

Our Miracle Working God

Introduction

There is no greater occurrence before the eyes, ears and senses of humanity that move us to faith and belief as do miracles. Miracles are the intangible, untouchable and unexplainable events that possess such a mystique about them that we are left to wonder what to do with what we just experienced. Intellectually, how do we process what we had nothing to do with, but there is no doubt that the result is that this really did happen. Well, if we had nothing to do with this occurrence, then we know there had to be some power, someone, a “Prime Mover” that put in motion what we could not. It is our lack in understanding the occurrence of the miracle that baffles us. Thus, there is no resource of our own that caused, sustained, made to happen, or brought to conclusion all that we simply can’t believe. *The source—GOD!*

His name alone causes demons to tremble with fear. *God, Yahweh, Elohim, El Shaddai, I AM.* By whatever name you choose to speak, He is the Almighty One, the maker, creator and keeper of heaven and earth. It is He, who has shown and proven Himself to be the great miracle worker. Whether as God the Father, through His son the Lord Jesus Christ, or by the power and presence of His Holy Spirit, a miracle wrought by either person of the Godhead is still just that, a miracle.

Relative to miracles, most have either had a miracle performed in their life, seen or heard of a miracle done in the life of someone you know, or either you want one performed in your life. Why? The reason why most want or look to miracles is we all want the assurance that the power of God really does exist. We all have the inkling to say, “If only I could see God do...then...”. Statements and desires of this nature put us in a place where we are no better than King Herod, “**Luke 23:8** *“And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.”*”

In this study, we will begin by trying to understand what a miracle is and look at the powers of God to perform miracles. Understanding a miracle is somewhat a misnomer, but we can know the source and power of who performs the miracles. We will also look at the contexts from both the Old and New Testaments in which God has performed miracles. Finally, we will take a historically progressive look at of miracles.

I. What is a Miracle?

Beginning our trek to understand and know what a miracle really is, let’s begin with several working definitions...

- ❖ **Miracle**— An event that defies common expectations of behavior and subsequently is attributed to a superhuman agent; an occurrence that demonstrates God’s involvement in the course of human affairs¹

¹ Roberts, R. D. (2016). Miracle, published in The Lexham Bible Dictionary

- ❖ **Miracle**—an event in the external world brought about by the immediate agency or the simple volition of God, operating without the use of means capable of being discerned by the senses, and designed to authenticate the divine commission of a religious teacher and the truth of his message (*John 2:18; Matt. 12:38*). It is an occurrence at once above nature and above man. It shows the intervention of a power that is not limited by the laws either of matter or of mind, a power interrupting the fixed laws which govern their movements, a supernatural power.²
- ❖ Also called a *sign, wonder, or mighty work, Acts 2:32; Matt. 12:38*) a work so superseding in its higher forms the established laws of nature as to evince the special interposition of God.³
- ❖ "**Miracle**" is the general term for the wonderful phenomena which accompanied the Jewish and Christian revelation, especially at critical moments, and which are alleged to have been continued, under certain conditions, in the history of the Christian church. The miracle proper is a work of God (*Ex 7:3 ff; Deut 4:34-35, etc.; John 3:2; 9:32-33; 10:38; Acts 10:38, etc.*); but as supernatural acts miracles are recognized as possible to evil agencies (*Matt 24:24; 2Th 2:9; Rev 13:14; 16:14, etc.*).⁴

The definition you choose to lean towards, in some ways, is immaterial because the source and power however it is defined in the context of our study, still originates with God. For children of God, any extraordinary occurrence is always studied within the context of scripture, for that is the way God chooses to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways. With this in mind, let us begin our journey with a miracle's biblical relevance and essential terminology. Then we will go to the Hebrew scriptures (commonly referred to as the Old Testament), making our way through the New Testament and the ministry of Jesus. Finally, we will conclude with an assessment of current day miracles and what they mean in our lives present day.

II. Biblical Relevance

It must not get beyond us that all miracles began as acts of God, and are expressed, displayed and then ultimately recorded in scripture. For believers, biblical relevance is the principal means by which we come to know and are made aware of miracles. Yes, miracles have happened outside of the bible, but no greater service to this divine act of God is done than when we yield to its biblical significance. As we have begun with definitions for miracles, let us further the technicalities of miracles with characterizations, synonyms, and related terminology.

