

ARE MIRACLES RELEVANT?

Leader pages on pp. 134-137

THE POINT:
MIRACLES ARE ACTS OF GOD THAT POINT TO JESUS AND GLORIFY HIM.

JOHN 10:22-26; 14:8-14

^{10:22} Then the Festival of Dedication took place in Jerusalem, and it was winter.

²³ Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's Colonnade.

²⁴ The Jews surrounded him and asked, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

²⁵ "I did tell you and you don't believe," Jesus answered them. "The works that I do in my Father's name testify about me.

²⁶ But you don't believe because you are not of my sheep."

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^{14:8} "Lord," said Philip, "show us the Father, and that's enough for us."

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works.

¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.

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¹² **"Truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.**

¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

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MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Festival of Dedication (10:22)– This festival commemorates the rededication of the Jerusalem temple in 164 BC. The temple had been desecrated by the Syrian ruler Antiochus IV.

It was winter (10:22)–This was not a mere description. But time and temperature notations in John are reflections of the

spiritual condition of the persons in the stories (cf. 3:2; 13:30; 18:3,18; 20:1,19; 21:3-4).

The Messiah (10:24)–A transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning "anointed one"; first-century Jews hoped God would send a Messiah who would free them and establish an independent Jewish nation.

WHY DOES GOD DO MIRACLES?

One reason Darwin’s Theory of Evolution is popular is because it helps people account for the existence of life without the need for the existence of God. Evolutionary scientists have worked intensely to show how natural processes can account for the existence of life and for the many life forms on earth. The main types of evidence they use to make their case are:

- The remains of ancient organisms
- Fossil layers
- Similarities among organisms that are alive today
- Similarities in DNA
- Similarities of embryos

The problem is that none of these prove scientifically the possibility that naturalistic evolution is true, and that is why it remains a theory. Their idea of evolution is a belief based on their faith in nature with no scientific basis at all.

The Bible voices a totally different worldview belief where God not only exists, but He is able to interact with His creation in ways that are outside of natural laws. The apostle John has given us a powerful awareness of God’s use of miracles in the world.

Miracles Reveal God’s Power //

John 10:22-26

Jesus was definitely a powerful speaker, and many people believed in Him because of His deep teachings. But it was not just His intense words that got people’s attention. He often performed amazing miracles in their presence. In fact, just before the events in this passage, Jesus had given sight to a man born blind (John 9:1-7). But human beings seem to have an amazing capacity to ignore what is right in front of their faces if it does not relate to what they already believe.

The report in John 10:22-39 took place during the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) in Jerusalem in late November or early December. As Jesus was walking in the temple entryway, the Jews spotted Him and crowded around Him. As they did, they began spraying Him with questions. Specifically, they were obsessed with knowing if He was the promised Messiah, and they focused their questioning on that.

Jesus fired back that He had already answered that question, but they just couldn’t bring themselves to believe what He was teaching. The reason they were having a difficult time believing Him was because He was not giving them an answer that matched their concept of the Messiah.



THE POINT: MIRACLES ARE ACTS OF GOD THAT POINT TO JESUS AND GLORIFY HIM.

Although many of those people had actually seen Jesus perform miracles, or at least had heard about them, they were still not sure and doubting.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT JESUS BY LOOKING AT HIS MIRACLES?

Jesus knew that the beliefs and motives of those in the crowd were wrong, so He rebuked their questioning by telling them, "I did tell you and you don't believe." Then He followed up with a very shocking statement. The reason they didn't believe was "because you are not of my sheep."

Jesus knew they didn't understand the nature of His messiahship and authority. He also knew that if He, at that moment, directly claimed to be the Messiah, they would try to force Him into a military/political role based upon their own messianic expectation, rather than allow Him to carry out the messianic role He had actually come to fulfill.

So, what exactly did Jesus mean when He said, "But you don't believe because you are not of my sheep?" They were not Jesus's sheep because their beliefs did not match up with God's reality. They were looking for a Messiah, and because of Jesus's powerful teachings and His amazing miracles, He seemed to be on point with what they wanted. But their definition of Messiah was different from the definition Jesus was preaching. Jesus's messiahship was based on an entirely different worldview foundation. Instead of a focus on this world as the people were expecting, Jesus was making known a spiritual kingdom. Unfortunately, the people rejected what Jesus was offering.

Jesus is rejected today for the same reason those in Jesus's day rejected Him: They don't believe the message or the miracles He performed. Even though God is still in the business of performing miracles by changing people's lives, healing people in countless ways, and even guiding the events in the world to achieve His purposes, those who do not believe simply do not see or get it. And when they do not see it for themselves, they reject the message of the gospel when it is shared with them.

