

TRUTH ON TRIAL

A 12-week series on
the Evidence for
Christianity



Sermon Notes 2/27/2022

“The Truth about Miracles”

What does the Bible say about miracles?

1. Miracles display God’s _____.

Jeremiah 32:17

Psalm 77:11-14

2. Miracles validate God’s _____.

Acts 2:22

2 Corinthians 12:12

3. Miracles can be _____.

Matthew 7:22-23

Matthew 24:24



Small Group Discussion Guide

Lesson 8: “The Truth about Miracles”

Many skeptics reject Christianity because of all the miracles in the Bible. There are about 250 miracles recorded in Scripture. Some people respond by saying that the Bible is just a book of fairy tales. Granted, there are still many people who believe what the Bible says about miracles. In a 2015 study, Barna Research reports that 51% of US adults believe that “the miracles of the Bible happened as they are described.”¹ However, truth is not determined by a majority vote. Is there reasonable evidence to confirm what the Bible says about miracles?

Some Definitions

MIRACLES—supernatural events that obviously violate the laws of nature. Divine miracles are caused by God, and they never contradict that which is good and true.

PROVIDENCE—events caused by God without violating the laws of nature. God will often cause natural events to work together at just the right moment to accomplish something amazing.

DEMONIC ACTIVITY—when God allows Satan or his messengers to exercise power over the natural realm. Demonic activity promotes that which is evil and false.

NATURALISM—the belief that the laws of nature cannot be changed or violated. The naturalist believes that there is no such thing as the “supernatural.”

SKEPTICISM—the belief that nothing should be believed unless it is a self-evident truth, or it can be verified empirically by at least one of the five senses. Ironically, skepticism is not a self-evident truth, and it cannot be verified empirically.

¹ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Miracles: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 30.

1. Do you believe in miracles? Why or why not?
2. What do you think is the most incredible miracle in the Bible? Why?
3. What is your favorite miracle in the Bible? What does it teach you about God?

General Revelation vs Special Revelation

General revelation is the information we learn about God from the universe around us (creation) and the moral law within us (conscience). Special revelation is a specific message that God communicates to people in a supernatural way i.e., the Bible.

We have studied three arguments for the existence of God.

1. The Cosmological Argument (The Beginning of the Universe)
2. The Teleological Argument (AKA Intelligent Design)
3. The Moral Argument

These arguments are based on *general revelation*, evidence found outside of the Bible. We don't have to go to the Bible to prove that there really is a God. From our observations of philosophy, astronomy, geology, physics, chemistry, and biology, we see abundant evidence that supports the existence of God. From *general revelation* we learn that there is a supernatural Creator. However, all the evidence from *general revelation* still leaves us with a very general understanding of God. These arguments are great for establishing the existence of God. But that's not enough. We also need to give people evidence for why we believe in the Bible.

The Bible is an example of *special revelation*. In fact, the Bible is the complete collection of all the *special revelation* we need to know about God and our relationship with Him. The divine miracles recorded in the Bible are also examples of *special revelation*.

The Testimony of Scripture

4. Read the following passages and discuss what they tell us about miracles.

Jeremiah 32:17

Psalms 77:11-14

Acts 2:22

1 Corinthians 13:8-10

2 Corinthians 12:12

Hebrews 2:3-4

Matthew 7:22-23

Matthew 24:24

Revelation 16:13-14

God's Royal Seal

Miracles were like the royal seal of a king. Before the days of modern technology, when a king wanted to send out an official message, he would have it written on a piece of parchment. And on the parchment, he would put a few drops hot wax and then press his royal seal into the wax. That seal would confirm that the message came from the king. For a royal seal to be effective it had to be unique, easily recognizable, and something that only the king possessed. The divine miracles in the Bible serve as the royal seal of God confirming His message.



In 2015, this royal seal was discovered in Jerusalem near the southern wall of the Temple Mount. The ancient Hebrew writing on the seal reads, “Belonging to Hezekiah, [son of] Ahaz, king of Judah.” Hezekiah reigned as King of Judah from 716 to 687 BC, after being a co-regent with his father Ahaz for about 13 years.

