

MIRACLES – PURPOSE & DURATION

Outline for "First Principles Class"

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INTRODUCTION:

1. Are miracles happening today?
2. Many religious people claim that miracles are still happening today.
3. These people seem to be very confused concerning what a miracle is.
4. Today many people are seeking a sign or miracle to cause them to believe in God.
5. Many even claim to have received such a sign!
6. On the other hand some people deny all miracles.
 - a. Deniers of the miraculous are like the poor – always with us.
 - b. Most supporters of evolution reject miracles.
 - c. The evidence of our faith would be seriously damaged if the miracles of the Bible were set aside.
7. One needs to answer a few questions concerning miracles – What is a miracle? What was the purpose of miracles? How long were miracles to continue? Have miracles happened today?

I. MIRACLES – MARVELOUS MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD – WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

A. What is the definition of a miracle?

1. Some define miracle as a work wrought by a divine power for a divine purpose by means beyond the reach of man.
 - a. The general idea is that it is something wonderful or unusual, and event, experience, or discovery so singular and strange as to awaken in one the feeling of awe.
 - b. Often times a phenomena in nature and events in history are labeled “miracle.”
2. Webster defines a miracle as “1: an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs 2: an extremely outstanding or unusual event, thing, or accomplishment...”
3. How does the Bible define a miracle?
 - a. The term miracle from the Biblical standpoint is a work out of the usual sequence of causes and effects (which God did by him in the midst of you Acts 2:22) for which one cannot account by ordinary operation of these causes. Miracles are produced by the agency of God thru His representatives and are to prove the message which said representatives bring.
 - b. In Bible miracles, original laws are not suspended, violated, or modified in any way, but a supernatural power outside of nature intervenes with a new effect. Therefore often times a miracle involves the introduction of a new cause.

B. What is the Bible description of a miracle?

1. While the general term miracle is used to describe the manifestation of supernatural power, various terms are used of miracles, because no one term can possibly exhaust all the significance of a miracle.
2. The Bible uses the terms “miracle,” or “miracles” some 37 times.
 - a. The term miracle is used one time in the Old Testament (Ex. 7:9) and the term “miracles” is used four times (Num. 14:22; Deut. 11:3; 29:3; Judges 6:13).
 - b. The New Testament term miracle is translated from a word (dunamiv) [1411] which means power. This word is translated “miracle” seven times (Mark

- 9:39; Acts 2:22; 19:11; I Cor. 12:10,28); Gal. 3:5; Heb. 2:4) and “power” 77 times, “mighty work” 11 times, “strength” 7 times, “might” four times, “virtue” three times, “mighty” two times and misc. nine times.
- c. The New Testament term miracles is translated from a word (shmeion) [4592] which means “sign, miracle with an ethical end and purpose.” This word is translated “miracle(s)” 23 times (Luke 23:8; John 2:11,23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2,14,26; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18,37; Acts 4:16,22; 6:8; 8:6,13; 15:12; Rev. 13:14; 16:14; 19:20), this word is also translated sign 50 times, wonder three time and token one time.
3. The Bible uses the term “wonders” in reference to miracles.
 - a. The word wonder or wonders are found 53 times in the Old Testament and 22 times in the New Testament.
 - b. The word used in the New Testament which is translated wonder(s) (terav) [5059] indicates the state of mind produced on the eyewitnesses by the sight of miracles. This word is found 16 times in the New Testament (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; John 4:48; Acts 2:19,22,43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12; Rom. 15:19; II Cor. 12:12; II Thess. 2:9; Heb. 2:4).
 4. The Bible uses the term sign/signs in reference to miracles.
 - a. The word sign(s) are found 129 times in the Bible 79 in the Old Testament and 50 in the New Testament.
 - b. The word which is translated sign(s) (shmeion) carries with it a particular reference to the significance of miracles as being seals by which God authenticated the miracle-worker himself.
 5. The Bible uses the term “powers” in reference to miracles.
 - a. Miracles are also powers in that they manifest the mighty power of God which was inherent in Christ himself.
 - b. The word (dunamiv) [1411] which is translated power 77 times means inherent power.
 6. There are other descriptive words of miracles are works (John 5:36; 7:21; 10:25,32), “great things” (Luke 1:49), “glorious things” (Luke 13:17), “strange things” (Luke 5:26), “wonderful things” (Matt. 21:15), “marvelous things” (Psa. 78:12), and “marvelous works” (Psa. 29:14; 105:5).
 7. Combining all the terms used in the Old and New Testament to describe the Biblical idea of miracles as manifestations of God’s extraordinary work, they indicate powers transcending the ordinary powers of nature, wrought in connection with the ends of revelation.
- C. Who were the doers of miracles?
1. Miracles were accomplished by God (Job 40:2,9; 42:2; Amos 4:13; 5:8; Col. 1:16,17).
 2. Miracles were accomplished by Christ (Matt. 10:1; 28:18; John 10:17,18; 11:25; Col. 2:10).
 - a. Christ’s miraculous power was foretold (Isa. 9:6; 35:5,6; 42:7).
 - b. Christ never accomplished miracles simply to display His power, nor to astonish people.
 - c. He did not accomplish miracles for His own behalf.
 3. Miracles were accomplished by the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:1; I Cor. 12:4-10,28; 14:1).
 - a. These gifts were not to be neglected, despised or purchased (I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6; I Thess. 5:20; Acts 8:20).
 - b. These gifts were temporary (I Cor. 13:8).

