28. The Book of Acts—5:12-32

(11/18/26)

Acts 5:12 (NKJV)
12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders [miracles] **were done among the people.**

What is a Miracle?

A miracle is a supernatural event for which there is no *natural* explanation.

Webster's defines a miracle as: *"An event or action that apparently contradicts known scientific laws and is hence thought to be due to supernatural causes especially to an act of God".*

Did you notice the words *"apparently contradicts known scientific laws"* and hence *"thought to be due to supernatural causes?"*

The folks over at Webster's seem to be saying that what many think to be a miracle is actually nothing more than an event that utilizes unknown natural or scientific laws that are then mistaken for a supernatural occurrence.

In other words, they're saying, *"what would someone in Jesus' day have thought if they were to witness a 747 taking off—would they not have concluded they were witnessing a miracle?"*

And yet since the discovery of the law of aerodynamics—a scientific law that supersedes the natural law of gravity, we know that a massive plane taking off isn't a miracle at all.

You see there are many who don't believe in miracles or in the supernatural—they believe that all the so called "miracles" in the Bible and down through history can be explained through natural phenomenon.

The denial of God and the supernatural today is due to rationalistic and materialistic thought having taken captive the thinking of the Western world and especially the scientific community over the past few hundred years.

As people sought to get rid of God and the supernatural they turned to *naturalism* as their god and began to worship the creation rather than the Creator. (Romans 1:25)

A naturalist believes that God only exists as a fantasy in the minds of religious non-intellectuals.

They believe that nature (the physical universe) is all there is and everything came into existence through natural processes (Big Bang) without any divine fiat (command).

But for those of us who believe in the God of the Bible we know that He is a supernatural God who has created the natural universe and has put in place natural laws by which He governs or controls it.

But at any time, He can suspend or work contrary to those natural laws if it suits His purposes and when He does we call it a *miracle*—but for God it's simply a demonstration that He is not bound to the natural laws He has created that normally govern the natural realm.

We see all throughout the pages of the Old and New Testaments—God using the supernatural to testify to His existence and power.

One of the primary examples of this in the O.T. was the Exodus with the 10 plagues and the parting of the Red Sea—but we also see in the Book of Joshua how God parted the Jordan River at flood stage, and how He caused the sun to stand still in the sky for almost a whole day.

We also read how through the ministries of Elijah and Elisha He worked numerous miracles—even raising the dead.

In the N.T. Jesus worked many miracles like walking on water, turning water to wine, multiplying small amounts of food to feed thousands of hungry people—He healed the sick, raised the dead, calmed the storm—in fact He did so many miracles that John said at the end of his gospel—

John 20:30-31 (NKJV)
30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

John 21:25 (NKJV)
25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

We also see how God continued to work miracles during the Book of Acts—primarily through Peter and Paul—but also through others like Stephen and Philip.

And that brings up and important point—did miracles cease with the end of the apostolic period (the first century)?

Many say "yes", but I don't believe that is true.

God has always been the God of the miraculous—and He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

If you read the reports from missionaries around the world—especially in third world countries where people have put their faith in Jesus—these people with simple faith are seeing God do many miraculous things—<u>for wherever God is working the supernatural is still happening</u>.

So why doesn't God work more miracles in America? Because of our unbelief. (Explain)

A word of caution

Now we need to be careful concerning our concept of miracles—we must be careful not to assume that if a person has the power to perform miracles, they must be from God.

I say be careful because Satan can perform miracles and so can those whom he empowers—

2 Thessalonians 2:9 (NKJV)
9 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

Now even though miracles don't necessarily prove that a man has been sent by God—they do add considerable weight to his claim—if his character and message are consistent with Jesus and His apostles.

In Jesus' case He Himself pointed to the miracles He had done as proof He was in fact the Messiah—

Matthew 11:2-6 (NKJV)
2 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples 3 and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" 4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 5 *The* blind see and *the* lame walk; *the* lepers are cleansed and *the* deaf hear; *the* dead are raised up and *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

In saying this Jesus was reminding John the Baptist of what the prophets had prophesied concerning the Messiah's ministry—

Isaiah 35:5-6 (NKJV)
5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

And again, Jesus pointed to the miracles He had done as proof He had come from the Father and was one with the Father—

John 14:11 (NKJV)
[11] Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

One more thing about miracles

Miracles won't force a person to believe that doesn't want to believe.

