

# Miracles vs. Providence

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

## Introduction:

- A. Heb. 2:2-4; 1Peter 5:6-7
- B. How can one distinguish between them?
  - 1. "It was a miracle that we weren't killed." "I was hired on within three days of putting in my application; it was a miracle."
  - 2. Not from God's perspective; not from the Biblical descriptions and definitions of miracles

## I. WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

- A. Rom. 15:18-19 - Miracle or Power
  - 1. Greek words most often translated as such:
    - a. dunamis - "power"
    - b. exousia - "authority"
  - 2. Focus is on the event itself as well as its cause
    - a. Words denote the origin of event
  - 3. By definition, a miracle is not an ordinary result of natural processes; only explanation possible for a miracle is a clear and visible exhibition of the power of God
- B. Sign - semeion
  - 1. Emphasis is that signified by action to beholder - connotes instruction or persuasion
- C. Wonder - Translated most often from *teras*; "astonish, amazed, marvel, etc."
  - 1. Emphasis is on miracle from humanity's view; connotes effect on witnesses
- D. Uses of Miracle and power
  - 1. Acts 2:22 - Miracle or mighty work (dunamis - power)
  - 2. Acts 8:6, 13 - Power of God vs. deception (dunamis - power)
  - 3. Mark 2:10-12 - Divine authority demonstrated (exousia - authority)
  - 4. Luke 24:49 - Evidenced by pouring forth of the Holy Spirit (exousia - authority)
- E. Miracles not for curiosity or display, but for teaching
  - 1. Confirmed reason for faith - John 20:30-31
  - 2. Confirmed power to act - Matt. 9:6-8
  - 3. Confirmed the message revealed - Mark 16:20
  - 4. Taught by example of the action - Mark 8:11-29
- F. Miracles were not seen as natural phenomena
  - 1. Apparent by instant change - Luke 9:38-43
  - 2. Obviously different from natural law - Mark 2:12

## II. TRUE MIRACLES

- A. Creation - Psalm 33:6; Heb. 11:3
- B. Exodus, Wandering, and Conquest
  - 1. Plagues brought upon Egypt - Ex. 7-12

2. Led, fed, and sustained people in wilderness
  3. God delivered by dividing the Red Sea - Ex. 14
  4. Walls of Jericho made to fall - Joshua 6
  5. Sun stood still as enemies pursued - Joshua 10:12
- C. During Time of Prophets
1. Miracles worked by Elijah
    - a. Multiplying of food and resurrection - 1Kings 17:8-24
    - b. Fire brought upon sacrifice at Mount Carmel - 1Kings 18:37
  2. Miracles worked by Elisha
    - a. Division of Jordan River to cross - 2Kings 2:7-14
    - b. Man buried with Elisha raised - 2Kings 13:20
- D. During Earthly Ministry of Jesus
1. Multiplied food - Matt. 14:15, 15:32
  2. Healed the sick - Matt. 4:23, 9:35; Luke 4:40
  3. Made blind to see - John 9; Matt. 9:27, 20:30
  4. Lepers made whole - Mark 1:40; Luke 17:12
  5. Bodies made whole - Mark 3:1; Luke 22:50
  6. Raised the dead - Luke 7:11, 8:41; John 11:1
  7. Cast out demons - Luke 4:31, 8:26, 11:14
  8. Over natural world - Matt. 8:23; John 6:16
- E. During Apostolic Time
1. Lame man cured at temple - Acts 3:2-10
  2. Aeneas healed of palsy - Acts 9:32-35
  3. Dorcas raised from dead - Acts 9:36-42
  4. Crippled man healed at Lystra - Acts 14:8
  5. Demon cast out of woman - Acts 16:16-18
- F. Miracles performed by Paul - Acts 19:11-12
1. Eutychus raised from dead - Acts 20:9-12
  2. Unharmd by venomous viper - Acts 28:3

### **III. NATURE OF BIBLE MIRACLES**

- A. Bible miracles were INSTANTANEOUS
1. Did not start and slowly develop over time
  2. Witnesses saw previous condition and both start and finish of the action
- B. Bible miracles were BEYOND NATURAL EXPLANATION
1. Witnesses repeatedly declared them different from nature
  2. Action could not be explained by natural processes
- C. Bible miracles were EVIDENCE TO UNBELIEVERS
1. Not done to confirm believers or give 2nd grace
- D. Nature of Bible cases of healing
1. Healed all manner of diseases
  2. There were no failures
  3. There were no relapses after healing took place
  4. Miracle not conditioned on faith of one to be healed
  5. Subject was completely and perfectly healed
  6. Healing took place immediately

7. Nature of illness healed served as a sign to witness
8. No testimonial given about healing done elsewhere
9. No question about genuineness of miracle performed  
(Edited from material by Roy Cogdill and James D. Bales)

#### **IV. DEFINING PROVIDENCE**

- A. 1 Peter 5:6-7
- B. Prayers are often answered by Providence
  1. Providential help promised by God to saints
  2. Sought through prayer - James 5:13-18
  3. Gary Ogden - Prayer is pleading the promises of God
  4. We know God helps
    - a. We know why He helps
    - b. We know who He helps
    - c. We cannot know with certainty when, how, or where He helps
- C. Not prayers to God for miraculous action
  1. Matt. 21:18-22; 1Kings 17:21-24
  2. Miracles give evidence generating faith in the word of God
  3. Providence given for a different purpose: care for saints, not for evidence to others
    - a. Not as a summons to others to believe based on our personal speculation about the Providence and subsequent testimony.
    - b. "The Lord helped me win this race"
- D. Since we do not know when, how, or where God will supply us with our needs, let us keep our focus on praying for His care and thanking Him when we receive it.
  1. Let us leave off all speculation about when, how, and where He has helped us
  2. That activity inevitably leads to discouragement and doubt