Many people think that miracles were common in Bible times. However, when we look at all the time recorded in Bible history and compare that to the number of miracles in the Bible, we see that miracles were rare.

The Bible covers about 4,000 years of human history. During that time there were about 250 miracles recorded in the Bible. If those miracles were spread out evenly throughout history, it would be 1 miracle every 16 years. However, the Bible doesn't spread the miracles out evenly.

The Bible squeezes most of the miracles into one of three time periods:

1. Moses and Joshua
2. Elijah and Elisha
3. Jesus and the Apostles



There are a few miracles scattered here and there in other parts of the Bible, but the vast majority take place during one of these three time periods. The reason so many miracles took place at these times was because the message and the messengers during these times needed to be confirmed as having come from God. The primary purpose of miracles in the Bible was to authenticate the word of God or the messenger of God.

The Naturalism of Benedict Spinoza

Baruch (de) Spinoza (1632–1677) was a Dutch philosopher of Jewish descent. His argument against miracles was based on the following syllogism.

1. Miracles are violations of natural laws.
2. *Natural laws are immutable.*
3. It is impossible to violate immutable laws.
4. Therefore, miracles are impossible.²

² Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and the Modern Mind: a Defense of Biblical Miracles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 15.

This is an example of circular reasoning. Spinoza starts with the presupposition that the laws of nature can never be broken and then he concludes that miracles are impossible. But how do we know that the laws of nature cannot be broken?

Josh McDowell points out how it is a mistake to think that natural laws cannot be broken simply because we label them as “laws.” He writes,

“As for the idea that miracles violate natural or scientific laws, we must remember that scientific laws neither dictate events nor do they explain them. They are merely a generalization about observable causes and effects.”³

The Skepticism of David Hume

David Hume (1711—1776) was a Scottish Enlightenment philosopher known for his highly influential system of skepticism and naturalism. His arguments against miracles are still being used by skeptics today. Here is one of his popular arguments.

1. Natural Law is by definition a description of a regular occurrence.
2. A miracle is by definition a rare occurrence.
3. *The evidence for the regular is always greater than that for the rare.*
4. A wise man always bases his belief on the greater evidence.
5. Therefore, a wise man should never believe in miracles.⁴

However, the evidence for regular events is *not* always greater than that for the rare. There are many things that secular scientists believe in even though they are not regular events:

1. The Big Bang is not based on regular events.
2. The origin of life on earth does not occur regularly.
3. Macro-Evolution is not a regular event. *In fact, it has never been observed at all!*

³ Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Answers to Tough Questions Skeptics Ask about the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1987), 93.

⁴ Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 205.

The Existence of God and Miracles

If a person believes in the possibility that God exist, then he must admit the possibility of miracles since divine miracles are by definition “acts of God.” C.S, Lewis put it this way: “But if we admit God, must we admit Miracle? Indeed, indeed, you have no security against it. That is the bargain.”⁵ We have already examined three powerful arguments for the existence of God. Therefore, if we accept the evidence for God, then we must accept the possibility of miracles.

The Existence of the Universe and Miracles

The existence of the universe is a conclusive argument for miracles. Science has proven that the universe had a beginning and that all time, space, and matter came into existence from nothing. Norman Geisler explains how this drives the final nail into the coffin of skepticism. He writes,

“The very cosmological argument, by which we know God exists, also proves that a supernatural event has occurred. For if the universe had a beginning and, therefore, a Beginner, then God brought the universe into existence out of nothing. But ex nihilo creation out of nothing is the greatest supernatural event of all. If Jesus’ making much bread out of a little bread is a miracle, then how much more is making everything out of nothing? Turning water into wine pales in comparison with creating the first water molecules.”⁶

As Christians we have powerful evidence that the miracles recorded in the Bible are absolutely true. Those miracles function as a divine seal confirming that the Bible really is the word of God. And as a result, we can put our hope and trust in Jesus Christ with confidence.

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 109.

⁶ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 450–451.