Miracles Reveal God's Person // John 14:8-11

It is understandable when non-believers don't recognize the work of God in the world. After all, their most foundational beliefs don't even recognize the existence of the God of the Bible. They believe Christian beliefs are fairy tales. In John 14, though, it was Jesus's disciples who were struggling with the meaning of Jesus's messiahship. It's not that they didn't believe, but they didn't yet fully understand all His messiahship involved.



DIGGING DEEPER GOD'S MIRACLES

As Christians, we need a healthy worldview about miracles that includes the power and sovereignty of God. From our smallest impossibilities to our deepest concerns, God desires to provide a way for us whether it be in our circumstances or through them. God wants to extend His kindness to you. Isaiah 54:10 delivers this promise to us: "Though the mountains move and the hills shake, my love will not be removed from you and my covenant of peace will not be shaken," says your compassionate Lord." God is our Way Maker and Miracle Worker according to modern day songwriter and worship leader, Sinach. Our pursuit of miracles isn't just because of what God can do. Instead, it's for us to better know who He is and who He wants to do for us. God assures His followers He is concerned with every detail of our lives as we offer those concerns to Him.

What prevents believers from seeking God's kindness through His miracles?



The disciples especially struggled with understanding Jesus's relationship with the Father. Jesus had just told them He was the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Of course, this wasn't the first time Jesus connected Himself to God the Father (5:19; 6:38; 10:15), but Philip wanted to settle the matter: "Show us the Father, and that's enough for us."

WHAT OBSTACLES KEEP PEOPLE FROM ACCEPTING THE TRUTH OF WHO JESUS IS?

Jesus had to be disappointed that they still didn't get it, but He continued to be about as direct as possible: "The one who has seen me has seen the Father." With that, Jesus continued making His point by asking rhetorical questions about what they themselves had heard and seen throughout their time with Him.

Jesus finished by warning them to "believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me." But knowing that they were still struggling, Jesus appealed to one more piece of evidence that He was, certainly, the Messiah. He told them, "Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves." The miracles He had performed proved Jesus's connection to the Father.

It can be easy for us on this side of the cross to look down on the disciples for their lack of understanding. But before we get too self-righteous, we must admit that believers today also struggle with understanding. Many Christians don't really know the Scriptures and simply accept the words of some preacher or TV evangelist. Some

blindly accept the unbiblical morality given to them by the news media, school textbooks, and the entertainment industry. As a result, many who look to Jesus as their Savior fail to believe and live in ways consistent with the entirety of Scripture. This is why so many self-professed Christians believe in the theory of evolution and others who claim to follow Jesus live immoral lifestyles.

It is vital to make biblical worldview beliefs where we stand. But it is also essential to recognize that biblical beliefs are not just a matter of intellectual knowledge. To personally hold a biblical worldview, we have to actually live within our personal relationship with God as we walk with Him daily.

Miracles Reveal God's Presence // John 14:12-14

Normally people tend to have a very narrow understanding of miracles. The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary defines miracles as "events which unmistakably involve an immediate and powerful action of God designed to reveal His character or purposes."⁵ The most common images of miracles people lean towards are things like physical healing, the defying of the laws of nature, casting out evil spirits, and amazing events. But the most extreme miracle of all is the transformation that takes place in people's lives when they receive Christ.

When Jesus told His disciples that "the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these," He was not telling them that they would necessarily be feeding thousands of people with a small amount of food or raising people from the dead. Jesus never did miracles simply for the sake of showing off His magnificent power. In every case, Jesus had a greater purpose in performing a miracle. The purpose was to point people to God. In reality, the apostle John, in his Gospel, typically referred to Jesus's miracles as "signs"—acts that pointed to something else. And the "something else" in this case is a personal relationship with God. Jesus's main point in sharing this teaching with His disciples was to express to them that He knew that He was about to leave them, but that His ministry would continue through them.

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In verse 13, Jesus shared with His disciples the motive for the amazing works that they would do as they ministered the gospel in the world after He was gone. He told them, "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Jesus was not telling His disciples that they could just ask for anything and Jesus would give it to them as if He were a spiritual vending machine. Instead, they were to ask specifically for things that would bring glory to the Father.

Jesus shared here that when they were asking for something, they would be asking "in my name." In that time, a person's name was considered to be equal to the person. So, when the disciples asked for something "in my (Christ's) name," they would be asking based on His authority.

HOW IS PRAYING IN JESUS'S NAME OFTEN MISUSED?

There are, certainly, times when God will use one of His followers in a miraculous way. The sad truth, though, is that many people will still not respond to God, even if they do see a miracle. Jesus acknowledged that reality in a parable He told about the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:31). The important thing to know is that it is not the performing of a miracle that is key, but what is important is the completing of God's miraculous purpose in people's lives.