It is worth noting that five of the miracles that Matthew records were performed in Capernaum—a city that ultimately rejected Him (Matt. 11:21–23).

Not to mention the totality of the miracles Jesus did over the course of His 3 ½ year ministry—so many John tells us they couldn't be numbered, and yet when it was all said and done the leaders of Israel rejected Him, arrested Him, and crucified Him.

But for those with an open-heart Jesus' miracles were *"sermons in action"* that led them into faith or confirmed the faith that was already in their hearts that Jesus was exactly who He claimed to be—the Messiah and King of Israel!

Acts 5:12–13 (NKJV)
[12] And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. [13] Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.

Once the Church had been purified by purging out the leaven of hypocrisy (the sin of Annanias and Saphira) the Church moved forward in power.

Today much of that power is lacking, so much so that many teach that the power God gave the first century church was only temporary and that that supernatural power was designed to 'launch' the Church.

They claim it was like a 'booster rocket' to get them 'off the ground' but now we have our programs and seminaries, so we don't need this special power. (Elaborate)

People held the early church in high esteem, but they didn't rush to join after hearing about the way God judged Ananias and Saphira for lying to the Holy Spirit—can you blame them?

Acts 5:14–16 (NKJV)
14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. 16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

This was a time where the Holy Spirit was working in unusual ways—so much so that God used Peter's shadow as a source of healing.

We see here that as the people were sitting or lying on couches, they would watch Peter come up the street, looking at where the sun was and making sure that, when he walked past, *"his shadow is going to fall on me."*

As his shadow fell on them, I believe that it was a point of contact where their faith was released—very much like the woman in Luke 8:

Luke 8:41–48 (NLT)
41 Then a man named Jairus, a leader of the local synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come home with him. 42 His only daughter, who was about twelve years old, was dying. As Jesus went with him, he was surrounded by the crowds. 43 A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding, and she could find no cure. 44 Coming up behind Jesus, she touched the fringe of his robe. Immediately, the bleeding stopped. 45 "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. Everyone denied it, and Peter said, "Master, this whole crowd is pressing up against you." 46 But Jesus said, "Someone deliberately touched me, for I felt healing power go out from me." 47 When the woman realized that she could not stay hidden, she began to tremble and fell to her knees in front of him. The whole crowd heard her explain why she had touched him and that she had been immediately healed. 48 "Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

Jesus didn't say His *robe* healed her, but her <u>faith</u> when she reached out and touched Jesus' robe she believed that she would be healed, that the power of God would be released.

And the same was true of Peter's shadow—it became a point of contact where their faith was released—*"The moment Peter's shadow falls on me I know I'll be healed!"*

But just so we're clear on this—there was nothing spiritual or mystical about Peter's shadow—it was all about the person's faith that caused the power of God to be released and to flow into their body for healing.

Pastor Chuck Smith comments on this—

"I think that that is true today in many cases today. People's faith is built up by these faith healers to believe that the moment that "brother healer" lays his hands on me I'll be healed. And they build this up. Now, I'm not saying right or wrong. I'm just saying that faith does work. It works. It brings salvation. By grace you are saved through faith. It brings healing. The prayer of faith shall save the sick. The Lord shall raise them up (James 5:17)."

Acts 5:17–20 (NKJV)
17 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who *were* with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. 19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of <u>this life</u>."

True Holy Spirit ministry invariably leads to conversion on the one hand and bitter opposition on the other—so it was here.

The high priest (probably Caiaphas) and his Sadducean friends were furious that these fanatical disciples of Jesus were wielding such influence among the people.

They resented any threat to their exclusive role as religious leaders, and especially despised preaching concerning bodily resurrection, which they totally denied.

"All the words of <u>this life</u>"

We're not just talking about *future* life, the *afterlife*, or *eternal* life—it's referring to <u>this life</u>!

Jesus said, *"I have come that you might have life* [now] *and have it more abundantly"* (see John 10:10).

Life is what the Bible is all about—yes, eternal life in heaven someday, but also abundant life on earth right now through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of us!

Peter would later write that God has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)—through His indwelling Spirit and the promises in His Word!

Acts 5:21–28 (NKJV)
21 And when they heard *that,* they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22 But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, 23 saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" 24 Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. 25 So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" 26 Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

Notice the things that these Jewish leaders accused the apostles of:

***First*—"You men have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine..."**

Jesus said, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be witnesses to Me both in Jerusalem and in Judea…"* (Acts 1:8)

Well, they have now witnessed in Jerusalem, and according to the testimony of the high priest, they filled the city with the doctrine of Jesus Christ!

