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“THE VERY WORKS THAT I DO BEAR WITNESS OF ME”

Eric Lyons, M.Min. and Kyle Butt, M.A.

The Bible begins with the miracle of Creation (Genesis 1:1), and ends with a reminder of the miraculous Second Coming of Christ (Revelation 22: 20). Like polka dots on a Dalmatian, wondrous miracles wrought by God and His messengers spatter the biblical text. God created the Universe out of nothing (Genesis 1), and centuries later flooded the entire Earth with water (Genesis 7). He sent ten plagues upon the Egyptians (Exodus 7-12), parted the Red Sea (Exodus 14), and caused water to come from a rock twice during Israel’s forty years of wandering in the wilderness (Exodus 17; Numbers 20). He healed a leper (2 Kings 5), raised many from the dead (1 Kings 17; Matthew 27:52-53), and on two different occasions translated men from Earth to heaven so that they never tasted death (Hebrews 11: 5; 2 Kings 2:1-11). Even the Bible itself is the result of the miracle of God supernaturally guiding Bible writers in what they wrote. Rather than being the result of man’s genius, the Bible claims to be “**God-breathed**” (2 Timothy 3:16, NIV). According to the apostle Peter, “[P]rophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were **carried along by the Holy Spirit**” (2 Peter 1:21, NIV, emp. added). From revelation to inspiration, from God’s Creation to Jesus’ incarnation, miraculous (supernatural) explanations lay at the heart of numerous biblical (and therefore historical) events.

Some people adamantly claim that any type of miracle is absolutely impossible. Why do they say “no” to miracles? There are many reasons, but perhaps most sig-

nificant is that they do not believe that God exists (or that if He does, He does not intervene in the natural world). A person who believes that the Universe and its contents evolved through natural processes over billions of years cannot believe in miracles because he or she thinks that nothing exists outside of nature. As the late, eminent astronomer of Cornell University, Carl Sagan, put it: “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be” (1980, p. 4). Since a miracle is an extraordinary event that demands a supernatural explanation, no such event ever could occur in a world where only natural forces operate. Once a person denies God and the miracle of Creation, then he or she is forced to deny that miracles of any kind can occur. Christians believe in miracles because they believe that God exists and that the Bible (which reports some of God’s miracles) is His Word, whereas atheists reject miracles because they do not believe in a higher, supernatural Being.

Those who hold to an atheistic viewpoint are correct about one thing: If God does not exist (or as the deist believes, if He does exist, but is unwilling to intervene in His creation), then miracles cannot occur. On the other hand, if God does exist (and evidence indicates that He does—see Thompson, 2003), then miracles not only are possible, but also probable. It makes perfectly good sense to conclude that if God created the Universe, then on occasion He might intervene through supernatural acts (i.e., miracles) to accomplish His divine purposes.

MIRACULOUS CONFIRMATION

Since the world began, God has revealed messages to mankind “by the mouth of His holy prophets” (Luke 1:70; cf. Luke 11:49-51; Acts 3:21) and worked various miracles through them for the purpose of confirming His Divine will. God gave Moses the ability to turn a staff into a snake and water into blood in order that his hearers “may believe the message” that he spoke (Exodus 4:1-9). Fire from Heaven consumed an altar on Mount Carmel so that Israel might know the one true God and that

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His faithful prophet Elijah spoke on His behalf (1 Kings 18:36-39). Centuries later, as the apostles went about preaching the Gospel, Mark wrote that the Lord was “working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs” (16:20). According to the writer of Hebrews, the salvation “which at first began to be spoken by the Lord...was confirmed to us by those who heard Him” (2:3). God bore witness “with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will” (2:4). Indeed, throughout the Bible God’s spokesmen worked miracles in order to validate their divine message.

In view of the fact that miracles have served as a confirmation of God’s revelation since time began, it should be no surprise that “when the fullness of time had come” (Galatians 4:4), and the promised Messiah, the Son of God, came to Earth for the purpose of saving the world from sin (Luke 19:10; John 3:16), that He would confirm His identity and message by performing miracles. Centuries before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah foretold of a time when “the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.... [T]he lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (35:5-6). Although this language has a figurative element to it, it literally is true of the coming of the Messiah. When John the Baptizer heard about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus asking if He was “the Coming One” of Whom

the prophets spoke. Jesus responded to John’s disciples by pointing to the people whom He had miraculously healed (thus fulfilling Isaiah’s Messianic prophecy), saying, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 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” (Matthew 11:4-5; cf. Mark 7:37). Jesus wanted them to know that He was doing exactly what “the Coming One” was supposed to do (cf. Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17), and what the Jews expected Him to do—perform miracles (John 7:31; cf. John 4:48; 1 Corinthians 1:22).

Jesus’ miracles served a different purpose than those wrought by Moses, Elijah, or one of the New Testament apostles or prophets. Unlike all other miracle workers recorded in Scripture, Jesus actually claimed to be the prophesied Messiah, the Son of God, and His miracles were performed to prove both the truthfulness of His message and His divine nature. Whereas the apostles and prophets of the New Testament worked miracles to confirm their message that Jesus was the Son of God, Jesus performed miracles to bear witness that He was, in fact, the Son of God. In response to a group of Jews who inquired about whether or not He was the Christ, Jesus replied,

I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me.... I and My Father are one.... If I do not do

the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him (John 10:25,30,37-38).

