

...Set For the Defence of the Gospel. (Phil 1:17)

DEFENDER OF TRUTH

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T H E M E :

***Do Miracles
Exist Today?***

DEFENDER OF TRUTH

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EDITORIAL

This edition of Defender of Truth which is the last one for 2023 is focused on miracles. Many people have been swept away by claims and advertisements of men performing miracles. Are these claims valid in the light of the Holy Scriptures? This important question is answered in this edition.

Previous editions of the magazine can now be viewed and downloaded from the website www.defenderoftruth.com.ng.

The site also has articles, books, and audio and video sermons which the reader will find edifying.

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

by **Afolabi A. Akinyemi**



The word used for a miracle in the original Hebrew Old Testament is *pala*. "In its participle form, *pālā'* means "miracles, wonders," and refers to the extraordinary deeds of God". (Exod. 3:20; Jos. 3:5)

In the original Greek New Testament, the Greek word for miracle is *dynamis*. "dynamis essentially means "power," but it can also denote acts of power ("miracles") or a person's "ability."². (Mathew 25:25; Heb. 11:11) There are two other words used for the word miracle in the New Testament. Sign which is *sēmeion* in Greek means "a "sign" that marks or distinguishes something. It is also used as a miraculous indicator, often a "miracle."³ and wonder which is *teras* in Greek and means "wonder, miracle, miraculous occurrence."⁴

To indicate the source of miracles, the New Testament also refers to them as gifts of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 2:4). These four words encapsulate the basic meaning of a miracle. A miracle is thus an act of divine power which marks or distinguishes something or someone and creates amazement.

THE NATURE OF BIBLE MIRACLES

A closer look at Bible miracles will reveal they occur when the laws of nature are suspended. A miracle is beyond and above nature. Since the creation, God has set in motion laws by which the universe is governed. A miracle occurs when these laws are suspended.

A few examples will demonstrate this fact.

1. Jesus walked on the sea. The natural law of gravity was suspended.

"Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Then those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." Math. 14:25-33

2. The conception of Jesus Christ. The law of human conception was suspended.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Math. 1:18-22



3. The extension of daylight.

"Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon." So the sun stood still, And the moon stopped, Till the people had revenge Upon their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day" Jos.10:12-14

It should then be noted that whilst the laws of nature (order of nature) are powerful, and wonderful and signify God's control over the universe (Ps.19:1-3;139:14) they do not qualify as miracles. Many people conflate miracles with God's acts of providence. A woman conceiving after many years of marriage, near death escapes from accidents etc. are not miracles because the laws of nature are not suspended. Gene Tope says "Everything God does for us is wonderful, but not everything He does is miraculous. A miracle is a supernatural event that manifests the power of God"⁵

TYPES OF MIRACLES

Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthian church listed nine gifts of the Holy Spirit.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues" 1 Cor.12:4-10.

These gifts can be classified into three broad categories:

1. Gifts relating to intellectual powers
 - Word of wisdom –spiritual insights and decision-making.
 - Word of knowledge- the ability to know spiritual truths without having been taught.
 - Faith – special faith for performing miracles.
2. Exhibition of Miraculous Faith
 - Healing
 - Miracles – raising the dead, holding serpents without injury etc.
 - Prophecy- revealing future events, revealing the mind of God
 - Discerning spirits- detecting false prophets
3. Miraculous use of language
 - Speaking in tongues
 - Interpretation of tongues

CONCLUSION

A good understanding of Bible miracles is necessary for readers to avoid being carried away by modern claims of miracles which are in most cases acts of God's providence which occur according to the natural order/law God has created.

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¹ Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Tope, Gene *The Providence of God*, Truth Publications Inc. 2017

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

by Bro Opemipo Olusola

INTRODUCTION

In its most basic sense, a miracle is an unusual, unexpected, observable event brought about by direct divine intervention. True miracles could not be explained by the ordinary occurrence of natural laws. Those who experienced true miracles clearly understood that something out of the ordinary had happened (Acts 4:14-16; 26:26). The presence of the supernatural work of God was seen in a miracle (1 Kg 18:17-46; Jhn 3:2; 11:43-45).

The purpose of the miracle in the Bible is not to prove the existence of God, but it is to prove the legitimacy and the validity of an agent of the revelation of someone whom God has commissioned to speak His word e.g. The Prophets and the Apostles. The purpose of a miracle is to verify the messenger of the word of God.

The miracles themselves were not the point. The miracles served as "signs" pointing to a greater reality. God often begins great things with miracles. The creation of the world began with miracles (Gen.1&2). The nation of Israel was established by miracles (Ex. 7:14ff)

The church of God began with several miracles on Pentecost day (Acts 2). This is aside from several miraculous works demonstrated by Christ towards the preparation of the church establishment.

PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

Miracles are performed as evidence of divine power. God never sent His spokesmen away empty-handed. He always gave them proof or evidence of divine power. When we turn to the Old Testament, we find God's sending forth Moses to lead the people out of Egyptian bondage.

And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it" (Ex. 4:1-3).

God then told Moses to take up the serpent, and it became a rod again. He then told him to put his hand in his bosom and it became leprous. God then told him to put his hand back in his bosom, and it became clear. So these miracles were Moses' credentials. They were to be proof that God had sent him.

