

The Meanings and Purposes of Miracles

Passages: Job 38–39; Ex 14; Dan 3; Mk 16:14–20; Heb 2:3–4

Memory Verse

“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)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God used miracles, signs, and wonders throughout the Bible, and this is still the same today.2. Through miracles, God enables mankind to know Him, His word, and the way to salvation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is almighty, full of love and compassion for mankind.2. God stretches out His powerful hand to deliver and protect us when in pain, sorrow, and need.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Be truly thankful for God’s mercy and saving grace, and give Him all the glory.2. Ponder on God’s nature in His miracles and reflect this in our lives.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Types of Miracles
- B. The Purposes of Miracles
- C. The Prerequisites for Miracles

Life Application

What Does God Want Me to Learn from Miracles?

Memory Verse

Conclusion: By studying miracles and witnessing them, we can grow in our knowledge of the truth, change our hearts, and shift our lives so that we can have a closer walk with God.

Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

Throughout human history, God has demonstrated His power and might through amazing acts. These divine acts are known as signs, wonders, and miracles. These acts of God transcend natural and scientific laws. They go beyond human understanding and reasoning, and they cannot be achieved by man. Through miracles, we see the sovereignty and glory of God.

In today's lesson, we will look at miracles in nature, miracles experienced by man, God's intentions for miracles, and the prerequisites for miracles.

A. Types of Miracles

1. Miracles in Nature

Just as a building needs a designer to build it, our universe and all of creation was created by an awesome Creator. Creation gives us a glimpse of God's power, wisdom, majesty, and love. He causes the new plants to grow in the springtime, guides the stars in their cycles above, maintains the seasons, and sustains every living being.

No human can achieve or replicate all of these things that we experience; they all come from God, making them miracles in and of themselves. For example, from what we know so far, the universe has about 100 billion galaxies. Each of these galaxies contains hundreds of billions of stars. Man cannot possibly determine the exact number of stars because there are just too many. And yet, our God knows the exact number, and He calls each one by name (Ps 147:4).

When beholding God's creation, King David exclaimed, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?" (Ps 8:3–4). Job also marveled saying, "Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job 26:14).

Besides these daily miracles in the natural world, there are also a number of extraordinary occurrences in the Bible that go beyond the laws of nature.

- When the five kings of the Amorites came to fight against the city of Gibeon and the Israelites, Joshua prayed that the sun and the moon would remain in place. As a result, God caused the sun and the moon to remain still for an entire day to provide daylight for Joshua to destroy the enemies (Josh 10:1–14).
- When Hezekiah was sick and near death, he beseeched the Lord to heal him. The Lord heard his prayer and gave him fifteen more years to live. God caused the sundial to go back ten degrees as a sign (2 Kgs 20:1–11).
- Jesus instructed Peter to cast a hook in the sea. Peter did so and the first fish that he caught had a coin in its mouth that was used to pay the temple tax (Mt 17:24–27).

2. Miracles Experienced by Man

Mankind has been created and loved by God. God uses signs, wonders, and miracles to relieve man of their pain, sorrow, and daily concerns and to allow man to ultimately know Him and receive salvation. The following are miracles experienced by man.

a. Protection from danger

Psalm 121:1–8 reminds us that in times of dangers and difficulties, our help and deliverance

come from the Lord who made the heavens and earth. He will keep us from all evil, and He will preserve our soul.

- When Daniel and his three friends were thrown into a furnace for their refusal to worship the golden image, they were unharmed by the fiery fire.
- Peter was freed from his prison cell by an angel.
- Paul was bitten by a venomous snake but was unharmed.

b. Healing of sicknesses

During His earthly ministry, Jesus healed countless people with all kinds of sicknesses. In the New Testament, there are seventeen accounts of physical healing, including a man with a withered hand (Mt 12:9–14), the deaf and mute (Mk 7:31–37), a paralytic (Mt 9:2–8), lepers (Lk 17:11–19), a woman with a long-term sickness (Lk 13:10–17), and many more. These miracles show that Jesus is the great physician. When we are sick, we need to turn to the merciful Savior who has the power to heal us.

c. Casting out demons

Jesus cast out demons from those who were tortured and possessed by demons. Later, through faith and reliance on God’s power, the disciples were able to do the same. Similarly, by believing in God, we can be freed from the bondage of Satan and sin.

d. Raising of the dead

No one has the power to raise people from the dead except God. In the New Testament, there are three people whom Jesus raised from the dead. These miracles show that Jesus, as our Creator, has power over life and death.

