

Women's Doctrinal Series

First Baptist Church, Paso Robles

Shelanie Voorheis, Director of Worship and Women's Ministry
rob.shel@fbcpasorobles.org

16 March 2019: Lesson 3--MIRACLES

Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. Psalm 115:3

What is doctrine and why do we care?

- Doctrine is the whole teaching of the Bible on a given subject. It matters because right _____(*mind*) leads to right _____(*heart/soul*) which lead to right _____(*strength*).
- 2 Peter 3:17-18

Assumptions:

- The Bible is:
 - _____: *The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God. (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, pg. 73)*
 - _____: *The inerrancy of Scripture means that the Bible always tells the truth, and...it always tells the truth concerning everything it talks about. This definition does not mean that the Bible tells us every fact there is to know about any one subject, but it affirms that what it does say about any subject is true. (Grudem 91)*
 - _____: *The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture...contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly. (Grudem 127)*

THE DOCTRINE OF MIRACLES

You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

Psalm 77:14

WHAT: *Mighty Acts, Signs, Wonders*

The Bible describes miracles usually, especially in the New Testament, in three terms: signs, wonders and mighty works. And therein you have the definition of miracles, really. They were mighty works to create wonder, to act as a sign.

What is a sign for? What is a sign for? To point to something. You know, when you're traveling and you arrive in Arizona, you don't climb up on the sign and say, "I'm now in Arizona," because the sign says "Welcome to Arizona." Or when you're going to Bakersfield and the sign says "Bakersfield," you don't sit up on the sign and say, "I'm in Bakersfield." No, that's just a sign pointing you to there. You haven't gotten there yet. Miracles are not an end to themselves. They're a what? They're a sign, and signs are for pointing somewhere.

John MacArthur, "The Bible Verifiable by Miracles," November 3, 1974

Definitions

Definition #1: *A direct intervention of God in the world.*

YES NO MAYBE

Problem:

Definition #2: *A more direct activity of God in the world.*

YES NO MAYBE

Problem:

Definition #3: *God working in the world without using means to bring about the results he wishes.*

YES NO MAYBE

Problem:

Definition #4: *An exception to natural law; God acting contrary to the laws of nature.*

YES NO MAYBE

Problem:

Definition #5: *An event impossible to explain by natural causes.*

YES NO MAYBE

Problem:

Definition #6: *A less common kind of God's activity in which he arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to himself.*

YES NO MAYBE

Problem:

Definition #7: *Acts of God that proclaim his sovereign power over creation as well as his commitment to the good of his people.*

YES NO MAYBE

Problem:

WHY:

1. To bring _____ to God.
 - a. Jesus heals a paralytic and the crowds *“were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.”* (Matthew 9:8)

2. To _____ the messengers and the message of the gospel.
 - a. Jesus’ miracles reveal His divine identity.
 - i. Jesus walks on water. His disciples respond, *“Truly, you are the Son of God.”* (Matthew 14:33)
 - ii. When asked whether he was the *“one who is to come,”* Jesus answers by pointing to his miracles. (Luke 7:19)
 - b. *“When miracles occur, they give evidence that God is truly at work and so serve to advance the gospel...This was true in Jesus’ ministry, but it was also true in the early church: when Philip went to a city in Samaria, the multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs which he did. For the unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice; and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city.”* (Acts 8:6-8), (Grudem, 360)