Similarly, on another occasion Jesus defended His deity, saying, “[T]he works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me” (John 5:36). While on Earth, Jesus was “attested by God...with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him” (Acts 2:22, NASB). And, according to the apostle John, “Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 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 20:30-31, emp. added). As would be expected from the One Who claimed to be God incarnate (cf. John 1:1-3,14; 10:30), Scripture records that Jesus performed miracles throughout His ministry in an effort to provide sufficient proof of His divine message and nature.

REASONS TO BELIEVE IN THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

Regardless of how much credible evidence one is able to set forth in a discussion on the miracles of Christ, certain individuals will never be convinced that Jesus is the Son of God. The Bible makes clear that even a number of those in the first century who saw the miraculous works of Jesus firsthand were not persuaded that He was the promised Messiah (cf. Mark 6:6). Rather than fall at His feet and call him “Lord” (as did the blind man whose sight was miraculously restored by Jesus—John 9:38), countless Jews refused to believe His claims of divinity. Instead, they attributed His works to Satan, and said things like, “He has Beelzebub,” or “By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons” (Mark 3:22). In light of such reactions to Jesus’ miracles by some of those who actually walked the Earth with Him 2,000 years ago, it should not be surprising that many alive today also reject Him as Lord and God. As previously stated, one of the main reasons for rejecting His deity and the miracles which the Bible claims that He worked is simply because many people deny God’s existence (even in the face of the heavens declaring His handiwork—cf. Psalm 19:1) and the Bible’s inspiration (which also has been demonstrated with an abundant amount of evidence—see Thompson, 2001). Obviously, if one refuses to accept these

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Editors:

Brad Harrub, Ph.D.*
(*Neurobiology, University of Tennessee)

Dave Miller, Ph.D.*
(*Communication, Southern Illinois University)

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two foundational pillars of Christianity, he will never be convinced that Jesus worked miracles. Still, both theists and atheists should consider several of the following reasons as to why the miracles of Jesus are credible testimonies of His divine nature and teachings.

Countless Thousands Witnessed His Miracles

Aside from the fact that Jesus' miracles are recorded in the most historically documented ancient book in all of the world (see Butt, 2000, 20[1]:4-5), which time and again has proven itself to be a reliable witness to history (see Butt 2004a, 2004b), it also is significant that Jesus' miracles were not done in some remote place on Earth with only a few witnesses. Instead, the miracles of Jesus were attested by **multitudes** of people all across Palestine throughout His ministry. Jesus began His miracles in Cana of Galilee by turning water into wine at a wedding feast in the presence of His disciples and other guests (John 2:1-11). [Considering how much wine was made after the hosts had already run out (approximately 120 gallons—2:6), it would appear there were many guests at the feast. Exactly how many witnessed the amazing feat, we are not told. But, the apostle John did record that “the servants who had drawn the water knew” of the miracle (2:9), as well as Jesus' disciples (2:11).] On more than one Sabbath day, Jesus performed miracles in Jewish synagogues where countless contemporaries gathered to study Scripture on their holy day (Mark 1:23-28; Mark 3:1-6). Jesus once healed a sick man at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem where “a **great multitude**” of sick people had congregated (John 5:3), and He healed a paralytic in a Capernaum house **full** of “Pharisees and teachers of the law...who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem” (Luke 5:17). The house was so crowded with people, in fact, that those who brought the paralytic could not even enter the house through the door. Instead, they uncovered part of the roof, and lowered him through the tiling. Matthew recorded how Jesus “saw a **great multitude**; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick” (14:14, emp. added). Then, later, He took five loaves of bread and two fish and miraculously fed **5,000 men, plus their women and children**, while afterwards taking up twelve baskets full of leftovers (Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:33-43; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14). On another occasion, Jesus took “a

few little fish...and seven loaves” of bread and fed **4,000 men, besides women and children** (Matthew 15:32-39).

Truly, countless thousands of Jesus' contemporaries witnessed His miracles on various occasions throughout His ministry. They were not hidden or performed in inaccessible locations incapable of being tested by potential followers. Rather, they were subjected to analysis by Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers, friends and foes. They were evaluated in the physical realm by physical senses. When Peter preached to those who had put Jesus to death, he reminded them that Christ's identity had been proved “by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, **as you yourselves also know**” (Acts 2:22, emp. added). The Jews had witnessed Christ's miracles occurring among them while He was on the Earth. In the presence of many eyewitnesses, Jesus gave sight to the blind, healed lepers, fed thousands with a handful of food, and made the lame to walk.

The Enemies of Christ Attested to His Works

Interestingly, although many of Jesus' enemies who witnessed His miracles rejected Him as the Messiah and attempted to undermine His ministry, even they did not deny the miracles that He worked. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in the presence of many Jews, “the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, ‘What shall we do? For **this Man works many signs**’” (John 11:47, emp. added). According to Luke, even King Herod had heard enough reports about Jesus to believe that He could perform “some miracle” in his presence (Luke 23:8). Once, after Jesus healed a blind, mute, demon-possessed man in the midst of multitudes of people, the Pharisees responded, saying, “This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons” (Matthew 12:24). While many of Jesus' enemies did not confess belief in Him as being the heaven-sent, virgin-born, Son of God, but attributed His works as being from Satan, it is important to notice that they did not deny the supernatural wonders that He worked. In fact, they confessed that He worked a miracle by casting a demon from a man, while on another occasion they scolded Him for healing on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 13:10-17).