A. Miracles can be characterized by four means:⁵

1. form of the miracle;
2. identity of the direct agent (actor ultimately responsible for the miracle);
3. presence or absence of an intermediate agent;
4. observers' responses.

² Miracle, Easton's Bible Dictionary

³ American Tract Society

⁴ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

⁵ Ibid., Roberts, Lexham Bible Dictionary

These means of characterization are interrelated. For example, Jesus of Nazareth's confirmation as the intermediary for the Gospels' miracles affects the theological functions of the miracles.

B. Terminology for Miracles⁶

The Hebrew words for "sign" (אֵימָנוּת, 'wt) and "wonder" (מוֹפֵת, mwpt) frequently refer to miraculous events. While the words typically function as synonyms, a sign explicitly notes the referential quality of a miracle. The juxtaposition of "signs" and "wonders" occurs throughout the Hebrew Bible (e.g., *Exod* 7:3; *Deut* 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 34:11; *Isa* 8:18; *Jer* 32:20–21).

In the New Testament these four Greek words are principally used to designate miracles:

- (1.) Semeion, a "sign", i.e., an evidence of a divine commission; an attestation of a divine message (*Matt.* 12:38, 39; 16:1, 4; *Mark* 8:11; *Luke* 11:16; 23:8; *John* 2:11, 18, 23; *Acts* 6:8, etc.); a token of the presence and working of God; the seal of a higher power.
- (2.) Terata, "wonders;" wonder-causing events; portents; producing astonishment in the beholder (*Acts* 2:19).
- (3.) Dunameis, "might works;" works of superhuman power (*Acts* 2:22; *Rom.* 15:19; *2 Thess.* 2:9); of a new and higher power.
- (4.) Erga, "works;" the works of Him who is "wonderful in working" (*John* 5:20, 36).

The juxtaposition of "signs" and "wonders" occurs in the New Testament with the combination of the Greek words for "signs and wonders" (σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα, *sēmeia kai terata*) (e.g., *Mark* 13:22; *John* 4:48; *Acts* 2:43; *Rom* 15:19). John refers to Jesus' miracles as works (ἔργα, *erga*; e.g., *John* 10:20). Another Greek word for "wonder" (θαῦμα, *thauma*) appears outside the New Testament as a reference to miracles. In the New Testament, (θαῦμα, *thauma*) refers to "wonder" in the sense of simple amazement.

C. Miracles in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

The Old Testament designates certain extraordinary phenomena as "signs" and "wonders" demonstrating divine power. Forms of miracles in the Old Testament include:

- celestial events (e.g., *Josh* 10:9–15);
- instantaneous healings (e.g., *2 Kgs* 5:14);
- control of nature (e.g., *Exod* 14:21–22);
- objects and animals acting in unexpected ways (e.g., *Num* 22:22–35; *2 Kgs* 6:5–7).

The Hebrew Bible frequently portrays God as the direct agent of miracles in the Hebrew Bible. For example, Numbers 22:22–35 explicitly attributes responsibility for a miracle to God, stating that "the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey" so that it talked to Balaam (*Num* 22:28 NRSV). He often employs a human intermediary (e.g., Moses in *Exod* 14:21). Sometimes His power is so essential to a human character that the division between God's power and the power inherent in the human character is hardly recognizable (e.g., *2 Kgs* 1:15; *2 Kgs* 6:5–7).

Human responses to miracles depend on the observer's personal situation, sociopolitical situation, and theological suppositions. Thus, the same miraculous event can elicit different

⁶ Ibid., Roberts

responses among various observers. For example, while Belshazzar's initial response to the mysterious hand's writing on the wall is fear, Daniel shows no fear (*Dan 5:6, 17-28*). In addition, a miracle usually affects the reputation of its agent(s). The Philistines of 1 Sam 4:8, for instance, are fearful of the Hebrew "gods" who afflicted the Egyptians with plagues (*Exod 7-12*)

D. The Mosaic Miracles:⁷

This, e.g., was the great purpose of the miracles wrought for the deliverance of the people of Israel out of Egypt. The critical theories which treat the narrative of those events as "unhistorical" are, unsound. If they could be established, they would deprive us of some of the most precious evidences we possess of the character of God. But, in any case, the purpose to which the alleged miracles are ascribed is of the same character as in the case of the New Testament miracles. "*For ask now,*" says Moses, "*of the days that are past whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever a people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that Yahweh your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that Yahweh he is God; there is none else besides him*" (*Deut 4:32-35*). The God of the Jews was, and is, the God manifested in those miraculous acts of deliverance. Accordingly, the Ten Commandments are introduced with the declaration: "*I am Yahweh thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,*" and on this follows: "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" (*Ex 20:2-3*). Without these miracles, the God of the Jews would be an abstraction. As manifested in them, He is the living God, with a known character, "*a just God and a Saviour*" (*Isa 45:21*), who can be loved with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.