God does not work without a purpose. He did not work miraculously to satisfy the idle curiosity of man. He worked through miracles to accomplish specific purposes

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES UNDER OLD TESTAMENT

1. To prove the sovereignty of the Lord in Creation (Ps.33:6-9)
2. To prove that God is greater than all the gods of the nations. (Exs.7; 1Kgs.18)

3. To comfort and to protect His messengers (1Kgs.19:5-7)
4. To defend and to preserve the Messianic line. (Ezek.37:24-28)
5. That all nations may see God being magnified (Ezek.38:23; Josh.2:8-11)

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES UNDER THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Miracles are to show that another authority is present on the earth. Miracles have always been the evidence of God or Divine power on the earth (Matt.12:28).
2. Miracles reflect the mercy and compassion of God on mankind E.g Jesus feeding over 5000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 small fishes (Matt.14:13-21).
3. Miracles are performed so that the doctrine of Christ may become credible and that Christians may be confirmed in their faith. Heb.2:1-4 Says; *"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will"?*

God confirmed the words spoken by miracles. In other words, miracles were to confirm the testimony of God's speakers (Mk.16:17-20). To be one of these individuals who received the power to work miracles as stated in this passage, one would first have to hear the Lord proclaim the great salvation. (I doubt whether any of the modern "miracle workers" were present when the Lord first proclaimed the great salvation. Certainly, they were not!) So the passages do not apply to modern miracle workers.

4. Miracles were meant to authenticate the character of Jesus and His relationship with His Heavenly Father. John 11:41-43.
5. Miracles are meant to produce faith. *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written, 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

What was the purpose of the signs? John said that he was recording the account of Jesus' signs so that those who read His account may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. It is a well-known truth that faith comes by the presentation of testimony, or evidence. So the Gospel



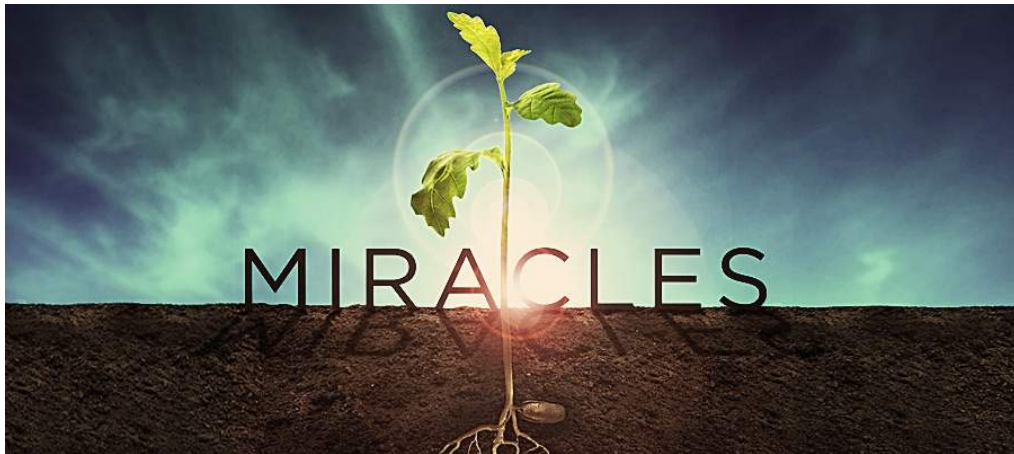
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according to John as well as other Gospel accounts, are books of testimony or evidence which are calculated to produce implicit faith in the hearts of those who read of Jesus' divine power.

HAS THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES BEEN ACHIEVED?

According to the book of Revelation chapter 22:18-19, the bible is sealed up already there is no new revelation, nor new confirmation except what has already been revealed and confirmed in the Holy scriptures. (Eph.3:3-5; Gal.1:6-9; 2Pet.1:3; Jude.3).

Those who are still seeking miraculous works today are simply saying that the miracles that Christ performed were inadequate and that the bible is not enough to make us believe in the Son of God.



CONCLUSION

Let us be satisfied with what the Holy Spirit has revealed to us in the Bible or else we will fall into the hands of heretic pastors in the name of searching for miracles (2 Tim.4:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:9). Flee from the hands of denominational pastors as they are only workers of deceits and hypocrisy (2 Cor.11:13-15; Rom.16:17-18).

Miracles were performed: (1) as evidence of divine power; (2) to produce faith; and (3) to confirm the word spoken. None of these reasons for the working of miracles will fit the men who claim to be working miracles today.

Miraculous works have accomplished their mission just like Manna ceased in the land of Canaan (Josh.5:12). Remember that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb without performing a single miracle (Lk.1:15). Let us be filled with God's spirit by allowing God's words to fill our hearts (Rom.8:14; Col.3:16).

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THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MIRACLES

by Jobalo Oshikanlu

Bible Gem:

"Now about the spiritual gifts [**the special endowments given by the Holy Spirit**], brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed" AMP (1 Corinthians 12:1).¹

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul's expressed desire, in our Bible gem above, concerning spiritual gifts, is equally appropriate to us today as it is evident that much misunderstanding persists today concerning the miraculous gifts. There are, broadly, two divergent but equally erroneous views held concerning miraculous gifts today. The first is that they never really existed and that no miracles were ever performed. This is the view of modernists who would have us believe that all Bible-related miracles simply came from man's failure to understand natural phenomena and that what man failed to understand or could not explain, he regarded as a miracle.

