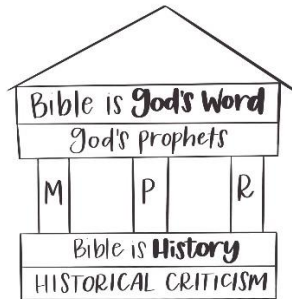


# Miracle

## Evidence for Christianity Session 2

William L. Custer 1/17/2021

1. Review of Session 1 on Faith and Evidence
  - a. Romans 10:17 "Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ."
  - b. Faith involves intellectual assent to the facts of the gospel and personal trust in Jesus as Lord
  - c. Example of Blondin over Niagara Falls



2. Jesus and the Apostles offered miracle and fulfilled prophecy as evidence
  - a. Mark 2:1-12 "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins...I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."
  - b. Jn 20:30, 31 "... many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."
  - c. Acts 1:3 "... He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God."
  - d. Acts 2:22 "Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst..."
  - e. I Cor 12:8 List of the gifts of the Spirit.
3. The two big miracles of the Bible
  - a. The Exodus
  - b. The Resurrection
4. Examples of Miracle
  - a. Nature - Water into wine, Jn 2:1-11; stilled the sea storm, Lk 8:22-25; walked on water, Matt 14:25; feed 5000, feed 4000
  - b. Diseases - Leprosy, paralysis, blind, lame
  - c. Timing - Jonah cast into the sea and the storm stopped, ship arrived at port three days later and the sea creature spit Jonah out alive
  - d. Raising the dead - Widow of Nain's son, Lk 7:11-17; Lazarus, Jn 11:1-44; Dorcas, Acts 9:36-42; Euthycus, Acts 20
  - e. Is power over unclean spirits a miracle, it is not listed in the gifts of the Spirit, I Cor 12, 14
5. What is a Miracle? Three Aspects seen in Acts 2:22
  - a. Mighty Work - dunamis
  - b. Wonder - teras
  - c. Sign - sameion

6. Miracle as a Power
  - a. The power of God confronts the power of evil. Not all that is supernatural is good,
  - b. Idolatry attributed to rebellious spirits. Deut. 32:16, 17; I Cor. 10:20; I Tim 4:1.
  - c. Greater power needed
  - d. The power is a Person unlike magic where power is in the incantation or wand
  - e. Moses and Pharaoh's magicians had a contest between Jehovah and the god's of Egypt.
    - They could duplicate the early miracles but they could not make lice.
    - Moses's snake devours the snakes of Pharaoh's magicians.
  - f. Illustration – Video “The Prince of Egypt”
  - g. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mt. Carmel, II Kgs 18:20-40
  - h. The case of Mr. Kwo and the spirit who demanded that on the first and fifteenth of each month incense was to be burned, food offered, and prostrations be made before the shrine of the goddess. He became a Christian and the unclean spirit left. See Merrill Unger's book Demons in the World Today, pp. 104-106.
  
7. Miracle as a Wonder
  - a. Miracles were unusual, not the norm and therefore result in wonder
  - b. They marveled XYZ
  - c. The Exodus and the Resurrection are the two grand miracles of the Bible
  - d. Performing miracles is listed as one of the nine spiritual gifts in I Cor 12 and 14
  - e. Discerning of spirits is also listed as a gift in I Cor, but casting out unclean spirits is not. Should we conclude that all Christians have power over unclean spirits?
  