3. To bear witness to the fact that the _____ of God has come and begun to expand its beneficial results into people’s lives.
 - a. *“The results of Jesus’ miracles who the characteristics of God’s kingdom.”* (Grudem 360)
 - b. The Kingdom of God: *“God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule and blessing.”* Alistair Begg, sermon series titled, *The Kingdom of God.*
 - i. *“If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”* (Matthew 12:28)
 - c. Miracles *“lead not simply to cognitive belief, but to worship, to awe, and wonder. Jesus’ miracles in particular were never magic tricks, designed only*

to impress and coerce...Instead, he used miraculous power to heal the sick, feed the hungry, and raise the dead. Why? We modern people think of miracles as the suspension of the natural order, but Jesus meant them to be the restoration of the natural order. The Bible tells us that God did not originally make the world to have disease, hunger, and death in it. Jesus has come to redeem where it is wrong and heal the world where it is broken. His miracles are not just proofs that he has power but also wonderful foretastes of what he is going to do with that power. Jesus' miracles are not just a challenge to our minds, but a promise to our hearts, that the world we all want is coming." Tim Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, 95-96.

4. To _____ those who are in need.
 - a. Two blind men near Jericho cry out, "*Have mercy on us,*" and Jesus, "*in pity*" healed them. (Matthew 20:30, 34)

5. To remove _____ from people's ministries.
 - a. As soon as Jesus had healed Peter's mother-in-law, "*she rose and served him.*" (Matthew 8:15)

WHEN:

1. _____

Genesis. The Bible begins with one of God's greatest miracles — the creation of the universe out of nothing. However literally the various details are taken, Genesis 1-2 primarily describes not the "how" but the "who" of creation. Against somewhat similar stories in polytheistic religions, Genesis affirms the complete, cosmic sovereignty of the Lord God. All else is subordinate and never to be worshiped. Humanity is categorically distinct from the rest of creation by virtue of being created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28). The fall, followed by an increase in evil, begins to thwart God's creative purposes. The next major miracle, the flood, thus affirms both God's judgment on extreme wickedness and his grace in promising never again to destroy humanity so completely (6:3 ; 9:15-16). The promise does not preclude judgments of a lesser nature, though, such as Babel (11:1-9) or Sodom and Gomorrah (19:1-29). Miracles throughout the rest of Genesis deal primarily with God's preservation of his

chosen line, when his promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) seem about to be broken, most notably Sarah's conception of Isaac at an advanced age (21:1-7). A seemingly miraculous provision of water in the desert preserves Hagar and Ishmael (21:14-21), reminding us of God's care for other peoples as well.

Exodus-Deuteronomy. The first major cluster of biblical miracles surrounds the central Old Testament act of redemption the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Here too appear thirteen of the eighteen Old Testament uses of "signs and wonders, " an expression that focuses on the miracles' redemptive significance. In the burning bush, God reveals his name (Yahweh) to Moses as the eternally existing one and promises his presence with his servant who is terrified of what God is asking him to do (Exod 3). Further signs are promised to encourage him that he can overcome Pharaoh and the Egyptians (4:1-17). Ten plagues ensue, from which the Israelites are miraculously protected (7:14-11:10). None of the plagues itself is necessarily supernatural; in fact, their sequence is often scientifically logical. But their timing and geographical limitations point to God's sovereign intervention on Israel's behalf. The climactic plague of the death of firstborn sons finally motivates Pharaoh to let Moses and his people go. Pharaoh quickly changes his mind, though, and it seems that his armies will obliterate Israel. The miraculous crossing of the Sea of Reeds (14:21-31), therefore, becomes the prototypical Old Testament miracle of the deliverance of God's people and the destruction of his enemies (15:1-2). It also discloses God's merciful initiatives prior to his giving of the law (20:1-2); in the Old Testament as in the New Testament, salvation by grace precedes God's demands for good works. The Israelites' wandering in the wilderness is punctuated by various miracles of preservation and judgment rescue when it seems they will perish (by the ongoing provision of manna and quail chap. 16 and special provisions at key moments, most notably water from the rock 17:1-7 ; Num 10:1-13) and destruction of those who disobey God and challenge his appointed leaders (most notably the sudden deaths of Nadab and Abihu Lev 10:1-7 ; and the earthquake that swallows Korah and his fellow rebels Num 16). Plagues, too, require divine intervention to be stopped and Aaron's rod buds to authenticate him as the legitimate priest (chap. 17). In short, God's mighty Acts intend to foster dependence of his people on him, that they might not trust in themselves or any other gods. And, as with Hagar, he occasionally reminds them that he can work to and through people outside the chosen line, even in humorous ways (Balaam's donkey Num 22:21-35).

