



WHY BE INTERESTED IN Miracles?

“Miracles, by definition, violate the principles of science.”

—RICHARD DAWKINS, FORMER PROFESSOR FOR PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF SCIENCE.

“Belief in miracles is entirely rational. Far from being an embarrassment to religious faith, they are signs of God’s love for, and continuing involvement in, creation.”

—ROBERT A. LARMER, PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

“DO YOU believe in miracles?” As shown by the above quotations, opinions vary drastically. But how would *you* answer that question?

You may be hesitant to answer, “Yes, I believe.” Perhaps you feel that to do so might indicate that you are somewhat superstitious or uneducated. Many feel that same way.

On the other hand, you may be convinced that miracles really do happen. You might believe in the miracles recorded in the Bible, such as Moses’ parting of the Red Sea. You may also believe that miracles occur in our time. In fact, a report recently issued revealed that “a significant proportion of the population of the Western world—for example around three-quarters of those in the United States and 38 per cent in Britain—continue to believe in miracles.” (*The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, edited by Graham H. Twelftree) Moreover, belief in miracles is not limited just to Christians. According to the *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions*, belief in miraculous events “is a feature of practically all religions.”

Or you may belong to a third group, who would answer: “I don’t know, and I don’t care! Miracles don’t happen in my life!” Really, why should you be interested in miracles?

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

It is an event that surpasses all known human and natural powers and is usually attributed to some sort of supernatural power.

Consider this scenario: Imagine that you have an incurable disease. If you were to read a report in a reputable medical journal about a new medicine that might cure your sickness, would it not be worthwhile to expend at least a little time and energy to investigate the facts? Similarly, the Bible promises that soon some amazing miracles

will occur. They will affect the lives of every living creature on this planet. Would it not be worth some of your time and energy to find out whether that promise is reliable?

However, before we examine what those promised miracles are, let us answer three common objections concerning miracles.

Are Miracles Really Possible?

THREE COMMON OBJECTIONS

OBJECTION 1: Miracles are impossible because they violate the laws of nature. Our understanding of the laws of nature is based on what scientists have observed happening in the natural world around us. However, those laws are similar to the grammar rules for a language—there may be some exceptions to the rule. Our understanding of these “rules” may, in fact, be very limited. (Job 38:4) A dedicated scientist may have spent a lifetime studying a certain law of nature. But all it takes is one “exception” for him to have to reevaluate his understanding of that law. As the saying goes, “Just one black swan undoes the theory that all swans are white.”

A humorous story illustrates how easy it is to base an opinion on incomplete facts. John Locke (1632-1704) related this story about the Dutch ambassador and the king of Siam:

While describing his country, Holland, to the king, the ambassador mentioned that at times it was possible for an elephant to walk on water. The king rejected the idea and felt that the ambassador was lying to him. However, the ambassador was merely describing something that was beyond the king’s personal experience. The king did not realize that when water freezes and becomes ice, it can support the weight of an elephant. This seemed impossible to the king because he did not have all the facts.

Consider some modern accomplishments that may have been considered impossible just a few decades ago:

