



# *Foundations of*

# FAITH

## Miracles of the Bible

### Lesson 13

The Bible is an extraordinary book, not only because of its moral teachings, but also because of the extraordinary miracles which it records. Since the word miracle has been much misused, a correct definition must be given.

**MIRACLES DEFINED.** Two New Testament Greek words are translated “miracle” in the King James Version of the Bible. One signifies “an act of power” while the other properly means “a sign”. A miracle, then, is an act of unusual power designed as a sign of divine authority. The word is often erroneously applied to anything unusual or difficult to explain. Correctly, a miracle occurs when the natural laws of the universe are restrained by the hand of God so that an otherwise unexplainable phenomenon results. For example, if a football released from a skyscraper rose in the air instead of falling to the ground, that would be a miracle because the law of gravity requires that it descend. On the other hand, if a sick person who is given only six months to live would gradually recover, that would not be a miracle since the recovery would have been effected through the natural laws instead of in opposition to them. While we might be unable to explain the recuperation, this is not a miracle because the natural laws have not been restrained.

**DID MIRACLES OCCUR IN BIBLE TIMES?** The sceptics have long attacked the Bible on the ground that miracles were figments of the imagination. This lesson is too brief for a detailed defence of miracles, but it may be suggested that if we grant the existence of God then a miracle is no more difficult to accept than the ordinary laws of nature. To a God who is all

powerful it is no harder to raise the dead than to put into operation the natural process of birth. Both are demonstrations of divine power. The reason that some accept the one and reject the other is that they have seen the one demonstrated and the other they have not. Actually, to prove the existence of God is to prove the **possibility** of miracles.

We should beware of those who would try to explain away every miracle in the Bible as a natural phenomenon. True, God has used the natural laws to accomplish his ends. Some of the ten plagues of Egypt were simply natural manifestations, timed by divine providence to make Pharaoh agree to let Israel leave Egypt. We are assured, “All things work together for good to them that love God.” (Romans 8:28) This statement of Paul refers to nothing miraculous. Yet, it is infidelity to explain away Biblical miracles on the ground that they were simply natural occurrences. No fair-minded person can read the account of Jesus feeding 5000 people with a few loaves and fishes and deny that the scriptures claim a miraculous multiplication of food. One might reject the accounts as untrustworthy if he does not believe the Bible, but he can hardly deny that the scriptures claim a miracle.

**OLD TESTAMENT MIRACLES.** The Old Testament describes a number of miracles, beginning with creation itself. By a miracle the first man was formed by God from the dust of the earth. (Genesis 2) A few of the miracles performed before Christ include the passing of Israel through the Red Sea (Exodus 14), the giving of manna and quail to Israel (Exodus 16), the fall

of the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6), and the raising of two children from the dead. (I Kings 17 and II Kings 4)

**THE NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES.** A majority of Biblical miracles are recorded in the New Testament. The largest portion was performed by Jesus, although miracles were also performed by the apostles and other Christians. Some were over the forces of nature as when Jesus turned water into wine (John 2) or walked upon the water. (Matt. 14) A greater number were miracles of healing. Because of present day claims of miracle workers, an examination of the methods of Jesus is in order. Notice the following:

(1) Jesus never healed to secure notoriety. In fact, he sometimes told those he healed, "See you tell no man" (Matt. 8:4), or "See that no man know it." (Matt. 9:30) In contrast, modern day healers seem intent on securing as much publicity for themselves as possible.

(2) Jesus and his disciples healed all sorts of afflictions. When he sent out the twelve, "He gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal **all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.**" (Matt. 10:1) Of the healing of the apostles it is said, "There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one." (Acts 5:16) Compare these examples with twentieth century healers who screen their candidates to remove the genuinely organically sick.

(3) Again, Jesus never made faith on the part of the ones being healed a universal condition of healing. There are about 31 recorded healings performed by Jesus. Of these, one required faith, and one it was commended and healing attributed to it. But in 15 cases no faith was required, in nine nothing is said of its presence, in one case the patient had it but it was not required, and in four cases faith was impossible. In other words, the requirement of faith was the exception, not the rule. Lazarus, for example, had no faith when he was raised from the dead. In contrast, modern healers invariably explain their failures by saying that their patients lacked faith.

(4) Jesus never healed partially. The blind, the lame, and the deaf recovered completely. They did not just improve or say they felt better. They had no relapses a few weeks later. Today, however, those who claim to have been miraculously healed will often admit that they are not completely cured. Moreover,

they are often back in the same condition a few weeks later.

(5) Jesus healed instantly. He would touch a person or speak a word and immediately the sick would recover. There was nothing gradual about it. If healing is gradual, it is not a miracle since a miracle necessitates restraining the laws of nature, which does not happen in a gradual recovery. True, a gradual recovery may be in answer to prayer. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16) Christians should pray for the sick in accordance with God's will. But if the recovery is gradual it is not a miracle although it may result from prayer.

**THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES.** Biblical miracles were not performed for the sake of the miracles themselves. In other words, Jesus healed the lame, not just to make them walk, but to prove that he was from God that he might establish faith on the part of the healed and the witnesses. One writer declares, "The miracles are to be credentials for the bearer of that good work." (Trench, **Notes on Miracles.**) After recording many of the miracles of Jesus, John states, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through his name." (John 20:30-31) The Jews understood miracles to be a sign of divine authority when they asked Jesus as he drove the money-changers out of the temple, "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" (John 2:18) They desired a miracle to prove that he had the authority to do as he did. When Moses was instructed by God to lead his people out of Egypt he complained that they would not listen to him. Therefore the Lord gave him the ability to perform three miracles designed to show that he was from God. (Exodus 4)

**FALSE MIRACLE WORKERS.** When Moses returned to Egypt and demonstrated his miraculous powers, the sorcerers of Pharaoh were apparently able to duplicate some of his powers, although not all. It is evident that their power, if real, did not come from God. Jesus warns us of false miracle workers, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matt. 24:24) Again, he says, "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy

name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matt. 7:22, 23)

We must put these charlatans to the test “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1) Under the Law of Moses, a simple test was applied to workers of signs. They were tested by their doctrine. If their teaching was wrong, they were to be put to death. (Deut. 13:1-5) We must also reject those whose teaching does not agree with the New Testament.

**DO WE HAVE MIRACLES TODAY?** God can do anything. If he desires, he can perform any miracle that he did in the Bible times. **But does he?** Jesus gave the apostles ability to bestow miraculous power on other Christians. For example, the apostles Peter and John gave miraculous spiritual gifts to the Samaritan converts of Philip. We read, “Simon saw that through the laying on of the **apostles’** hands the Holy Ghost was given.” (Acts 8:18) As far as we are told, only the apostles could transmit these miraculous gifts. It follows, then, that with the death of the last ones upon whom the apostles had bestowed these powers, miracles would end. This agrees with Paul. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul describes nine spiritual gifts. Then

he says, “Yet show I unto you a more excellent way.” (1 Cor. 12:31) A discussion of love and its superiority to miracles follows. Paul then declares, “Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away ... but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.” 1 Cor. 13:8, 10 – A.S.V.) In selecting three of the nine spiritual gifts as typical of all, he shows that when that which was perfect had come, miracles would cease. And what is “the perfect”? Some say it refers to the person of Christ. This cannot be for “that which is perfect” is neuter gender, not masculine as would be necessary if this meant Christ. The root word from which perfect is translated means “brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect.” (Thayer, **Greek-English** Lexicon, p. 618) It seems clear that Paul had in mind the completion of God’s revelation which at that time was in the process of being placed in written form in the New Testament scriptures. In fact, James speaks of this revelation as “the **perfect** law of liberty.” (James 1:25) Since this divine revelation has been “brought to its end, finished,” the need for spiritual gifts as a witness of authority is no longer required. They have served their purpose and have ceased.

### TEST ON LESSON 13

Write **true** or **false** after the following statements:

1. A miracle is anything unusual. ....
2. All the miracles in the Bible may be explained as natural phenomena. ....
3. The first miracle recorded in the Bible is that of creation. ....
4. Jesus healed people just to get them well. ....
5. Miracles were intended to prove that the workers of the miracles were from God. ....
6. We should accept any man who claims to work miracles. ....
7. God is unable to perform miracles today. ....
8. Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 13 that miraculous gifts would cease. ....

List **five** characteristics of the healing of Jesus.

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 1. .... | 4. .... |
| 2. .... | 5. .... |
| 3. .... |         |

What miracle is recorded in each of the following scriptures?

- 1. Genesis 19:23-25 .....
- 2. Exodus 7:19-20 .....
- 3. Exodus 14:16-22 .....
- 4. Joshua 6:1-20 .....
- 5. I Kings 13:1-4 .....
- 6. I Kings 17:8-16 .....
- 7. I Kings 17:17-23 .....
- 8. II Kings 5:1-14 .....
- 9. John 2:1-11 .....
- 10. Matthew 8:14-15 .....
- 11. Mark 5:1-15 .....
- 12. Matthew 9:1-8 .....
- 13. Matthew 14:15-21 .....
- 14. Matthew 14:22-27 .....
- 15. John 9:1-7 .....
- 16. Luke 17:11-19 .....
- 17. Mark 7:31-37 .....
- 18. John 11:20-46 .....
- 19. Luke 22:49-51 .....
- 20. Acts 3:1-8 .....
- 21. Acts 9:36-41 .....
- 22. Acts 20:9-12 .....

# Miracles of the Bible

## Lesson 13

### Answers

These lessons are based on the King James Version, so if you are using another translation the words employed may vary slightly. Sometimes an alternative answer is possible. The following is a useful guide.

Section 1 – F, F, T, F, T, F, F, T.

Section 2 – (Order not important)

He did not heal to secure notoriety.

He healed all sorts of afflictions.

He did not make faith a universal condition of healing.

He never healed partially.

He healed instantly.

Section 3 – (It is not necessary to state in these answers who performed the miracle.)

1. Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed
2. Water turned into blood
3. Red Sea divided so Israel could pass through
4. Walls of Jericho fall
5. Jeroboam's hand dried up
6. Widow's meal and cruse of oil did not fail
7. Widow's son raised from dead
8. Naaman cured of his leprosy
9. Jesus turned water into wine
10. Jesus cured Peter's mother-in-law of fever
11. Jesus cast legion of devils out of man and they entered swine
12. Jesus cured man with palsy
13. Jesus fed 5000
14. Jesus walked on water
15. Jesus gave sight to blind man
16. Jesus healed ten lepers
17. Jesus healed deaf and dumb man
18. Jesus raised Lazarus from dead
19. Jesus restored ear to servant of high priest
20. Peter and John healed lame man at gate of temple
21. Tabitha (Dorcas) raised from dead
22. Eutychus raised from dead