Even when Jesus' enemies diligently investigated the miracles that He performed in hopes of discrediting Him, they

still failed in their endeavors. The apostle John recorded an occasion when Jesus gave sight to a man born blind (John 9:7). After receiving his sight, neighbors and others examined him, inquiring how he was now able to see. Later he was brought to the Pharisees, and they scrutinized him. They questioned him about the One who caused him to see, and then argued among themselves about the character of Jesus. They called for the parents of the man who was blind, and questioned them about their son's blindness. Then they called upon the man born blind again, and a second time questioned him about how Jesus opened his eyes. Finally, when they realized the man would not cave in to their intimidating interrogation and say some negative thing about Jesus, “they cast him out” (9:34). They rejected him, and the One Who made him well. Yet, they were unable to deny the miracle that Jesus performed. It was known by countless witnesses that this man was born blind, but, after coming in contact with Jesus, his eyes were opened. The entire case was scrutinized thoroughly by Jesus' enemies, yet even they had to admit that Jesus caused the blind man to see (John 9:16-17,24,26). It was a fact, accepted, not by credulous youths, but by hardened, veteran enemies of Christ.

Furthermore, there were some of those among Jesus' strongest critics who eventually did come to believe, not simply in His miracles, but that the wonders He worked really were from Heaven. John hinted of this belief when he wrote about how there was a division among the Pharisees concerning whether Jesus was from God. One group asked, “How can a man who is a sinner (as some among the Pharisees alleged—EL/KB) do such signs?” (John 9:16). Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night and confessed, saying, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (John 3:2). Years later, after the establishment of the church, Luke recorded how “a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Truly, even many of those who were numbered among Jesus' enemies at one time eventually confessed to His being the Son of God. Considering that positive testimony from hostile witnesses is the weightiest kind of testimony in a court of law, such reactions from Jesus' enemies are extremely noteworthy in a discussion on the miracles of Christ.

Multiple Attestation of Writers

The case built for the authenticity of Jesus' miracles is further strengthened by the fact that His supernatural works were recorded, not by one person, but by multiple independent writers. Even unbelievers admit that various miracles in Jesus' life (including His resurrection) were recorded by more than one writer (cf. Barker, 1992, p. 179; Clements, 1990, p. 193). If scholars of ancient history generally rendered facts "unimpeachable" when two or three sources are in agreement (see Maier, 1991, p. 197), then the multiple attestation of Jesus' miracles by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8) is extremely impressive. Unlike Islam and Mormonism, each of which relies upon the accounts/writings of one alleged inspired man (Muhammad and Joseph Smith, respectively), Christianity rests upon the foundation of multiple writers. Consider also that certain miracles Jesus performed, specifically the feeding of the 5,000 and His resurrection, are recorded in all four gospel accounts. Furthermore, the writers' attestation of Jesus' life and miracles is similar enough so as not to be contradictory, but varied enough so that one cannot reasonably conclude that they participated in collusion in order to perpetrate a hoax. Truly, the fact that multiple writers attest to the factuality of Jesus' miracles should not be taken lightly and dismissed with a wave of the hand.

Interestingly, Bible writers were not alone in their attestation of the wonders that Jesus worked. The first-century Jewish historian, Josephus, mentioned Jesus as being One Who "was a doer of wonderful works (*paradoxa*)" and Who "drew over to him many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles" (1987, 18:3:3, emp. added). Josephus used this same Greek word (*paradoxa*) earlier when referring to Elijah and his "wonderful and surprising works by prophecy" (9:8:6). The only instance of this word in the New Testament is found in Luke's gospel account where those who had just witnessed Jesus heal a paralytic "were all seized with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, 'We have seen remarkable things (*paradoxa*) today'" (5:26, NASB, emp. added). A reference to Jesus' amazing works was also described in one section of the *Babylonian Talmud* (known as the *Sanhedrin Tractate*) where Jewish leaders wrote, "On the eve of the Passover Yeshu [Jesus—EL/KB] was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be

stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy....' But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of Passover" (Shachter, 1994, 43a). Even though the Talmud describes Jesus' amazing deeds as "sorcery," and although we may never know for certain whether Josephus truly believed Jesus could work legitimate miracles, both acknowledge that Jesus' life was characterized by remarkable wonders—testimony that would be expected from certain unbelievers who were attempting to explain away the supernatural acts of Christ.

Bible Writers Reported Facts—not Fairy Tales

It also is important to understand that the Bible writers insisted that their writings were not based on imaginary, non-verifiable people and events, but instead were grounded on solid historical facts (as has been confirmed time and again by the science of archaeology). The apostle Peter, in his second epistle to the Christians in the first century, wrote: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (1:16). In a similar statement, the apostle John insisted: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us" (1 John 1:1,3). When Luke wrote his account of the Gospel of Christ, he specifically and intentionally crafted his introduction to ensure that his readers understood that his account was historical and factual:

Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed (Luke 1:1-4).