Would to God the world would accuse Christians of doing that today!

I mean, you're out witnessing somewhere, you're arrested, go before a judge and he or she says to you—*"You have filled Chicago or Cook County with the doctrine of Jesus Christ!"*

I'd rejoice in a charge like that against me and so would you—because as Jesus said,

Matthew 5:11–12 (NKJV)
[11] "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. [12] Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The **second** thing these men were accused of was—**"…you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and <u>intend to bring this Man's blood on us</u>!"**

It reminds me of what Pilate did when he was pressured by the Jews to have Jesus crucified, and tried to let Him go but the crowd shouted him down and demanded Pilate give the order to kill Jesus—

Matthew 27:24–25 (NKJV)
[24] When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*." [25] And all the people answered and said, "His blood *be* on us and on our children."

And here they're upset because the apostles are declaring that these Jewish leaders were responsible for the wrongful death (murder) of Jesus Christ.

And now their playing the victims by saying the apostles were blaming them for Jesus' murder with their phony outrage—**"You're trying to bring this Man's blood on us!"**

Well, they incriminated themselves when they said, *"His blood be on us and on our children."*

Acts 5:29 (NKJV)
[29] But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

The apostles were obeying what their Lord and Master had commanded them to do (the Great Commission).

Believers are commanded to obey civil authority—except when it comes in conflict with the commandments of God.

When that happens, as Peter rightly said, **"We must obey God rather than men."**

In other words, our loyalty belongs to God and to His commandments which supersede the commandments of men (earthly leaders and human laws).

Acts 5:30–32 (NKJV)
30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so* also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Why does Peter refer to the cross as a tree?

Because he is drawing an association from Deuteronomy 21:22-23, where it says that a person who is hanged from a tree is cursed by God.

"While *xylon* [tree] was used in antiquity and in the LXX variously for 'a tree,' 'wood' of any kind, 'a pole,' and various objects made of wood, including 'a gallows,' it is also used in the NT for the cross of Jesus." (Longenecker)

Galatians 3:10–14 (NKJV)
10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, *"Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."* 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for *"the just shall live by faith."* 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but *"the man who does them shall live by them."* 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, *"Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"*), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Peter is bringing attention to the magnitude of their rejection of Jesus, pointing out that they killed him in the worst way possible, both from the Roman (cross) and the Jewish ("tree") perspective.

"Prince" is another way of saying 'Messiah' or 'King.'

The Greek word is *archagos* which means *'ruler'* or sometimes *'source'*—

Revelation 3:14 (NKJV)
14 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning [archagos—source] of the creation of God:

Acts 5:31 (NKJV)
31 Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince [Messiah] **and Savior, to give <u>repentance to Israel</u> and forgiveness of sins.**

Peter, instead of saying, that Jesus was crucified ***"to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to the whole world"*** singles out Israel only in his statement—why?

Because he is talking to the leaders of Israel who had been waiting for the Messiah (the Ruler of Israel) their whole lives—but when He came they killed Him!

But that wasn't the end of the story because God raised Him from the dead—**"And we are His witnesses to these things"—**

Acts 5:32 (NKJV)
32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so* also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Peter said, ***"We are witnesses to the resurrected Lord Jesus—eyewitnesses who have been commissioned by God to give testimony to the world that God raised Him from the dead."***

"…and *so* also *is* the Holy Spirit [a Witness] **whom God has given to those who <u>obey Him</u>."**

This is not talking about God giving the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation.

Because at the moment of salvation—we don't *'earn'* the Holy Spirit by obeying God, He comes into our hearts and gives us eternal life as a gift from God received through our faith. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe that Peter has in mind the Baptism with the Holy Spirit—the power to be witnesses for Jesus—

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)
[8] But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

So where does the 'obedience' come in?—

Acts 2:38
Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized [in water] in the name of Jesus Christ for ['because of'] the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Water baptism is God's way of publicly renouncing the old life of sin and rebellion against God, as well as publicly identifying ourselves with Jesus Christ as His disciples.

Luke 3:21–22 (NKJV)
[21] When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. [22] And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not for secret disciples or closet Christians but for those who openly denounce their sin and declare their allegiance to Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christian but have never been baptized in water, I really encourage you to <u>obey</u> God in this matter.

Acts 5:32 (NKJV)
[32] And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so* also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."