Joshua-2 Samuel. With Moses' death, Joshua becomes his appointed successor to lead the Israelites into the promised land. A water crossing (of the Jordan) similar to the exodus initiates this period and authenticates Joshua's privileged role (Joshua 3:7). Subsequent battles are often won or lost despite the relative strengths of the armies, to remind God's people that he alone is in charge (cf. esp. the conquest of Jericho versus the defeat at Ai chaps. 6-7). Although no miracle, per se, occurs as Gideon fights the Midianites, the confusion that causes his enemies to slay each other, despite the small number of opposing forces, is equally attributed to the Lord's direct intervention (Judg. 7). The report of sun and moon standing still while Joshua fights the Amorites comes in a poetic passage and is perhaps not meant to be taken as literal cosmic upheaval (Joshua 10:12-13). But it continues the theme of God's sovereign agency as the cause of victory. Subsequent miracles are also "borderline"Samson's superhuman strength when he is "filled with the Spirit" (Judges 13-16) and the ark's "power" over Dagon (1 Sam 5)

and the cattle that return it to Beth Shemesh (chap. 6). These and many other passages highlight how the biblical world's divisions between natural and supernatural were far more fluid than today and how most momentous events were attributed to various divinities.

First Kings-Nehemiah. The next major cluster of miracles involves the prophets Elijah and Elisha. The faithful remnant of Israel is locked in a mortal, spiritual battle with idolatry, especially Baal worship. The predominant purpose behind the miracles of these two prophets is to demonstrate Yahweh's superiority over Baal and to call God's people back to worship him. The classic expression of this combat comes at Carmel, as fire from heaven consumes Elijah's sacrifice and the prophets of Baal are destroyed (1 Kings 18:16-40). But other mighty deeds also demonstrate the Lord's supremacy over the pagan god of water, fertility, and life: Elijah alone can predict drought and rain (chaps. 17-18), and God will nourish his people (17:1-6) and others (vv. 7-16) during the former. Elisha purifies poisoned water and causes an axe head sunk in the river to float (2 Kings 2:19-22 ; 6:1-7). Both prophets, too, work Scripture's first miraculous resuscitations (1 Kings 17:17-24 ; 2 Kings 4:8-37). Elijah appropriately becomes the second person in history never to die but to be taken directly to heaven (2 Kings 2:1-18 ; cf. Enoch in Gen 5:24).

Elijah's successor certifies his prophetic role with closely parallel miracles. In addition to those already noted, Elisha provides unfailing oil for a needy widow (2 Kings 4:1-7), purifies a pot of food, feeds a hundred men with twenty small loaves, and again demonstrates God's concern for foreigners in healing Naaman's leprosy (4:38- 5:27). The latter two miracles closely resemble Jesus' later feeding of the multitudes, cures of lepers, and concern for Gentiles. Indeed Jesus himself will liken parts of his ministry to God's choice in the days of Elijah and Elisha to favor those outside Israel (Luke 4:25-27). Although Elisha dies a normal death, even his bones cause a corpse thrown into his grave to be resuscitated (2 Kings 13:20-21). The two other major miracles that occur in the Old Testament historical books involve the leprosy with which faithless Uzziah is afflicted and the sundial shadow's retreat as a sign to portend Hezekiah's recovery from illness (2 Kings 15:1-8 ; 20:1-11).