4. Miracles were accomplished by angels (II Sam. 24:16; Luke 1:11-13,57-59; John 5:2-4; Acts 5:17-24).
5. Miracles were accomplished by the servants of God.
 - a. Human agents could not act directly.
 - b. They could only accomplish miracles as power was delegated to them by God.
 - c. Men of God such as Moses, Aaron, Joshua, the judges, the prophets, the apostles and first century disciples were channels through whom miraculous power flowed.
6. Miracles were accomplished by evil agents.
 - a. In some mysterious way the Devil and those under his sway have had power to counterfeit and display miraculous power.
 - b. The Bible speaks of miracles performed through the power of the Devil (II Thess. 2:9; Matt. 24:24; Acts 8:9-11; II Cor. 11:13-14).

D. What are the divisions of miracles?

1. Bible miracles fall into clearly-defined divisions or catalogs.
2. Miracles exhibit God's power over nature.
 - a. Old Testament – The Red Sea (Ex. 14:21), Jordan (Joshua 3:14-17), Sun and moon stand still (Joshua 10:12,13), etc.
 - b. New Testament – Stilling the storm (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25), water into wine (John 2:1-11), walking on the sea (Matt. 14:22-36; Mark 6:45-54; John 6:15-21), earthquake (Acts 16:23-34), etc.
3. Miracles exhibit God's power over disease.
 - a. The provision, prevention and the permission of diseases are also related to Bible miracles.
 - b. The range covers boils, leprosy, poisonous serpents, deadly pottage, withered hands, sicknesses, fevers, issue of blood, dropsy, blindness, deafness, dumbness, lameness and infirmities.
4. Miracles exhibit God's power over death.
 - a. Some were stricken with death (at the flood, Nadab and Abihu, Shunammite's son, Sennacherib's army, Philistines, Ananias and Sapphira, and Herod).
 - b. Some miraculously missed death (Enoch and Elijah).
 - c. Some were raised from the dead (Christ raised three from the dead, Christ arose from the grave).
5. Miracles exhibit God's power over demons (Matt. 8:16; 8:28-32).

E. What is the distribution of these miracles?

1. The miracle of creation introduced the history of the world and of humanity.
2. Miracles were accomplished during Old Testament times.
3. Miracles were accomplished during New Testament times.
4. Miracles are not being accomplished today.