- Jairus’ daughter (Mt 9:18–26)
- The widow’s son at Nain (Lk 7:11–15)
- Lazarus at Bethany (Jn 11:1–44)

Workers such as Elijah, Elisha, Paul, and Peter also raised people from the dead through God’s power (1 Kgs 17:17–24; 2 Kgs 4:17–37; Acts 20:9–10; 9:39–41)

e. The transformation of the Holy Spirit

People rarely change, or they find it extremely difficult to change themselves. But through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, our evil desires and bad habits can be removed. With the help of the Spirit, we can bear good fruit and be sanctified. This is the most important miracle in our lives, as it enables us to be complete for salvation.

B. The Purposes of Miracles

1. The Purpose of Miracles for Man

a. Convince man to believe in God

People today revere science, money, power, or pleasure above God. However, through signs and miracles, a person can experience God’s might and power. This experience can lead them to depart from false beliefs and superstitions, and instead believe in God and submit to the truth (Rom 15:18; 2 Cor 10:4–6).

- The disciples wondered who Jesus was when they saw how even the winds and the waves obeyed Him (Mk 4:41).

- Simon the sorcerer believed in God upon seeing Philip perform God's great miracles (Acts 8:9–13).
- Jesus told the Jews that even if they don't believe in Him, at least believe in miracles, for through them they will know that the Lord Jesus is indeed God (Jn 10:3, 8; 14:11).

b. Confirm the true message

A miracle is not for entertainment. It is not to satisfy our curiosity, nor is the miracle itself the primary purpose. Signs and miracles confirm the gospel. Their main purpose is to lead man to know God, to show them the truth, and to teach them how to obtain salvation (Heb 2:3–4).

- The Lord worked with the apostles and confirmed the message they preached by the signs that followed (Mk 16:20).
- Herod desired for a long time to see Jesus because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him, but because of Herod's misplaced motives, Jesus did not perform any miracle (Lk 23:8–9).

c. Confirm the divine commission

Signs and wonders confirm that the worker has been sent by God.

- Miracles proved that Moses was chosen and sent by God (Num 16:28–30; 17:1–11).
- Jesus Christ worked miracles to testify that He is the Christ (Mt 11:2–6; Jn 5:36; 10:37–38).
- With the abidance of the Holy Spirit, the true church abounds with all kinds of miracles (Mk 16:17–18; Lk 10:19; 1 Cor 12:9, 28).

d. Strengthen the believers' faith

When believers turn to God and witness God's almightiness in times of sickness, trouble, or adversity, their faith and knowledge of God can grow.

- The power of Christ's miracles resolved the doubts of John the Baptist (Mt 11:2–6).
- Miracles caused early believers and others to fear God and to hold the apostles in high honor (Acts 5:11–13).

2. The Purpose of Miracles for God

a. To execute His deliverance

- The ten plagues were miracles for the purpose of delivering the chosen people out of Egypt (Ex 3:20; 7:20–12:36).
- The Lord delivered Peter when he sank into the sea (Mt 14:28–31).
- Jesus' resurrection was for the sake of our salvation (Jn 3:15; 17:2).

b. To execute His judgment

God uses miracles to bring judgment upon the wicked and the unrighteous.

- God rained down fire and brimstone to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24–25).
- When Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit, they immediately died (Acts 5:1–11).
- God caused the earth to open up and swallow the rebellious Korah, his men, and his household (Num 16:27–33).

c. To glorify our Father in heaven

We should not exalt the person who performed the miracle, but rather give praise and glory to God, the true source of miracles.