Job-Malachi. Two books whose genre is disputed contain major miracles: Job with his remarkable collection of afflictions and subsequent recovery and Jonah with his preservation by and expulsion from the great fish. Both teach of God's judgment and salvation, and of how even affliction is under his sovereign control for ultimately good purposes. The psalms frequently recount and reflect on God's past signs and wonders. The prophets speak of present and future signs, some more supernatural than others, to corroborate their message. Most famous is the prophecy of the virginal conception in Isaiah 7:14. The only other major cluster of Old Testament miracles centers on the life of Daniel and his friends in exile in Babylon. Once again Yahweh proves his supremacy over foreign gods and rulers. Thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are miraculously spared, while the great heat burns up their captors (Dan. 3). Thrown into the lion's den for praying to the Lord, Daniel too escapes harm (chap. 6). Other miracles give Daniel the ability to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream (chap. 2), and the miraculous writing on Belshazzar's wall (chap. 5).

Dictionaries - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology - Miracle, Craig T. Blomberg

2.

Matthew-John. The greatest of all biblical miracles is the incarnation God becoming human (John 1:1-18). Foreshadowed by the birth of John the Baptist to the previously barren Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-25), the virginal conception of Jesus, the God-man, fulfills prophecy (Matt. 1-2) and demonstrates the Spirit's parentage (Luke 1:26-38). Jesus' adult ministry regularly features miracles for a variety of purposes. Sometimes they respond to individuals' faith in Christ (e.g., Jairus Matt 9:18 ; and the hemorrhaging woman 9:22) or are hindered by their lack thereof (the disbelief in Nazareth Mark 6:4-6a). On other occasions they seem more designed to instill faith where it has been lacking (e.g., the stilling of the storm Mark 4:40 ; or the healing of the nobleman's son John 4:48).

Other important motifs include Jesus' compassion for the needy (e.g., in feeding the five thousand Mark 6:34 ; or in restoring the two blind men's sight Matt 20:34) and breaking down social barriers in preparation for the universal offer of the gospel (e.g., in cleansing the ritually impure lepers Mark 1:40-45 ; Luke 17:11-19 ; [where the thankful one is explicitly a Samaritan] healing the Syrophenician woman's daughter Mark 7:24-30 ; or feeding the four thousand in Gentile territory Matt 15:29-39). Frequently Jesus challenges the prevailing sabbath traditions (e.g., the man with the withered hand Mark 3:1-6 ; or the closely parallel healings of cripples in Luke 13:10-17 ; 14:1-6) and exposes Israel's predominant faithlessness (e.g., in praising the great faith of the centurion whose servant was sick Matt 8:5-13), including the periodic lack of faith of his own disciples (e.g., with the epileptic they could not cure Matt 17:14-21). In still other instances, Jesus wants to teach a lesson about sin. Sickness may be the result of one's own wickedness; its healing, therefore, an incentive to repent (John 5:1-15). In other cases, though, it is wrong to blame anyone; God's greater glory is what is involved (John 9:1-5).

But none of these themes proves as prominent as the most central one: Jesus works miracles to demonstrate that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated, the messianic age has arrived, and he is the Christ who will fulfill all of God's previous Scriptures. In explaining the significance of his exorcisms, Jesus makes this claim explicit (Matt 12:28). In replying to John the Baptist about his identity, the claim is more implicit but equally clear (Matt 11:4-5). Once he heals a paralytic to demonstrate his authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:9-10). His transfiguration is introduced as God's kingly reign come in power (Mark 9:1). Lazarus' revivification grounds Jesus' subsequent claim to be the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). And the evangelists' summaries regularly link his mighty deeds with his teachings so that the former legitimate the latter.

These direct statements give clues how to interpret some of the more unusual of Jesus' miracles that often have parabolic or symbolic elements. Turning water into wine probably demonstrates the joy attached to the arrival of the new age (John 2:1-11). Cursing the fig tree symbolizes the impending destruction of Israel just as much as the temple cleansing it sandwiches (Mark 11:12-25). Feeding the five thousand recalls the manna in the wilderness and sets up Jesus' bread of life discourse (John 6:1-15 John 6:25-59). Walking on the water is a theophany; Jesus' words of self-revelation echo Exodus 3:14 literally, "I am" (Mark 6:50).