DID YOU KNOW?

Often Christians are hesitant to share their beliefs because they don't feel they have enough knowledge or proof to back them up. This study reveals even the miracles Jesus performed before the Jews weren't enough to convince them to believe. Be encouraged! These passages show even when evidence is provided, people choose not to believe because they don't want to, not because there is nothing valid being shared from God's Word. Isaiah encourages Christians that God is fully sufficient to reveal and prove the truth of who He is by His own words. God promises in Isaiah 55:11, ". . .so my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do." Our responsibility is to be faithful messengers, delivering His Word regardless of how we feel people may receive it. Once we have delivered His message, it's up to our all-sufficient God to accomplish the miraculous work of transformation in the hearers' lives.

How can our belief and understanding of God's miracles help us to stand against an unbelieving culture?

LIVE IT

How will you practically show the greater works of Jesus through your life?

As believers, our use of the word "miracles" comes and goes. Most of the time we shy away from this greatness of God because of the fear of embarrassment if a miracle does not happen. In this session, it's clear that our God is a God of miracles. And what God has done for one, He can and will do for others. Here are things you can do to embrace God's miracles more fully:

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- **Face your doubt.** If you struggle with believing miracles are possible, think through what your doubts say about your belief in God. Be willing to trust that our all-powerful God does the impossible.
- **Embrace your miracle.** The greatest miracle God performs is the spiritual transformation He carries out through Christ. Let Him work the miracle of making you a new person daily.
- **Share the miracle.** Let people see the miraculous work God has done in your life and be prepared to share that miracle with them.

DAILY READINGS

1. THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE // JOHN 10:22-26

I'm often asked by new believers; "How do I know when God is speaking to me?"

My answer is usually the same; "Believe me, you will know!" In Acts 9:1-9, Paul, who was named Saul at the time was on the Damascus Road headed to persecute men and women who proclaimed Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Suddenly, he was stopped in his tracks when a light shone from heaven and a voice said to him "Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he responded, "Who are you Lord?" Saul knew it was the Lord Jesus speaking. Jesus says my sheep hear my voice and follow me. Even though Saul originally wasn't following God, when he heard Jesus's voice, he was obedient to the call of the Shepherd.

The sheep will obey the familiar voice of the Shepherd.

2. BELIEVE IN ME AND THE FATHER // JOHN 10:24-25

Jesus is in a large crowd of people with His disciples. A woman had a certain flow of blood for 12 years. She spent all that she had on physicians who were no help at all. In fact, Mark 5:25-34 tells us that her situation only grew worse. She heard that Jesus would be coming that way, so she positioned herself to touch the hem of His garment." Jesus felt the power leave Him and asked who touched Him? He told the lady that you are healed because you believed. John 10:24-25 tells us that the Jews surrounded Jesus for answers, and He responded, "You do not believe because you are not my sheep."

Let us trust and believe in the Father just as we believe in Christ.

3. ONLY GOD CAN // JOHN 14:14

Jesus performed miracles throughout the Gospels. Today's society often explains an action because of cause and effect. In John 14:14, Jesus stated if you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. God can provide healing when the

doctor says no. He can provide provision when the bank account is low. God is a restorer when a relationship is seemingly unredeemable. God isn't interested in our logic, He is interested in our trust. He does His best work when we cannot see the way out or the way through. Through faith Jesus healed, He raised the dead, made the blind see. It is the same faith we must have today for the miracles God will do in our life.

Depend on God and get your miracle.

4. RECOGNIZING MIRACLES // JOHN 10:25-26

How do you recognize God is working in your life? We may discount what happens daily as mundane, reoccurring, or just unnoticed. We may be in a season of waiting for God to work out something big in our lives, and we are unsure how it will end. Jesus said that the works He does in His Father's name testify about Him, and the Pharisees did not believe because they were not His sheep. As His sheep, we should pause throughout our day and consider the little miracles that God is doing. He got us through the workday, getting us home safely, having a meal, or enjoying our loved ones.

We recognize the miracles God is performing in our lives because we are His sheep.

5. GOD'S PRESENCE // PSALM 37:23-24

When my daughter walks into the room where her friend who is blind is waiting, my daughter announces her presence, so that her friend knows she is no longer alone. Jesus is forever present in our lives. Like my daughter's friend we may not see Him, but He is there waiting for us to ask what we need and trust that He will provide. He cares about every aspect of our lives. Jesus reminds us in John 14:12-14 that whoever believes in Him will do even greater things and whatever we ask of Him, He will do it. Then we read in Psalms that a man's steps are established by the Lord, and He takes pleasure in his way. Jesus is with us through everything.

Though he falls, he will not be overwhelmed, because the Lord holds his hand.