- The crowds marveled and glorified God when they saw the paralytic rise and take up his bed (Mk 2:12).
- Lazarus' sickness was for the glory of God (Jn 11:4).

C. The Prerequisites for Miracles

Mark 16:17 tells us that signs will follow those who believe in Jesus' name. This does not mean that miracles will definitely occur or that we should push God for a miracle. God said, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways [...]. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:8–9). God manifests miracles according to His will and purpose (1 Jn 5:14). However, there are still certain prerequisites for miracles to happen.

1. Performed in the Name of Jesus Christ

Our God is the maker and sustainer of all creation. He is the God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in us all. He came to the world as our Savior and manifested His name to mankind. Therefore, if we believe in His name and have faith in God's power and might, signs and miracles will follow (Mk 16:17; cf. Acts 3:16). Whatever we ask in Jesus' name, God will give to us (Jn 16:23–25).

Conversely, if we call on Jesus' name with unbelief and a lack of reverence, our actions will be ineffective. The seven sons of Sceva misused Jesus' name by attempting to cast out demons "by the Jesus whom Paul [preached]." Not only did they fail, but they were also overpowered by the demons (Acts 19:13–16). Using Jesus' name in vain will incur the wrath of God.

2. Performed Through God's Spirit

Signs, miracles, and mighty works manifest through God's Spirit (1 Cor 12:9–10; Acts 10:38).

- In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth through His Spirit and word (Gen 1:1–2).
- Jesus cast out demons and healed sicknesses through the power of the Spirit (Mt 12:28).
- When Elymas the sorcerer opposed the truth, Paul caused him to become blind (Acts 13:8–12).

3. Great Faith

a. From the intercessor

Jesus said that if we have faith as small as a mustard seed, nothing is impossible for us.

- The Lord showed mercy upon the Canaanite woman's demon-possessed daughter because of her great faith (Mt 15:22–29).
- Jesus marveled at the centurion's faith and healed his servant that same hour (Mt 8:5, 13).
- Elijah believed that God would send an abundance of rain when initially there was no sign of rain (1 Kgs 18:41–45).

b. From the one receiving intercession

Those who require healing must believe that Jesus is the almighty Savior and that He will heal us according to our faith (Mt 9:27–30, 20–22). With the use of God's words and personal testimonies, we can strengthen and encourage those who lack faith.

- The Lord encouraged Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe" (Mk 5:36).
- The Lord said to Martha, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" (Jn 11:39–40).

4. Fervent and Persistent Prayer

Oftentimes, prayer precedes a miracle. That’s not to say that wonders will instantly unfold when we pray. However, fervent and unceasing prayers are key in witnessing God’s deeds.

- Elijah prayed three times for the widow’s son to resurrect and prayed seven times before the rain came after three and a half years of drought (1 Kgs 17:21–22; 18:42–45).
- The Canaanite woman pleaded persistently for Jesus to heal her daughter (Mt 15:22–27).
- The blind man in Jericho incessantly called out to Jesus and was healed (Lk 18:38–43).

5. Confession and Repentance

God does not hear the prayers of the sinners (Jn 9:31) but the prayers of the righteous (Jas 5:16). Sickness, calamities, and troubles can sometimes originate from our sins (Mk 2:5–12). Therefore, repentance and confession of our trespasses are sometimes necessary before we ask for healing (Jas 5:15–16).

- Jesus first forgave the sins of the paralyzed man before He healed him.
- God sent down rain after the Israelites stopped worshipping idols (1 Kgs 18:37, 45).

Check for Understanding

1. **What are two types of miracles?** Miracles in nature and miracles experienced by man.
2. **What are the purposes of miracles for man?** Convince man to believe in God; confirm the true message; confirm the divine commission; and strengthen the believers’ faith.
3. **What are the purposes of miracles for God?** To execute His deliverance and judgment, and to allow us to glorify our Father in heaven.
4. **What requirements are needed for miracles to manifest?** Performed in the name of Jesus Christ; performed through God’s Spirit; great faith; fervent and persistent prayer; and confession and repentance.