E. Miracles in Gospel History:

The subject of miracles has given rise to much abstract discussion; but it is best approached by considering the actual facts involved, and it is best to begin with the facts nearest to us: those which are recorded in the New Testament. Our Lord's ministry was attended from first to last by events entirely beyond the ordinary course of Nature. He was born of a Virgin, and His birth was announced by angels, both to His mother, and to the man to whom she was betrothed (Matthew and Luke). He suffered death on the cross as an ordinary man, but on the third day after His crucifixion He rose from the tomb in which He was buried, and lived with His disciples for 40 days (*Ac 1:3*), eating and drinking with them, but with a body superior to ordinary physical conditions. At length He ascended to the heavens, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. But besides these two great miracles of His birth and His resurrection, Jesus was continually performing miracles during His ministry. His own words furnish the best description of the facts. In reply to the question of John the Baptist, His predecessor, He said, "*Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them*" (*Matt 11:4-5*). Specimens of these miracles are given in detail in the Gospel narratives; but it is a mistake to consider the matter, as is too often done, as though these

⁷ Miracles, Article from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

particular miracles were the only ones in question. Even if they could be explained away, as has often been attempted, there would remain reiterated statements of the evangelists, such as Matthew's that He "*went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people*" (Matt 4:23), or Luke's "*And a great number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; and they that were troubled with unclean spirits were healed. And all the multitude sought to touch him; for power came forth from him, and healed them all*" (Luke 6:17-19).

F. Miracles in the New Testament⁸

New Testament miracles occupy a central place within narrative texts (the Gospels and Acts) and apocalyptic texts (Revelation and Mark 13), and they often occur through human intermediaries. The most significant intermediary in the New Testament is Jesus, who performs miracles of healing, provision of food, and control of nature.

New Testament miracles display God's power, confirming or demonstrating the gospel message.

- Mark's Gospel treats miracles as symbolic demonstrations of the kingdom of God rather than validations of Jesus and the gospel.
- Matthew's Gospel uses miracles to portray Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise to raise up a prophet like Moses.
- Luke's Gospel and Acts refer to the miracles of Jesus and the early Christ-followers as validating signs and wonders. Miracles in Acts work within a mutually interpretative relationship with the Gospel message.
- John's Gospel describes Jesus' miracles as explanatory signs (σημεῖα, *sēmeia*); the text never calls them "miracles".
- Miraculous signs and wonders are confirmations of Paul's apostleship and valuable evangelistic tools (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12). Paul considers the ability to perform miracles a spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:10, 28–29).

Throughout the New Testament, enemies of the Christ-movement are capable of performing miraculous signs and wonders:

- *Mark 13:22* and *Matt 24:24* attribute signs and wonders to "false Christs" and "false prophets".
- 2 Thessalonians 2:9 indicates that the "man of lawlessness" will perform signs and wonders to deceive Christ-followers.
- Revelation refers to signs and wonders as both heavenly visions and as instruments of Satan's forces (*Rev 12:1, 3; 13:13–14; 15:1; 19:20*).

G. Functions of Biblical Miracles⁹

The function(s) of a miracle can be identified by several categories, including:

⁸ Ibid., Roberts

⁹ Ibid., Roberts

- *instrumental*—such as the heavenly manna (*Exod 16:11–21*), which serves to provide nourishment for the Israelites;
- *communicative*—for example, the hand that writes on the wall of Belshazzar’s palace (*Dan 5*);
- *punitive*—like the tumors that afflict the Philistines while they possess the ark of the covenant (*1 Sam 5:6–12*);
- *sociopolitical*—as when God confirms that Elijah is the superior prophet by sending fire from the sky to consume his water-soaked offering (*1 Kgs 18*);
- *theological*—which can be divided further into four primary functions:
- validation of God—for example, the consumption of Elijah’s offering (*1 Kgs 18*) validates the superiority of the Hebrew God over Baal and questions Baal’s existence, and the heavenly voice and descending Spirit at Jesus’ baptism confirm His status as God’s Son;
- *validation of God’s message*—such as Moses’ miracles before Pharaoh (*Exod 7–12*);
- *signal of God’s activity*—such as Jesus’ miracles in Matthew and Mark;
- *divine act of salvation*—the miracles in Acts, for example, are themselves saving acts, not just signs of salvation.

