

MIRACLES

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About the author...

Robert and his wife Irene have 2 children and 4 grandchildren. In August of 2000 Robert began his 27th year of labor with the church in Ripley, Tennessee. He preaches in numerous gospel meetings and lectureships each year. He has written numerous books and tracts.

Introduction

True Bible miracles versus pseudo miracles of current charismatics will be the focal emphasis of this study. It will be a study between the real and counterfeit, between the true and false, between real miracles workers and pseudo claimants to such powers, wonders and signs today, between those who DID and those today who must just TALK and between God's approval of the real and His rejection of the pseudo, the fake, the pretense.

Biblical miracles, in both testaments, are readily accepted and defended. Modern pretenders and their pompous claims for current signs, wonders and mighty miracles are rejected in totality, PERIOD! This study is needed because of massive misconceptions relative to miracles which permeate the current religious climate.

Miracles Misunderstood

Many consider a baby's birth a miracle. Jesus' birth was miraculous as per Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1,2 and Luke 1,2. But the births of James, Joses, Judas, Simon, His brothers and His sisters to Joseph and Mary were non-miraculous. Budding trees and blooming flowers in the spring are not miracles. Last minute wins in sports are often called miraculous. Was it miraculous that the losing team lost a heart-breaker the final play of the game? A man walks away from a fiery automobile crash uninjured, unscathed. He and his family call it a miracle. But what about the family of five in the other car who were killed? Were these miraculous fatalities? Surely, something is wrong with our superficial assessments of the foregoing. I write this on July 3, 2000. There will be all kinds of fireworks tomorrow. They will be spectacular but not supernatural.

In 1970, my father suffered a serious heart attack. I flew from Memphis, Tennessee, to Lansing, Michigan, to be by his side for the critical period. As he began to make progress, his cardiologist told my mother, "It is a miracle your husband is still alive." She corrected him by saying, "We believe our prayers have been heard for him but it is NOT a miracle." She knew more about miracles than the attending physician did. He was still hospitalized, under oxygen, very weak and faced an extended convalescent period. He never fully recovered and died with congestive heart failure in 1971.

Several years ago, I visited an elderly Christian lady who was critically ill. Her family, members of the church, told me it was a miracle she was still alive. Her son, a deacon and her grandson, her attending physician, were both long time members of the church. They affirmed the miraculous was indeed present. I preached her funeral later that very week! All the foregoing were not modern day miracles, regardless of claims to the contrary.

Miracles Defined

Biblical miracles were above and beyond natural law. They constituted God's stepping into the picture and performing with power and proficiency what natural law would not and could not produce. Without exception, they were always provisional or temporary. They were always performed by Deity directly or indirectly by heavenly appointed agents on earth such as prophets, apostles, or those upon whom apostolic hand had been imparted. Without exception, they were performed by God's clearly revealed authority. LYING signs, wonders and trumped-up miracles do not come under the scope of the foregoing declarations. See 2 Thessalonians 2:8,9 and Revelation 13:11-15. Look at the mass of trumped-up miracles claimed in the Roman Catholic beatification and canonization of saints.

Miracles Depicted

Creation in Genesis 1,2 was miraculous. God spoke and results were forthcoming promptly. The Psalmist captures the miracles of might during those six days (not long eons of time) by stating, *"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth...For he spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast"* (Psalm 33:6,9). The parting of the Red Sea and the Jordan River under Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha respectively, was miraculous. Some years back a man in Mississippi made headlines by announcing that he would walk the waters of Ross Barnett Reservoir, near Jackson, at a stated time. He wiggled out of performances by claiming he was shot in the leg by enemy assailants shortly before his water walk was to transpire! Surely, a water walker should be able to dodge bullets or quickly heal himself in time to make good a promise, a promise that fell to the ground, or into the water, void of fulfillment! I was living in Mississippi at the time and I exposed him in a paid article in a prominent Mississippi newspaper. Manna six days a week and water from riven rocks in the wilderness were supernatural. Lengthening the day for Joshua in a crucial battle was miraculous. A guide I once had in a Bible Land visit said he considered this one of the greatest of all Bible miracles. Naaman's cleansing was supernatural. So were resurrections by Elijah and Elisha in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4. Predictive prophecies of the Old Testament were miraculous. It is claimed there are some 333 just about the coming Christ.

The virgin conception and later His birth were miraculous occurrences. Such fulfilled for the FIRST and ONLY time Isaiah 7:14. Such was straight-line prophecy. His ministry was filled with worthy wonders, stupendous signs and mighty miracles. Nicodemus was right on target in declaring, *"...no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him"* (John 3:2).

The apostolic ministry was characterized by mighty miracles performed and by wonderful works wrought extending fullness of sustaining proof they were God's mouthpieces. Miracles were

imperative in both the revelation of truth and its ONCE confirmed needs no continuing confirmation as Pat Boone and other charismatic contenders presently plead.

