

Acts Chapter 3

1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

2 And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.

3 Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.

So here we have the disciples going to the temple even though they became Christians. As Jesus Christ is the ultimate temple we don't need to go to temple but they still go for prayers and here they are going to the temple on the ninth hour (time of the evening sacrifice).

Man is lame from birth. His legs are totally shriveled up. He was sitting at the beautiful gate. It was called beautiful because it was made of Corinthian brass with inlays of solid gold. It is so big and so heavy that it takes 22 men to open the gate. This man was always sitting here in anticipation that people going to temple would give him some money.

4 And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us."

5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

6 But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"

7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.

Did this healing involved faith?

Now Peter never asked if he believes in Jesus or not. The man didn't walk at first because he doesn't believe. Then Peter grabs him and pulls him up and this guy walks, immediately his ankles and feet were made strong. This is actually a creative work because you got all your muscles regenerate over a fraction of a second. Then he began to walk, jumping, walking and praising God and everybody saw it was a great testimony to him. So this man was totally transformed by this miracle.

Questioned by Pharisees

Acts 4:10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.

This was the first recorded miracles by the apostles at that time.

What is a miracle?

Let me give you a couple of definitions.

1. “An event impossible to explain by natural causes” “an exception to a natural law “. This definition assumes that God does not use natural causes. So God can actually cause miracles to occur but he can use natural causes as well. So therefore you also have a dichotomy between what happens in the world and what happens with God as if God sets the world in motion and he is not involved anymore. So God is also involved in nature.
2. Direct intervention of God in the world. This is a very bad definition because it assumes the world is independent of God. God is intervening every single day. For example, if we look at Belshazzar, Daniel chapter 5. Belshazzar was condemned by the king because he actually didn't acknowledge God who gives him breath every minute of the day. So God gives you breath every minute of the day, so you should worship him. So therefore you cannot say breath is natural, it is mine, it is not the word of God. So this definition excludes God.
3. God is working in the world without means, which means he is just doing stuff out of the blue which is not necessarily true because God uses means. For example, feeding of 5000 he used five fish and loaves of bread. So that is not a good definition.

So I would like to suggest to you Wayne Grudem's definition, "*A miracle is a less common kind of God's activity in which he arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to himself?*" So God is responsible for everything that happens in the world, it is just that in miracles it is less common. It is very uncommon to see someone with shriveled up legs to jump up on the spot. If a doctor would heal you, yes it is also more common but no less the work of God. So in this definition you do not take God out of the equation.

Miracles point upwards, Jesus as the source of healing.

16 And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Miracles attest to the authenticity of the gospel and the witness of the apostles.

Miracles point forward

They point forward to the final restoration of the natural order of what was originally meant to be. In Mark we studied, all the miracles of Jesus follow a particular characteristic. You never have suffering as a result of the fall. All of Jesus's miracles are focused on alleviating the fall because the most natural order in the world is the Garden of Eden. When God created us the Garden of Eden is the most natural order of all. After the Garden of Eden we have death, blindness, pain, poverty, lameness, everything comes on. What we actually experience in the world now is totally abnormal and unnatural. So Jesus's miracles points us forward to an area one day there will be no suffering and no pain and no tears to the perfect order where God intends. So all his miracles have that intent. Jesus tells us God's intent, God hates suffering. God want to put you back to the original state. Isaiah prophesized of a time in future where these things will be fulfilled. Isaiah 35

3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

4 Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

This is what Jesus has come to fulfill. He is bringing us back where all of suffering will be alleviated, where people will be brought on wheelchairs. So if this is Jesus’s ministry what implication does that have on us? As we are his church should also work towards the alleviation of suffering and pain where we pray for people who are suffering in pain and that God will minister to them in extraordinary ways or ordinary ways or medical ways because we recognize God is at work in all. So we are an agent for that kind of change. So God is against the pain. He did not invent the world of misery; he hates the misery as much as we do.

- Jesus healings were the only natural things in a world that is unnatural ,demonised and wounded.
- We are enemies of suffering and will alleviate it whenever we can
- We can handle suffering knowing that it will be vanquished one day.

There was a story of a man who was also in a wheelchair and he died of his disease and in his funeral he put a picture of him jumping before he got his accident. If you live as a Christian you are looking forward to a day that one day you will get your legs back and that is the day that is the natural order that is what God has made for you. So when he died you put your best picture.

Miracles look inwards

The miracles actually cause us to look inward.

But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk (Acts 3:6 ESV)

Actually he is teaching him to look something, somewhere deeper. If you look at the other, there was a story told of a man who was paralyzed also in Mark chapter 2 and Luke chapter 4, talks about this man being brought in through the roof, they lowered him down. Jesus said to him that your sins are forgiven and by the way I cure you also. Jesus is actually pointing to the fact that the illness that you have actually points to a deeper reality inside that illness is a sign of sin inside. So therefore he actually forgives this man sin.