Life Application

What Does God Want Me to Learn from Miracles?

Have the class divide into small groups. Read the following Bible verses to discover the different reactions to the miracles and what we can learn from each story.

Bible Passage/Who is Involved	What was the reaction to the miracle?	What does this teach us?
Acts 19:13–16 Sons of Sceva	The Jewish exorcists used the name of Jesus whom Paul preached to cast out evil spirits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without belief and faith in the Lord Jesus, casting out demons in His name is ineffective. • Only with true faith and a life that pleases God can a person be worthy to call upon the name of Jesus. • Misuse of God’s name will incur His wrath.
Acts 8:9–24 Simon the Sorcerer	When Simon saw the signs and miracles and how the people received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, he wanted to purchase the power.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simon’s desire to purchase the power of God showed that he was more interested in power and glory. • This reminds us that even though we may have experienced some miracles in our life and seen God’s power, we may still have weaknesses,

		<p>erroneous thoughts, or incorrect motives that need to be changed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our goal in life should be transforming ourselves into the image of Christ.
Acts 14:8–18 The people in Lystra	The people wanted to worship the apostles, believing that they were gods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we experience miracles, we need to avoid the temptation of exalting ourselves or the person who performed the miracle. • All praise and glory should be given to the almighty God.
Jn 6:10–14, 22–26 The multitude	The day after Jesus fed the 5,000, the people came looking for Him again. But Jesus knew that it was not because they believed in Him, but because they wanted food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of following the Lord and seeing miracles is not for material blessings and benefits. • We ought to set our sights on higher and nobler goals, such as to grow in Christ through His word and Spirit.
Lk 23:8–9 King Herod	King Herod had heard much about Jesus and wanted Jesus to perform a miracle for him.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miracles do not exist for the purpose of satisfying our curiosity, nor are they a form of entertainment. Their purpose is to allow us to know and believe in the true God.
Lk 17:11–19 The leper	After the leper was cured, he returned to Jesus to glorify God and give thanks to Him.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We cannot take God’s grace for granted. We need to glorify Him and give thanks for God’s blessings.

Discussion:

- Share a miracle that you experienced or have heard about that inspired you to grow spiritually.
- What did you learn about Jesus’ character from the miracle? Did it change you?

Memory Verse

“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)

Meaning

Miracles are not for the purpose of entertainment or excitement. Instead, miracles are for the purpose of leading ourselves and others to the truth that is the gospel of salvation. They are a testimony of God’s almighty power.

Conclusion

The purpose of miracles is not to perform startling wonders that will cause a sensation. Nor are they for the purpose of fulfilling any material desires or for satisfying our curiosity. Instead, by studying miracles and witnessing them, we can grow in our knowledge of the truth, change our hearts, and shift our lives so that we can have a closer walk with God.

Lesson 9 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is the purpose of miracles?
They lead us and others to the truth that is the gospel of salvation. They are a testimony of God's almighty power.
2. Summarize a miracle in the Bible that went beyond the laws of nature.
 - a. *God caused the sun and moon to remain still for an entire day to provide daylight for Joshua and the Israelites to destroy their enemies (Josh 10:1–14).*
 - b. *God healed Hezekiah and caused the sundial to go back ten degrees as a sign (2 Kgs 20:1–11).*
 - c. *Jesus instructed Peter to cast a hook in the sea. He did so, and the first fish he caught had a coin in its mouth that was used to pay the temple tax (Mt 17:24–27).*
3. What are the purposes of miracles for man?
 - a. *Convince man to believe in God*
 - b. *Confirm the true message*
 - c. *Confirm the divine commission*
 - d. *Strengthen the believers' faith*
4. "For My _____ are not your _____, nor are your _____ My _____ [...]. For as the _____ are higher than the _____, so are My _____ higher than your _____ and My _____ than your _____." (Isaiah 55:8–9)
thoughts, thoughts, ways, ways, heavens, earth, ways, ways, thoughts, thoughts.
5. Have you ever witnessed or heard of a miracle that changed your faith in any way? Briefly explain.
Personal answers.