

INTRODUCTION

Miracles: What Are They?

Any honest study of the *supernatural*, even a simple one such as this, must begin with an understanding of the *natural*.

By *natural* I am referring to things which happen by themselves, of their own accord. Things which happen without anyone making them happen.

Natural foods are those which are not tampered with, which have no additives or preservatives.

Natural childbirth is one where the process is not assisted by surgery, mechanical devices, painkillers, or anesthesia.

“Doing what comes naturally,” means to allow the process to pursue its normal course.

Natural is that which you do not have to work at, which you get if you take no measures to stop it. It is the process of “letting nature have its normal way.”

Our word “nature” comes from the Greek work *physis*, “to grow,” and the Latin word *natura*, “to be born.” Natural, then (as opposed to supernatural) is that which springs up, arrives, or goes on of its own accord. It deals with the spontaneous, the unintended, the unsolicited, that which is controlled by the laws which control nature.

The Naturalist

There are two groups of people in the world: those who hold that all events have natural origin, and those who believe many events are supernatural in origin. For a number of years, since the famous Scopes trial in Tennessee, a great debate has raged in America concerning creation. Did this world come into being as a natural course of action, or was it formed by God — a supernatural event?

The naturalist believes in a vast process in space and time which is going on of its own accord. He believes every event happens because some other event has happened. For instance, the naturalist does not see the rising of the sun each morning as a miracle. He understands that the earth rotates on an axis, an imaginary pole that stretches through the globe from south to north. This earth makes an exact turn on that axis every 24 hours. As it turns it faces the sun. Thus, the rising of the sun can be predicted because the earth turns on its axis.

On the other hand, if the earth should not turn on its axis, or if that turning should be slowed — as it was when Joshua took authority over nature and commanded “the sun to stand still” — hindering the natural process — that would be a miracle.

Likewise, the naturalist does not see healing of infection by the use of an antibiotic drug as a miracle. The human body is designed to resist infection. In fact, it has its own system of antibodies, soldiers who rush to fight the evil infection. But if the body is weakened for some reason, or the infection is too massive, it may need help. The injection of additional antibodies into the system is no more than the use of additional troops to help the battle-weary antibodies already at work in the human body.

On the other hand, what if the infection is raging, and the body is losing its battle? Let’s say gangrene has set in and the flesh is dead, putrefying. There are no antibiotic drugs available, but someone prays — and suddenly the infection abates, the fever subsides, and the dead flesh comes to life. That would be a miracle.

The Supernaturalist

Pure naturalism, therefore, cannot accept the idea of a God who made nature and stands outside (or

works within) to direct and change it. He believes in a nature which runs on its own. The supernaturalist, however, believes there has to be more than nature working on its own. He believes that the very framework of nature and the natural law is proof of a God who exists, who has created the framework of space and time and guides the procession of systematically connected events which fill them.

The supernaturalist sees two sets of laws — two “natures” so to speak. He sees the visible laws which govern and control visible nature. These are the laws of chemistry, physics, mathematics, geology, medicine, even the laws of human behavior. The law of gravity is one of these laws. That law says if you drop a heavier-than-air object from an airplane it will fall at a pre-determined rate of speed and splatter on the earth, depending on the density of the soil it hits and the density of the object which is falling. That law can be altered, of course. If you attach a parachute to the falling object, the cloth of the chute retards the rate of speed at which the object is falling, allowing it to settle to earth rather than splatter. If you attach a jet engine to the object which is falling, that engine may have the ability to overwhelm the law of gravity by exerting an upward thrust greater than the downward tug, allowing the object to actually fly up rather than fall down — at least as long as the fuel lasts.

Eventually, though, the law of gravity will prevail, giving rise to the saying, “That which goes up must come down.”

Miracles

C.S. Lewis defines “miracle” as “an interference with nature by supernatural power.” This is done as God superimposes His high, invisible law over the visible laws of nature. The supernaturalist, therefore, while not denying the laws of nature, believes also in a higher set of laws which govern the “heavenlies.” These laws are invisible and are activated by various factors — none of which seem consistent with our western logic.

Prayer is one of these factors which activates miracles.

So is faith.

Sometimes miracles occur when no one asked for them or even believed they were possible. Such miracles seem to take place simply because God willed them into being. All are, however, merely the imposition of God’s higher law over His lower law.