The man will be thinking if only I could be walking I would be the happiest man in the world. Today a lot of people walking around are unhappy due to different reasons. Unhappiness

comes from an emptiness inside your soul. We being humans are shortsighted and think that if we get this or that then we will be satisfied. This man teaches us that there is something deeper.

He found what he was looking for

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's (Acts 3:11 ESV)

So now for him walking is not that important anymore. He spent the rest of time hanging on to Peter and John as they have the words of eternal life.

So this miracles not only

- 1) Point upwards,
- 2) they point forward
- 3) they point inward into the heart.

Miracles also cause you to go in a downward spiral

Miracles make them more vulnerable

- Miracles make people more vulnerable, makes them weaker. Right after this miracle what happens, they get persecuted.
- God became human being and this made him vulnerable.
- If Jesus came to strength to destroy all evil we would have all been gone, we will be judged.
- He came in weakness and his power comes into our lives through weakness.
- We too have to come in weakness, we lose control of our lives, we trust him.
- Our power won't go into the world without our weakness.

So the way we minister in this world is not through power, legislation or political activity, we actually minister the world through weakness and that is what this miracle teaches us. In the early church the power of the church was its willingness to die and then they have got gigantic plagues where people use to die and people use to leave the cities but Christians were the one who remained in the city, cared for the poor, fed the hungry, caught the diseases and died in their place but through this love and through this weakness they actually transformed their culture and in 350 years became 56% of the population. That is how it works through weakness.

DO MIRACLES HAPPEN TODAY?

Some will say yes and some will say no. The cessationists will say there are no more miracles. Miracles died of because of the apostolic age because all the miracles were associated with apostles. So if the apostles died out then the miracles which they could have performed died out together with them. This is a view held by many-many famous Christians; Jonathan Edwards, Martin Luther, John Owen, John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon,

George Whitfield. If we look into Acts 6:8 **And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.**

Stephen was not an apostle but he was doing miracles.

Acts 8:39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away,

Galatians 3: 5-6 Does he who supply the spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by the works of the law or by healing, hearing with faith just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

So Paul in writing to Galatians acknowledges that the spirit works miracles among their midst.

Leaders to pray for the sick. James says

5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. . 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

The church elders are asked to pray for people who are sick but here is famous passage again

I Cor 12:28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

So not everyone does miracles but somebody does then if they don't do why would Paul write about it. So there must be miracles.

IF IT IS YES, HOW ARE THEY DONE?

John Wimber introduced the power evangelism phenomenon. He says that

- look at examples in gospel and Acts, you got miracles in the gospels, you got miracle in the Acts, so therefore you should have miracles today.
- Evangelism is ineffective without the signs.
- The church does not expect these miracles that is why you don't get any miracles.

Theological arguments are

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The interpretation by Wimber is that because authority is given so therefore you will be able to heal. This is a little bit difficult to justify because the authority is the authority to disciple the nations, it does not necessarily mean authority to have miracles. So that is a bit of a stretch. Here it says,

John 14:12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

DOES IT MEAN WE CAN DO MIRACLES?

It means that we are going to be doing works greater than Jesus Christ. So this does not preclude miracles. It does not say it directly but it can include it. When we look at the history of the Bible and when we look at miracle and you will find that miracles occur in clusters; Moses 10 plagues, the law. Elisha and Elijah, introducing the prophets to their ministry, Jesus and apostles. Miracles does not happen every single day. We look at the period of the Judges for example, hardly any miracles appear for 100 or 1000 of years. If we look at the period of Malachi, long periods of time we have no miracles at all. So when miracles happen they happen in clusters. So when John Wimber says, we have to expect miracles happening all the time that is biblically untrue because even in the Bible they occur in clusters. It does not appear all the time. If we look at all the books in the New Testament, the letters in the New Testament of Paul, only in one letter he talks about miracles, all the rest he does not. That is a huge deal because his emphasis is not there. So this can include miracles but it does not mean all believers in all areas will have miracles, there may be certain individuals.

Argument for gifts

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known (1 Corinthians 13:8-12 ESV)

So here is arguing that what we actually have now in terms of gifts is temporary. The important thing is when the perfect comes the partial will pass away.

WHAT DOES PERFECT MEAN?

The perfect could mean the new heaven and new earth. Cessationists will say when the perfect revelation of God comes then everything will be done away. So because the Bible is already written, so we don't need any more prophets. If we look at the passage there are certain features in the passage that make this interpretation a little bit difficult. To say the perfect has come will be very difficult because knowledge, tongue and prophesy will pass away, just because you in the bible that means knowledge will pass away. Our knowledge of God is partial because we even have trouble interpreting God's word. So therefore we cannot argue from this passage that the perfect has already come. So you cannot argue that there are no spiritual gifts anymore because the perfect has already come. So it is the strongest passage that there are continuing spiritual gifts.

