
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What is a true miracle?**

Acts 3:1-10

¹ Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

² And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;

³ who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

⁴ And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."

⁵ So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

⁶ Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

⁷ And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

⁸ So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them; walking, leaping, and praising God.

⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

¹⁰ Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Here is a true Bible miracle. Notice some very important facts about this story:

- This lame man was obviously lame. Everyone in town knew that he was lame. He had been laid there at the gate all his life. This healing was something that everyone in town could see. It was not some tumor hidden inside his body that could not be verified. It was not something that could be attributed to a psychosomatic problem. This was not a subjective illness, but an objective case of a man lame from birth (verse 2).
- This man was not expecting to be healed (verse 5). He did not have faith in the preachers who were doing the healing. He did not have faith in Jesus Christ. He was

actually only begging for money and when the apostles approached him he was expecting to receive money, not healing.

- Peter and John did not have prayer. There was no ceremony. There was no anointing with oil. There was no "healing service." They did not ask the man if he had "faith to be healed." Peter just grabbed him by the hand and jerked him up to his feet.
- The healing was instantaneous -- immediate (verse 7). There was no rehabilitation period. It was not a matter of several weeks passing by and then the man gradually was able to walk with crutches and then several more weeks passed and with therapy, he could then limp along without crutches. No ... this was instant and immediate.
- The healing was permanent. This lame man did not have a relapse the next day. Acts 4:22 makes it apparent that once he was healed, he stayed healed!
- The healing could not be denied by even the enemies of the apostles. Notice carefully:

Acts 4:15-16

¹⁵ ... the [Jewish] council, ... conferred among themselves,

¹⁶ saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and **we cannot deny it.**

If these Jewish leaders could have denied this miracle, they certainly would have done so, but they were not able to deny it.

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

What then is a true, Bible miracle? A true Bible miracle is:

- Something that defies known medical and scientific laws.
- Something that is immediate.
- Something that is obvious even to enemies of the Lord.
- Something that can be verified and is objective.

This is why we say that miracles of healing do not occur today. Many people claim they see miracles, or that they have experienced miracles, but they do not experience this kind of healing.

- People who claim to heal today insist that the patient have faith in Jesus and in miracles first, but this man in Acts 3 had no faith.
- Elaborate ceremonies are conducted in which everyone present gets hyped up and once they are put into a positive frame of mind, they naturally feel better and feel more energy, but this is not miraculous healing. This is, as Norman Vincent Peale calls it, the "Power Of Positive Thinking."
- The maladies which are supposedly "healed" today are maladies which cannot be verified. Faith healers today claim to heal cancer, and tumors, and backaches, and headaches, and other such things which cannot be verified.
- The things which are supposedly "miraculous healings" today are not instantaneous and immediate. Faith healers today pray for healing to come and then several days pass, or worse, several weeks and months pass and when a poor soul begins to struggle out of bed with a walker and therapy, they declare they have performed a miracle.

MIRACLES WILL END

My friend, God heals people today, but He does not heal people miraculously! Just as God gives us our "daily bread," He also gives us healing, but He does so in a non-miraculous way.

We in the church of Christ are accused of "limiting God" when we say that miracles do not occur anymore, but the truth is, these so-called miracle workers are the ones limiting God. They do not believe God can work thru ordinary laws of medicine and science. They insist that the **only** way God can operate is miraculously.

Others argue that if God healed people miraculously in times past, He will do so today because God doesn't change. Here is where people are making the wrong assumption. Although God Himself does not change, He does change how He deals with people from generation to generation. For example:

- God once created a man out of the dust of the ground and He made a woman for that man from a rib taken from the man. Does God make men and women in this same way today?
- Again, God once became so disgusted with the world that He destroyed it with a flood. Does He do this today? Will He **ever** do it again?

The point is, although God is the same "yesterday, today, and forever," His methods of doing things change. God gave miracles in the Bible, not just so people wouldn't suffer. In fact, God assures us time and again that suffering and sickness and death are going to continue as long as this earth continues. God did not give miracles to undo the suffering that Adam brought in when he sinned. This won't be undone until we get to heaven.

Miracles were given to verify the truthfulness of the message preached by the apostles. They needed proof that what they preached was the truth. Miracles became that verifying proof.

Mark 16:20

²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

However, once the gospel message was confirmed true, miracles would end.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10

⁸ Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

¹⁰ But when **that which is perfect has come**, then that which is in part will be done away.

When "that which is perfect" comes, then miraculous power will cease. This "perfect thing" is said to be like a mirror, or a looking glass which allows men to see themselves as they really are. Notice verses 11 and 12:

1 Corinthians 13:11-12

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

¹² For now we see in a **mirror**, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

What is the "perfect thing" that, like a mirror, allows us to see ourselves as we really are? It is the NT scriptures:

James 1:22-25

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a **mirror**;

²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

²⁵ But he who looks into the **perfect law of liberty** and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Here the "perfect law of liberty" (the NT scriptures) is like a mirror and it allows us to see ourselves as we really are. Thus, we learn by putting these passages together, that miraculous power would end once the "perfect law of liberty" -- the NT scriptures -- were completely revealed and verified to be true and accurate.

I realize this may be new information to you, but I hope you will consider it very carefully. We must allow the scriptures to explain themselves. James 1 and 1 Cor. 13 explain the purpose and duration of miracles and this is a very important lesson which we learn from Acts chapter 3.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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