



Make Room for a Miracle

July 30-August 5, 2023

MAIN POINT

Our all-powerful God demonstrates His power in extraordinary ways to testify to His Son and bring glory to Himself.

INTRODUCTION

How would you define “miracle?” What makes an event or occurrence “miraculous?”

Do you believe in miracles? Do you think the average American believes in miracles? Why or why not?

What is your favorite miracle in the Bible and why?

The possibility of miracles has been debated for centuries, even in Christian circles. And as the American culture becomes more and more post-Christian in its worldview, more and more Americans deny the miracles recorded in the Bible. Does it matter? Should Christians still believe in miracles? Today we will consider what the Bible teaches in regard to miracles.

UNDERSTANDING

READ [ACTS 2:22-24](#), AS WELL AS VERSES [36-41](#).

What is the setting for this passage (see [Acts 2:1-47](#))?

According to Peter’s first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, what means did God the Father use to endorse Jesus and His ministry?

What three words did Peter use to describe God’s means of endorsement?

What did Peter want his hearers to be sure of (v. 36)?

What was the result of Peter’s sermon?

The New Testament primarily uses three Greek words to indicate occurrences we commonly refer to as “miracles.” These three words are used individually and in various combinations. Here in Acts 2:22 all three words are used together and translated as “miracles, wonders, and signs.” “Miracles” (dynamis) means “strength, ability, power in action.” It is most often translated “power” and in the New Testament usually refers to divine power. “Wonders” (teras) means “something strange that causes the beholder to marvel.” “Signs” (semeion) means a “sign, mark, or token.” In the New Testament it is used of signs of divine authority.

The following definition of “miracles” reflects the definitions of these Greek words and the use and context of these words in the New Testament: A New Testament “miracle” is a demonstration of God’s power (dynamis), in an extra-ordinary way (teras), as a sign (semeion) to confirm His Word, endorse His Son, or display His glory.

READ [LUKE 1:26-37](#).

Are some “miracles” in the Bible just too ridiculous to believe? Does God expect us to believe everything recorded in Scripture? What miracle is recorded in this passage? According

to verse 35, how would this extraordinary event be possible? Note, “power” in verse 35 is translated from dynamis.

According to verse 37, what limits does God have when it comes to “miracles, wonders, and signs?”

Read [Romans 1:18-20](#) and consider the power of God. If God has enough power to speak the universe into existence, how much power does He have? What does this indicate about His power to miraculously conceive a baby in a womb?

Over the centuries, some Christian thinkers, have proposed that some “miracles” recorded in the Bible should be taken figuratively rather than literally. Then they subjectively decided which miracles that thinking should apply to. Some Christians still do that today. This sort of “half-belief” essentially says “I will believe God can do some extraordinary things, but there is a limit to what I think God can do.”

The virgin birth of Christ is sometimes regulated to the “figurative” miracle category. Yet the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was conceived in the womb of a virgin woman by the power (dynamis) of God through the overshadowing presence of the Holy Spirit. The same Divine Power that created the universe also conceived Jesus in Mary’s womb, parted the Red Sea, healed the lame, gave sight to the blind, and raised Jesus from the dead.

READ [JOHN 11:4-6](#), [14-15](#), [38-48](#).

Why didn’t Jesus go to Lazarus when He first learned he was sick? Why did Jesus wait until Lazarus had died? List every reason you can find in the passage.

Did everyone who witnessed the resuscitation of Lazarus believe in Jesus? Why or why not?

Read [Matthew 9:6-8](#), [Matthew 14:14](#), [Mark 16:19-20](#), [John 2:23](#), and [Hebrews 2:3-4](#). Based on these passages, list every purpose for miracles you can find.

Jesus restored physical life to Lazarus’ body that had been in the grave for four days. Jesus could have healed Lazarus when he was merely sick, but God had purpose for a greater miracle. Through the death and resuscitation of Jesus’ friend, God the Father would get much deserved glory and many would put their faith and trust in His Son.

Interestingly, all the witnesses did not respond in the same way to the miracle. Many believed, but others refused to believe. Even though they witnessed the power of God, they chose to reject the truth to suit their own temporary, physical circumstances. Believing what they saw simply wasn’t convenient. But their unbelief cannot be blamed on anything lacking in the miracle. It was more than sufficient to carry out its purpose.

