



Introduction to

APOLOGETICS

Session IV: Are Miracles Possible?

Why Miracles?

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“Without miracles, the Bible cannot be the Word of God, Jesus cannot be the Son of God, salvation cannot be an act of God, and the resurrection cannot be an act of God . . . In short, Christianity crumbles! But the Bible is filled with miracles and claims to be the word of God, Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and as the apostle Paul said, without the resurrection, there is no salvation (1 Cor. 15:17). Hence, the Christian faith, unlike other faiths, can be falsified.” Norman Geisler

This quote from Geisler sums up why miracles are so important to the Christian faith. This point is also, why non-believers attack the idea of miracles so hard. If they can “disprove” the notion of a miracle then everything we know about our belief falls as a result. For this reason, we must not only affirm that miracles are possible but be willing to rationally defend their necessity. Too often in today’s Church, we see people becoming less sure of miracles. We see “Christians” make claims that undermine or blatantly oppose the idea of real miracles. We must face this serious issue, as it is a direct attack on Jesus. If it is true what Jesus said He claimed to be God, He claimed miracles were real and He claimed that He performed them. Fortunately, for the Church this is by no means a new threat nor a difficult one to handle for the prepared believer. The fact is in order to respond, and respond we must, we have to explain a few things about miracles.

What Miracles Are Not

For Christians to mount a reasonable defense of Miracles they must first have a clear understanding of the nature of miracles. So let us examine what miracles are not and what they are. Much of this session will be drawn from Norman Geisler’s *12 That Show Christianity Is True*.

- **Miracles are not merely things that appear unusual.**
 - Just as “all that glitters is not gold” so all that may appear supernatural is not. All that is unusual is not supernatural.
- **Miracles are not merely anomalies.**
 - Scientists did not understand how the bumblebee could fly (anomaly). Its body size and wing size should have made it impossible. Likewise, it is still not completely understood why water expands when freezing and most other liquids contract; but if it did not life would not be possible.



- **Miracles are not a providential act**
 - When a man is drowning and he floats close to the bank and grabs a limb. This is not necessarily a miracle.
- **Miracles are not psychological**
 - Sometimes people can have psychological phenomenon that is so strong it can have the appearance of a miracle. For example false pregnancy or hypnosis.
- **Miracles are not magic**
 - Sleight of hand and parlor tricks are not miraculous. The clever rouses of the magician are no substitute for the truly miraculous.
- **Miracles cannot be done by Satanic forces**
 - Satan cannot do real miracles only fake them and imitate them. Only God performs acts of God. Satan may be a master magician, but he cannot do the supernatural.
 - Only God is all powerful (Rev. 19:6).
 - Only God can create life (Job 1:21; Deut. 32:39).
 - Only God can raise the dead (Jn. 10:18; Acts 2:24).
 - If Satan could raise the dead, he could emulate the greatest miracle of all: Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The Bible says Satan's works are false signs and wonders (2 Thes 2:9). Satan is a super scientist in using natural laws to produce satanic signs (2 Cor. 11:14) through: evil spirits, intentions, actions, false teaching, false predictions, mediums, idol images or the use of physical objects (divination).

Signs of a Satanic Sign

- 1. Evil spirits (Deut. 18:11).
- 2. Evil intentions (Gen. 3:5; 2 Thes. 2:9).
- 3. Evil actions (1 Tim. 4:3–4; Jude 7).
- 4. False teaching (Col. 2:8–9; 1 Jn. 4:1).
- 5. False predictions (Deut. 18:21–22).
- 6. Use of mediums (Deut. 18:11).
- 7. Use of idols or images (Ex. 20:3–4)
- 8. Use of physical objects (divination) (Deut. 18:11).



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What Miracles Prove

A dramatic, dark, and swirling image, possibly representing a storm or a tunnel, with a bright light source visible in the distance. The image is characterized by deep blues and blacks, with white highlights suggesting water or light reflecting off surfaces. The overall effect is one of intense, swirling motion and a sense of being drawn into a powerful, unseen force.

Primary Purpose of Miracles

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If miracles are supernatural acts in the world by a supernatural being. Then these acts must be direct unusual acts within nature by a source that is *beyond nature*. For if not *beyond nature*, this being would not have all power *over nature*. Miracles will ultimately be different from other unusual, but natural, events. As pointed out earlier the primary (but not only) purpose of a miracle is to confirm a message from God. Only Theistic religions consider miracles to be a confirmation by God of a truth claim made in His name. After all, miracles are used to connect a truth claim by confirming a *message* from God, through a *messenger* of God. Therefore, a divine message can only come from a theistic worldview. (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) Why? Because a miracle can only come from a *personal* God who desires to communicate to rational beings made in His image (Gen. 1:27). Plainly put a message connected with miracles is something that only God can do. The source is a supernatural Being who performs a supernatural act. Even among non-believers, miracles are recognized as being a clear sign of God's message. David Hume said a resurrection would be a miracle. "It is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country"

Bertrand Russell was once asked "What kind of evidence could convince you God exists?" he responded: "I think that if I heard a voice from the sky predicting all that was going to happen to me during the next twenty-four hours, including events that would have seemed highly improbable, and if all these events then proceed to happen, then I might perhaps be convinced at least of the existence of some superhuman intelligence. I can imagine other evidence of the same sort which might convince me, but as far as I know, no such evidence exists" (*What is an Agnostic?*).