The second erroneous view held today is that miraculous gifts from the Holy Spirit remain the possession of some. This thinking and approach is held by numerous so-called 'Pentecostal' and denominational churches who continue to claim possession of at least some (if not all) of the miraculous gifts that were imparted by the Holy Spirit during the first century.²

This compilation seeks to show the reader, with clarity, what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit and miraculous gifts. In this article, the terms "spiritual gifts" and "miraculous gifts" are used interchangeably, in reference to the "gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Hebrews 2:4) recorded in the Bible which were miraculous by their nature and impact.

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Bible teaches in clear terms that the miraculous gifts in the New Testament were for revelation and confirmation of the Word of God. In other words, first, it was by these spiritual gifts that the message of the New Testament was revealed and documented. The Scriptures were given by inspiration of God through the men who, arising from certain of the spiritual gifts, were miraculously inspired, or moved by the Holy Spirit in what they were to say and write: "... for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the **Holy Spirit**" (2 Peter 1:21). As the Lord Jesus Himself said would happen: "...for it is not you who speak, but the **Spirit** of your Father who speaks in you" (Matthew 10:20). The inspiration by the Holy Spirit was verbal, the Holy Spirit choosing exact words from the style and vocabulary of the inspired man. Hence, the apostle states in 1 Corinthians 12:13 "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the **Holy Spirit** teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual".

Secondly, some of the miraculous gifts were given and meant for the authentication of the message revealed by the

revelatory gifts, that is, to confirm such a message as being from God. Hence, Hebrews 2:3-4 says "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also **bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?**". After the Lord ascended into heaven, the Bible records thus of the Apostles: "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and **confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen**" (Mark 16:20). And in another place: "[Paul and Barnabas] stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was **bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands**" (Acts 14:3). In other words, the gospel that was preached, itself miraculously revealed, was confirmed or authenticated as the true word of God by the miraculous works that God, through the Holy Spirit, allowed the preachers to perform.

It is important to understand that whether the miraculous gifts were revelatory or confirmatory by their impact, whilst all the gifts and powers had their origin in God the Father (John 14:10), the actual distribution of the miraculous gifts to men came from the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11).

THE MIRACULOUS GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (1 CORINTHIANS 12 AND 14)

In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, the Apostle identified nine of the spiritual gifts, one of the key purposes of this enumeration being to show the unity of the Source of the gifts or that they all came from the same Holy Spirit. There was the "Word of Wisdom" which was for revelation of God's divine plan (for man's redemption in the gospel of Christ) that had been concealed but was then being unveiled through the Apostles and Prophets (Ephesians 3:5). There was the "Word of Knowledge" which is presumably a gift for enhanced or deeper understanding of what was revealed through the former. There was the "Faith" that (differing from that which comes purely from hearing the gospel – Romans 10:17) is supernatural faith that, in Paul's language, could enable the recipient of the gift to "move mountains" (1 Corinthians 13:2). There were "Gifts of Healing", supernatural gifts that enabled them to cure all manner of diseases and misfortunes such as blindness, deafness, lameness, etc., without discrimination. Unlike modern miracle performers of the present time, there was no screening of afflicted persons prior to the exercise of these gifts and there were no relapses, gradual cures or marks of affliction borne by the persons healed (Acts 5:14-16).

There was also "Working of Miracles" which relates to the



exercise of supernatural power such as raising the dead, casting out evil spirits and inflicting judgement or punishments (Acts 5:9-10; 13:9-12). There was "Prophecy" which was a different kind of inspiration or revelation that unveiled future events, such as was used by Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10-11). There was "Discerning of spirits" which was the power to discern the disposition and secrets hidden in the hearts of men (2 Corinthians 12:21). There was the gift of "Diverse Kinds of Tongues" to speak in languages that were not one's native language (Acts 2:6-8), and the "Interpretation of Tongues" which was to reveal or disclose what was said in the foreign language.

It is important to highlight that there is no indication that any apostle ever performed any miracle apart from the aid of the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus Christ, while in the flesh, was never indicated to have performed any miracle prior to the Holy Spirit descending upon Him at the time of His baptism (Matthew 3:16), when He was said to have received the Holy Spirit "without measure" (John 3:34). But apart from the Apostles, several early Christians received miraculous gifts by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. Not all children of God received miraculous gifts but rather only those the Apostles laid their hands on (Acts 8:14-17; Acts 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6).

In 1 Corinthians 14, the Apostle delivers God's regulations concerning the use of the revelatory miraculous gifts in the assemblies of the church. At a time when the New Testament scriptures were then non-existent, the revelatory spiritual gifts were the means whereby preaching and teaching of the word of God was done (Acts 11:26; 13:1). In the assemblies of the church, the Holy Spirit forbids women to teach or exercise overt leadership over men (1 Timothy 2:11-14). As a result, women who were possessors of revelatory spiritual gifts (Acts 21:9) were also forbidden from using such gifts within the church assembly where men were present (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (ACTS 2:38)

A very common misconception is to confuse "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (singular) in Acts 2:38 with "gifts of the Holy Spirit" (plural) in Hebrews 2:4 and 1 Corinthians 12 and to thereby suggest, very erroneously so, that Christians upon and by virtue of their repentance and baptism receive miraculous gifts.