The Bible identifies several purposes for miracles. The passages in the third question of this section highlight five: to bring glory to God; to help those in need; to confirm God’s Word; to endorse Jesus as Messiah and Savior; to authenticate the gospel message.

APPLICATION

Based on today’s lesson, in what way has your understanding of miracles changed?

Do you know of any Christians who doubt or deny any of the miracles recorded in the Bible? If so, how could you help them come to a biblical understanding of miracles?

Why is it vital that Christians believe the miracles recorded in Scripture? In what ways does doubt and denial impact our faith and testimony to the world?

PRAYER

Lord, nothing is impossible for You! Not only are You all-powerful, but You also demonstrate Your power through miraculous events. We believe in the virgin birth of Jesus and the other miracles recorded in the Bible. We praise You for Your glory and power. We ask that You will strengthen our faith in You through what You have done! In Jesus' name, Amen.

COMMENTARY

ACTS 2:22-24, 36-41

2:23 Peter's declaration articulates a major paradox of the Christian life: Jesus' death occurred as a result of the plan and foreknowledge of God, but it was the free (and sinful) acts of human beings that executed that plan. The Bible often affirms the reality of both divine sovereignty and genuine human choice without explaining how the two can possibly work together without conflict (e.g., [4:28](#); [Genesis 45:5](#)).

2:24 The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental event of Christianity and the basis of the gospel. Peter made several important statements about the resurrection in this verse. First, it was God who raised Jesus from the dead. This pictures the resurrection as God the Father's vindication of God the Son. Second, Jesus was literally dead before the resurrection, not simply injured. Thus His resurrection was no mere resuscitation. Notice also that Peter personifies death as an actual force that holds the deceased in its embrace. Third, death's power was overcome by the resurrection, which means that believers should no longer fear it.

2:25-28 The second OT passage Peter cited is [Psalms 16:8-11](#). He recognized that Jesus was the one about whom David had prophesied, one who would not see the decay of death (also in v. 31).

2:29-30 Peter identified David as a prophet because he had prophesied through his psalm about the Messiah. David would have treasured this God-given foreknowledge because it entailed Israel's eventual salvation through his own progeny. David would have a victorious descendant on his throne. Peter saw all of this as having been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is now seated at God's right hand (v. 25; [Ephesians 1:20](#)).

2:32 Throughout this passage Peter has affirmed the reality and significance of Jesus' resurrection. Now he states most clearly the basis of his claims: he and the rest of the apostles were all witnesses to the risen Jesus. They had seen the risen Christ for themselves.

2:34-35 The third and final OT passage cited by Peter is [Psalm 110:1](#). Peter cited David as the authority for his seeing Jesus as seated at God's right hand, with all of His enemies in full subjection. The basis of this victory and exaltation was Jesus' resurrection.

2:36 Peter addressed his words specifically to Jews (the house of Israel) and affirmed that Jesus whom they crucified was both Lord and Messiah. By calling Jesus "Lord and Messiah," Peter was staking the biggest possible claims. "Lord" is reserved in the Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint) for God (Yahweh). Thus Peter says Jesus is God. Peter further noted

that Jesus was the Messiah (anointed one), Israel's hope for salvation.

2:37 Peter's audience came under deep conviction because they realized their guilt in the execution of Jesus, plus they were convinced by Peter's passionate eyewitness testimony and his description of how the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection fulfilled OT prophecies about the promised Messiah. This prompted them to ask the question that anyone hearing the gospel should ask, Brothers, what must we do?

2:38 Peter's answer indicates three major components in conversion. One must repent, which means turning from sin. To be baptized... in the name of Jesus publicly declares our repentance and faith, plus it symbolically identifies us with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Holy Spirit is given as a gift and seal of conversion, empowering the believer for the life of faith.

2:39 One of the major themes of the book of Acts is that the message of salvation through Jesus Christ extends not just to the people of Israel but also beyond them to as many as... God will call. The Gentiles were far off in two senses: they were geographically far removed from Israel, but even more significantly they were "far off" from knowledge of the one true God.

2:41 In response to Peter's preaching, Luke commented in an understated way that about 3,000 people were added to the community of believers. Note the close link between coming to faith and being baptized. There was apparently no delay between profession of faith and baptism. The large number of converts ("3,000") was made possible by the huge crowds who had traveled to Jerusalem from all over the Mediterranean region for the Passover celebration.