II. MIRACLES – MARVELOUS MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD – PURPOSE/DESIGN – WHY MIRACLES?

A. The very first miracle had a definite purpose/design.

1. God created the universe by miracle (Gen. 1).
2. Man was created by miracle (Gen. 1:26,27; 2:7).
3. Marriage was created by miracle (Gen. 2:20-25).
4. The definite design of this very first miracle was creation.

B. During the Patriarchal period miracles had precise purposes (Adam to Moses).

1. Why was Enoch translated (Gen. 5:21; Heb. 11:5)?
2. Why did God destroy the world with a flood (Gen. 6:5-8)?

3. Why did God confound the languages (Gen. 11:1-10)?
 4. Why did God destroy Sodom Na Gomorrah (Gen. 19)?
 5. Why did the Lord appear to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3:1-6; 4:1-8)?
 6. Why the miracles in Egypt (Ex. 7-12)?
 7. Why did God part the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21-30)?
 8. All the miracles during the Patriarchal period had precise purposes of confirming God's word and creating faith.
- C. During the Mosaic period miracles had distinctive designs.
1. Miracles at Mount Sinai and during the wilderness wanderings were to confirm the word of God and create faith in the children of Israel.
 - a. Destruction of Aaron's Son (Lev. 10:1,2).
 - b. Destruction of Korah and his company (Num. 16:41-50).
 - c. Fiery serpents and the cure (Num. 21:4-9).
 - d. Balaam's donkey talked (Num. 22:28-31).
 2. Miracles during the time of Joshua and the Judges were to confirm the word of God and create faith.
 - a. The Jordan river divided (Joshua 3:14-17).
 - b. Fall of Jericho (Joshua 6:17-20).
 - c. Sun and Moon stand still (Joshua 10:12,13).
 3. During the time of the United Kingdom miracles were to confirm the word of God and to create faith.
 - a. Thunder and rain in answer to Samuel's prayer (I Sam. 12:16-19).
 - b. Death of Uzzah for touching the ark (I Sam. 5).
 - c. Sacrifice consumed, dedication of the temple (II Chron. 7:1-3).
 4. During the time of the divided Kingdom miracles were to confirm the Word and to create faith.
 - a. Seventeen miracles at least could be listed.
 - b. Jeroboam's hand withered (I Kings 13:1-6).
 - c. Sacrifice consumed on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18:17-40).
 - d. Naaman's leprosy (II Kings 5:1-15).
 5. During the time of the kingdom of Judah miracles were to confirm the word and to create faith.
 - a. Destruction of Sennacherib's army (II Kings 19:35,36).
 - b. The shadow retreating ten degrees (II Kings 20:8-11).
 6. During the time of captivity miracles were to confirm the word of god and to create faith.
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar's dream interpreted by Daniel (Dan. 2).
 - b. The fiery furnace (Dan. 3:19-27).
 - c. Lion's den (Dan. 6:16-23).
 7. During the last days of the Mosaic period miracles were to confirm the Word and to create faith.
 - a. The birth of Christ (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1,2).
 - b. The miracles of Jesus over nature.
 - 1) First miracle – water to wine (John 2:1-11).
 - 2) Draught of fishes (Luke 5:1-11).
 - 3) Stills the tempest (Matt. 8:23-27; 14:32; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25).
 - 4) Walks on the sea (Matt. 14:22,23; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21).
 - 5) Curses the fig tree (Matt. 21:17-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-24).
 - c. The miracles of Jesus over disease.