For instance, when Moses and the children of Israel came to the shore of the Red Sea, which was actually an extension of the Gulf of Suez separating Egypt from the Sinai Peninsula called the Yam Suf, he was faced with an impossible situation — in the natural. Behind him was the entire army of Egypt, prepared to slaughter the Hebrew slaves. In front of him was an impassable body of water. The natural ways out of this dilemma were not sufficient. They were not armed or strong enough to fight off the Egyptians. They did not have time, materials, or the ability to build a bridge across the body of water. There were no boats available. In short, they needed a miracle.

The Bible says, “The Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land” (Exodus 14:21). God used the natural law to perform a miracle. The wind is more powerful than the water. That is a natural law. The miracle came in the timing, and in the fact the wind blew from the east. Had it blown from any other direction it would not have worked. But the east wind caused the waters to separate. The wind then continued to blow, holding the water back until the Israelites were safely on the other side. The Egyptian army, in hot pursuit, was trapped in the sea bed. Only then did God cause the wind to stop blowing, drowning the enemy and releasing the Israelites to march on toward their promised destination.

Some naturalists, reading this passage, fail to see it as a miracle. They see it as simple coincidence. To them it does not necessarily follow that because there is a God who created nature, He sometimes

interferes with those natural laws. In fact, there are many people who believe in God but reject the idea of miracles. While they may accept that He is, and even accept the idea that He has created a system of laws which are higher than the visible laws of nature, they do not believe He ever allows the invisible system to impinge on the visible system.

Their reason, they say, is reason. They are schooled in western logic and cannot give credence to a God who operates in a realm which supersedes logic — often bypassing the logical sequence of thesis, antithesis, research, and conclusion. Any God who has not read Plato and Aristotle, they argue, is not God. Such people are like my Sunday School teacher who, although she could accept a God of miracles, could never believe a good Jesus would change water to wine because her culture had schooled her that wine was evil.

A Look at Nature

To better understand the nature of God we must look at the nature of nature. Granted, there are times when nature seems “out of control.” Dogs may become rabid and attack neighborhood children. Men may go insane, pick up guns and kill innocent people in shopping centers and McDonald’s restaurants. Rivers may flood and swallow up homes and property. Healthy cells in the body may rebel, turn cancerous, destroy, and kill. When this happens it seems nature is rebellious. But these are exceptions to the rules God has set in motion. When we study nature, when she is “in control,” that is, obeying the laws of God, we have no choice but to conclude nature was designed to submit — not to rebel.

There is no way to believe that nature produced God. Nor is there any way to believe that the two — God and nature — operate independently and are self-existent. There are those who hold to this latter view, saying it is the only way to explain the problem of evil. However, that is simply a way of saying that evil needs to be explained in a way man can comprehend. Jesus never attempted to explain evil. He simply accepted it and superimposed His higher law of miracles over it when it seemed to be changing nature from the way God intended it to be.

This leaves but one possible alternative: God created nature. Thus, nature is not resisting God as an alien, but is rebelling — as we all are — against His right to rule and reign.

How then do we answer the man who says that the miracles of Jesus (or present day miracles) are not possible because they are contrary to “the laws of nature” and God will not contradict Himself? Of course, by “laws of nature” he means the known laws, or observed laws. A miracle, however, by definition, is an exception to the laws of nature. Miracles are determined by higher laws, unseen laws, the laws of the invisible kingdom.

For instance, the Bible says Mary, a virgin, gave birth to Jesus. This is a scientific impossibility. We know it, and so did Joseph, her husband. A virgin birth is contrary to the course of nature. The regular process of nature calls for a male sperm to impregnate a female egg through the act of sexual intercourse. But Mary had not “known a man.” The Bible says the male sperm, which was placed in her womb by the Holy Spirit, came from God.

Impossible! Yes, unless the regular process of nature was overruled or supplemented by something from beyond nature. That is a miracle.

Miracles in the Bible — and miracles today — are always accompanied by fear and wonder. Why? Because they are exceptions to the known. They come from the unknown. They are more than natural. They are supernatural. How can they be surprising unless they are seen as exceptions to the rules?

If you approach this subject by ruling out the supernatural you will see no miracles. You will be forced to say all such occurrences have natural causes, or are caused by natural laws yet unknown to man — in

short, hang on long enough and we'll figure it out.

On the other hand, until you believe nature works according to regular laws — and regular laws alone — you will see no miracles. Until you realize the earth always follows a natural law, turning on its axis once every 24 hours, you'll not understand that what happened in the valley of Ajalon, when Joshua commanded the “sun to stand still,” was a miracle. This means, contrary to what some believe, that advancing scientific knowledge does not make it harder to accept miracles, it makes it easier. The more we learn about the laws of nature the more astounding it is when God overrides those laws by superimposing His higher laws.