In a similar line of reasoning, Luke included in his introduction to the book of Acts the idea that Jesus, "presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the

kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). In addition, when the apostle Paul was arguing the case that Jesus Christ had truly been raised from the dead, he wrote that the resurrected Jesus

was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

This handful of verses by Peter, Paul, John, and Luke, reveal that the Bible writers insisted with conviction that their writings were not mythical, but were based on factual events. Furthermore, they specifically documented many of the eye-witnesses who could testify to the accuracy of their statements. As Henry S. Curr remarked more than half a century ago,

We are not asked to believe in myths and legends of the kind associated with paganism, classical and otherwise, nor in cunningly devised fables or old wives' tales. We are besought to accept sober stories of incidents which cannot be accounted for in any other way save that God was directly and intimately at work in the matter (1941, 98:478).

The claim that the Bible is filled with miracle myths can be made, but it cannot be reasonably maintained. The evidence is overwhelming that the Bible writers understood and insisted that their information about Jesus and His miracles was accurate and factual, just as were all other details in their narratives and letters. Furthermore, their claim of factual accuracy has been verified time and again by the discipline of archaeology as well as by refutations of alleged discrepancies between the various writings and history.

Jesus' Signs were Many and Varied

Another characteristic of Jesus' miracles is that more than a few are recorded in Scripture. One is not asked to believe that Jesus is the Son of God because He performed one or two marvelous deeds during His lifetime. On the contrary, genuine "miracles cluster around the Lord Jesus Christ like steel shavings to a magnet" (Witmer, 1973, 130:132). The gospel accounts are saturated with a variety of miracles that Christ performed, not for wealth or political power, but that the world may be convinced that He was sent by the Father to bring salvation to mankind (cf. John 5:36; 10:37-38). As Isaiah prophesied, Jesus performed miracles of healing (Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:16-17). He cleansed a leper

Resurrected “Savior-Gods” and the Prophets of Old

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

Periodically, critics of Jesus question why there are so many stories of “savior-gods” (outside of Judaism and Christianity) that sound somewhat similar to the story of Jesus. Why would various civilizations (e.g., Egyptians, Greeks, etc.) that existed centuries before the time of Christ have “legends” about god-like characters who worked miracles, conquered death, and were revered by their followers? What logical answer can be given as to why stories similar in some ways to the Gospel story existed hundreds or thousands of years before Jesus?

Although several reasonable answers have already been given to the above questions in past articles (e.g., Butt and Thompson, 2001a and 2001b), another logical explanation for the presence of these stories revolves around the prophets of old. When Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and lawyers for their hypocrisy, He mentioned their unrighteous ancestors and made the following statement:

Therefore the wisdom of God also said, “I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,” that the blood of all the prophets which was shed **from the foundation of the world** may be required of this generation, **from the blood of Abel** to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation (Luke 11:49-51, emp. added).

According to Jesus, God used prophets as far back as “the foundation of the world,” specifically from the time of Abel, Adam’s second son recorded in Scripture. The apostle Peter made a similar statement while preaching to thousands of Jews in Solomon’s Portico.

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, **which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began** (Acts 3:19-21, emp. added).

“Since the world began,” God has revealed messages to mankind via His prophets. Sometimes these messages were regarding the coming physical destruction upon a particular nation (e.g., Jonah 3:1-10; Nahum 1-3). At other times, they were about one particular person or tribe of people (e.g., Genesis 40; 49). But

no prophecies were more important (nor more prevalent in Scripture) than those concerning Christ. And, God’s spokesmen have been foretelling His Coming specifically **since the earliest of times**. Luke recorded how, after the birth of John the Baptizer, his father, Zacharias, “was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying,”

Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who **have been since the world began** (Luke 1:67-70, emp. added).

God’s prophets have not foretold the coming of a great Redeemer only since the Mosaic period, nor were prophecies concerning the Savior of the world limited to the Jewish people. Zacharias rejoiced that God was sending the Redeemer and Savior of Whom the prophets had spoken “**since the world began.**” Admittedly, most all of the Messianic prophecies recorded in Scripture appear after God revealed to Abraham that through his seed “all the nations of the world shall be blessed” (Genesis 22:18; 12:1-3; 49:10; etc.). Yet, one recorded messianic prophecy goes back centuries before Abraham—all the way to Adam and Eve’s tenure in the Garden of Eden. There God informed the serpent following his deception of Eve: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15). In this very first messianic prophecy, a suffering, but victorious, Redeemer is pictured.

Thousands of years later, hundreds of similar prophecies about the Christ were given to the Israelites. It is logical to conclude, however, that similar messianic prophecies would have been delivered by other prophets outside of Judaism. The patriarch Enoch, just seven generations from Adam, “walked with God three hundred years” and “prophesied” (Genesis 5:22; Jude 14). His great-great-grandson Noah, whom the apostle Peter described as “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), very likely knew of the Messianic prophecies during patriarchal times, and may very well have received direct revelation from God on the matter (similar to how God spoke to him regarding the Flood—Genesis 6:13-21). Centuries later, non-Jewish, God-fearing men such as Melchizedek, king of Salem, “the priest of the Most High God” (Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 7:1), Job, and others worshipped and served the one true God.



