

# Are Miracles Possible? Signs of God or Gullibility

*If we admit God, must we admit Miracle?*

*Indeed, indeed, you have no security against it. That is the bargain.*

— C. S. LEWIS

## MEMORY VERSE

*How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (Hebrews 2:3-4).*

## REVIEW OF THE CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EVIDENCE SO FAR:

1. Does Truth Exist? Yes, it's self defeating to say it doesn't.
2. Does God Exist? Yes, as evidenced by the:
  - a. Beginning of the universe (Cosmological Argument)
  - b. Design of the universe (Teleological Argument/Anthropic Principle)
  - c. Design of life (Teleological Argument)
  - d. Moral Law (Moral Argument)

## SO A THEISTIC GOD EXISTS

From the Cosmological, Teleological and Moral arguments we are able to know beyond a reasonable doubt that a theistic God exists. We have not assumed God exists because the Bible says so. We have shown this through natural revelation without use of the Bible.

If that is the case, then any non-theistic religion is built on a false foundation. That means that while non-theistic religions teach some things that are true, they have false beliefs concerning the existence and nature of God.

Only theism fits all the facts so far. But which theism is the right one? The three major theistic religions are Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Maybe none of them are completely true. Maybe they have theism right but not much else. That's possible. We'll discover which one really is true by the end of this workbook.

## ARE MIRACLES POSSIBLE?

How can you believe in miracles? Didn't we give up that superstitious belief during the "Enlightenment?" Doesn't everything happen according to fixed natural laws? Didn't David Hume prove that a wise man should not believe in miracles? If the Bible is true, why don't we see public displays of miracles all the time today?

If miracles are not possible, then much of the Bible is false. It is filled with miracle claims. Many in the academic community think it's foolish to believe in miracles. Such people assume that miracles don't occur, just like they assume that intelligent causes are not possible in biology. In other words, they philosophically rule out miracles in advance.

This anti-supernatural bias is admitted explicitly by James Tabor, Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, in his book, *The Jesus Dynasty*. Speaking of the claim that Jesus was virgin conceived, Tabor writes, "The assumption of the historian is that all human beings have both a biological mother and father, and that Jesus is no exception. That leaves two possibilities—either Joseph or some other unnamed man was the father of Jesus" (p. 59).

If Jesus really was virgin born, how could Tabor ever discover it? He couldn't because he's already ruled out the possibility before looking at the evidence. But ruling out miracles in advance is actually the foolish thing to do. Why? Because if God exists, then miracles are possible. In fact, the greatest miracle in the Bible has already occurred—the creation of the universe out of nothing—and we have overwhelming scientific evidence for it.

## HOW DOES GOD COMMUNICATE?

**1. How is a miracle from God like a seal on a message from a medieval King?**

**2. What was the main purpose of miracles in biblical times?**

**3. According to Exodus 4:1-8; Numbers 16:5-33; 1 Kings 18:21-39; Matthew 12:40; Luke 7:20-22; what was the purpose of miracles in these instances?**

**4. We think miracles happen continuously in the Bible. Do they? If you look at miracles in the Bible from Moses to Jesus, about how many instances of miracles are there?**

**5. What are the three time frames in the Bible when God does miracles through people?**

**6. Why do you think many people today have a hard time believing in miracles?**

**7. Some people have difficulty with what they think are unbelievable events in the Bible, such as the story of Jonah and the resurrection of Jesus. But what does Genesis 1:1 and the evidence for the beginning of the universe tell us about the possibility of God doing miracles?**

**8. What does Romans 1:18-20 tell us about our knowledge of the Creator?**



**David Hume**

### **OBJECTIONS TO MIRACLES**

David Hume, the great skeptic who died in 1776, said that miracles are not credible. His argument states that a wise man would not accept a miracle because "the evidence for the regular is always greater than that for the rare." The problem with this part of Hume's argument is that the evidence for the regular is not *always* greater than that for the rare.

**9. Give two counterexamples to show that David Hume's assertion that the evidence for "the regular is always greater than that for the rare" is false.**

**10. Why do miracles need to be rare events?**

**11. What are some of the known motivations for people ruling out the possibility of miracles?**

**12. How is Divine Providence different from a miracle?**

**13. Suppose someone said to you, "Only a fool would believe in miracles?" Of course, you would first ask him to support what he says with the two questions: 1) What do you mean by that? and 2) How did you come to that conclusion? After you hear his answers, what evidence or point would you want him to consider? Complete the sentence, "Have you ever considered...."**

## **BELIEF THAT VS. TRUST IN:**

Many people say that they would believe that God exists if He did a great miracle for them. But there's a difference between believing *that* God exists and putting your trust *in* God. You can believe that God exists and still not be saved (see James 2:19).

*“The greatest miracle in the Bible is the first verse. We have scientific and philosophical evidence that the first verse is true.”*

**14. Do miracles always motivate trust in God? Give examples from Scripture to support your answer.**

## **WHO CONTROLS MIRACLES?**

There's a false theology that some people today claim is Christian. It is called "the Word of Faith" movement. If you are not healthy and wealthy, it is because you just don't have enough faith. If you have enough faith, "miracles" are guaranteed.

That view is nonsense as evidenced by the fact that Jesus and His disciples were not healthy and wealthy. They got beaten, tortured, and killed for being Christians. Don't tell us they didn't have enough faith! The "Word of Faith" theology also overlooks the fact that Christians are called to suffer (see I Peter 2:21).

We don't control miracles. God always has the final say in miracles. When He did miracles through prophets, God was still the one in control. Notice that miracles were never done for entertainment or merely for the personal benefit of the one through whom the miracle was done. Paul couldn't heal his own "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7-10) or the ailments of his friends (1 Tim 5:23). Miracles were done as signs from God to point back to God, and they were always under God's control.

The miracles of Christ validate His claim to be the Messiah. Notice that the miracles of Jesus were in three basic categories:

1. Power over Nature (walking on water, calming the storm),
2. Power over Sickness (healings), and
3. Power over Life (Resurrection).

Those are signs of the Messiah and an indication of the restoration the Messiah will accomplish. One day the Messiah will completely tame and restore this fallen natural world and forevermore put an end to sickness and death. Since He has the power to create the universe out of nothing, restoring it to perfection is nothing for Him. Since the greatest miracle in the Bible has already occurred—the creation of the universe out of nothing—lesser miracles are certainly possible. In the remaining lessons, we'll see that those lesser miracles actually occurred and the Bible is true.

## TOOLBOX

- Lee Strobel 3-Disc Collection includes: *The Case for Faith*, *The Case for Christ*, and *The Case for a Creator*.
- Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, Baker Academic, 2011. This voluminous work (2 volumes) contains even an analysis of modern day miracle claims.