



The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. Proverbs 18:15

Are miracles real?

General question: Is the message of Christianity true?

Also asked as:

- How can any intelligent person believe in miracles?
- Why should anyone believe that the miracles of the Bible are important?
- Aren't miracles all counterfeit?
- Aren't there logical natural explanations for all miracles in the Bible?
- Why aren't there miracles today?
- What about a specific Bible miracle?
- Do miracles happen today?
- What about self-proclaimed miracle-workers today ... are they real?
- Would God perform a miracle for me so that I could believe?

Similar questions answered separately:

- Is the Bible reliable?
- What about the hypocrites?
- Does God exist?

A caution: Not all so-called miracles within Christianity are real ... and some claimed miracles aren't credible. True miracles are supernatural acts performed by God that are contrary to natural laws. Magic tricks, illusions, the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly, and the birth of a baby are not miracles. However, virgin birth, resurrection from the dead, walking on water, healing a man born blind, and turning water into wine are miracles.

The short answer:

Many of the so-called miracle-workers and miracles of today (and in history) are hoaxes. However, the existence of forgers and forgeries does not exclude the possibility of real miracles. If the God of the Bible exists, then the miracles of the Bible were possible, probable, and pertinent. It is wrong to reject the evidence of true miracles because one rejects the possibility that God exists. The existence of true miracles is evidence of the existence of God.

The longer answer:

What is a miracle? It is important to define a miracle. How can someone know that a miracle was real without knowing what one is? Miracles are divine interventions in the natural world. They happen contrary to natural laws. Miracles are naturally impossible or highly improbable.

Superseding natural laws. True miracles happen contrary to natural laws. The events of the natural world happen in known and predictable ways. Similar multiple events happen similarly. Those similarities are described and predicted by natural laws. If you drop a coin off a building, the law of gravity describes its descent. However, a miracle is a divinely activated singularity that happens contrary to those observed patterns ... deviating from the laws of nature. If you turn a bucket of water upside down, the water pours out in a way described by the law of gravity. If you spin that bucket of water at sufficient speed in large, vertical circles, the water will not pour out. That is not a miracle. It is one natural law (centrifugal force) superseding another natural law (gravity). One natural law superseding another is not a miracle. However, an act of divine intervention superseding natural laws is a miracle. A true miracle involving water would have to be unexplainable by any combination of natural laws ... as in Jesus walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee, John 6:19 or in His turning water into wine, John 2:1-11.

Natural impossibilities. All true miracles are natural improbabilities. However, some of those are also natural impossibilities in that they happen contrary to the laws of nature. True miracles cannot be enacted by natural forces or by man. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. It was clear that he was dead ... dead for 4 days, John 11:1-45. Raising him from the dead was a true miracle observed by his sisters, friends, and religious leaders. Jesus healed a congenitally blind man, John 9. His miraculous healing was enacted by Jesus and observed by many witnesses ... his neighbors, family, and the religious leaders. Such supernaturally caused events are naturally impossible.

Natural improbabilities. Some miracles are not natural impossibilities. They are natural improbabilities. These miracles are peculiarly fortunate, providential natural happenings. Rather than storming the walls of Jericho, the Israeli army marched around the city for seven days ... according to an unusual but God-given battle plan, Joshua 6:1-5. The fortified walls of the city fell down precisely after the seventh march on the seventh day. The ruins of Jericho sit above an earthquake fault. An earthquake could easily and naturally have brought the walls down. The walls of Jericho falling down might not have been a natural impossibility. However, the timing of such an earthquake would have been naturally improbable ... peculiarly fortunate and providential. In the Exodus, the Israelites crossing the Red Sea on dry ground was miraculous. However, some have said that the Red Sea opening as it did was naturally possible. If it was naturally possible, then it must be said that its timing was highly improbable. It opened to allow ~ 600,000 Jews to pass safely through ... and then closed on the advancing Egyptian army. Such improbabilities are miracles ... naturally possible but highly improbable.

A misused word. The word *miracle* is often misused. In a sporting event, a player may win the game through a combination of extreme effort and good fortune ... catching the 9th inning would-be winning home run ball above the centerfield fence ... or making a diving catch in the end zone in overtime ... or sinking the three-pointer at the buzzer. These are spectacular plays, but not *miracle* plays as sometimes called. The birth of a baby is wonderful ... but it is not a miracle. Conception, pregnancy, and birth are naturally occurring, possible, and probable. Miracles are contrary to the normal events of nature ... naturally impossible or very highly improbable. Tricks, hoaxes, and illusions are not miracles. Psychosomatic cures are not miracles. Coincidences are not miracles. Non-specific predictions that are occasionally and inconsistently fulfilled in vague ways are not miraculous, Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

Miracles in the Bible. The Bible contains the accounts of many miracles ... some specific ones are described in detail and many are only generally mentioned. Under a strict and narrow definition of *miracle*, over 200 specific miracles are described in the Bible. Those miracles were purposeful in God's interaction with man.

