

# LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE

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Miracles don't happen every day.

If you base your life upon the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus, though it occurred 2,000 years ago, your life will be filled with wonder. But if you base your life upon contemporary miracles, it may be a long walk to the next rest stop.

If someone asked you, "What is a miracle? Define a miracle." What would you say?

- Unusual event.
- Contrary to natural law.
- Inexplicable.
- Supernatural event.
- Something only God could do (humanly impossible).

Have you ever experienced a miracle?

A Roman soldier, named Cornelius, did. He was a prayerful man, and generous to the poor. He was a Gentile (not a Jew), yet He believed in and sought after Jehovah, the God of the Jews. Gentiles like Cornelius were called "God-fearing." But nothing Cornelius had done prepared him for what happened; it was out of the ordinary and unprecedented.

One afternoon, as Cornelius prayed, he saw an angel approaching him. The angel called him by name! He was terrified. Perhaps it was the angel of death (there was precedent for that!).

It was not. This angel bore good news: *"Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering!"* (Acts 10:4).

Then, the angel gave Cornelius very specific instructions: *"Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore"* (Acts 10:5-6).

The name of a nearby town, a homeowner's name, address, and occupation, and the name of his houseguest, whom Cornelius was to invite to his home. Mysterious, yet detailed!

*Acts 10:25 As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him. <sup>26</sup> But Peter pulled him up and said, "Stand up! I'm a human being just like you!"*

Cornelius' action was understandable—after all, he had been visited by an angel, who spoke with him. This was all too wonderful!

But Peter was emphatic: “I am just like you!”

A few chapters later...

*Acts 14:8* While they were at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting<sup>9</sup> and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, Paul realized he had faith to be healed.<sup>10</sup> So Paul called to him in a loud voice, “Stand up!” And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.

The crowd went berserk: “These men are gods in human form!”

They were so excited, that they called for the local Greek priest and began to prepare an animal sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, assuring each other that these men were actually gods.

*Acts 14:14* But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting,<sup>15</sup> “Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you!”

There it is again—that confusion of the human and the divine, equating supernatural power with God alone. But the message of the Gospel (the Good News) is that heaven has invaded earth, the Kingdom of God has come, the divine and the human have merged, and, as a result, supernatural things really happen in human experience!

“We are merely human beings—just like you!”

The Good News also teaches that religious exercises that ignore or deny the Lord Jesus Christ are hollow and deceptive superstitions, which are worthless for spiritual progress, and should be abandoned in favor of the reality of Christ.

*Acts 14:15* We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.

Rather than honoring gods that have been invented by human imagination or created by human hands (really, no-gods), we should honor the real God, the Maker of heaven and earth and all that is in them, the Living God, who relates with us by speaking and acting, the Saving God, who loves us and gave Himself for us.

He used to be known only to the Hebrew people, to whom God gave the Law and the prophets, while all other peoples were permitted to live however they chose. But He did not cut off the Gentile world altogether.

*Acts 14:16* In the past He permitted all the nations to go their own ways,<sup>17</sup> but He never left them without evidence of Himself and His goodness. For instance, He sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts.”<sup>18</sup> But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.

This is key! God wants to be known. He is not hiding Himself. He has always left a trail of breadcrumbs for people to follow.

The trail is not in miracles, for then most people would never see them.

His trail is in ordinary things—sunrises, sunsets, rain for the crops, fruitful seasons, and happiness. These are among His enduring witnesses. They are evidence of His gracious character. And they are ubiquitous.

They are not unique to any people, or language, or culture, or religion. They are not exclusive to any geographic region or climate or season. They are universal. Because God wants to be known.

God’s Word Translation: “Yet, by doing good, He has given evidence of His existence.”

The Message: “Evidence of good beyond your doing.”

This is more goodness than humans alone could arrange or produce.

But we have an awful tendency to ignore this evidence.

*Romans 1:20* For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

<sup>21</sup> Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship Him as God or even give Him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. <sup>23</sup> And instead of worshipping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

Are we so impressed with our own finite knowledge and reason that we ignore the Infinite One who made us so?

Or, are we so taken with the things God has made, that we refuse to acknowledge their Maker and give Him the praise He is due?

This is taking God for granted (at best). This is offensive to Him. It is sin.

This week, I want you to make a conscious effort to acknowledge God through the good elements of the natural world.

When you step out of an air-conditioned office into the sunshine, and you feel its warm rays caressing your skin and relaxing your muscles, don't just say to yourself, "I love the sun!" Instead, also say, "I love God who gave the sun to warm us!"

If you're driving home from the City, notice those California hills, tinged with grass that's browning from the heat, and say, "God, what a beautiful Creator you are!"

When the setting sun turns the clouds to a fiery pink-orange, don't just say, "Wow! What a sunset!" Instead, also say, "God, I love how you paint the evening sky!"

As you sit down to your evening meal, and you taste something special that you enjoy, don't just say, "Mmmm, that's good." Remember to also say, "God created these flavors for us to enjoy! Thank You, Lord!"

Everything that seems good to you in life was either created by God for your enjoyment, or He gave you the ability to enjoy it. Let Him know you're thinking of Him. Give Him thanks.

Turn your world back into God's world simply by recognizing His handiwork and acknowledging Him with thankfulness. He made these things as witnesses to His great goodness, and for you to enjoy.

Miracles don't follow superstitious people. Miracles don't follow religious people. And real Christians don't chase miracles.

Miracles follow people who acknowledge God—the God who works miracles. So, the more you acknowledge Him, the more miracles you'll witness.

If you want more of earth's turmoil, think a lot about the things of earth and just squeeze God in when you must.

If you want more of heaven's grace, think a lot about the things of heaven and just let the things of earth in when you must.

*“Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:2-3).*

Your mission (if you accept it) is to let God be God, and you be His everyday worshipper. Look for the evidence of His presence and goodness in the ordinary things of your life and, as you find them, acknowledge His handiwork with thanksgiving and praise.