In Acts 2:38, the Apostle Peter preached that those who would accept Jesus Christ needed to "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit***". It is important to point out that this "gift of the Holy Spirit" (singular, and with the definite article "the") is the Holy Spirit Himself (1 Corinthians 6:19) rather than a miraculous gift that He administers. Hence, several English versions helpfully render this as "*Then you will receive **the Holy Spirit as a gift***".ⁱⁱⁱ This is the Holy Spirit by way of a spiritual seal as a deposit of God's presence in the Christian ahead of eternal life (Ephesians 1:13-

14) and this presence of the Holy Spirit manifests ONLY by exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit recorded in Galatians 5:22-23.^{iv}

IN CLOSING

Today, we live in a period long after the church has been established and God's truth has been fully revealed (Jude 3), confirmed and recorded for us in the New Testament. Hence, the miracles performed by God through men have served their purpose and, by God's design, they are not continuing. God still directly intervenes in the affairs of His children in answer to their prayers, nonetheless (Philippians 4:6-7).

The Bible warns that evil men and seducers will grow worse in their activities, including in their "*lying wonders*", deceiving those who do not love the truth (2 Timothy 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). We urge you to shun such deceitful activities by repenting (Psalm 1:1; 119:172; 1 John 5:17; Acts 17:30-31), confessing your faith in Christ (Romans 10:9-10), being baptized (immersed) in water for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38; 22:16), doing God's will (Matthew 7:21), and regularly worshipping God in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

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- ⁱ Other than here and as otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV).
- ⁱⁱ It makes no sense, from a Biblical perspective, to suppose that some miraculous gifts remain, whilst others have passed away. It is only sensible to understand that either they all remain with us today, or they are all gone.
- ⁱⁱⁱ See International Standard Version (ISV), Names of God Bible (NOG) and GOD'S WORD Translation (GW).
- ^{iv} That is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD AND MIRACLES

by Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba

INTRODUCTION

It is a common teaching among the Pentecostals that miracles exist today. Often, we hear of various claims among different churches about certain miracles that were performed. Sadly, even among some members of the churches of Christ, there seem to be those who believe this view. Some brethren have been advocating that God is still performing miracles as He did in the first century. Recently, a church of Christ in Lagos, Nigeria organized an all-night special prayer. It was reported that certain preachers conducted deliverance sessions for people with all kinds of spiritual problems.

As I write this article, I have in my possession a flyer by a congregation of the Lord's church (church of Christ 44b Ligali Street) inviting people for a "Revival Night, October 2023 Edition." The theme of the Revival Night is tagged: **"Deliverance from darkness dominion of witchcraft" (sic)**. It is important to state at this point that the Bible speaks of deliverance from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13) and this refers to the conversion of people from the world of sin into Christ's kingdom (the church) after they have obeyed the gospel by hearing, believing, repenting, confession of faith in Christ and baptism in water for the forgiveness of sins. The Bible teaches that the Lord adds the saved to the church after baptism (Acts 2:41, 47). This deliverance is done by God himself. So, one wonders what type of deliverance this congregation would like to do. Besides, would one imagine that they have not been properly delivered by God and so, they needed another deliverance? If the deliverance is meant for the unbelievers, does the Bible speak of anything like a special night of deliverance service? These questions are pertinent.

The surprising thing is that when these issues were brought up to be discussed in social media groups comprising of gospel preachers, there were ministers of the gospel who defended these churches and their practice. The claim was made that anyone who says that miracles have ceased is limiting God's power. But how true is this? Indeed, without an iota of doubt, God is all-powerful and He is still alive. But He chooses how He does His work. In this writing, we are going to look into God's Word to understand certain concepts such as providence and miracles in relation to how God works today.

WHAT IS PROVIDENCE?

The word "providence" can be defined as "the care or benevolent guidance of God." The dictionary defines providence as "exercising foresight; divine guidance or care; intervention." The English word comes from the Latin, "providere" which is made up of two words, "pro" (before) and "videre" (to see), thus "to see before" or "to foresee." The corresponding Greek word is "pronoia" (forethought). Thus, the idea "to see before," which expresses the idea of foresight and forethought, implies a future end or goal with a definite purpose and plan for sustaining that end. This word is used in

Acts 24:2, not about God's providence, but man's. That said, the concept of divine providence is clearly taught in the Scriptures.

One problem encountered in a study of providence is the thinking of some that God can only exercise His providence through miracles. And when we say (as taught in the Bible) that the age of miracles has now ceased, they assume that we are saying that God's providential care has also ceased. In so doing, they think that we are limiting God's exercise of care and guidance to the past ages. But this is not true at all. While it is true that God sometimes used miracles to accomplish His will, on other occasions He used natural means, often unseen by man, to bring about His purpose. We must keep in mind that both the natural and the miraculous are under the control of the Creator. By a miracle, God created the universe and then established natural laws by which it would continue. Both are expressions of His will. Both employ a supernatural source. While the supernatural means have ceased, the supernatural source in ways unseen by human eyes continues to control His universe and His people today.

MIRACLES

That miracles are a reality in Biblical teaching is a fact that no believer could deny. However, many individuals have a wholly inadequate view of the true nature of miracles. In general, a "miracle" can be said to be an event in the external world wrought by the immediate power of God, intended as a demonstration of His purpose and will. In Scripture, there are three terms used to define and describe the idea of a miracle. They are signs, wonders, and powers. These three terms come together in the work of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:22), the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 2:4), and the Apostles (II Corinthians 12:12).