III. Progressive Historical Perspective and Conclusion

It has lately been argued with much earnestness and force in Germany, particularly by J. Wendland, in his *Miracles and Christianity*, that belief in miracles is indispensable to our apprehension of a real living God, and to our trust in His saving work in our own souls. The work of grace and salvation, indeed, is all so far miraculous that it requires the influence upon our nature of a living power above that nature. It is not strictly correct to call it miraculous, as these operations of God's Spirit are now an established part of His kingdom of grace. But they none the less involve the exercise of a like supernatural power to that exhibited in our Lord's miracles of healing and casting out of demons; and in proportion to the depths of man's Christian life will he be compelled to believe in the gracious operation on his soul of this Divine interposition.¹⁰

The chief object of miracles having been to authenticate the revelation God has made of his will, these mighty words ceased when the Scripture canon was completed and settled, and Christianity was fairly established. Since the close of the first century from the ascension of Christ, few or no undoubted miracles have been wrought; and whether a sufficient occasion for new miracles will ever arise is known only to God.¹¹

Questions for Consideration

1. *Have you ever observed a miracle?*
2. *Has a miracle ever been manifested in your life personally?*
3. *Does the presence or absence of having witnessed a miracle enhance or lessen your faith?*
4. *Do you feel the need to see a miracle?*
5. *Is God still God to you even if you never personally see a miracle?*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I.S.B.E.

¹¹ *Miracle*, Article from the American Tract Society

Resource: Miracles of the Bible

Old Testament Miracles

New Testament Miracles

The creation of all things, Ge 1:1-31.	The star in the east, Mt 2:3.
The deluge, comprising many miracles, Ge 6:1-22.	The Spirit like a dove, Mt 3:16.
The destruction of Sodom, etc., Ge 19:1-38.	Christ's fast and temptations, Mt 4:1-11.
The healing of Abimelech, Ge 20:17,18.	Many miracles of Christ, Mt 4:23-24; 8:16;
The burning bush, Ex 3:2-4.	14:14,36; 15:30; Mr 1:34; Lu 6:17-19.
Moses' rod made a serpent, and restored, Ex 4:3-4; 7:10.	Lepers cleansed, Mt 8:3-4; Lu 17:14.
Moses' hand made leprous, and healed, [Ex 4.6-7].	Centurion's servant healed, Mt 8:5-13.
Water turned into blood, Ex 4:9,30.	Peter's wife's mother healed, Mt 8:14.
The Nile turned to blood, Ex 7:20.	Tempests stilled, Mt 8:23-26; 14:32.
Frogs brought and removed, Ex 8:6,13.	Devils cast out, Mt 8:28-32; 9:32-33; 15:22-28; 17:14-18.
Lice brought, Ex 8:17.	Paralytics healed, Mt 9:2-6; Mr 2:3-12.
Flies brought, and removed, Ex 8:21-31.	Issue of blood healed, Mt 9:20-22.
Murrain of beasts, Ex 9:3-6.	Jairus' daughter raised to life, Mt 9:18,25.
Boils and blains brought, Ex 9:10,11.	Sight given to the blind, Mt 9:27-30; 20:34; Mr 8:22-25; Joh 9:1-7.
Hail brought, and removed, Ex 9:23,33.	The dumb restored, Mt 9:32-33; 12:22; Mr 7:33-35.
Locusts brought, and removed, Ex 10:13,19.	Miracles by the disciples, Mt 10:1-8.
Darkness brought, Ex 10:22.	Multitudes fed, Mt 14:15-21; 15:35-38.
First-born destroyed, Ex 10:29.	Christ walking on the sea, Mt 14:25-27.
The Red Sea divided, Ex 14:21-22.	Peter walking on the sea, Mt 14:29.
Egyptians overwhelmed, Ex 14:26-28.	Christ's transfiguration, etc., Mt 17:1-8.
Waters of Marah sweetened, Ex 15:27.	Tribute from a fish's mouth, Mt 17:27.
Quails and manna sent, Ex 16:1-36.	The fig tree withered, Mt 21:19.
Water from the rock, in Horeb, Ex 17:6.	Miracles at the crucifixion, Mt 27:51-53.
Amalek vanquished, Ex 17:11-13.	Miracles at the resurrection, Mt 28:1-7; Lu 24:6.
Pillar of cloud and fire, Nu 9:15-23.	Draught of fishes, Lu 5:4-6; Joh 21:6.
Leprosy of Miriam, Nu 12:10.	Widow's son raised to life, Lu 7:14,15.
Destruction of Korah, etc., Nu 16:28-35,46-50.	Miracles before John's messengers, Lu 7:21-22.
Aaron's rod budding, Nu 17:8.	Miracles by the seventy, Lu 10:9,17.
Water from the rock, in Kadesh, Nu 20:11.	Woman healed of infirmity, Lu 13:11-13.
Healing by the brazen serpent, Nu 21:8,9.	Dropsy cured, Lu 14:2-4.
Balaam's ass speaks, Nu 22:28.	Malchus' ear restored, Lu 22:50-51.
Plague in the desert, Nu 25:1,9.	Water turned to wine, Joh 2:6-10.