We have no way of knowing how many of God's spokesmen through the centuries have prophesied about the coming of a Savior. We do know, however, that some prophecies about Christ are virtually as old as the world itself, and the Bible nowhere pretends to contain every Messianic prophecy ever spoken.

One may reasonably conclude that a chief reason nations outside of Israel possessed stories of savior-gods who share many commonalities with Jesus is because **they had heard either inspired prophets foretell the Redeemer's coming, or the prophecies made "from the foundation of the world" had been passed down to them by word of mouth.** Interestingly, some of the first people on Earth to recognize the arrival of the Messiah were men the Bible calls—not Jews—but "wise men (magi, NASB) from the East" (Matthew 2:1). From where did these men receive such knowledge? How did they know that a particular "star in the East" (Matthew 2:2) would indi-

cate the Messiah's entrance into the world? The fact is, they received Divine direction (cf. Matthew 2:1-12).

Truly, God's scheme of redemption through a "hero" that would save the world from sin and death has been revealed since the fall of man. Simply because civilizations from the past (outside of Judaism and Christianity) possessed similar "redemption" stories and/or knowledge of a Redeemer should not be troubling or surprising. They likely were based (at least partly) on messages preached by the prophets of old.

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IN THE NEWS

You are aware of the systematic cleansing of America's public schools and government buildings by the elimination of references to God and the Bible. This conspiratorial departure from the nation's origins has been illustrated once again—but in a rather unexpected place: the detention center for suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The politically correct crowd saw to it that every Muslim had access to a Quran. Oh, yes, inmates who want a Quran are carefully accommodated. But when a Pakistani Muslim inmate (detained for alleged ties to Osama bin Laden) requested a copy of the Bible—no can do (Serrano, 2005).

Though the Quran is preeminent to the Muslim, Islam nevertheless acknowledges the Bible as Scripture from God. So, when he requested that his lawyer ship him a copy of the Bible, prison officials promptly confiscated the package. U.S. government lawyers said the detainee had not shown that the practice of his religion had been "substantially burdened" by being deprived of a Bible.

Unbelievable! Our own people no longer see the Bible as necessary, or its unavailability as adverse and creating a hardship. We live in a time warp far removed from America's origins. The Founders clearly believed that the initial existence and future survival of the Republic was heavily, if not exclusively, dependent on the successful diffusion of the Bible throughout society. While abundant evidence for this assertion exists, consider just one example. A year after declaring independence from England, the Colonies began to feel the effects of the British embargo. Consequently, the Continental Congress directed a committee to investigate ways by which Bibles could be secured. The committee made its re-

port on September 11, 1777, stating "that the use of the Bible is so universal, and its importance so great...your Committee recommends that Congress will order the Committee of Commerce to import 20,000 Bibles from Holland, Scotland, or elsewhere, into the different ports of the States of the Union." Congress promptly ordered the importation (*Journals of...*, 1907, 8:734-745). Four years later, as the shortage continued, importation became sufficiently impractical that Congress was again petitioned for approval, this time to print Bibles in America rather than purchase them abroad. The request was approved and upon completion of the printing, on September 12, 1782, the full Congress not only approved the edition, but their endorsement was given in the front of the Bible: "Whereupon, Resolved, That the United States in Congress assembled...recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States" (*Journals of...*, 1914, 23:574). Who today would believe that the original Congress of the United States considered the Bible so important to national existence that they would expend effort—even in wartime—to make certain that Bibles were available to the American population? The present widespread loss of respect for and interest in the Bible, if continued, will spell our national doom.

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Dave Miller

RESOURCES

Power over Affliction	Cited In
Royal official's son	John 4:46-54
Peter's mother-in-law	Matthew 8:14-18; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41
Leper	Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-14
Paralytic	Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-26
Lame man at the Pool of Bethesda	John 5:1-16
Man with withered hand	Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11
Paralyzed centurion's servant	Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
Hemorrhaging woman	Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48
Two blind men	Matthew 9:27-31
Deaf and mute man	Matthew 15:29-31; Mark 7:31-37
Blind man outside of Bethesda	Mark 8:22-26
Ten lepers	Luke 17:11-19
Man born blind	John 9
Crippled woman	Luke 13:10-17
Man with dropsy	Luke 14:1-6
Two blind men near Jericho	Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52
Malchus' ear	Luke 22:50-51

with the touch of His hand (Matthew 8:1-4), and healed all manner of sickness and disease with the word of His mouth (cf. John 4:46-54). One woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years was healed immediately simply by touching the fringe of His garment (Luke 8:43-48). Similarly, on one occasion after Jesus came into the land of Gennesaret, **all** who were sick in **all** of the surrounding region came to Him, “and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well” (Matthew 14:34-36; Mark 3:10). Generally speaking, “**great multitudes** came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them” (Matthew 15:30, emp. added). “He cured **many** of infirmities, afflictions...and to **many** blind He gave sight” (Luke 7:21, emp. added). Even Jesus’ enemies confessed to His “many signs” (John 11:48).

