

Miracles: God Confirms and Reveals

“It’s a miracle!” Is it really? How can we know?

Miracles are not:

- **Simply happenings unexplainable by man.** Man’s ever-increasing and yet severely-limited knowledge has caused him to attribute happenings *presently* unexplainable to supernatural causes throughout history, only to later understand them as simple acts of nature.
- **Just wondrous events.** Just because an event or happening causes wonder, awe, or amazement does not necessarily mean a miracle has occurred.
- **Merely exotic occurrences.** A person survives an auto accident when hit head-on at highway speed. Just because we can’t fathom the laws of physics at work, doesn’t necessarily mean that God has performed a miracle.
- **The providence of God at work, even if in answer to prayer.** God is indeed *supernatural*, but every time He intercedes in the lives of men is not necessarily miraculous. God *caused* two women to become pregnant: Hannah and Mary. Hannah’s pregnancy resulted from God answering her prayer, and acting upon her womb, but occurred through the *natural* means of her husband, Elkanah, cf. 1Sam.1:5,19-20. By contrast, Mary become pregnant through *supernatural* means of the Holy Spirit, rather than through the *natural* means of her future husband, Joseph, cf. Matt.1:18-25. God acted *providentially* through the *natural means* of Hannah’s husband Elkanah, but acted *miraculously* through *supernatural means* when Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit rather than Joseph!

Miracles are:

- **Extraordinary events that are inexplicable in terms of *natural* forces, Matt.14:22-33; and,**
- **Events which cause the observers to postulate *superhuman* causes, John 9:30-33; and,**
- **Events which constitute evidence as a *sign* with implications much wider than the event itself, John 20:30-31.**

The Purposes of Miracles:

1. **Not to merely effect *physical* changes.** While there were certainly thousands who benefited *physically* from Jesus’ miracles, cf. Matt.14:14-21; 8:16-17; but there were obviously many people in other parts of the world at the time whom He did not heal. If the purpose of these miracles was merely to *effect physical* changes in peoples lives, surely He could have and would have healed everyone worldwide- but He didn’t for such was not the primary purpose of the miracles He performed. We are given a hint, if we look closely, in Acts 10:38. His healing had a greater purpose of releasing people from the *oppression of the devil*- which, at the time, often had *physical* as well as *spiritual* effects, cf. Mark 5:1-20.
2. **To confirm His *presence or approval*.** How did God *confirm* that the 12 apostles were *approved* of Him and should thus be heeded in Acts 2:1-11a? Was it not through the *miraculous sign* of enabling these *uneducated* and *untrained men* (see Acts 4:13)

to be able to *speak in unknown (unlearned) tongues (languages)?* Could *natural forces* account for these things? No, vv.13-15. Did it cause the observers to postulate *superhuman cause*? Of course, vv.7-12! Was it a *sign with implications much wider than the event itself*? You bet, vv.16-21!

3. **To reveal His word and will.** Stay in Acts 2. So why did the 12 apostles need this *confirming sign* from God? What was its point beyond enabling them to speak in languages that they had not learned? Was it just to *astound* the crowd and prove the apostles were *approved* of God? Not at all! What *else* did this particular miracle enable? No, it empowered them to *reveal God's word and will* to this crowd, vv.22-36,40!

Now, isn't this *confirmation* (as demonstrated above) what Jesus said would happen in Mark16:17-18, and for the purpose of *revelation* indicated in Mark 16:20? See also John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13.

God Confirms His Presence/Approval and Reveals His Word/Will through Miracles in the Old Testament.