Water of Jordan divided, Jos 3:10-17.	Nobleman's son healed, Joh 4:46-53.
Jordan restored to its course, Jos 4:18.	Impotent man healed, Joh 5:5-9.
Jericho taken, Jos 6:6-20.	Sudden crossing of the sea, Joh 6:21.
Achan discovered, Jos 7:14-21.	Lazarus raised from the dead, Joh 11:43-44.
Sun and moon stand still, Jos 10:12-14.	Christ's coming to his disciples, Joh 20:19,26.
Gideon's fleece wet, Jg 6:36-40.	Wonders at the Pentecost, Ac 2:1-11.
Midianites destroyed, Jg 7:16-22.	Miracles by the apostles, Ac 2:43; 5:12.
Exploits of Samson, Jg 14:1-16:31.	Lame man cured, Ac 3:7.
House of Dagon destroyed, Jg 16:30.	Death of Ananias and Sapphira, Ac 5:5,10.
Dagon falls before the ark, etc., 1Sa 5:1-12.	Many sick healed, Ac 5:15-16.
Return of the ark, 1Sa 6:12.	Apostles delivered from prison, Ac 5:19.
Thunder and rain in harvest, 1Sa 12:18.	Miracles by Stephen, Ac 6:8.
Jeroboam's hand withered, etc., 1Ki 13:4,6.	Miracles by Philip, Ac 8:6,7,13.
The altar rent, 1Ki 13:5.	Eneas made whole, Ac 9:34.
Drought caused, 1Ki 17:6.	Dorcas restored to life, Ac 9:40.
Elijah fed by ravens, 1Ki 17:6.	Peter delivered from prison, Ac 12:6-10.
Meal and oil supplied, 1Ki 17:14-16.	Elymas struck blind, Ac 13:11.
Child restored to life, 1Ki 17:22-23.	Miracles by Paul and Barnabas, Ac 14:3.
Sacrifice consumed by fire, 1Ki 18:36,38.	Lame man cured, Ac 14:10.
Rain brought, 1Ki 18:41-45.	Unclean spirit cast out, Ac 16:18.
Men destroyed by fire, 2Ki 1:10-12.	Paul and Silas delivered, Ac 16:25-26.
Waters of Jordan divided, 2Ki 2:14.	Special miracles, Ac 19:11-12.
Oil supplied, 2Ki 4:1-7.	Eutchus restored to life, Ac 20:10-12.
Child restored to life, 2Ki 4:32-35.	Viper's bite made harmless, Ac 28:5.
Naaman healed, 2Ki 5:10,14.	Father of Publius, etc., healed, Ac 28:8,9.
Gehazi's leprosy, 2Ki 5:27.	
Iron caused to swim, 2Ki 6:6.	
Syrians smitten blind, etc., 2Ki 19:35.	
Hezekiah healed, 2Ki 20:7.	
Shadow put back, 2Ki 20:11.	
Pestilence in Israel, 1Ch 21:14.	
Jonah preserved by a fish, Jon 1:17; 2:10.	