These are the kinds of miracles we read of in the Bible: a man is raised from the dead (John 11), a lame man walks instantaneously (Acts 3), blind people are given their sight immediately (Mark 10:49-52), a man's ear is attached back to his head automatically (Luke 22:50-51). But we must admit that these kinds of miracles are not happening today. Most importantly, it must be understood that the ultimate purpose of Bible miracles was to confirm the Word of God (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:1-4; John 20:30-31. See II Timothy 3:16-17 and Jude 1:3; Romans 10:17 cf. Romans 1:16; I Corinthians 1:18).

Many today claim to have the power to perform miracles. But, when you take a look at the teaching of the Bible on miraculous spiritual gifts, I Corinthians 13:8-10 teaches without an iota of doubt that:

- Miraculous gifts (prophecy, tongues, knowledge) will stop at a certain time and will not continue forever.
- These miraculous gifts are "in part" (v.9)
- They will all be done away "when that which is perfect has come" (v.10)

A popular understanding of the "perfect" is that this is a reference to the return of Jesus. So many interpret this verse to mean that Paul is saying that miraculous spiritual gifts will



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continue until Jesus returns. However, there are many problems with this understanding of Paul's teaching.

First, what is the point of saying that the miraculous spiritual gifts will end at the second coming of Christ? Of course, those gifts would end! Everything is going to end at the second coming of Christ, according to 1 Corinthians 15:23-24.

Second, what is the point of saying that right now we cannot know all of God's will but when Christ returns, we will know fully? Again, this is not helpful, especially to these first-century Christians who are arguing over spiritual gifts.

Third, Paul says that three things will remain when that which is perfect has come: faith, hope, and love (verse 13). But faith and hope cannot remain after the Second Coming of Christ. The scriptures are very clear that hope that is seen is not hope (Romans 8:24). No one hopes for what he sees. Hope is necessary until we are joined with Christ. Hope will not remain after the second coming. Further, faith will not remain either. The writer of Hebrews teaches that faith is the evidence of things **not seen** (Hebrews 11:1). There is no need for faith in Christ when we are gathered at home with Him. So, Paul describes a time after the end of spiritual gifts when faith, hope, and love will remain.

Also, many jump to verse 12 and state that we have not seen God face-to-face. Therefore, Paul is talking about the second coming when we will see God face to face. But this is not what Paul says if we carefully read it. The text does not say **we will see God face to face**. Paul simply says that we will see clearly like being face to face, rather than dimly.

Since the partial refers to the limited knowledge and information the Christians had in the first century through spiritual gifts, the most natural understanding of "the perfect" is a time when that knowledge would be complete and no longer limited. Thus, the perfect is the complete Word of God. James calls it the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25).

However, it must be emphasized that saying that miraculous gifts have ceased is not to say that we do not believe in the power of God or prayer. We believe God can heal people through prayer and providence (James 5:13-15). In His time and way, God will heal people, but people no longer have the power to do biblical miracles. Why is it that not one miracle worker can go down to the cemetery today and raise a dead person? Because that power no longer exists for us!

HOW GOD WORKS TODAY

Today, God does not use miracles to work (1 Corinthians 13:8). He has told us to ask in prayer what we need and he will hear us (1 John 5:14). Those who are sick should pray (James 5: 13-15). The truth is: modern-day miracles are fake because there are no genuine miracles happening today. In a day and age when all people can seem to think about is miracles and the Holy Spirit, maybe we should start turning our attention to the product of the Holy Spirit—The Word of God (Eph. 6:17). Instead of getting in a fizzle about miracles today, Christians need to be fired up for the Words of the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 20:9). May God help us to study to show ourselves approved (2 Timothy 2:15).

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MODERN CLAIMS OF MIRACLES VERSUS BIBLE MIRACLES

by *Oladapo Olawale*

Diverse claims of miracles abound today, many of which have been attributed to God and Christ. Anyone may make a claim whether right or wrong about what he believes or has witnessed, but it is pertinent that every claim particularly as it relates to God must be validated by God's Word. The Bible being God's truth (John 17:17) is the standard by which any miraculous claim can be proved; any miracle contrary to that standard could not have originated from God.

For the very reason that many false prophets have gone into the world, the Bible enjoins us to test every spirit whether they are from God (1 John 4:1, 1 Timothy 4:1). Jesus Christ himself stressed the fact that being able to perform miracles and mighty works is not indicative of being pleasing to God (Matthew 7: 22-23), instead it is by obeying His commands that we can tell if anyone abides in Him (Matthew 7: 21). The Bible contains numerous accounts of miracles which confirms it as the Word of God. If we place the miracles recorded in the Bible side by side with many professed miracles today, we will notice so many contradictions in today's miracles such that we can easily question their authenticity.

When we rely only on the subjective testimonies and claims of those who feel God is performing miracles today, we do not have evidence that is credible enough. It is, therefore, pertinent to compare the pattern of miracles in the Bible with modern-day claims to validate any miraculous claims.

COMPARING BIBLE MIRACLES WITH MODERN-DAY CLAIMS

This discussion will examine modern-day claims of miracles in the light of bible miracles to ascertain the difference between true and false miracles; and to identify those who merely pretend to be miracle workers but are not genuine.