Jesus not only exhibited power over the sick and afflicted, He also showed His **superiority over nature** more than once. Whereas God’s prophet Moses turned water into blood by striking water with his rod (Exodus 7:20), Jesus simply willed water into wine at a wedding feast (John 2:1-11). He further exercised His power over the natural world by calming the Sea of Galilee during a turbulent storm (Matthew 8:23-27), by walking on water for a considerable distance to reach His disciples (Matthew 14:25-43), and by causing a fig tree to wither away at His command. In truth, Jesus’ supernatural superiority over the physical world (which He created—Colossians 1:16) is exactly what we would expect from One Who claimed to be the Son of God.

Jesus’ miracles were not limited to the natural world, however. As further proof of His deity, He also revealed His **power over the spiritual world** by casting out demons. “They brought to Him **many** who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word” (Matthew 8:16, emp. added). Luke also recorded that “He cured **many** of...evil spirits” (Luke 7:21, emp. added). Mark recorded where Jesus once exhibited power over a man overwhelmed with unclean spirits, which no one had been able to bind not even with chains and shackles; neither could anyone tame the demon-infested man (Mark 5:1-21). Jesus, however, cured him. Afterwards, witnesses saw the man with the unclean spirits “sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind” (Luke 8:35-36). On several occasions, Jesus healed individuals who were tortured by evil spirits. And, “they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, ‘What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out’ ” (Luke 4:36).

Power over Nature	Cited In
Water changed into wine	John 2:1-11
First catch of fish	Luke 5:1-7
Calming a turbulent storm	Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:36-41; Luke 8:22-25
Feeding 5,000	Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:30-34; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14
Walking on water	Matthew 14:22-32; Mark 6:45-46; John 6:15-21
Feeding 4,000	Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9
Money in the fish's mouth	Matthew 17:24-27
Fig tree withers	Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-24
Second catch of fish	John 21:1-11

Finally, Jesus even performed miracles that demonstrated His **power over death**. Recall that when John the Baptizer’s disciples came to Jesus inquiring about His identity, Jesus instructed them to tell John that “the dead are raised” (Matthew 11:5). The widow of Nain’s son had already been declared dead and placed in a casket when Jesus touched the open coffin and told him to “arise.” Immediately, “he who was dead sat up and began to speak” (Luke 7:14-15). Lazarus had already been dead and buried for four days by the time Jesus raised him from the dead (John 11:1-44). Such a great demonstration of power over death caused “many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did” to believe in Him (John 11:45). What’s more, Jesus’ own resurrection from the dead was the climax of all of His miracles, and serves as perhaps the most convincing miracle of all (see Butt, 2002, pp. 9-15).

In all, the Gospel records contain some thirty-seven specific supernatural acts that Jesus performed. If that number were to include such miracles as His virgin birth and transfiguration, and the multiple times He exemplified the ability to “read minds” and to know the past or future without having to learn of them through ordinary means (cf. John 4:15-19; 13:21-30; 2:25), etc., the number would reach upwards to fifty. Indeed, the miracles of Christ were varied and numerous. He healed the blind, lame, sick, and leprous, as well as demonstrated power over nature, demons, and death. The apostle John, who recorded the miracles of Christ “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31), also commented on how “Jesus did **many other** signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book” (20:30, emp. added). In fact, Jesus worked so many miracles throughout His ministry on Earth that, “if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

Power over Demons	Cited In
Man in synagogue at Capernaum	Mark 1:23-28; Luke 4:33-37
Mute, demon-possessed man	Matthew 9:32-34
Mary Magdalene	Luke 8:2
Two men at Gadara	Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-21; Luke 8:26-40
Blind, mute, demon-possessed man	Matthew 12:22-30; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 11:14-23
Syro-Phoenician's daughter	Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30
Epileptic, demon-possessed child	Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43

The Miracles of Jesus were not Silly or Overboard

Admittedly, for some, a number of the miracles that Jesus performed are more easily accepted than others. The fact that a group of fishermen let their nets down into the sea and caught so many fish that the netting began to break (Luke 5:1-11) is not difficult for critics to accept (although not as a miracle). The idea of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead after already being in the tomb for four days, however, is much harder for skeptics to believe. But, neither this miracle nor any other that Jesus worked is unworthy of our consideration because it is silly or overboard. People may reject the miracles of Christ because of their disbelief in the supernatural altogether, or because of their inability to attach naturalistic explanations to various miracles. However, His miracles cannot be denied on the grounds that they are characterized by the absurd and ridiculous—that they are not. As Furman Kearley once stated, “The gospel records are marked by restraint and sublimity in the description of miracles” (1976, 93[27]:4).

The miracles of Christ certainly were extraordinary (otherwise they would not be miracles), yet they were performed (and recorded) with all sanity and sobriety—exactly what one would expect if they really were signs from God. After all, He is the author and finisher of that unspeakable machine which we call the universe, ever working in accordance with its constitution on the strictest principles of law and order, and thus proclaiming that its Architect is no capricious being but one whose mental attributes are as marvelous as His moral and spiritual qualities. In these circumstances, it would be very strange if the Biblical miracles represented the contradiction of orderly things (Curr, 1941, 98:471).

Since the omnipotent God has chosen to control His infinite power, and to use it in orderly and rational ways, one would expect that when God put on flesh (John 1:1-3, 14) and exerted His supernatural power on Earth, it likewise would be characterized as power under control—miracles performed with infinite sobriety and rationality.