God's provision. Some miracles are God's provision for His people or for a specific person ... such as the feeding of the Israelites during their wandering in Exodus 16, or the feeding of Elijah in 1 Kings 17, or the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6.

God's protection. Some miracles are God's protection or deliverance of His followers ... such as the persuasive plagues in Egypt in Exodus 7-12, or the opening and closing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14, or the blinding of the attacking Syrian army in 2 Kings 6:18.

God's compassion. Some miracles are expressions of His grace and compassion ... such as the raising of the widow's son in 1 Kings 17:17-24, or the healing of the blind man in John 9, or the healing of the epileptic in Luke 9:38-42, or the healing of the lame man in Acts 3:1-11. Jesus performed many signs and wonders including miraculous healings. However, it was not His custom to heal everyone nor was faith always required for someone to be healed. At the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, Jesus arbitrarily chose one man to heal in John 5:1-9. Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be healed ... and then He healed him. However, Jesus left all of the others at the pool unhealed.

God's judgment. Some miracles are instruments of God's judgment against those who disobey Him ... such as Noah's flood in Genesis 7, or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19, or fire destroying ungrateful complainers in Numbers 11:1-2, or Uzzah's death after touching the Ark of the Covenant in 2 Samuel 6:6-7.

God's authentication. Many miracles validated God, His message, or His messenger ... such as Moses and water from the rock in Exodus 17:1-7, or Gideon and the fleece in Judges 6, or Elijah on Mt. Carmel in 1 Kings 18, or Daniel and the lions in Daniel 6.

The ultimate miracle and miracle worker. Jesus presented Himself as God in human form ... authenticated in part by His miraculous works. Nineteen of His miracles are described in detail in the four Gospel accounts. He turned water into wine, cast out demons, healed the sick, walked on water, fed the multitudes, and rose from the dead. He never performed miracles for the applause of the crowd. His miracles were purposeful and selective. Jesus performed miracles to bear witness of who He was and why He came to earth.

To authenticate Himself. His miracles bore witness of His identity. Jesus answered some skeptics, *"I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me,"* John 10:25. He also said, *"Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake,"* John 14:11.

To show that the Father sent Him. His miracles proved that He came from God the Father. Jesus said, *"For the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish — the very works that I do — testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me,"* John 5:36.

To precipitate belief. Jesus came to earth to seek and to save spiritually lost people, Luke 19:10. The Bible clearly states that we are separated from God because of our sins, Isaiah 59:2, Romans 3:23, & Romans 6:23. Jesus died on the cross to pay for all our sins, I Peter 2:24, I Corinthians 15:3-5. If we *believe in Him*, our sins are forgiven and we are reconciled to God, John 1:12, 11:25-26, & Acts 10:43. Jesus performed miracles so that we would have convincing evidence to bring us to the point of believing in Him.

Significant claims and dramatic miracles. The claims of Jesus were so significant that we need convincing evidence to believe in Him. His miracles were that dramatic evidence. That was His purpose ... to give evidence through His miracles so that we could believe in Him.

I am the bread of life. Jesus fed the multitude of over 5,000 that had come to Him ... miraculously fed from five barley loaves and two small fish. He miraculously gave bread to them. Then on the day after that miracle, Jesus dramatically claimed, *"I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst,"* John 6:35. It was a significant claim backed up by the dramatic proof of that miracle.

I am the light of the world. Jesus healed a blind man in John 9 ... a man blind from birth, living in his own personal darkness. Jesus compassionately gave sight to him. After his encounter with Jesus, and for the first time in his life, the man could see the light. Just before that miraculous healing, Jesus said, *"While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world,"* John 9:5. That was a significant claim backed up by dramatic proof.

I am the resurrection and the life. Jesus did the naturally impossible. He raised Lazarus from the dead ... four days after he was buried. Just before that miraculous event, Jesus claimed to have the power to give life. *"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"* John 11:25-26. He said that, and then He raised Lazarus from the dead. That significant claim was backed up by dramatic proof.