(a) Modern-day Miracles are not needed to confirm the word of God

In examining the biblical records about miracles and the purpose they served, compared to modern-day miracles, the first and most significant discovery we will make is that miracles were not intended to continue today. The miracles of the bible were performed for the primary reason of confirming God's message and the messenger as authentic (John 3:2; 20: 30 – 31; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3). The word of God in the New Testament having already been confirmed does not need to be confirmed repeatedly. When the church first began, the gifts of prophecies and miraculous knowledge were essential in revealing the message of God (1 Corinthians 12: 28 – 30) because there was no New Testament at the time to reveal God's will in the New Testament dispensation. These gifts including the gift of healing were bequeathed at the time through the laying on of the Apostle's hands (Acts 6:6-8; 8:14-19; 19:1-6; Romans 1:11; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

This was to be a temporary arrangement until the completion

of the New Testament. Anyone who prophesied or preached at the time only had a part of the truth of God (1 Corinthians 13: 8 – 10) until the perfect law of liberty was given (James 1:25). In this age, we have 'the faith' that had been delivered once and for all time to us (Jude 3). All of the scriptures have provided us with everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:3). A careful consideration of Jude 3 will reveal to us that if God had through the miracles performed by Jesus, the Holy Apostles and prophets, confirmed His word once and for all ages, then, He would not need any more miracles to confirm what He had already done once and for all time.

When men today, therefore, claim to perform miracles, they are by implication holding themselves out as confirming something new/different from 'the faith' that has already been confirmed, they cannot be confirming what had already been confirmed through the miracles recorded in the Bible. Besides there are no Apostles today who could impart these gifts and abilities today. The question then persists: why do we have many miracle workers today? The answer may not be far-fetched: because many false prophets have gone into the world (1 John 4:1; 1 Timothy 4:1-2).

(b) Modern-day Miracles are highly questionable

Whereas Bible Miracles are credible, undeniable, and demonstrable facts, modern-day miracles leave a lot of questions unanswered, usually requiring persons to argue for their validity. Modern-day miracles resemble more of a staged performance with the supposed 'recipients' of the miracles and their condition needing healing not already known to many people. The testimonies of neutral persons are never obtained. On YouTube, we can find countless videos showing and explaining the tricks employed by so-called miracle workers today. A so-called pastor once claimed 'miracle money' where angels deposited money into accounts of people; another person claimed she has never had cause to refill her cooking gas for years, as the gas just kept burning. These bogus claims are never verified by anyone other than those making them and their allies, such is the nature of modern-day miracles.

On the other hand, Bible miracles were perceived by the human senses and witnessed by many without any doubt whatsoever. When Jesus turned water into wine, some witnesses tasted and confirmed this miracle (John 2:9); the restored ear of the high priest's servant was visible to those present (Luke 22:51). Bible miracles could not be explained by natural methods as there are overwhelming historical evidence to point to the miracles performed by Jesus and the Apostles.

Even the enemies of Jesus could not deny the great effect of His miracles, they only sought to attribute them to the power of Satan. (Matthew 12:24). In Acts 4:16 the lame man at the temple who was healed by Peter and John, was well known to people who frequented the temple and there was testimony to the fact that he had been lame from birth (Acts 3:2).



Despite unduly punishing the Apostles for the miracles, the Jewish Sanhedrin still attested to the veracity of the miracle performed thus: For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. Miracles today are neither evident nor convincing enough to elicit such sincere reactions.

(c) Modern-day Miracles are all about healing

The miracles that were performed by Jesus and the Apostles were not limited to healing. Jesus stilled the tempest (Mark 4:37 – 41), walked on the sea and made Peter do the same (Matthew 14: 25 – 33), turned water into wine (John 2:1-11), fed five thousand people with five loaves and a fish (Luke 9:16-17). Jesus also on several occasions raised the dead (Luke 7:11 – 17; 8: 40 – 56; John 11). The Apostles Peter and Paul respectively also raised people from the dead (Acts 9:36 – 43; 20: 7 – 12). It is therefore baffling that despite the diverse kinds of miracles performed in the Bible, today's miracle workers only limit themselves to healing. Perhaps due to the numerous health issues and challenges in the world today, it is easy to fill up the auditoriums of these healing performers with many sick people to convince them to contribute their money as a way of 'sowing seeds' for their 'healing'. Yet many who attend these churches for healing never get healed, they remain as they have been. Another, significant doubt on the healing miracles today is that they are restricted to the named venue of the miracle worker whereas Jesus and His disciples went everywhere (Acts 10:38; 8: 4-5).

(d) Modern-day Miracles are selective and partial

Modern-day miracle workers employ many selective approaches to determine how to perform miracles and who to heal. Some of these selective methods are meant to raise money, for instance selling healing items like olive oil, 'holy water', effigies etc which are believed to have healing powers when prayed with. In some other cases, we read of prayer cards used to identify those who collaborate with fake miracle workers and to screen anyone else out. Using selective methods as a condition to perform miracles raises questions about the credibility and source of these modern miracles. There is no record in the Bible where Jesus or the Apostles employed methods of screening those to receive miracles. Neither is anyone in the Bible required to buy any healing merchandise as a condition before he can be healed.

(e) Modern-day miracles are not Instantaneous.

Bible miracles occurred immediately when performed, there was no healing period as the results were instantaneous and complete for everyone present to behold. In Mark 10:52, blind Bartimaeus received his sight immediately, and the lame man at the temple was healed and began walking immediately (Acts 3:7). See also Mark 1: 40 – 42; Luke 8:43-48. Today, we see people gesticulating vigorously, being made to sweat and exert themselves before they are healed. There is no such instance in the Bible; some have even passed through a

'healing school' and waited for some days or even weeks before they were healed. Biblical miracles are genuine and as such were not slow and progressive. They produced instantaneous and complete results.