8. Miracle as a Sign
  - a. Many signs, Jn 20:30, 31; attested by signs, Acts 2:22
  - b. What do signs do, they point. How do miracles point?
  - c. Miracles point to the supernatural
  - d. Miracles point to a person unlike magic which points to an incantation or object (wand).
    - Compare Harry Potter's wand
    - Compare Micky Mouse in Fantasia where weird things happen due to bad spells
    - Compare Lloyd Douglas, The Robe, where the power is in the robe
  - e. Biblical miracles solve life's problems
    - Compare healing pattern baldness to resurrection.
    - Compare apocryphal miracle, child Jesus makes clay birds that fly away
  
9. Purpose of Miracle - Evidence
  - a. Not primarily to get sick folks well but to confirm the claims of the Jesus, the Apostles, and Prophets.
  - b. Healing of the paralytic “in order that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” Mark 2:1-12
  - c. Jesus did heal out of compassion: widow of Nain, Lk 7:11-17; Feeding 4000, Matt 15:32, Mk 8:2-3; Also, Matt 14:14 and Matt 20:4, but that does not seem to be the primary purpose.
  - d. Jesus had the power to heal everyone, which He did in some towns (Matt 8:16-17) but in general He did not. Jesus was asked about healing everyone and mentioned Elijah
  - e. Elijah – sent only to the widow of Zarephath in Sidon. Were not many widows in Galilee, Lk 4:26
  - f. Paul prayed for his thorn in the flesh to go away, II Cor 12: 6, 7
  - g. Suffering has a purpose, if all suffering were eliminated by miracle then there would be no gain in character, II Pet 1: 3-9; Rom 5:3-5; Js 1:2-4

10. Providence: Less Evidence Same God
  - a. A miracle is distinct from Divine Providence by its evidential value, both come from God, either could be an answer to prayer
  - b. About some answers to prayer one might say, that could have happened anyway.
  - c. Some prayers clearly result in miracle. Ruth Ann Custer Freeman tells of the healing of her daughter Amy's arm broken by a compound fracture. They were in Africa, far from medical help, she did all she knew how to do, she prayed and watch the bone withdraw and the flesh heal
  
11. How does a miracle prove anything? How is it a sign?
  - a. A miracle shows intelligent design
  - b. Compare Wrex the crash dummy
  - c. Compare communicating with our cat Sebastian
  - d. William A. Dembski, Intelligent Design
  
12. Science and the logic of confirmation
  - a. The traditional scientific method used an informal fallacy called The Fallacy of Affirming the Consequent. If it's raining, I'll get wet. I got wet. Therefore, it's raining.
  - b. Philosophers of Science discovered this problem in the 1950's and widely accepted by the 1970's
  - c. Statical method rescues experimental science
  - d. Many scientific theories involve non-repeatable events and therefore statistics don't help
  - e. History involves non-repeatable events and therefore statistics don't help
  - f. For non-repeatable events the method of confirmation is "best explanation of all the evidence, that is logically consistent and simple
  - g. Use of animals to test vaccines uses a special type of best explanation argument called an argument from analogy
  
13. Arguments from miracle and fulfilled prophecy to Jesus as Son of God and the Bible as God's Word are arguments from "best explanation" of the evidence.
  
14. Supernatural events today are well documented
  - a. Angels – See Billy Graham's book Angels.
  - b. Healings – See Craig Keener, Miracles
  - c. Occult Supernatural – Jack Cottrell records a story from Wendell Freeman who witnessed an African witch doctor heal a badly withered leg. See Cottrell, The Reasons for our Hope, p. 24.
  
15. What is a Miracle?
  - a. A miracle is an event not produced through natural causes; not possible based on our experience
  - b. Not a violation of the laws of nature, but an event not produced by natural causes
  - c. Compare "he died of natural causes" with he was raised from the dead through natural causes"
  - d. Laws of nature are merely generalizations on our experience. When we experience something new, we don't deny it but modify our generalizations and our expectations.
  - e. Illus: farmer who saw a giraffe for the first time said "There's no such animal"
  - f. People in Jesus's day did not expect a Virgin Birth, See Lewis "Religion and Science," pp. 72-75.
  - g. Example: Floating axe head, II Kgs 6:6
  - h. Example: Jonah and the Sea Creature
  
16. David Hume (1711-1776) argued that miracles are not possible
  - a. Hume said: a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature and since a firm and alterable experience has established those laws, miracles cannot happen