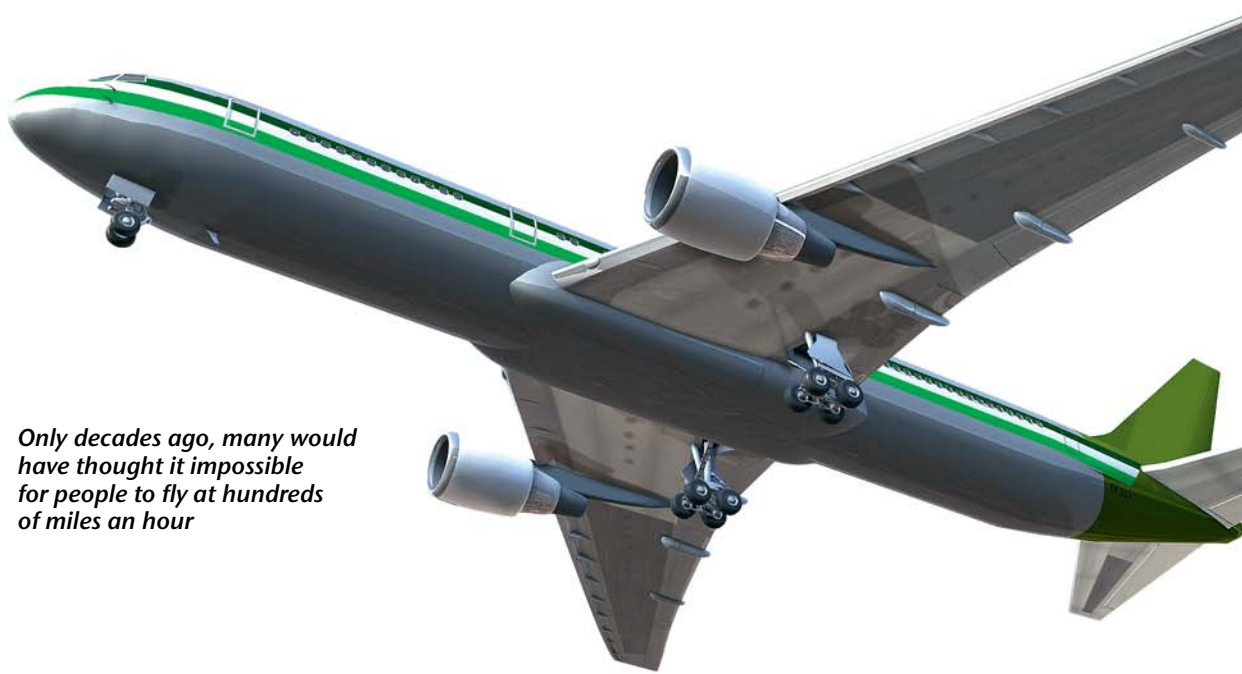
- An airplane can transport more than 800 passengers nonstop from New York to Singapore, traveling at a cruising speed of 560 miles per hour (900 km/h).



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Only decades ago, many would have thought it impossible for people to fly at hundreds of miles an hour

- Video conferences can enable people on different continents to engage in face-to-face conversations.
- Thousands of songs can be stored on a device smaller than a box of matches.
- Surgeons can transplant hearts and other body parts.

What logical conclusion can we draw from such facts? This: If humans can accomplish feats that just a few years ago seemed impossible, then surely the God who created the universe and all that is in it can perform amazing acts that we do not yet fully understand or cannot presently replicate.*—Genesis 18:14; Matthew 19:26.

* If you question the existence of God, please see the brochures *Does God Really Care About Us?* and *Was Life Created?* or ask the person who gave you this magazine for more information.

OBJECTION 2: The Bible relies on miracles to make people believe. The Bible does not tell us to believe all miracles. In fact, the opposite is true. The Bible *warns* us to be very careful when it comes to trusting miracles and powerful signs. Notice this clear warning: “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives.” —2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10, *New International Version*.

Jesus Christ also warned that many would claim to follow him but would not be his genuine followers. Some would even say to him: “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” (Matthew 7:22, *NIV*) But Jesus said that he would not

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[°] Braille also available.

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accept those people as his followers. (Matthew 7:23) Obviously, then, Jesus did not teach that all miracles are from God.

God does not tell his worshippers to base their faith simply on miracles. Rather, their faith should be firmly established on facts.—Hebrews 11:1.

Let us consider, for example, one of the well-known miracles recorded in the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Years after that event, some Christians in Corinth started to question whether Jesus had been resurrected. How did the apostle Paul help those Christians? Did he simply say, “Have more faith”? No. Notice how he reminded them of established facts. He stated that Jesus “was buried, yes, . . . he has been raised up the third day according to the Scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that he appeared to upward of five hundred brothers at one time, the most of whom remain to the present.”—1 Corinthians 15:4-8.

Did it matter whether those Christians believed in that miracle? Paul goes on to say: “If Christ has not been raised up, our preaching is certainly in vain, and our faith is in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:14) Paul did not take the matter lightly. Either the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus was true or it was not! And Paul knew that it was true because of the hundreds of eyewitness accounts of people who were still living at that time. In fact, those eyewitnesses were willing to die rather than deny what they had seen.—1 Corinthians 15:17-19.