1. **Through the *burning bush*, Ex.3:1-12.** God *confirmed* His *presence* through this miraculous event, vv.2-6; and *revealed* His *will* to Moses through it, vv.10.
2. **Through the *staff that became a serpent*, Ex.4:1-5.** God gave Moses this *miraculous sign* to *confirm* him as His messenger, vv.1-4 (as well as *leprous/clean hand*, and *water from the Nile* turned to *blood*, vv.6-9); so that the people would *believe* what he *revealed* from God, vv.1,10-12 (see also Ex.7:1-2).
3. **Through the *plagues upon Egypt*, Ex.7-12.** Notice how the plagues *confirmed* God's *presence* with Israel (they were not affected by the plagues), and *revealed* God's power over the Egyptian gods:
 - **Nile turned to blood** *revealed* God's power over *Khnum* (guardian of the Nile), *Hapi* (spirit of the Nile), and *Osiris* (Nile was bloodstream);
 - **Frogs** *revealed* God's power over *Heqt* (god of resurrection in the form of a frog);
 - **Pestilence (Murrain) on Cattle** *revealed* God's power over *Hathor* (mother-goddess in cow form), *Apis* (bull god or *Ptah*, the symbol of fertility), and *Mnevis* (the sacred bull of Heliopolis);
 - **Hail and Locusts** *revealed* God's power over *Nut* (sky goddess), *Isis* (goddess of life), and *Seth* (protector of crops);
 - **Darkness** *revealed* God's power over *Re*, *Aten*, *Atum*, and *Horus* (all sun gods of various sorts);
 - **Death of Firstborn** *revealed* God's power over *Pharaoh* (supposed deity incarnate) and *Osiris* (giver of life).

You see, these were not just random *miraculous plagues* designed to "hit 'em where it hurts"- they were **extraordinary events** that were **inexplicable in terms of natural forces**, that **caused the observers to postulate superhuman causes**, and had **implications much wider than the event itself!** Through these *miraculous signs*, God *confirmed His presence* with and *approval of Israel*, and *revealed His will* that Pharaoh should "Let My people go!"

Similarly, God *Confirms His Presence/Approval* and *Reveals His Word/Will* regarding Jesus in the New Testament.

1. Through the *dove* and *God's voice from heaven* at Jesus' baptism, Matt.3:16-17 (see also John 1:31-34).
2. Through the *transfiguration of Jesus* and *God's voice*, Matt.17:1-5.
3. Through the *signs at the crucifixion*, Matt.27:45,51,53,54. After witnessing the *signs of darkness*, the *veil of the Temple being torn from top to bottom*, the *earthquake*, and the *resurrection of many saints*, the centurion declared, "Truly this was the Son of God!" I think he got the *implication wider than the event itself*, don't you?

So, what should these things mean to us? Think back to the plagues upon Egypt- how those miraculous signs had *implications wider than the events themselves*. **Jesus' miraculous signs also had *implications wider than the events themselves!*** They weren't just *random*. They had specific purposes. For instance:

- **Jesus opening the eyes of a blind**, cf. John 9:35-41, demonstrates **His power over *spiritual darkness***- that He is truly *the light of the world*, John 1:4-5; 8:12!
- **Jesus walking on the water and calming the sea**, Matt.14:24b,30-33, demonstrates **His power over not just the elements of the natural world, but also over our *storms of life***....if we will have faith in Him!
- **Jesus casting out demons**, Matt.8:28-33, demonstrates **His complete power over Satan and his demons**- He has *bound the strong man* and is *plundering his house*, Matt.12:22-29; Heb.2:14-15!
- **Jesus healing the paralytic**, Matt.9:1-6, demonstrates **His power over sin** and **His ability *forgive man's sins***- this was the implication *much wider than the event itself!*

We could continue to examine the miracles of Jesus, and how they *confirm* His deity and *reveal* His power over every spiritual obstacle man faces, but I hope you get the point with these few examples. So let's wrap up with a few *take-home* applications:

1. We need to understand, define, and use the term "miracles" as God's word does instead of the way the world understands, defines, and uses the term.
2. But even more importantly, we need to understand the *spiritual purposes* with which God used miracles- and learn from them, rather than seeking a "miracle" in our own lives for some mere *physical* benefit. We don't need miracles today, we need to understand how and why God used them, and learn from them. Jesus has the power to ***enlighten you***, to ***handle all your storms of life***, to ***cast out/aside whatever spiritual obstacles you have or face***, and most importantly, He has the power to ***forgive your sins!***