Charles Darwin insisted that the appearance of complex organisms would be a miracle. He wrote: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory [of gradual change] would absolutely break down" (*On the Origin of Species*, 6th ed. (1872), 154).



The argument that miracles can serve as confirmation of a message from God:

1. If a theistic God exists, then miracles are possible.
2. A miracle is a special act of a theistic God.
3. A theistic God is all-knowing (omniscient).
4. A theistic God is also a morally perfect Being (see point 3),
5. An all-knowing, all-perfect God cannot err or deceive.
6. Hence, a theistic God would not act to confirm something as true that was false.
7. Therefore, true miracles in connection with a message confirm that message to be from God: (a) the miracle confirms the message, (b) the sign confirms the sermon, (c) an act of God confirms the Word of God, and (d) new revelation needs new confirmation.

What Makes a True Miracle?

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As we have discussed not every unusual event constitutes an actual miracle or message from God. We must realize that certain criterion is use for identifying what is truly miraculous.

First miracles must be immediate. They are not gradual.

- “Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” (Mt. 8:3).
- “And Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed.’ And the servant was healed that very moment” (Mt. 8:13).
- Peter said, “‘In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!’ And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened . . .” (Acts 3:6–7). (See also Mt. 9:22; Mk. 1:31, 42; Jn. 5:9).

Second miracles come in multiples. There are over two hundred and fifty miracles in the Bible. Sixty of these are in the Gospels alone.

Third Miracles must be connected with a truth claim about God. As we have seen, Moses did miracles to prove that God had sent him. He said, “By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me . . .” (Num. 16:5; 28–33). Elijah saw his miracle as confirmation that he was the servant of the true God of Israel. “O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant . . . Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench” (1 Kings 18:36–38). Jesus did miracles to show that he has the power on earth to forgive sins “‘But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the paralytic, “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.”” (Mk. 2:10–11; cf. Mt. 12:38–39). If they are not connected to a truth claim from God then we have no right to claim apologetics value.

Finally, miracles contain a predictive element that adds to the credibility of a claim. Moses promised supernatural judgments of God on Egypt (Exod. 4:21–23); that the rod of God would bud (Num. 17:5); that Korah would be judged (Num. 16:28–30). Elijah predicted that fire would come from heaven to consume the sacrifice (1 Kings 18:22f.). etc.

Biblical miracles have all the qualifications of true miracles:

1. They were immediate.
2. There were multiple miracles.
3. They were connected with a truth claim in the name of God.
4. Some had a predictive element in them.

Conclusion

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Frank Turek, a theologian and Christian author, often uses the analogy of a King and his seal to explain the concept of miracles he wrote in *I Don't Have Enough Faith To Be An Atheist* "In the days before mass communications—when all long-distance messages were sent by hand—a king would place his seal on his message. This seal would be a sign to the recipient of the message that the message was authentic—it really came from the king and not from someone just posing as the king. Of course to make this system work, the seal needed to be unusual or unique, easily recognizable, and it had to be something only the king possessed.

God could use a similar system to authenticate his messages—specifically, he could use miracles. Miracles are unusual and unique, easily recognizable, and only God can do them. Even skeptics, by demanding a sign from God, are implicitly admitting that miracles would prove his existence."

"A miracle is a divine intervention in the natural world that produces an event that would not have resulted from purely natural causes. Simply put it is a supernatural act done in the world by God. There are other unusual occurrences that do not constitute the miraculous. These include anomalies, magic and Satanic signs. Because only God can do miracles, they can serve as a unique sign or confirmation that a message is from God. If God exists, then miracles are always possible. Since all dis-proofs for God fail and the greatest miracle of all is creation, all non-theistic views are false.

All theistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) consider miracles to be a confirmation by God of a truth claim made in His name. Even some atheists agree with theists about what would constitute a miracle and the confirming nature they could have. Miracles can confirm a message because an all-knowing, all-perfect God cannot err or deceive. Biblical miracles meet the true qualifications of a miracle being immediate, multiple, connected with a truth claim in the name of God, and some have a predictive element. Hence, miracles can confirm the claim of Christ to be God in human flesh." *12 Points That Show Christianity is True* Norman Geisler