OBJECTION 3: Miracles are just natural phenomena that are misunderstood by uneducated people. Some scholars try to explain the miracles in the Bible as merely natural events that occurred without divine intervention. They feel that this makes the Biblical accounts more believable. While it is true

that natural phenomena may have been associated with some miracles—such things as earthquakes, plagues, and landslides—these explanations have one thing in common. They disregard *the timing* of the miracle as explained in the Scriptures.

For example, some have argued that the first plague brought upon Egypt, the turning of the Nile River into blood, was actually the result of red soil that had been washed down the Nile, along with reddish organisms called flagellates. However, the Bible account says that the river was turned into blood, not red mud. A careful reading of Exodus 7:14-21 shows that this miracle occurred at the time that Aaron, at Moses’ direction, struck the Nile River with his rod. Even if the transformation of the river were caused by a natural occurrence, the timing of Aaron’s striking the river was in itself miraculous!

As another example of the importance of the timing of a miracle, consider what happened when the nation of Israel was poised to enter the Promised Land. Their way was blocked by the Jordan River at flood stage. The Bible account tells us what happened next: “At the instant that the carriers of the Ark came as far as the Jordan and the feet of the priests carrying the Ark were dipped in the edge of the waters . . . , then the waters descending from above began to stand still. They rose up as one dam very far away at Adam.” (Joshua 3:15, 16) Was this the result of an earthquake or a landslide? The account does not say. But the timing of this event was miraculous. It occurred exactly at the time Jehovah had said that it would.—Joshua 3:7, 8, 13.

So, then, are there such things as miracles? The Bible says that there are. According to what it tells us, these are not just natural phenomena. Really, then, is it logical to say that it is impossible for them to happen just because they do not occur every day?

CAN YOU BELIEVE THE MIRACLES Recorded in the Bible?

IF YOU were told an amazing story, would not the credibility of the person telling the story affect whether you believe that story or not? Such credibility would involve not only the way the person told the story but also his personal record of truthfulness. After all, if over the years he had always told you the truth and had never deliberately lied to you, you would have good reason to believe what he now told you.

The same is true of miracles recorded in the Bible. None of us were alive when those

events occurred. But we can determine if the Bible's story is credible—if it has the ring of truth. How? Here are some factors that add credibility to Bible accounts of miracles.

Many miracles were performed in public places. At times, they were seen by thousands, if not millions, of observers. (Exodus 14:21-31; 19:16-19) They were not performed in secret, away from the eyes of the public.

The miracles were marked by simplicity. There were no special props or flashy displays, and there was no trick lighting. For the most part, the miracles recorded in the Bible occurred in response to chance encounters and requests from individuals. (Mark 5:25-29; Luke 7:11-16) In such cases the events could not have been staged by the one performing the miracle.

The motive of those performing the miracles was not to gain fame, glory, and riches for themselves. Rather, it was to bring glory to God. (John 11:1-4, 15, 40) Any effort by individuals to gain wealth from such miraculous powers was condemned.—2 Kings 5:15, 16, 20, 25-27; Acts 8:18-23.

The variety of miracles recorded in the Bible indicates that they could not be merely the works of men. For instance, the sea and the wind were calmed, water was changed into wine, rain was stopped and started, sick people were cured, and sight was restored to the blind. All those miracles and many more show that a superhuman power that can exercise influence over all forms of matter must have been behind such miracles.—1 Kings 17:1-7; 18:41-45; Matthew 8:24-27; Luke 17:11-19; John 2:1-11; 9:1-7.

Opposers who observed the miracles did not question that they had occurred. When Jesus resurrected his friend Lazarus, Jesus' religious enemies did not question that Lazarus had been dead. How could they? Lazarus

Jesus' opposers did not question that Lazarus had been dead



had been buried for four days. (John 11: 45-48; 12:9-11) Even centuries after Jesus' death, the writers of the Jewish Talmud continued to acknowledge that Jesus had miraculous powers. They simply questioned the *source* of those powers. Similarly, when Jesus' disciples were brought before a Jewish court, the question they were asked was not "Did you perform a miracle?" But they were asked: "By what power or in whose name did you do this?"—Acts 4:1-13.