The Miracles of Jesus in Particular

They eloquently and excellently exhibited His power in ACTION—not in just a TALK game. Modern pretenders TALK incessantly about miracles. They NEVER demonstrate. Talk is cheap; action would prove their verbal boasts!

His miracles exhibited power over disease, sickness, the elements, demons and death. He healed a leper and made Peter's mother-in-law well in Mark 1. He stilled a severe storm at sea in Matthew 8 and walked on that same sea later in Matthew 14, Mark 6 and John 6. He was NOT walking along the shore line as malicious modernism absurdly advocates. He made a lifelong man of blindness to see in John 9. He cast out a legion of demons in Matthew 8; Mark 5; and Luke 8. He raised from the dead Jairus' daughter in Mark 5, the widow's son of Nain in Luke 7 and Lazarus, dead for four days, in John 11. He raised Himself as per John 10:17,18. He possessed power to lay down His life; He possessed power to take it up again. This marked Him as a man of miracles--extraordinary miracles.

His miracles were real, publicly performed, could not be denied even by His adamant antagonists and were done under a vast variety of conditions and circumstance. These were not cures of stomach aches, headaches, backaches, leg cramps, or self-diagnosed cancers—the stock-in-trade palaver of charismatic charlatans today. His were real, bonafide miracles verifiable by the masses of men and women. They were done to confirm His Messiahship, prove God sent Him and served as enthusiastic endorsement of His mission in word and work.

Jesus performed miracles whether the person helped and healed had faith or not. At times, He required faith such as in Matthew 9:27-31 relative to a duet of blind men. Obviously, there could have been NO faith in the dead damsel in Mark 5, the dead son of Nain in Luke 7 or dead Lazarus of Bethany in John 11. Yet, this is the persistent ploy among current charismatics in trumped-up healing campaigns, "You do not have sufficient faith for me to heal you!" Yet the duped devotee has come to be healed! Why does not the religious racketeer instill miraculous faith first and then heal the sickness subsequently? Satan must be ALL SMILES relative to such sly shenanigans while Heaven FROWNS on such perversions of religious racketeers!

Modern Pretenders and Their Idle Claims

Charismatic claimants of miraculous powers have as their persistent ploy an endless game of talk, Talk, TALK; it is never demonstrate, Demonstrate, DEMONSTRATE! Exhibition is NEVER on their near or distant horizon. Claimed miracles are almost always in distant places—never on-the-spot occurrences. How utterly strange! Jesus and His apostles were on-the-spot miracle performers though he could heal at a distance as in John 4 and Luke 7.

Ben Franklin, former preacher of the gospel but later a traitor to truth, met the inimitable Guy N. Woods in a 1974 debate in Gadsden, Alabama. I attended every session, reviewed it for the *Gospel Advocate* and later read it when it appeared in book form. I still have this book in my library. Franklin claimed Holy Spirit baptism, said he could talk in tongues and testified of personally known

miracles on the West Coast—even resurrections from the dead. When brother Woods requested names and phone numbers of such people, Franklin claimed some of them had died again! Brother Woods, in essence, quipped, “It would be pretty difficult to contact them!” Flavil Nichols was there on crutches due to a recent leg injury. L. E. Wright was there with only one arm. Brother Woods challenged Franklin to heal both men. The debate could have and would have ended right there had he demonstrated! Brother Nichols returned home still on crutches; brother Wright returned home with only one arm. His refusal to demonstrate was deadly to his charismatic cause. He claimed to talk in tongued but did a miserable job in handling correct English! He even confessed that when he went into Mexico to preach he took a translator with him! Spanish was off limits to this tongue talker! The Gadsden debate was an overwhelming victory for truth, which was par for the course with brother Woods in all his polemic discussions. Truth was always safe in his able hands and error would not and could not stand in the company of his sharp debating skills.

Brother Perry Cotham met a Peter John in a 1989 debate in Grand Rapids, Michigan. All Peter John could do was talk; he could not perform miraculously; NONE of them can!

I once had a discussion with a fiery Pentecostal preacher in Louisiana. He claimed Holy Spirit baptism for himself, on-the-spot revelations directly from the Holy Spirit for our discussion and healing and resurrecting powers at his beckoning call. Yet he wore glasses, had a hearing aide and his mental powers were flimsy, fallible and faulty. All he could do was talk with grammatical blunders abounding. He could not demonstrate. NONE of them can—not that first one!

A man of my acquaintance in another state claimed the same miraculous powers as were afforded apostles in John 14-16. When he received a rather severe leg injury in a hunting accident, neither he nor any of his Pentecostal colleagues could heal him instantly. He finally got well, the same way we all do in such situations—non-miraculously and without any sort of supernatural power. This same man claimed Holy Spirit recall powers just as Christ promised the eleven in John 14:26. I tested him. I quoted several partial verses of statements Jesus made in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and requested he finish the omitted portions. He could not recall ANY of them! He did not know where to go among the eight-nine chapters of these books to read the remainder of the partially quoted verses. I finished each one for him and told him, “I can quote all these because I have memorized all of them. You cannot quote any of them though you can claim instant Holy Spirit recall of all Jesus said.” His recalling powers were in limbo. In fact, such gave a new dimension to the term limbo!