(f) Modern-day Miracles are conditioned on the faith of their recipients

Quite often when confronted about the failure of some of their healing miracles, modern-day miracle workers blame it on a lack of faith of the recipients. Whilst it is true that in some cases, the faith of beneficiaries of miracles was referenced (Mark 5:34, 36), most people in the Bible were not required to have faith to receive their miracles. Neither those who were raised from the dead (John 11:44) nor those possessed by demons (Luke 9:42;11:14) were in any position to exercise faith to receive their healing. The man at the pool of Bethesda who had been lame for 38 years did not even know Jesus let alone exercise faith in Him yet that did not matter to Jesus, He still healed him (John 5:13) so also the man born blind in John 9:11-12,17,25,35-36. In Mark 2:5, Jesus healed the paralytic after observing the faith of his companions, not even the faith of the recipient of the healing miracle. Contrary to what many faith healers practice, the New Testament teach that miracles were performed to elicit or produce faith (John 20:30-31) and not the other way round.

In essence, bible miracles were not limited by the faith or lack of faith of men, they rested solely on the power of God working in them to confirm the message of God. Blaming the failure of miracles on the lack of faith of recipients of miracles is not only insensitive to the plight of sick people seeking miracles but indicative of the fact that modern-day miracles do not originate from God.

(g) Modern-day Miracles have an unworthy motive

Although many miracle workers today claim their goal is to spread the gospel through the miracles being performed, in the real sense, they seek personal aggrandizement – for fame and financial reward. 'Faith healers' today have simply made merchandise of their 'healing ministry' enriching themselves through sales of all sorts of miracle items like oil, 'holy water', and other religious paraphernalia which do not have any connection to the power of healing. Many, through the fake/staged miracles, arrogate to themselves unscriptural titles whilst some exert mind control over their gullible flock and sometimes extend this to the political space.

Modern-day miracle workers have built multi-billion fortunes for themselves to the neglect of their innocent and simple-minded followers who simply do not ask them questions. Jesus Christ and His Apostles did not enrich themselves with their miraculous powers; they never sought to be wealthy by gathering collections from those who seek healing to furnish a luxurious lifestyle that is befitting of the time they lived. Jesus never acquired material wealth despite being the Son of God and performing miracles to attest to this. The Apostle Peter told the lame man at the temple that he had neither silver nor gold

to give him, but he went ahead to heal him and asked for no collection in return (Acts 3:6). This is contrary to the numerous collections received from miracle seekers today in addition to the several faith merchandises sold to them.

CONCLUSION

When we look up to the word of God, the faith that has been delivered once and for all time, we see that miracles have ceased today having served the purpose of confirming the word of God. Besides there are no Apostles today to impart spiritual gifts to enable anyone to perform miracles. This is the most significant discovery we can make when comparing bible miracles with modern-day ones. Aside from this, the pattern of miracles recorded in the Bible are of high standards of credibility which modern-day miracle workers have never met. The miracles of the Bible are completely at variance with the miracles performed today. Fake miracles continue to abound in today's world because indeed, many false prophets have gone into the world who do not serve the Lord but their own belly deceiving the hearts of the simple! (Romans 16:18-19; Philippians 3:17-19; 2 Peter 2:1-3)

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DO MIRACLES EXIST TODAY?

by Kayode Adekunle

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written 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.

"Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away" 1 Cor 13:8-10

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

A miracle can be considered to be an event that involves the direct and powerful action of God, transcending the ordinary laws of nature and defying common expectations of behaviour. Miracles are extraordinary occurrences that can only be attributed to the supernatural work of God and demonstrate His involvement in human existence. God employs miracles in the Bible to reveal Himself, His character, and His purposes to humans through occurrences that are not otherwise explainable.

Miracles provide evidence of God's presence and power in the world and demonstrate His authority on behalf of His servants. A miracle may be performed directly by God or through a human agent. Other words used to describe miracles in the Bible are signs and wonders. Paul says this to the Corinthians *"Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds"* 11 Cor 12:12

The Bible reveals different forms of miracles, however, they can be broadly categorized into four.

Nature Miracles: There are many occasions in the Bible both in the Old and New Testaments when God demonstrated His power over nature resulting in supernatural occurrences. A few examples include

The burning bush (Exodus 3:1-14); The plague miracles (Exodus 7-12); Pillar of cloud and fire (Exodus 13:21-22); Crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-31); Bitter waters sweetened (Exodus 15:23-25); Manna sent (Exodus 16:14-35).

Jesus turning water to wine in Cana (John 2:1-11); Feeding of 5000 people by Jesus Christ (John 6:1-14); Jesus calms a storm on the sea (Matthew 8:23-27); Jesus walks on water (Matthew 14:22-33).

Healing Miracles: Miraculous power to cure physical impairments and illnesses are equally exhibited in both the Old and New Testament, these are a few examples; Healing of Naaman by Elisha in River Jordan (2 Kings 5:1-19); The Lord sent venomous snakes among rebellious Israel. Moses prayed for them, made a bronze snake and anyone who looked at it lived (Num. 21:8-9). Jesus Christ and His Apostles show great power of healing in the New Testament; a few examples are; the healing of an official's son at Capernaum in Galilee John 4:43-54; healing of Peter's mother-in-law sick with fever Matthew 8:14-15; Peter & John healed the lame man Acts 3:1-11; 3:16

Exorcisms Miracles: This is to cast out demons and unclean spirits. Jesus manifested this on some occasions during His ministry, A few examples are; Jesus driving out an evil spirit from a man in Capernaum Mark 1:21-27; healing many sick and oppressed in the evening Matthew 8:16-17; casting demons into a herd of pigs Luke 8:26-39.