Healing the deaf-mute effects a rare miracle predicted to herald the messianic age (Mark 7:31-37 ; cf. Isa 35:6). Raising the son of the Nain widow closely resembles the reanimations by Elijah and Elisha (Luke 7:11-17) and occurs on virtually the identical site as one of them (Old Testament Shunem). The two great fish catches point to the disciples' call to be spiritual fishers of people and to Peter's reinstatement after his denial for this continued ministry (Luke 5:1-11 ; John 21:1-14).

The greatest miracle of Jesus' life, of course, is his resurrection. Immediately following his death, nature heralds its unusual significance with an earthquake, the rending of the temple veil, and the opening of tombs of certain Old Testament saints, who would then be raised following Jesus' resurrection (Matt 27:51-54). God's resurrection of Jesus vindicates his claims, gives atoning meaning to his death, serves as a prelude to his ascension and exaltation, and makes eternal life and bodily resurrection available to all who trust in him. The best theological commentary on this event is 1 Corinthians 15.

Each evangelist has his own thematic emphases concerning Jesus' miracles...Luke highlights Jesus' compassion for the outcasts of society (4:18 ; 17:11-19) and his role as a new Moses (9:28-36) and Elijah/Elisha (7:1-28). John's views prove the most distinctive. Whereas the Synoptics use "signs" in a negative sense as that which unbelieving skeptics demand but do not receive save for the resurrection as the "sign of Jonah" (Matt 12:38-42), John consistently speaks of Jesus' miracles as "signs" meant to lead people to faith in Christ (2:11 ; 4:54 ; cf. 20:31). But he encourages a maturity that does not require dependence on miraculous proofs (4:48 ; 20:29). John also pairs seven signs with seven discourses to form the first major half of his Gospel (1:19-11:57). The signs require interpretive teaching even as they legitimate Jesus' claims.

Acts. Jesus' ascension ends his resurrection appearances, marks his return to the Father, and enables him to bestow the Spirit permanently on all believers (Acts 1:1-11). The Spirit comes with miraculous confirmation at Pentecost (2:1-3). Apostolic preaching picks up the Old Testament phrase "signs and wonders" to stress the redemptive significance of Christ's ministry (2:22) and to describe how the first Christians continued that work (4:30 ; 5:12), as commissioned earlier by Jesus himself. Many different believers perform miracles, not just the twelve (Stephen and Philip in Acts 6:8 and Acts 8:13), and they continue with about the same frequency throughout the book. Peter and Paul, as the two protagonists of the two halves of Acts (chaps. 1-12, 13-28), each work a specially large number, several pairs of which are remarkably parallel (earthquakes to get out of jail 12:5-10 ; 16:22-34 ; healings of the lame 3:1-10 ; 14:8-10 ; raising the dead 9:36-43 ; 20:7-12). The apostolic miracles often closely parallel Jesus' mighty works, too (cf. 9:32-35 ; and Mark 2:1-12 ; 9:36-42 ; and Mark 5:35-42). Luke thus stresses that the disciples are the authorized successors of Jesus, and that Peter's Jewish-oriented ministry and Paul's Gentile-centered work equally fulfill Christ's commission. As in other periods, occasional miracles also reflect God's judgment on his enemies (13:6-12) or his rebellious children (5:1-11).

Romans-Revelation. For Paul, healings and miracles are spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:9-10) God gives to those whom he chooses (vv. 29-30) throughout the entire period of history until Christ's return (1:7 ; 13:10-12). But he often withholds miraculous healing because of the remedial value of suffering (2 Cor 12:8-9). Miracles further certify apostolic credentials (12:12),

characterize Paul's ministry (Rom 15:19), and attest the truth of Christian life in the Spirit (Gal 3:5). Counterfeit miracles will proliferate in the end times (2 Thess 2:9), as Jesus himself had prophesied (Matt 24:24), and as Revelation will describe in greater detail (e.g., 13:13-14a). James attributes a ministry of anointing with oil and prayer for healing to the eldership of the local church (5:14-16).

