

LESSON ONE

MINISTRY OF MIRACLES

A. WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

Scriptural References:

"By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus" (Acts 4:30).

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:28).

There are three words in the Scriptures, which have a similar meaning: signs, wonders and miracles. These refer to supernatural phenomena which are seen and observed but which cannot be explained by man's knowledge. They are effected by the direct operation of God's power.

What is a miracle?

It has been defined that a miracle is an act that is "violation of nature." However, this is not quite true. It would be more accurate to say that; "A miracle is a phenomenon that is contrary to what we know as nature. Actually, there is no such thing as a miracle with God because everything is not only possible with Him, but He understands everything. Only to man does a strange phenomenon become a miracle.

God can work contrary to the natural laws, which He Himself established in the act of creation and He also can work on a higher natural level, which would overcome the simple laws of nature known to man. In either case it becomes a miracle to man but not to God.

To illustrate this, let us think of the law of gravity. We may look at a large jet plane weighing several hundred tons. The law of gravity holds the plane to the ground, and it would certainly seem impossible for this heavy plane to lift off the ground. When eventually it travels down the runway and takes off, it seems a miracle. Actually the pull of gravity is still there but another power has taken over and the plane has yielded to a law higher than that of gravity.

Today we are surrounded by modern inventions, which certainly would seem miraculous one hundred years ago. The radio and television are miracles of modern science.

When God performs an act of supernatural power, He may be simply working on a higher level of natural laws. On the other hand He can suspend all natural laws and reverse everything. This He can because He is the Creator.

We might, therefore, attempt a simple definition by saying that: "A miracle is a supernatural event which may be seen and observed by man, but is beyond the understanding of man."

B. THE GOD OF CREATION IS THE GOD OF MIRACLES:

To believe in the Creator is to believe in the God of miracles. It is impossible to believe in one without believing in the other.

The two greatest of all miracles are "Creation" and "Redemption of Man." All other miracles are secondary in significance compared with these two wondrous acts of God.

God in sovereign power and wisdom brought the universe into being, and now continues to sustain and guide it. Nature has an order but that which He brought into being does not helplessly bind God. Nature is plastic in the hands of its sovereign Creator.

Faith in the "God of miracles" is a very important element here. Many times faith is built and inspired by the witnessing of miracles. On the other hand, faith is the element that moves the hand of God in the performance of the miraculous. Unbelief can hinder God in the performance of miracles. Jesus was unable to perform many miracles in His hometown of Nazareth because of unbelief. *"And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58).*

C. THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES:

Why did God perform miracles? Why does He continue to perform miracles? Does God perform miracles just to entertain Himself or to entertain man? Does He perform miracles just to prove that He can do these things? Are they acts of whim or mood? Does He perform miracles for the same reason that a magician would pull a rabbit out of a hat?

Certainly not!

Miracles do not just happen. There is a divine purpose behind every act of God. Almost without exception they take place in order to minister to the needs of man. God is continually calling man unto Himself and this is one of the means that He uses. By His mighty miracles God shows His infinite love to man. His mercy and compassion are revealed by His miracles. Even His miracles of judgment many times are acts of mercy. In Egypt His miracles of judgment against Pharaoh proved His power to His own people and strengthened their faith.

D. IS THE AGE OF MIRACLES PAST?

Agnostics and unbelievers often assert that the age of miracles is past. However, this is only an empty argument of those who do not believe the Bible. Nowhere does the Bible even hint that such a thing is true. On the contrary the Bible gives plenty of proof that the age of miracles is not past - that God is still performing miracles on behalf of His people.

We are still in the Church Dispensation. The Church Age began in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost and will not close until Jesus comes to catch away the Bride unto Himself. This Church Age began with many miracles and since we are still in this Church Age we can still expect miracles.

There is only one body and Jesus has placed within that body the "working of miracles." *"To another the working of miracles; to another..." (I Corinthians 12:10). "...after that miracles..." (I Corinthians 12:28). "Are all workers of miracles?" (I Corinthians 12:29).*

Certainly if the working of miracles has been placed in the body, we have every right to expect to witness miracles today.

In the Great Commission Jesus commissioned His disciples to perform miracles as a fruit of the Gospel ministry. *"In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents...and they shall recover"* (Mark 16:17-18).

The argument is sometimes brought forth that in Bible days miracles were needed to build faith and defeat demon powers. In all fairness if we are honest, we have to admit that our faith is under greater attack than at any time during history and demon power is stronger. If there ever were a day when we need to witness God's power in demonstration performing miracles, it is today.

Thank God, the day of miracles is still here.

Possibly the strongest proof of this fact is the Unchangeable Christ, *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever"* (Hebrews 13:8).

LESSON ONE

SELF HELP TEST

A. Why does God perform miracles?

B. What is a miracle?

C. Prove that the days of miracles are not past.

D. Why was Jesus not able to perform miracles in Nazareth?