The Higher Law

There are those who say only an incompetent workman would create something which needs to be interfered with by the creator. But that statement assumes that God is like a general contractor who, once having built a house, leaves it and goes on to the next building project — with no interest in the house's inhabitants. The God revealed in Jesus, however, is more than a Creator — He is a Father. He has not simply created this earth long, long ago and now sits back watching. He is still creating — just as much today as when He put it all together out of nothing. Every time a male sperm touches a female egg, a new world is created. Every time a human being recognizes his need to depend on God and calls out for Jesus Christ to save him, a new world is created. Every kind act, done in the name of Jesus, brings a new creation into being. Every song, every painting, every act of love, every literary composition — all are acts of creation as surely as the creation of an elephant or a man.

God's higher law is the law of love. Only love makes the difference. Thus, every miracle is a new creation — an act of godly love. Nature is without emotion or morality. A poisonous snake is designed to protect itself by striking. It strikes at a human being just as quickly as it strikes at a predator. It has no morals. No emotions. A miracle, such as the one recorded in Acts 28:1-6, is an act of morality, an act of love, an act of new creation. In that remarkable story, told by Luke — a physician, by the way — we find the story of Paul, shipwrecked on the island of Malta, bitten by a poisonous viper. The islanders, knowing how deadly the snake was, expected him “to swell up or suddenly fall over dead.” But nothing happened to him. As a result, the people were able to hear him when he told them about God. Not only that, but Paul visited a number of sick people on the island — including the chief official — laid hands on them, and they were healed. God's higher law of love had overridden the natural law which says poison in a man's system brings death.

God's higher law is based on love. “God so loved the world,” Jesus told Nicodemus, “that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). That is the law of love.

The reason we have a tough time believing in miracles is we believe all things were made for man. Not so. God loves man and for man's sake became a man and died for him. But all things were not made for man — they were made for God. “The earth is the Lord's,” David said correctly. Isaiah reminds us the earth is God's footstool. Man lives here as a tenant farmer might occupy the land of a wealthy land baron — with God's permission and for God's pleasure.

The skeptic asks how we can then believe that such a mighty God would ever condescend to “come down” to this tiny planet. That question, however, would sound utterly ridiculous if we knew all there is to know about God's creation. Perhaps one of these days we'll discover there are rational creatures on some of those other bodies that float in space. When we find them we may also discover that they, like us, have fallen and need redemption. But what if we discover that unlike us, their Adam and Eve did not sin? That their planet remains an Edenic paradise where God rules and reigns, and all nature responds to the

laws of God?

It is possible, you know, that this universe may be filled with happy lives which have never needed to be redeemed by blood sacrifice. Or, it may be their redemption came in modes different from the one God ordained for Planet Earth. Maybe the Son of God came to their planet not as a Jewish Jesus, but as a four-legged beaktheon.

He who questions how a big God could come down to little earth knows only a little God — the size of man. The bigger our concept of God, the more we see Him as a God of miracles.

Miracles reveal the nature of God. Thus, there are no big miracles and little miracles. All miracles are big — for they reflect the nature of our big God. While they do, by definition, interrupt the usual course of nature, in so doing they assert all the more the unity and harmony of God. They reveal a God who not only created nature, but who still controls it by the higher law of love. “The creation waits in eager expectation,” Paul wrote, “for the sons of God to be revealed” (Romans 8:19). In short, all nature yearns for man to take his rightful place as a being of spiritual authority through whom miracles come as readily as they did through Jesus — the second Adam.

This world is interested in miracles. You can go into any bar in America, any pub in Europe, strike up a conversation about miracles, and you’ll get a crowd — especially if you’re talking about one that happened to you. Folks will gather around. You don’t have to be in church — in fact, usually there is more interest in bars than in churches, perhaps because miracles are so rare in today’s church. As a result, church people have made up all kinds of explanations for why they don’t happen anymore.

But miracles were at the very heart of Jesus’ ministry, for He came to reveal God — and God is a God of miracles.

Unlike Jesus, John the Baptist did not seem to be a miracle-worker. With the exception of Elijah and Elisha, most of the prophets did not have a miracle ministry. Jesus, however, was a minister of miracles. Every place He went, miraculous things happened. His followers, into whom He had breathed His Spirit, were also ministers of miracles. The instruction the Holy Spirit gave to the early church was that the church was to be a church of miracles, a church of the supernatural.

Miracles should be the norm in the life of the Christian. Because we are constantly stumbling through a dark world, we need God to guide our footsteps, giving us the ability to walk supernaturally.

