

Grace Church
Roanoke, Virginia
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Elementary Apologetics
Lesson #14

WHY I BELIEVE

The Reality of Miracles

INTRODUCTION

- A. The basic conflict between the world and Christianity is over naturalism and supernaturalism. Beneath all the attacks of scientists, philosophers, scholars and theologians who oppose Biblical Christianity is a denial of the supernatural.
- B. Most liberals, skeptics and infidels state that the miracles of the Bible are merely stories (legend, myth) concerning spiritual truth but are not to be taken literally. However, the Christian who believes his Bible and thinks clearly knows that supernaturalism and miracles are inextricably bound up with real Christianity.
- C. It can be shown that supernaturalism is reasonable even though no one understands all there is to know about miracles.

I. DEFINITION OF A MIRACLE

- A. Defining the meaning of a miracle in the Biblical sense is the key to understanding supernaturalism. There are many who use the word miracle but they do not believe it is connected with supernaturalism. The dictionary defines a miracle as “an event or effect in the physical world deviating from the known laws of nature, or transcending our knowledge of these laws.”
- B. Floyd Hamilton defined a miracle as “an event in the external world, which is accompanied by the intermediate power of God” (The Basis for Christian Faith). Paul Little says a miracle is “an act of God breaking into, changing, or interrupting the ordinary course of things” (Know Why You Believe). A miracle always is a direct manifestation of God’s supernatural power.

II. THE POSSIBILITY OF A MIRACLE

A. Naturalistic View

1. Those who deny the possibility of a miracle either deny the existence of God or have such a weak concept of God that He is unable to intervene into His creation. Without a high view of God, it is difficult, if not impossible, to believe in miracles.
2. Many intelligent men deny miracles because they approach the Bible with the presupposition that miracles are impossible in light of scientific fact. They have approached the Bible with a world view that eliminates even the possibility of miracles. There are three basic reasons why men deny miracles:
 - a) Uniformitarianism: Uniformitarians are committed to the uniformity of nature and believe that the world is operating according to certain fixed or regular laws of nature. Uniformitarianism states that all things exist as they always did and all physical phenomenon continues according to natural laws. They, of course, reject the supernatural. **OBJECTIONS**: (1) Natural law is based on observation and it is not a force or a power. It is merely a scientific statement of the observable fact that all nature seems to be working under a system of natural laws. Natural laws are merely descriptions of what happens and they do not cause anything. The cause behind natural law is God. (2) Fixed law merely assumes that all things have been uniform and by statistical reason assumes that all things have been and will be uniform, but science cannot make a dogmatic statement that all things have been or will be uniform. Therefore, there may be the possibility of miracles. (3) A consistent uniformitarian must deny the existence of God, for as soon as God is brought into the picture, the possibility of miracles exists.
 - b) Ignorance: The reason many educated men take a negative attitude toward the Bible is their ignorance of the actual contents of the Bible, and especially in the evidence in support of its historicity. In secular America, most people have never seriously read the Bible and have been raised up on anti-supernaturalism.
 - c) Sin: Sin has blinded the minds of men to the truth of God. The sin and corruption of men's hearts often leads men to reject the Book which reveals and condemns such sin and corruption. Most scholars are brilliant and dedicated to

their work, but they are living in independence of God and are in rebellion to God's control in their lives. They do not enjoy reading the Bible which demands submission of the mind to God and submission of the heart to Christ. Instead of obeying the Bible, they seek unconsciously to justify their rejection of the its humbling demands by trying to discredit the Book which condemns their pride and rebellion against God.

- d) Prophecy: Christians are clearly told in prophetic truth that in the latter days uniformitarianism will become dominant and challenge the whole concept of supernaturalism as found in the Bible (II Pet. 3:3-4). NOTE: When men make statements like "all scholars agree that the supernatural is impossible," they are not being exactly honest. What they mean is that all scholars, who start with the naturalistic premise, are agreed of uniformitarianism. Actually there are many Christian scholars and scientists who accept the miracles of the Bible. NOTE: We should not be too alarmed because the great majority of scientists today are anti-supernatural, for it has been prophesied that this would be so.
3. No intelligent Christian is against science, for the true facts of science and the Bible will never contradict. However, when a scientist leaves the realm of true fact and begins to speculate as to the meaning of certain data, then the Christian might take issue with the scientist.

B. Supernatural View

1. The Christian believes in God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of this universe, for He is sovereign over His creation. The recognition of God admits the possibility of a miracle because God is all-powerful.
2. The Christian world view begins with God. A Christian believes in natural law – that there is uniformity in nature most of the time. However, all laws are God's law, and God, who created the apparent fixed laws of nature, can intervene into His creation when and however He pleases. God is over, above and outside natural law, and not bound by it.
3. Science is not in a position to judge a miracle. Science deals with the regular and normal laws of nature. Scientific knowledge advances through observation and experiment. It works on data

supplied by the five senses. However, a miracle involves the spiritual realm and cannot be dealt with on a scientific basis.

4. A miracle cannot conform to any known law or it would not be a miracle. A miracle is a unique event in which God intervenes into His creation. The Christian who argues for a miracle is not against the regularity of nature as a general principle, but is against the regularity of nature in every instance. To reverse the argument, if all natural became supernatural, there would be no room for a miracle; nothing would be a miracle because all would be miraculous. Regularity of nature is important to make a miracle valid.
5. No thinking Christian would deny that some miracles have a “natural” element in them such as the parting of the Red Sea. We read clearly that the east wind blew back the water of the Red Sea so the children of Israel could cross and this was a “natural” force. The cause behind the wind, however, was God. The supernatural element was the timing. It happened only when Moses stretched out his rod towards the sea, and the waters parted just as Israel reached the shore and closed up on Egyptians as they pursued the Israelites. NOTE: There are many miracles that have no natural elements in them at all, such as the resurrection of Christ from the dead or the healing of a man born blind.
6. The issue then is God, for if there is a God, then the possibility of miracles exists. Paul Little says,

We have seen that the question of whether miracles are possible is not scientific, but philosophical. Science can only say miracles do not occur in the ordinary course of nature. Science cannot “forbid” miracles because natural laws do not cause, and therefore cannot forbid anything. They are merely descriptions of what happens. The Christian embraces the concept of natural law. “It is essential to the theistic doctrine of miracles that nature be uniform in her daily routine. If nature were utterly spontaneous, miracles would be as impossible of detection as it would be to establish a natural law.” (Know Why You Believe)

7. Science itself is not against miracles and true science must admit the possibility of miracles if there is a God. The question then comes to the evidence of miracles as they are recorded in the Bible. The question before the Christian and non-Christian alike is not, “Are miracles possible?” but, “Are the records of the Bible

concerning miracles reliable?” or “Can the writers of scripture be believed?” NOTE: For a further study of this subject of miracles read Bernard Ramm on Christian Evidences and Paul Little on Know Why You Believe, which show that the evidence for the reality of Biblical miracles is valid.