Dictionaries - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology - Miracle, Craig T. Blomberg

3.

 - a. "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed...To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles...All these are inspired by the one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills." (1 Cor. 12:1-11)
 - b. "...the word {apportions} is a present participle in the Greek, indicating a continuing activity of the Holy Spirit." (Grudem 367)
 - c. "Though there does seem to have been an unusual concentration of miraculous power in the ministry of the apostles, this is not a reason for thinking that there would be few or no miracles following their deaths. Rather, the apostles were the leaders in a new covenant church whose life and message were characterized by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in miraculous ways. Furthermore, they set a pattern that the church throughout its history may well seek to imitate in its own life, insofar as God the Holy Spirit is please to work miracles for the edification of the church." (Grudem 368)

WHO:

1. _____
 - a. "In the Old Testament, miracles seemed to occur primarily in connection with one prominent leader at a time, such as Moses or Elijah or Elisha." (Grudem 359)

2. _____
 - a. "In the New Testament, there is a sudden and unprecedented increase in the miracles when Jesus begins his ministry (Luke 4:36-37, 40-41). However, contrary to the pattern of the Old Testament, the authority to work miracles and to cast out demons was not confined to Jesus himself...Even during his ministry, Jesus gave authority to heal the sick and to cast out demons not only to the Twelve, but also to seventy of his disciples (Luke 10:1, 9, 17-19; cf. Matthew 10:8; Luke 9:49-50)." (Grudem 359)

3. _____
 - a. "Moreover, the passages noted {here} (1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Cor. 12:10, Gal. 1:1, Gal. 3:5) from 1 Corinthians and Galatians indicate that performing miracles was not confined to the seventy disciples, but was characteristic of the churches of Galatia and the New Testament churches generally. This suggests that the occurrence of miracles is a characteristic of the New Testament church and may be seen as an indication of the powerful new work of the Holy Spirit that began with Pentecost and may be expected to continue through the church age." (Grudem 359)

-
4. _____
- a. May be known by:
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - b. "Pharaoh's magicians were able to work some false miracles (Ex.7:11, 22; 8:7), though they soon had to admit that God's power was greater (Ex. 8:19). Simon the sorcerer in the city of Samaria amazed people with his magic (Acts 8:9-11), even though the miracles done through Philip were much greater (Acts 8:13)...Paul says that when the man of sin {the antichrist} comes it "will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish" (2 Thess. 2:9-10)...This indicates that those who work false miracles in the end times by the power of Satan will not speak the truth but will preach a false gospel." (Grudem 368-369)
 - c.

HOW:

- 1. Not for _____ or _____
 - a. Remember Simon the magician to whom Peter said, "*your heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.*" (Acts 8:21-22)

- 2. Not for _____
 - a. Remember Herod: "*When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him.*" (Luke 23:8)

-
3. All for _____
- a. "Though I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:2)
 - b. "Gifts are not the main thing. Love is the main thing. Using gifts is one way to love...It is a great danger to want signs and wonders because they sound neat or merely because you think they could make your faith stronger. That is almost a sure way to spiritual self-centeredness. What we should really want is that Christ be honored through our self-sacrificing love for others...When that miracle happens, we might be in a position to experience the lesser gifts..." John Piper, *Gifts of Healings and Workings of Miracles*, March 4, 1990.

THREE CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDIES:

"There is no use going to the texts until we have some idea about the possibility or probability of the miraculous. Those who assume that miracles cannot happen are merely wasting time by looking into the texts: we know in advance what results they will find for they have begun by begging the question." C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*

- 1. Derren Brown YES NO MAYBE
- 2. Duane Miller YES NO MAYBE
- 3. Sophia Burnham YES NO MAYBE