

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

The Bible records numerous miracles in both the Old and the New Testaments. God caused some of these directly (e.g., the astounding miracle of creation with which the Bible begins). In most of these unique events, God employed the agency of men (and in a few cases, angels and even lower animal forms). Miraculous activity is so prominent in the Bible that one cannot credibly claim to believe in its veracity while denying its recorded miracles.

What constitutes a miracle? Men have redefined and “dumbed down” this Bible word, as they have many others (e.g., *love, sin, grace, faith*, et al.) in the vernacular. One may hear everything from escaping a tornado to a spectacular play in some sporting event described as a “miracle.”

What does *miracle* mean? This word in the New Testament is translated from two different Greek words. First, *dunamis*, which connotes power or inherent ability (our word, *dynamite*, is derived directly from this Greek word). It “is used of works of a supernatural origin and character, such as could not be produced by natural agents and means” (Acts 19:11; 1 Cor. 12:10; et al.).

The second word is *semeion* (also translated “sign”), indicating a sign, mark, or token, “used of ‘miracles’ and wonders as signs of divine authority” (Luke 23: 8; Acts 4:16; et al.). From these two words we learn that a genuine miracle is a work that (1) suspends natural laws and cannot be produced/explained by natural agency, (2) can be explained only by supernatural intervention, and (3) usually is performed to confirm Divine authority (cf. John 20:31; Heb. 2: 3–4).

While human genius and physical prowess have produced some amazing feats (e.g., in sports, medicine, et al.), such things are still human accomplishments. The Bible miracles were spectacular, extraordinary, and amazing, but they were more—far more. The enemies who sought Jesus’ death admitted concerning Him: “For this man doeth many signs” (John 11:47). When Peter and John healed the lame man in Jerusalem, enemies of the Gospel who sought to silence them nevertheless confessed “that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, ...and we cannot deny it” (Acts 4:16).

Another characteristic of Bible miracles was their immediate, rather than gradual, effect. This fact is demonstrable in the many miracles of healing (e.g., the lame, blind, deaf, and dumb, replacing a severed ear) and raising the dead. The so-called “miracles” of modern religionists are gross deceptions that stand in stark contrast with the actual miracles recorded in Holy Writ.

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