- 1) Nobleman's son (John 4:46-54).
 - 2) Demoniac (Matt. 9:1-8; Luke 4:33-36).
 - 3) Restores ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19).
 - 4) Cures a man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6).
 - 5) Heals the ear of Malchus (Luke 22:49-51).
- d. Jesus raises the dead.
- 1) Widow's son (Luke 7:11-16).
 - 2) Daughter of Jairus (Matt. 9:18,19,23-26; Mark 5:22,23,35-43; Luke 8:41,42,49-56).
 - 3) Lazarus (John 11:1-46).
- e. Jesus fed the hungry (5,000 – Matt. 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:5-14; 4000 – Matt. 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9).
- f. The disciples were given power to accomplish miracles (Matt. 10:8; Luke 10:9).
- g. One of the greatest miracles of all was the resurrection (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1,2; Luke 24:1; Acts 2:18,22; I Cor. 15:1-58).
- D. During the Christian period miracles had a particular purpose.
1. On the day of Pentecost, the beginning of the Christian period, miracles were done to confirm the word (Acts 2).
 2. The apostles accomplished miracles to confirm the word (Acts 3:1ff; II Cor. 12:12; Tabitha raised from the dead – Acts 9:36-43; Elymas – Acts 13:8-12; Eutychus – Acts 20:12; mass miracles of healing – Acts 28:8,9).
 3. Philip did miracles to confirm the Word and create faith (Acts 8:6).
 4. Gifts were given to many during this time to confirm the Word so that the church would grow to maturity (Eph. 4:7-14).
 - a. These gifts were given by Christ when he ascended.
 - b. These gifts were miraculous.
 - c. These gifts were given to some for perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body (Eph. 4:12).
 - d. These gifts helped the early church grow to maturity (Eph. 4:14,15).
 5. Miracles were accomplished by the apostles and those upon whom they had laid their hands (Acts 8:14; 19:6; I Cor. 12:4-11).
- E. Miracles were never accomplished for the mere pleasure of it or for the mere benefit of the one accomplishing the miracle (II Tim. 4:20; II Cor. 12:8-10).
- F. The purpose/design of miracles give the credibility, possibility and probability that God is real and that He does what He says He will do.
- G. The purpose/design of miracles was to create faith and confirm the Word of God (John 20:30,31; Heb. 2:3,4).
- H. Since miracles were designed to create faith and confirm the Word of God they are not longer needed today.
- III. MIRACLES – MARVELOUS MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD – DURATION – DISAPPEARANCE OF MIRACLES.
- A. The miraculous manifestations of God were never intended to continue.
1. The physical universe, all things were created by miracles (Gen. 1) but all things were perpetuated by divine law working naturally (Gen. 1:11,12,20-25).
 - a. Plants grow because seeds are planted.
 - b. Babies are born by natural process.
 - c. God does not continue to create, as He did in the beginning. If so what has He created (brought something from nothing) recently (Heb. 11:3).
 2. During the Patriarchal period miracles were for a purpose.

- a. God destroyed the world except for Noah and his family and the animals on the ark (Gen. 6-8). Then they were to replenish the earth by natural means.
 - b. At the tower of Babel, God confused the languages but after the miracle the people continued naturally.
 3. Under the law of Moses the Lord accomplished miracles at Sinai, then the people were commanded to keep the law or suffer the consequences (Deut. 17:2,6; Heb. 10:28).
 4. The Christian age, the church, began with a miracle on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
 - a. Paul said the marvelous manifestations of God, miracles, would end when that which is perfect is come (I Cor. 13:8-13).
 - b. Paul said that the marvelous gifts given would last till (Eph. 4:13).
 - c. Today if the seed is planted a Christian will grow.
 - 1) The seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:11).
 - 2) The power to produce Christians is in the Word of God, the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16,17).
 5. God's law of propagation holds true in the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom and the spiritual kingdom.
- B. When did the marvelous manifestations, miracles, of God end?
1. Miracles ended when that which is perfect came (I Cor. 13:10). That which is perfect is the completed revelation from God, the Bible (II Tim. 3:16,17; II Peter 1:3; James 1:25).
 - a. The written word was completed when John completed the book of Revelation.
 - b. Therefore miracles ended by that time.
 2. The apostles were the only ones allowed to impart these miraculous powers to others by laying on of their hands (Acts 6:6-8; 8:12-19; 19:6).
 - a. The apostles have long since died.
 - b. Those upon whom they laid their hands have long since died.
 - c. Therefore miracles have "failed... ceased... vanished away" (I Cor. 13:8-10).
 3. These miracles were to last "till we all come in the unity of the faith" (Eph. 4:13).
 - a. The unity of the faith has come (Eph. 4:4-6).
 - b. The faith has once and for all been delivered (Jude 3).
 - c. The faith is the gospel of Christ.
- C. Why are miracles no longer needed?
1. Miracles were accomplished to create faith (John 2:11).
 - a. Today faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17; 1:16; Acts 15:7; John 20:30,31).
 - b. Therefore miracles are no longer needed to create faith.
 - c. If a miracle is still needed to create faith, the Bible is insufficient for this purpose and therefore untrue.
 2. Miracles were accomplished to confirm the Word (Mark 16:20).
 - a. The Word of God has been confirmed (Heb. 2:1-4; Acts 15:32; I Cor. 1:6; Heb. 6:17).
 - b. The Word of God does not need to be confirmed over and over again.
 3. Miracles are no longer needed today because the power of procreation is in the seen, the Word of God, the Bible (Luke 8:11).
- D. But some today are still looking for a miracle, some are actually claiming to be able to accomplish miracles.
1. Today there is a segment of society still seeking a sign.
 - a. During the time of Jesus some demanded a sign (Matt. 12:38).