Restoration Miracles: This involves raising the dead, and restoring to life. Jesus Christ and His Apostles performed

miracles along this line in the New Testament, a few examples are: Jesus raises Jairus' daughter back to life Matthew 9:18, 23-26; raising a widow's son from the dead in Nain Luke 7:11-17; Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead in Bethany John 11:1-45; Peter raising Tabitha from the dead Acts 9:36-43; Paul raising Eutychus from the dead at Troas Acts 20: 7-12.

MIRACLES NO LONGER EXIST TODAY

Many out of their ignorance still believe that miracles still exist today as in the days of the scriptures and the Bible verse that is mostly interpreted in this regard is Jesus Christ's statement to His disciples in Mark 16:17-18 *"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."* Many still believe and teach today that Jesus Christ's statement here applies to all believers today. A belief like this however, is a case of not being able to *"rightly divide the word of truth"* (1 Tim 2:15).

A close look at the context of Mark 16:17-18 shows that Jesus Christ directed this statement to His disciples, especially those among them who had doubted His resurrection. In verses 9-11, Mark recorded how Christ met Mary Magdalene after His resurrection and how she (Mary) had gone to inform His disciples about this encounter, but *"they did not believe"* (Mark 16:11). In verse 14, Christ *"rebuked their unbelief"* and went on to pronounce power to perform miracles and carry out signs and wonders on those of them who did not doubt His resurrection. To confirm that Mark 16: 17-18 is specifically for the disciples of Christ, Mark ends the chapter with this statement in Mark 16:19-20 *"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."*

REASONS FOR MIRACLES

It is very evident that God did not allow miracles to happen in the Bible to prove His existence or power alone because the Bible makes it clear that all that man needs to know to believe that God exists has been manifested in His creation. Paul says this to the Romans *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse"* Romans 1:20.

Hence, the purpose of the miracles in the Bible is not to prove the existence of God alone, but it is also to prove the legitimacy and the validity of the agents of revelation, that is,

Do Miracles Exist Today?

of the people whom God has commissioned to speak His word. In this regard, He used great prophets in the Old Testament, His Son Jesus Christ, the Apostles and the early Christians in the New Testament not only to authenticate His words but to also prove the legitimacy of His servants.

Since the Jews demanded signs (1 Cor 1:22), God gave Christ the power to perform miracles. Peter declares to the Jews on the day of Pentecost that *"Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God by miracles, wonders and signs."* Acts 2:22. Since Jesus Christ's sonship was rejected by His fellow Jews, John declares; *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written 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.

The Apostles' genuineness as true servants of Christ is authenticated by their ability to perform miracles, signs and wonders (1 Cor 12:12). The miracle of the coming down of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is to give the Apostles the power of utterances to be able to speak *"the wonderful works of God"* (Acts 2:11) and preach the gospel of Christ for the very first time. This confirms Jesus Christ's promise to them in John 16:12-13.

At the beginning of the Church, the Apostles could transfer miraculous power to the early Christians who were also able to manifest these signs for them to get direct revelations of the word of God. We saw this in the case of Stephen (Acts 6:8); Philip (Acts 8:6) and the manifestation of different gifts (1 Cor 12:28). It is important to emphasize however, that the Holy Spirit makes it very clear the Apostles were the only one who could transfer this power through the laying of hands, as done by Peter and John in Samaria (Acts 8:14-17) and Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19: 6.) This confirms the fact that miraculous powers do not transcend the Apostles and the early Christians.

DO CHRISTIANS STILL NEED MIRACLES TODAY?

It is very clear in the Bible that there is no longer a basis for Christians today to need miracles. Paul makes it clear to the Corinthians that miraculous power will come to an end (1 Cor 13:8-10). The perfect law of liberty (James 1:25) is the New Testament which contains the complete revelation of the mind of God to mankind today. Peter says God has given to us *"all things that pertain to life and godliness"* (1 Peter 1:3). The Bible (the New Testament) is sufficient for us because *"all truth"* (John 16:13) has been revealed in it. We don't need miracles today to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We confess and believe Him today by faith.

HAS GOD CHANGED?

God Almighty remains the same (Malachi 3:6) and our Lord Jesus Christ also remains the same forever (Hebrews 13:8). The understanding we need to have, however, is that the Holy

Spirit has revealed the mind of God to us today through the New Testament (1 Corinthians 2:10) and Jesus Christ His Son and our Saviour carried out the work of redemption through the shedding of His blood (Rom 5:9; Eph 1:7). Christians today do not need miracles to believe the work of salvation that Jesus Christ has accomplished by shedding His blood on the cross of Calvary because we do not walk by sight today, but by faith (1 Cor 5:7) and faith comes today by hearing the word of God (Rom 10:17).

CONCLUSION

The Bible confirms that there is only *"one Faith"* (Eph 4: 5) and this Faith *"has been delivered to us once and for all"* (Jude 3). The implication of this is that the Holy Spirit of God which dwells in us (1 Tim 1:14) guides us only through the word of God. Miracles were just physical signs that God used to achieve specific purposes in the Bible and it is the miracle recorded in the Bible, rather than the lying wonders of men since the completion of the Bible and up till today that have a genuine connection to God.

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