Sufficient evidence. Jesus came to earth to draw men unto Himself. His miracles were for that purpose. He performed miracles to give evidence for us to believe in Him. John wrote, *"Many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name,"* John 20:30-31. His miracles were sufficient proof of His being and His purpose ... sufficient so that we could believe. His ultimate miracle was His own defeat of death. He was brutally tortured and executed. His Roman executioners, experts in death, declared Him dead. He was buried. Then on the third day rose from the dead. He conquered death. Afterwards, He appeared multiple times to His disciples and to many others (to over 500 at one time, I Corinthians 15:6). He did not limp around on unhealed pierced feet, clinging to life, and trying to recover from His crucifixion wounds. His completely healed resurrection body convincingly demonstrated that death had no power over Him. Jesus had defeated death. His followers changed from hopeless cowards to confident witnesses. His life, miracles, and resurrection had been their sufficient proof. However, others would not believe. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, many did not believe and illogically plotted to kill Lazarus and Jesus, John 11:53 & 12:10-11. They rejected the convincing evidence. Jesus told the account of a rich man in Hades begging Abraham to send someone to his brothers to warn them of their future doom. However, Abraham said that they already had sufficient proof and that *"they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead,"* Luke 16:31. Jesus lived His life punctuated by many convincing miracles. His resurrection from the dead was the supreme miracle. The evidence is more than sufficient. The question for all of us is this, *"Are we open to the convincing evidence of His miracles and resurrection?"*

Intellectual dishonesty. It is circular reasoning to say that God does not exist and therefore miracles are impossible. That is being closed-minded. It is like saying, *don't tell me the facts, my mind is already made up.* It is correct to say that documented miracles happened that are consistent with the character and claims of the God of the Bible ... and therefore, God exists. The God of the Bible exists and His miracles are possible and probable. Many trustworthy, non-prejudiced eyewitnesses saw the miracles of Jesus. Non-contradictory accounts of those miracles are documented in the trustworthy pages of the New Testament. The evidence is there ... we should believe in Him.

Would you believe in God if He did a personal miracle for you? Would you? Or would you attribute it to a magic trick, illusion, or delusion? Alternatively, would you still doubt unless He did another miracle or yet another miracle? Imagine the following. God actually did a miracle for you ... not just one miracle but many miracles. In addition, let's say that those miracles were very convincing to you and to other eyewitnesses. In your presence, He healed the blind, lame, and diseased ... and even healed someone who appeared to be insane. He miraculously fed a multitude of your acquaintances on two occasions ... therefore, establishing a large number of eyewitnesses. He also raised one of your friends from the dead ... calling him out of the grave. And let's say this was all up-close and personal ... undeniably real and true. Would you believe? Of course, you would. But what if God told you that He was not going to continue performing

miracles at that same pace? Let's say that He told you and several of your friends, eyewitnesses with you, that you should document those miracles in print so that subsequent generations could read and believe because of your documentation of His miraculous claims and acts. Would your children, grandchildren, and subsequent generations believe? That is essentially what happened 2,000 years ago. Just change the names of the eyewitnesses. Jesus performed His miracles in front of His disciples and many other followers. They were convinced and believed. Several of those eyewitnesses documented those events and claims in the pages of the New Testament so that their children, grandchildren, and subsequent generations could read and believe. Jesus said to Thomas, "*Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed,*" John 20:29. The Bible is the reliable documentation of the many miraculous proofs given by Jesus to us so that we would believe in Him. Moreover, God is under no obligation to repeat those miracles routinely for each new generation. He has given us reasonable, sufficient, and documented evidence.

Do you have to believe in all the miracles of the Bible to believe in Jesus? No ... but you can believe them because they are true. The only thing that you must do to *believe in Jesus* is to *believe in Jesus*. One act of faith is all it takes. You must personally put your faith in Him. As an example: you are ready for a step of faith if during a flight, you are standing with a parachute strapped to your back at the open door of a mechanically doomed airplane. You do not have to understand or believe everything about parachutes to step out of the airplane. All you have to do is take that logical step of faith. You do not need to understand or believe everything about miracles to take your step of faith to believe in Jesus. There is reliably documented history of His miracles and resurrection ... proof that when you believe He will carry you to eternal safety.

Are there miracles today? God is still capable of performing acts that supersede the Laws of Nature. However, today there often seems to be more fraudulent claims of the miraculous than there are true and undeniable miracles. Many of the so-called miracles and miracle-workers of today's Christianity stand in contradiction to the miracles and miracle-workers of the Bible. In addition, those of false religions, cults, and the occult can be attributed to the work of Satan and demonic forces. The miracles of the Bible were clearly consistent with the character and claims of God, consistent with His purposes, and never self-promoting for the one used as an instrument of His power. The miracles of the Bible draw us to Him ... to belief in Jesus Christ. His miracles are sufficient evidence to convince us to believe.

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