That means miracles. But God is not restoring miracles to the church. They’ve been there all along. He is simply waiting for simple people who will step forward in faith and expect God to use them, as He used Jesus, to perform miracles.

As I said earlier, that’s a bit frightening. It’s frightening because it demands we become partakers of the supernatural world in which God lives. It’s frightening because it calls for us to be willing to become instruments of God’s Spirit. It is at this very point that so many draw back. It is one thing to worship an impersonal God who never threatens us with His presence any more than a book on the shelf threatens us. But it is always shocking to meet Life when we thought we were alone. “Look out!” we cry. “Something’s out there!” Indeed it is. Not something — but Someone. And sensing He is so much bigger than we are, we find it easier to cut the line than to reel it in and run the risk of having it consume us.

Someplace I heard the story of the little boy whose mother put him to bed in the upstairs bedroom. After kissing him goodnight, she went back downstairs to read the paper. Moments later the little boy, dressed in his pajamas, was half-way down the stairs himself.

“Mommy, I’m afraid.”

“There’s nothing to be afraid of, I was just up there.”

“But it’s dark in my room.”

“Don’t be afraid; God is in there. Now go back to bed.”

The little fellow crept back up the steps and stood at the door of his dark bedroom, peering in. “God,” he said in a shaky voice. “I’m coming in, but don’t You move ’cause if You do You’ll scare me to death.”

Today we discover God is moving — and a lot of folks are scared. He is alive, pulling at our line, perhaps approaching at the speed of light. And now, those of us who have been dabbling in religion are suddenly forced to make a decision. Do we go on, or do we turn and flee?

If we do go on, if we reel in the line, if we enter the dark room, we need to know there are no limits to what God may choose to do to — and through — us. I challenge you to study these miracles of Jesus not as ancient history, but as a prelude to what He wants to do through you. Today. These accounts are either lies of the first magnitude, or history. If they are lies, then the entire Bible is false and Jesus is the biggest con man who ever walked the face of the earth. But if they are history, then we have no choice but to allow the same Spirit which raised Christ from the dead to come into us. Once that happens we, too, will become ministers of miracles.

A modern day prophet stopped by my house during the days I was writing this introduction to *Miracle Power* and left a “prophecy” he said he had received from God. I put it aside for a number of days, busy with other things. Then, shortly before I finished this book, I took it down and read it. I include it here as confirmation of what I have just written:

“The health of My people is not dependent upon what they do, but rather what I choose to let happen. I do not will that any of My people be sick, but rather that they have life and health in abundance. There are laws and practices that I have set into motion with regard to the health of My people; and when those laws and practices are violated, those who have violated them will receive the just reward of that violation. The miracle of healing takes place when I choose to intervene in the process that follows, by diverting or absorbing that motion and thus nullifying its effect. But what will cause Me to intervene in any given situation is not a matter of faith, supplications, or even prayer. I am sovereign, and make all decisions based on My sovereignty. I alone am the healer and giver of life. My Word says that faith is important to the healing process. That is true. But it is not, in and of itself, the magical or mystical key to unlock the storehouse of health and well-being, but rather a necessary part of the process of healing. The presence of faith is a catalyst to begin the process, but if all the elements are not there, there is no change — no miracle.

“I shall never allow man to fully understand the healing process, for if he does, he will give himself credit and lessen his dependence upon Me. There will continue to be those times when I choose to allow sickness and disease to bend and to break the rebellious spirit. That, too, is for Me to decide. No man shall ever fully understand My process.

“Knowing this does not release you from living a holy life of faith, or of doing those things you know to be good which produce health. Only the fool will omit that which he knows is right. Rather, you should continue to exercise your faith and believe in Me, and who I am, and in who you are in Me. I have allowed some to have limited access to understanding this mystery. Some physicians have tapped, superficially, into that vein. Many have been healed by doctors who have limited knowledge of the mystery. Others have been healed by the touch of some of My chosen ones. But that is still My choice, for man can go only as far as I am willing to let him in this process of understanding. I will never reveal the full truth and understanding, for that would make man like Me and he would depart even farther from full truth.

“Do not allow this lack of understanding to dismay you; rather, let it draw you closer to Me. In doing this you will experience more health and release than you could ever imagine possible.”

The purpose of this book is to stimulate you, excite you, hopefully to convince you that the miracles of Jesus were not for yesterday — they are for today. They were not for Jesus alone; they are for you. It is not enough to say, “Expect a miracle.” We should say, “Expect a miracle through me.”