Unlike the stories of many alleged miracle workers from the past (or present), Jesus’ miracles are characterized by restraint and dignity. Consider the miracle that Jesus performed on Malchus, a man who was about to arrest Jesus. Instead of doing something like commanding the left ear of Malchus to wither or fall off (after Peter severed his right one with a sword), Jesus simply touched the detached ear “and healed him” (Luke 22:51). A man who was about to turn Jesus over to His enemies has his ear cut off with a sword, and Jesus simply (yet miraculously) puts his ear back in place. What’s more, that is all any Bible writer wrote about the matter. An amazing miracle was worked the night before Jesus’ death, and the only thing revealed is that Jesus “touched his ear and healed him.” As with all of Jesus’ miracles,

Power over Death	Cited In
Widow of Nain's son	Luke 7:11-18
Jairus' daughter	Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:21-24, 35-43; Luke 8:40-42, 49-56
Lazarus	John 11
Jesus' own resurrection	Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20

[t]here is no attempt to magnify the supernatural features of the incident. The happening is left to speak for itself. If truth be best unadorned, then there are no more effective illustrations of that doctrine than the Biblical records of signs and wonders. The writers do not dwell upon them. They rather take the marvels in their stride. They tell the story as succinctly as they can, and then pass on to deal with something else. That is exemplified very clearly in the Synoptic Gospels. We are told of the moral and physical miracle wrought in a house at Capernaum when four men bore a sick friend to the feet of Jesus, having removed part of the roof and lowered the pallet through the aperture. The man’s sins were forgiven. This was a sign from heaven if there ever was one. His infirmity was also removed and that was another demonstration of our Lord’s claims to be God manifest in the flesh. Matthew then proceeds to recount his call to discipleship and what followed.

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Dr. Brad Harrub			
March 3-5	Lakeland, GA	(229)	482-5898
March 12-15	Lavergne, TN	(615)	223-0370
March 19-22	Woodbury, TN	(615)	563-2119
Dr. Dave Miller			
March 3-5	Van Nuys, CA	(818)	785-2623
March 12-15	Grady, AL	(334)	537-9008
March 31-April 2	Hodges, AL	(205)	935-3992
Kyle Butt			
March 3-5	Dexter, MO	(423)	476-8941
April 9	Columbia, TN	(931)	388-5814
Eric Lyons			
March 17-19	Smyrna, TN	(615)	459-3217
April 7-9	Santa Maria, CA	(805)	925-9406

Procedure like that is repeated again and again. The writers do not linger over the supernatural as a modern novelist might do. The miracle is mentioned at greater or less length, and then the narrative goes on its way. It is true that reference is often made to the amazement created in the crowds which witnessed these mighty works of God; but even that is not emphasized inordinately (Curr, 1941, 98:473).

Furthermore, unlike those in other writings, Jesus' miracles were not characterized by the sorcerer's hocus pocus. In fact, there are few parallels to Jesus and the magicians of the ancient world. Even Rudolf Bultmann, the twentieth-century German writer who sought to explain away the miracles of Jesus, admitted that "the New Testament miracle stories are extremely reserved in this respect, since they hesitate to attribute to the person of Jesus the magical traits which were often characteristic of the Hellenistic miracle worker" (as quoted in Habermas, 2001, p. 113). Jesus could have performed any miracle that He wanted. He could have pulled rabbits from hats for the sole purpose of amusing people. He could have turned His Jewish enemies into stones, or given a person three eyes. He could have turned boys into men. He could have lit the robes of the Pharisees on fire and told them that hell would be ten times as hot. He could have formed a dozen sparrows out of clay as a child, and then, in the midst of a group of boys, turned the clay birds into live ones at the clap of His hands, as is alleged in the non-inspired apocryphal book, the *Gospel of Thomas* (1: 4-9; *The Lost Books...*, 1979, p. 60). Certainly, Jesus **could** have done any number of silly, outlandish miracles. But, He didn't. In contrast to the miracles recorded in any number of non-inspired sources, Jesus' miracles were not characterized by

endless tales of wonders with which literature and folklore of the world abounds. There is no suggestion of magic or legerdemain about the mighty works of God described in the Bible. On the contrary, they are invariably characterized by a sanity and sobriety and reasonableness.... There is nothing extravagant or bizarre about them.... When the miracles of our Lord which are described in the four Gospels are compared with those derived from other sources, the difference is like that of chalk and cheese" (Curr, 98:471-472).

Jesus Worked Wonders that are not Being Duplicated Today

Finally, neither the modern alleged "faith healer" nor the twenty-first-century sci-

entist is duplicating the miracles that Jesus worked while on Earth 2,000 years ago. Pseudo-wonder workers today stage seemingly endless events where willing participants with supposed sicknesses appear and act as if they are being healed of their diseases by the laying on of hands. Nebulous aches and pains and dubious illnesses that defy medical substantiation are supposedly cured by prominent "faith healers" who simultaneously are building financial empires with the funds they receive from gullible followers. Frauds like Oral Roberts, Benny Hinn, and a host of others have made many millions of dollars off of viewers who naively send them money without stopping to consider the real differences between the miracles that Jesus worked and what they observe these men do today.