So can you believe what the Bible tells us about miracles? From what we have just considered, it is clear that Bible accounts about miracles have the earmarks of credibility. There are other reasons for trusting these Bible accounts. For example, when the Bible relates an event, it often gives us the time, the place, and the names of the people involved. Even critics of the Bible have been amazed by the accuracy of the historical details found in the Bible. Hundreds of Bible prophecies have been fulfilled, even in the smallest of details. In addition, the Bible contains much advice about how to make human relationships happy—advice that has helped people of all ages and walks of life. When it comes to human relationships, the advice found in the Bible has proved to be without equal.

If you have not yet gained full confidence in the Bible, why not take the time to examine it more carefully? The more you get to know it, the more you will grow to trust it. (John 17:17) You will realize that you can trust what it tells you about the miracles that occurred in the past. Once you believe those accounts, you will have a good basis for trusting what the Bible says will happen in the near future.

Miracles

THAT ARE

About to Happen

IF A surgeon was scheduled to perform a complicated procedure on you, how would you feel if you found out that he had never performed this type of surgery? No doubt you would be concerned. But what if, on the other hand, you found out that this doctor was the leading surgeon in his field and that he had performed hundreds of successful operations like the one you were about to have? Would you not have much more confidence that he could help *you*?

The sick world in which we find ourselves today needs drastic "surgery." Through his Word, the Bible, Jehovah God has promised that he will restore Paradise to this earth. (2 Peter 3:13) But for that to happen, wickedness will first have to be removed, completely cut away. (Psalm 37:9-11; Proverbs 2:21, 22) All the woeful conditions that we see around us must be eradicated before a paradise can be reestablished. It will literally take a miracle for that to happen! —Revelation 21:4, 5.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that those massive changes will soon occur. Why? Because the miracles Jehovah God has already performed prove that he has the power to fulfill his promises. Compare just six of the miracles recorded in the Bible with the promises it makes for the future.

MIRACLE:

JESUS FED THOUSANDS WITH A FEW LOAVES AND FISHES.

—MATTHEW 14:13-21; MARK 8:1-9; JOHN 6:1-14.

PROMISE:

*"The earth itself will certainly give its produce;
God, our God, will bless us."*—PSALM 67:6.

MEANING FOR US:

NO ONE WILL EVER AGAIN SUFFER FROM HUNGER.



MIRACLE:

JESUS RESTORED SIGHT TO THE BLIND.

—MATTHEW 9:27-31; MARK 8:22-26.

PROMISE:

"The eyes of the blind ones will be opened."
—ISAIAH 35:5.

MEANING FOR US:

ALL BLIND PEOPLE WILL RECEIVE SIGHT.

MIRACLE:

JESUS CURED THE DISABLED.

—MATTHEW 11:5, 6; JOHN 5:3-9.

PROMISE:

"The lame one will climb up just as a stag does."
—ISAIAH 35:6.

MEANING FOR US:

ALL PHYSICAL DISABILITIES WILL BE CURED.



MIRACLE:

JESUS CURED A VARIETY OF SICKNESSES.

—MARK 1:32-34; LUKE 4:40.

PROMISE:

"No resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—ISAIAH 33:24.

MEANING FOR US:

**ALL DEBILITATING SICKNESSES WILL BE REMOVED.
WE WILL ENJOY PERFECT HEALTH.**



MIRACLE:

JESUS CONTROLLED THE ELEMENTS.

—MATTHEW 8:23-27; LUKE 8:22-25.

PROMISE:

“They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not toil for nothing.”—ISAIAH 65:21, 23.

“You will be far away from oppression—for you will fear none—and from anything terrifying, for it will not come near you.”—ISAIAH 54:14.

MEANING FOR US:

NATURAL DISASTERS WILL BE NO MORE.



MIRACLE:

JESUS RAISED THE DEAD.

—MATTHEW 9:18-26; LUKE 7:11-17.

PROMISE:

“All those in the memorial tombs will . . . come out.”—JOHN 5:28, 29.

“The sea gave up those dead in it, and death and Hades gave up those dead in them.”—REVELATION 20:13.

MEANING FOR US:

OUR DEAD LOVED ONES WILL BE RESURRECTED.



May you continue to learn about the Bible's promises for our future. As your faith grows, so will your hope—a hope to live at a time when you will personally benefit from the miracles that Jehovah performs.