- b. Jesus had already accomplished many miracles.
- c. Signs from heaven had been accomplished.
- d. The Pharisees still wanted to see a sign.
 - 1) They showed their distrust in Christ's works (Matt. 16:1).
 - 2) Christ refused their request.
- e. Men still seem to be seeking a sign.
 - 1) They are rejecting the miracles of Christ.
 - 2) They are rejecting the testimony of Christ, who gave:
 - a) Testimony by the Spirit (John 16:12-15).
 - b) Laws through apostles (Matt. 16:19; John 20:23; II Thess. 2:15).
 - c) Law to be obeyed (Matt. 7:21-27; John 12:48,49; Heb. 5:9).
 - 3) This segment of society which is seeking a sign is doing so in lieu of God's Word.
 - 4) No sign shall be given this sign seeking segment of society just as no sign was given the Pharisees.
 - 5) Only an evil and adulterous seek a sign (Matt. 12:39).
 - 6) The rich man wanted someone to return from the grave to keep his brethren from ending up where he was (Luke 16:27-31).
 - 7) Christ was raised from the dead but this sign seeking segment of society will not hear Him.
 - 8) God will allow this sign seeking segment of society to believe a lie (II Thess. 2:10).
- 2. But many argue that because Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Heb. 13:8) that miracles are still needed.
 - a. If this means that He always does things in the same manner in which He once did them, then He is still creating worlds, still commanding men to build arks, offer animal sacrifices, offer their sons as sacrifices, still performing miracles at Sinai, etc.
 - b. It means that He is still feeding his people with manna from heaven, feeding the hungry as he did the 5,000, etc.
 - c. The principle that He uses in dealing with men has not changed. He himself has not changed. But His manner of accomplishing His will has changed (Eph. 3:10,11).
- 3. Those who are still looking for a sign are rejecting the Word of God and are therefore an evil and adulterous generation (Matt. 12:39).
- 4. If you think you can do a miracle prove it.
 - a. The common answer is that well you do not have enough faith.
 - b. How much faith did Elymas have (Acts 13:8-12)?
 - c. How much faith did Eutychus have (Acts 20:12)?

CONCLUSION:

1. Miracles had a precise purpose, distinctive designs and a particular purpose, that is to create faith and to confirm the word.
2. Miracles are no longer being accomplished because they are no longer needed to create faith nor to confirm the Word.
3. If you insist that you have seen a miracle you are either mistaken, or you are lying!
4. If you claim to be able to do miracles, prove it, do one right now!
5. God's Word, not signs, miracles, lead to salvation (John 6:45; Acts 11:14).
6. There is one miracle yet to be accomplished – the resurrection (John 6:28,29).