- b. This reading of Hume's argument is circular: if our experience is firm and unalterable, then of course miracles don't happen.
  - c. In spite of circularity, Hume's argument is still repeated to this day
17. David Hume alternately argued that historical evidence could never establish a miracle
- a. Hume argued that one could never confirm that a miracle happened because improbable events cannot be historically confirmed.
  - b. Hume's Catch-22: For an event (miracle) to be interesting it must be unnatural and therefore improbable; but if improbable, historical evidence is not sufficient to confirm it.
  - c. The odds of a perfect Bridge hand are 1,635,013,559,600 to 1, but... / Geisler, Miracles, p. 31
  - d. One of the false canons of historical criticism, if the document describes a miracle, the document cannot be historical
  - e. But if God exists, if natural law is not the "whole show," then miracles are both possible & probable for a personal God who wants to communicate, so argues C. S. Lewis in Miracles
18. CS Lewis Refuted David Hume's Arguments
- a. Quote from his book Miracles (p. 7)\_"In all my life I have met only one person who claims to have seen a ghost. And the interesting thing about the story is that person disbelieved in the immortal soul before she saw the ghost and still disbelieves after seeing it. She says that what she saw must have been an illusion or a trick of the nerves. And obviously she may be right. Seeing is not believing.
  - b. Lewis continues: "For this reason, the question whether miracles occur can never be answered simply by experience. Every event which might claim to be a miracle, is in the last resort, something presented to our senses, something seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted. And our senses are not infallible. If anything extraordinary seems to have happened, we can always say that we have been the victim of an illusion."
  - c. Lewis continues: "If we hold a philosophy which excludes the supernatural, this is what we shall always say. What we learn from experience depends on what kind of philosophy we bring to experience. It is therefore useless to appeal to experience before we have settled, as well as we can, the philosophical question."
19. What is a Miracle? William Lane Craig
- a. After discussing three views of the "laws of nature" William Lane Craig responds to Hume: "On none of these theories, then, should miracles be understood as a violation of the laws of nature. Rather they are naturally (or physically) impossible events, events at certain times and places cannot be produced by the relevant natural causes. Now the question is, what could conceivably transform an event that is naturally impossible into a real historical event? Clearly, the answer is the personal God of theism." Reasonable Faith, chapter 4 "The Problem of Miracles," p. 144
20. Arguments for God's Existence
- a. Traditional "proofs" for God's existence based on certainty, have been replaced by arguments from "best explanation"; this follows a similar rejection of certainty in modern philosophy of science
  - b. Design in the universe is evidence of a Designer - an argument from analogy
  - c. Beginning of the universe (Big Bang) is evidence of an intelligent powerful First Cause
  - d. The universal sense of morality in all cultures is evidence of moral Law Giver
  - e. The existence of an intelligent, powerful, moral God adds to the credibility of miracle accounts
21. Deist's argument that Biblical miracles didn't happen
- a. Deist - God created the universe like a clock, wound it up, and does not tamper with it later
  - b. Most American Founding Fathers were not Deists, maybe three

- c. Jefferson, Washington prayed, and Franklin prayed
- d. Deist - If God had to tamper with the universe through a miracle it would indicate a flaw in the original creation
- e. Answer – flaws are not the only reason God might perform a miracle. He would do so to communicate. Compare our desire to communicate with pets

### **The Resurrection of Jesus**

1. Jesus was dead
  - a. Blood and water flowed from the wound
  - b. Roman soldiers said he was dead
2. The Empty Tomb
  - a. Stone covering the entrance, seal on the stone
  - b. Guard at the tomb
3. Resurrection Appearances
  - a. A dozen separate appearances (13 actually)
  - b. Over 40 days
  - c. To groups of witnesses, 500 at once
  - d. Jesus talked and ate with the

### **Prophecy**

1. II Pet 1:16-21 "... no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation (Gk "origin") for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."
2. Heb 1:1-4 "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets ... has spoken to us in His Son..."
3. Luke 24:25-27 "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."

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