Money-hungry and money-motivated Oral Roberts, in recent years, claimed to have seen a vision of a gigantic Christ. Roberts told his duped devotees in TV land that if sufficient money did not soon fill his near empty coffers, the Lord had promised or threatened to call him home. He offered NO objective proof for either of these. Incidentally, why did he have to build a big, expensive hospital in Tulsa, that was not needed by the medical community there, if he and his colleagues could heal minus such facilities? Jesus built no such at Capernaum; Peter built no such in Jerusalem; Paul built no such at Ephesus. They healed minus all such expensive facilities. They healed in wide open places minus doctors, nurses, surgeries, or medicine.

A so-called healing group once put up a tent near a large hospital in Mississippi. The professed healers did not empty the nearby hospital of patient one! They soon folded their temporary tent and fled the scene. The hospital remained in the healing business with a wise, workable combination—God’s help and medical skills such as surgery, therapy, medicine, time, etc.

A Texas northern destroyed a healing tent ministry. Many were injured. The healer left town in high gear. Had he stayed, he could not have healed a tiny scratch on a little finger and he knew it

better than any of this duped devotees.

A healer of the past, Jack Coe, claimed powers to heal polio. He later died of polio himself. His healing cronies could not heal his polio, nor raise him from the dead after he died. He is still dead and will stay dead until resurrection morning dawns!

Current pretenders to miraculous powers contradict what other pretenders do and say. Old Testament prophets, Jesus Christ, New Testament apostles and those upon whom they laid hands, never contradicted each other in words or works! Why the difference? I know! So do you!

Primary Purposes of Miracles

Healing benefits of a physical nature were always secondary. Primarily, miracles were performed to reveal truth and to confirm it when once revealed. They testified as being from God and backed it up with bonafide miracles. We have neither revelatory nor confirmatory needs today!

Scripture Establishes Miracle Duration

Pauline passages in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and Ephesians 4:8-13 are crystal clear directives in this vastly important realm of knowledge. The miraculous *"in part"* would last till *"that which is perfect is come."* It is not till "HE who is perfect is come" as though it were a reference to Christ's second coming. "That which is perfect" is the perfect revelation, the fullness of truth, the completed Bible. When such materialized so majestically and marvelously, the miraculous, by divine design, faded the scene. Miraculous prophecies failed, i.e., were no longer given. Supernatural tongues ceased. Nobody, absolutely nobody, has had them for nineteen centuries now. The masses of men and women who claim such cannot even speak correct English, butchering it minus all grammatical mercy! Modern claimants to the miraculous are frequently among the most illiterate and ignorant of all religious people. *"Till we all come in (unto--ASV) the unity of the faith"* is another allusion to the arrival of that full system of truth once for all delivered to saints and hence the completed Bible (Ephesians 4:13; cf. Jude 3).

No Possible Way to Have Them Now

From Pentecost onward, miraculous powers were transmitted two ways--Holy Spirit baptism and apostolic imposition of hands. The twelve in Acts 2, Paul, this we know by implication in Acts 9 and Cornelius' household in Acts 10 were the FULL recipients of the former. NO person has received such since A.D. 41. Hence, no person today can lay claim upon such by a subjectively assumed reciprocity of Holy Spirit baptism. NO one today has had apostolic hands imposed on him. Hence, miraculous powers are unavailable in that realm. Men, en masse, claim such; actual recipients of such in our day still stand at ZERO PERIOD!

Dangers of this Claimed Power Today

It feeds the greedy coffers of religious racketeers and charismatic charlatans with money galore. It deceives the naive. It makes a mockery of religion. It reflects on true religion. It causes

indiscriminate beholders to label all preachers as covetous charlatans, as money hungry shysters. It diverts people away from gospel conversion and Scriptural sanctification. It weans people away from the Bible and turns them into emotional wrecks. It encourages a reckless approach to the whole realm of biblical hermeneutics (the science of explaining the Bible and providing wholesome applications of the same). True miracles in Bible times never did any of these; pseudo or false miracles of today contribute to all the foregoing for a surety.

Conclusion

Modern claimants to such are a SIGNAL DISGRACE to god and a DISSERVICE to each person they deceive with their conniving bill of sales bought at the peril of souls—precious souls that need the truth of God.

Points to Remember

1. God does not have to perform miraculously in order to answer prayers.
2. Every claimant to modern miraculous powers should be pressed relentlessly to DEMONSTRATE his power—not just TALK of it!
3. Modern claimants to tongue speaking powers usually blunder greatly in the usage of their own native tongue to say nothing of the foreign tongues they claim to utter.
4. Conversion and sanctification are our major needs now—not modern day miracles.
5. Pentecostalism has been a blight on true religion since its untimely origin in the early part of the twentieth century.