EVANGELISM

There is power evangelism with miracles and then there is proclamation evangelism which is the usual evangelism and they are both equally valid. Whether God performs miracles will be dependent on God and God alone. A lot of people have abused this

- The miracles occur at sovereign will of the Father through the Son
- It is not a right or power wielded by people
- It is used to authenticate the gospel in the eyes of unbelievers usually
- By themselves are insufficient to convert
- It should follow biblical patterns

The biblical patterns of healing are

- Jesus healed with a word or a touch
- Jesus healed instantaneously
- Jesus healed totally.
- Jesus healed anybody
- Jesus healed organic disease
- Jesus raised the dead

Jesus actually interrupted a funeral and grabbed the guy and he comes alive. The dead guy has no faith, he was dead.

Miracles today

If we look at miracles today by miracle workers who claim they have a gift of healing or prayer for healing. The question is whether people like Benny Hinn or individuals have a gift of healing. If he has a gift of healing then he must be under biblical patterns.

Charles Price, a very famous evangelist in British Colombia had many people come to know the Lord through his ministry through healing. So what they did they actually looked at 350 people who were healed, 6 months later 301 still remained sick, 39 died, 5 went mad.

Kathryn Kuhlman, one of the most famous healers in the world when she was studied by Kim Nolan found that most of her people who were supposed to be healed had actually medical treatment or has had functional disease (back pain, headache, etc.).

If miracles exist and if they have got a healing gift they must heal like Jesus or Peter.

Benny Hinn says,

- It is always God's will to heal
- Faith is vital to your miracle.
- Healing is received by faith.
- Healing is kept by your faith, you cannot receive healing unless your heart is right with God.

If we apply this to the beggar outside the beautiful gate. He does not have any faith, he is not right with God, and he was only sitting there for the money, but still he got healed.

God does intend to heal. In the Book of Revelations it is written, one day there will be no more tears. Everybody will get healed ultimately but not necessarily now.

Benny Hinn also says, *Never ever go to the Lord and say if it be thy will. Don't allow such faith destroying words to be spoken from your mouth when you pray. If it be thy will faith will be destroyed.*

So when you go healing rally and I lay hands on you and you didn't get healed then it is your fault you don't have faith. This theology means it is your fault when you don't receive healing. This is wrong theology

IF YOU REALLY CAN HEAL

Jesus heals people who are demon possessed. The possessed never came to Jesus; they are like running away from Jesus. Jesus grabs them and cast the demon out.

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction (Matthew 9:35 ESV)

Peter also raised a dead person called Tabitha. A dead person cannot have faith. So if you want to say you are a miracle worker, apply biblical standards.

Nader Mikhael who wrote a book on The Toronto Blessing and he describes, *"During the 1800's, cripples, paralytics and the blind were healed 'as in the days of old, by laying on of hands in the name of Jesus,' under a New York missionaries ministry. Healing recipients, praising God, rushed to gather ill friends and neighbours who were also healed. Seeing the miracles, converts clamoured to receive baptism and join the church*

This was done by a Mormon missionary who don't believe in Jesus. Jesus said,

On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness (Matthew 7:22-23 ESV)

This means there are people who are not Christian who can heal, who can cast out demons. So just because you have an extraordinary phenomenon don't get sucked in because the devil can appear as an angel of light and the devil can also heal, cast out demons too.

John Wimber, 1981 *At one point, it looked like a battle field, bodies everywhere, people weeping, wailing, speaking in tongues, much shouting and loud behaviour*

He was wondering is this of the Lord, so what he did he sat down for 1 o'clock to 4 o'clock in the middle of the night and he took a Bible study, look through the Bible but don't know whether it is from the Lord. All along Wimber was praying, "is it you Lord, are you in this miracle, are you doing this. Suddenly a telephone call came from his friend, a pastor from another city. He told him, "I don't know I just got a prompting from God to call you and just tell you one thing. It is me". If Wimber had done the Bible study he should have gone to 1-Corinthians chapter 14. It tells us that, when you want to prophesize you take turns. There should be order, not confusion. When we look at the fruit of Holy Spirit it is self-control. That means the Bible gives you those guidelines and yet he changes his whole theology because of the telephone. That is a little bit difficult.

Toronto Blessing is when they actually fall to the ground and they laugh and they do that even in the Lord's Supper. Some of them are growling like lions and shouting like hyenas and they supposed to be the work of the Holy Spirit. Is it the work of the Holy Spirit? It started with a pastor named Randy, he was preaching halfway and they all started laughing.