Jesus went about "healing **every** sickness and **every** disease" (Matthew 9:35, emp. added). His miraculous wonders knew no limitations. He could cure anything. Luke, the learned physician (Colossians 4: 14), recorded how He could restore a shriveled hand in the midst of His enemies (Luke 6:6-10), and heal a severed ear with the touch of His hand (Luke 22:51). He healed "many" of their blindness (Luke 7:21), including one man who had been **born** blind (John 9:1-7)! What's more, He even raised the dead simply by calling out to them (John 11:43). What modern-day "spiritualist," magician, or scientist has come close to doing these sorts of things that defy natural explanations? Who is going into schools for the blind and giving children their sight? Who is going to funerals or graveyards to raise the dead? These are the kinds of miracles that Jesus worked—supernatural feats that testify to His identity as the heaven-sent Savior of the world.

CONCLUSION

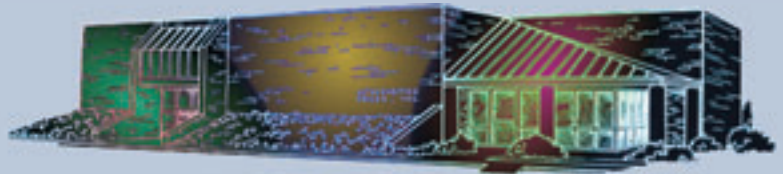
As should be expected from the One Who claimed to be God incarnate (cf. John 1:1-3,14; 10:30), Scripture records that Jesus performed miracles throughout His ministry in order to provide sufficient proof of His divine message and nature. Countless thousands witnessed His miracles. He performed them throughout His ministry—miracles that in countless ways are unlike the alleged wonders worked by sorcerers, scientists, or "spiritualists" of the past or present. Even Jesus' enemies attested to the wonders that He worked, which later were recorded, not by one person, but by multiple independent writers who were dedicated to reporting facts rather than fairy tales.

Jesus worked miracles, not for the sake of entertaining individuals or in order to make a profit off of His audiences, but that the world may know that Jesus and God are one (John 10:30,38), and that the Father sent Him to Earth to save mankind from sin (John 5:36). He "did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 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 20:30-31, emp. added). Certainly, among the greatest proofs for the deity of Christ are the miracles that He worked.

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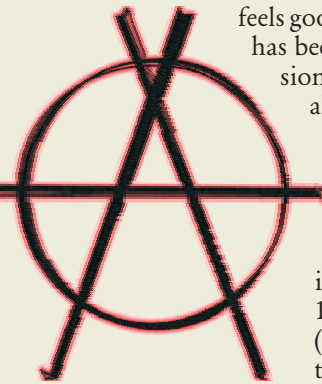
NOTE FROM THE EDITORS



ANNOUNCING ANOTHER NEW BOOK

We are pleased to announce the availability of the latest volume to come forth from the offices of Apologetics Press: *Sexual Anarchy*. This book addresses itself to the sexually permissive climate that characterizes America. The *American Heritage Dictionary* gives as one of its definitions for anarchy: “absence of any cohesive principle, such as a common standard or purpose.” Indeed, since the 1960s, American civilization has been sucked into the vortex of sexual disorder and confusion. The sexual behavior of many Americans is determined

on the basis of personal choice—what feels good. More specifically, the mind has been disengaged and fleshly passions and bodily appetites have been allowed to inform the mind what actions may be taken. “Barnyard morality” is the order of the day. Though humans did not evolve from animals, but were, in fact, created in the image of their Creator (Genesis 1:26-27), when the human spirit (the mind) is disengaged from the objective standard of morality, humans become morally bankrupt and animalistic—behaving like brute beasts.



The International Symbol for Anarchy

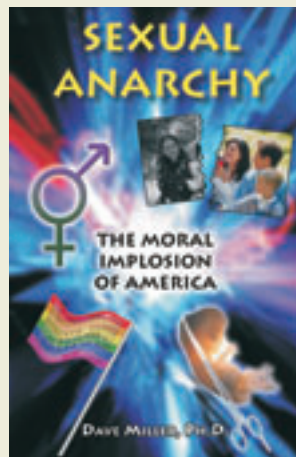
The dismantling of the Christian foundations of America during the last fifty years has resulted in a plethora of sexually deviant actions. America is literally spiraling downward into the abyss of moral depravity and degradation. While sex is inherently good, having been created by the Creator Who fashioned the male and female bodies, it is only proper when it is practiced in accordance with the stipulations framed by the Creator. Deviation from that moral framework inevita-

bly wrecks psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical havoc on the individuals involved, and on society at large.

This volume addresses four social factors—divorce, abortion, homosexuality, and pornography—behaviors that share in common the fact that they are all linked to human sexuality. All four represent human desire to gratify sexual appetites without regard to a higher standard of authority. But no civilization, no nation, no country can survive the ultimate affects of sexual anarchy. Many in America appear determined to pursue the same road to perdition that every civilization before her has followed. If a sizable percentage of this country’s citizenry persists in doing so, mark it down, America, too, will eventually collapse into the dust of antiquity—like every other civilization in human history.

It is our prayer that this volume will serve in some small way as a positive contribution toward encouraging citizens to exercise the sexual self-restraint that the Creator requires of all people.

Brad Harrub
 Dave Miller



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