Sister Maria Woodworth Etter in St Louis 1920. She was preaching halfway and became statue for three days and three nights. 150 thousand people came to see the statue. At the end of three days and three nights she continued preaching and they thought this is the miracle of God. If we look at this miracle compared to what Jesus does and apostle does is totally different.

John Macarthur says, *The truly spiritual person is not someone who sweeps away into trances, ecstasies, emotional frenzies or falls over in a dead faint. When a person is out of control, it is never the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is self-control*

Benny Hinn always pushes people to fall down. One 85-year-old woman had come forward for healing touch from Benny Hinn, died after someone slain in the spirit fell on top of her fracturing her hip. The woman's family sued 5 million dollars against Hinn.

Mary Baker Eddy used to heal people with telepathic powers. She will just think about you and you will get healed and when she died she died and they made sure she had a telephone inside her casket, because she prophesized she will wake up, so she will call them to dig out. Needless to say they never got the telephone call.

We have got all sorts of funniest phenomenon then you got people who have slain in the spirit and when look in the Bible there are no instances where people are slain in the spirit. Some biblical inputs are

And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." 17 So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, "Understand, O son of man that the vision is for the time of the end." 18 and when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and made me stand up (Daniel 8:16-18 ESV).

Daniel fell down and it is not getting slain in the spirit.

Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” 5 They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am he.” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. 6 When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” **they drew back and fell to the ground.** 7 So he asked them again, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” 8 Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he (John 18:4-8 ESV)

Paul fell to the ground because of a bright light.

There are very few instances.

In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two- edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last (Revelation 1:16-17 ESV)

So when you are on the ground God gives you a vision and speaks to you directly. You don’t deserve a knock out forever. Slain in the spirit is a very-very-very funny phenomenon. I don’t know whether it is of God, it is probably not likely but I have never been slain.

King Hezekiah was sick and almost died and God gave him 15 years. This is what God said

2-Kings 20: 6 and I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David’s sake.” 7 And Isaiah said, “Bring a cake of figs. And let them take and lay it on the boil that he may recover.”

God used poultice. God used medicine. God gave Hezekiah 15 years by putting a pomegranate poultice on a boil which would either have caused septicaemia and killed him. God uses medicine. So God can use normal and natural means as well.

The healing is the first part of chapter 3. The rest of the chapter 3 is actually about the life ministry, death and resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. The whole thing is based on that. The gospel is front and center. You should never have a miracle service. You should have a gospel service and if people are healed in the meanwhile to authenticate the gospel it is fine, because the gospel is always front and center.

There is also biblical evidence. The biblical evidence is important. He talks about Jesus being

SUFFERING SERVANT:

18 But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

Isaiah 53 talks about a suffering servant before Christ's death. They had passages in the Bible, Jeremiah and Isaiah that talk about a suffering servant but they never knew it was the Messiah. Only when Jesus came then Peter applies it backwards and say, look this passage actually applies to the Messiah because Jewish idea is a victorious Messiah who did not suffer.

FINAL PROPHET:

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen —. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him (Deuteronomy 18:15-119 ESV)

DAVIDIC KING:

And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days (Acts 3:24 ESV)

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (2 Samuel 7:12-13 ESV)

SEED OF ABRAHAM

You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed (Acts 3:25 ESV)

So the miracles start things going. The miracle does not convert people. The scriptures convert people. That is why he spent all this time telling things. Peter preached these things because they are Jews. Jews believe in Bible. So they have always read about the Davidic King. They are always expecting the Davidic King. They are expecting the final prophet. They are expecting the seed of Abraham. They do not expect this.

So now he says, This healing proves that Jesus Christ is all of these things. So he not only had miracles he also had the gospel. So it goes together.

RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus (Acts 3:19-20 ESV)

Therefore repent and have faith is the same thing. Because when you turn from something you must turn toward something. So it is two sides of the same coin.

AIM OF THE STORY

Miracles do happen in the world today. There may be certain people in our midst who are miracle workers, I cannot discount it, but the miracles need to come through the kind of standard which the Bible sets and not heal only functional diseases and certain disease cannot heal and then blame people because if they didn't got healed. We are not in the business of making a miracle. If a miracle is there everybody will see, but the miracle must also conform to the biblical standard. It points forward into the final days.

Some years ago there was a great miracle phenomenon happening in certain churches. One incident reports that people having toothache and then they looked inside they all got gold fillings. How likely is that to be a work of God? That means God made you rich. There is not a single incident in the bible where God gave gold. Every miracle of God points forward to the final days where they will be no suffering and no pain. Every miracle of God also conforms to the word of God where there is order and not chaos. There is love, there is up building of the church and after the miracle your faith gets stronger.