

# **MIRACLES – Are They Possible?**

***John 2:1-11***

**Sermon for Peace Church**

**February 8, 2009**

**PURPOSE** – Explain the validity of miracles and call forth faith in Jesus, God’s miracle worker!

**MAIN IDEA** – By definition, miracles are possible because they fall beyond the descriptive laws of nature. Miracles are also needed to overcome the natural processes of decay. Jesus provides such kingdom miracles!

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Let’s open our Bibles to John 2.

Last month, and again this month, we’re in a series of sermons dealing with questions that unbelievers rightly ask of our Christian faith:

- Is the Bible trustworthy?
- How do you know God exists?
- Why is there so much suffering?
- How can you say Jesus is the only way to God?

(i) Today I want to deal with the subject of MIRACLES – are they possible?

A. Is it CREDIBLE to believe in a VIRGIN giving birth?

- A man walking on water? Quieting storms with a word? Bringing his friend Lazarus back from the dead? Feeding 5,000 from a few loaves & fish?

... > “Come on – those things don’t happen! Science tells us that!

- They’re MYTH ... or maybe they were just a MAGIC TRICK – maybe Jesus had a secret stash of food hidden somewhere!

2. But miracles are CENTRAL to our Christian faith.

This is one way Christianity is unique among other religions.

(i) The founder of Islam, Mohammed, never claimed to have performed a single miracle. Jesus Christ performed many.

A. In fact, in John 10 Jesus said, *“Don’t believe in me unless I do what my Father God does. If I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles – that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”*

- His miracles revealed His union with God and the nature of his ministry!

(ii) The apostle Paul took our faith’s reliance on miracles even further. In the passage read earlier – 1 Corinthians 15, referring to the “miracle of all miracles” – the RESURRECTION, Paul states, *“If it didn’t occur – if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is USELESS and so is your faith ... and we’re to be PITIED more than all men - as FOOLS!”*

3. Both Jesus’ claims & our faith is built on the miraculous!

But not only to miracles in the past, MIRACLES TODAY!

(i) For the Bible teaches that the SAME POWER that both revealed Jesus and brought Him up from death, brings US new life – from God through faith.

- We worship a God of miracles in Jesus.

- We gather here to gain faith to receive that power ... among us today – in Word & Spirit.

4. And it’s for that very reason that, inspired by the Spirit, the apostle John wrote this account of Jesus’ first miracle:

***Read John 2:1-11***

## **II. THE STORY**

1. WHAT A DISASTER! ... The wedding feast has run out of wine! = serious problem!

My commentary states: *This meant more than the disruption of the feast. It was something of a SLUR on those who had provided it, for they had not fully discharged the duties of hospitality. This may indicate that they were poor and had made the minimum provision, hoping for the best. It is also possible that the lack of wine involved another embarrassment – in that it rendered the bridegroom’s family LIABLE to a LAWSUIT!”* (Leon Morris, p. 179)

What? ... I’ve given my daughter ... to court!

But I've seen it at weddings numerous times: MURPHY'S LAW – "What can go wrong, will go wrong!"

- Where's the flowers?! The tux doesn't fit! They're late! That's not the cake I ordered! Those aren't the readings I prepared to read! Where's my speech?

(I remember my mom on my wedding day, in the context of a bunch of things going different than she had planned, muttering: "This is the worst day of my life!" We still tease her about it! ... it all turned out OK)

2. The context of this miracle not only reminds me of Murphy's Law, it reminds me of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Law of Thermodynamics. This is also called the "Law of Decay".

It's about energy transfer. It explains why nothing stays the same. Ultimately things fall apart and disintegrate over time.

I.e. – You buy a new suit ... eventually the clothing becomes faded, wears out – got to buy another one. = Law of Decay

- Our bodies, like all material things, are subject to this law ... They wear down, they decay - leading to death!

(i) The 2<sup>nd</sup> Law of Thermodynamics says, unless Another Energy is put into a situation, things become less ordered over time.

I.e. – You leave your bed unmade & your bedroom a mess before you head out for school. If no one touches it, thing will not become more ordered during the course of the day (it'd be nice!). And if you left it for a year or 5 / 10 years or 100 years ... things would go from bad to worse.

**THAT WAS THE DIRECTION THINGS WERE GOING AT THIS WEDDING FEAST!**

= increasing disorder and decay!

3. Sometimes LIFE itself feels this way! ... from bad to worse!

The wine has stopped. Life is dry ... Empty ... Will love grow?

It just feels like things are breaking apart – isolation, scarcity

From bad to worse ... that seems to be our weekly economic news.

Is that the destiny of my finances, my ministry, my church, my family, my life?

There's no wine ... there's no feasting ... the joy is lost!

4. THEN IN STEPS JESUS! – God's Intervening Energy!

First, his mother calls his attention to the need.

But Jesus distances himself from her: *“Woman, why do you involve me? ... My time has not yet come.”* The statement means that now that He’s beginning his public ministry, He is not primarily the Son of Mary. He’s no longer at her beckon command. He’s the Son of Man. Now He’s the servant of all. He’s the Son of God – He waits upon God’s leading.

Yet Mary must sense in her spirit that this is a time for Jesus to come forth – for she tells the nearby servants to do “whatever he tells you to”.

- Likewise Jesus gets God’s prompting to act.

(i) He has 6 stone jars used for Jewish ceremonial washing filled with water ... to the brim.

THIS WATER IS MIRACULOUSLY TURNED TO WINE

We don’t know how.

A. A MIRACLE! - the water turns to wine!

... and not just any wine, but the BEST OF WINES!

How is this possible?

### III. THE POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES

Science, as we know it today, still cannot explain it. Maybe one day I will. Just 200 years ago, everyone would have said that 400 tons of metal flying in the air would be a miracle. Today we know about laws of propulsion & aerodynamics. So we no longer think of a 747 flying through the air as a miracle!)

But what’s most important to recognize is that science also cannot DISPROVE this or any other miracle.

1. That’s the common argument made against miracles.

- That they are violations of the laws of nature ... laws ASSUMED TO BE IMMUTABLE / unbreakable.

I.e. – When you drop a ball from on high – it always falls to the ground. It’s a law of nature – gravity. Do it 1,000 times and it will fall to the ground 1,000 times.

Will it?

What if on the 1001<sup>st</sup> time, another person / power / force outside of the system, (or operating at laws or dimensions yet unknown to the system) simply stuck his hand out and CAUGHT the ball before it fell to the ground?

= the law would be suspended. Another power intervened to change the effects of gravity.

(i) That's the simplest argument for the possibility of miracles:

To say that the normal laws of nature cannot be broken is to assume that we live in a CLOSED SYSTEM – that the only energies and powers that there are, are the ones within this observed material world, as we know it.

In that world, yes, water can be made to wine. But first it must be absorbed into the vine & a grape, then crushed, then fermented – that's the way nature works – like the ball dropping to the earth.

A. But what if there is another power outside of the system that, on occasion, INTERVENES?!?

Perhaps that water normally dropping to the earth to be absorbed into the vine gets "CAUGHT" ... "spoken upon" ... and turned into wine immediately!

... by some power or yet unknown law that has broken into the system!

A. In other words, if there are powers beyond the physics of our world as we now know them, then miracles are possible. If God exists – Someone outside of the natural system – miracles are possible.

They are even probable! – because that would be a sensible way of revealing His existence, even as Jesus indicated.

2. The other limit of scientific laws is that they are not absolutely verifiable. In other words, there is no way that you can absolutely, fully prove them.

Light, we say, travels at the speed of 186,000 miles per second. We say that because it's been measured at that speed – many times. But even if we measured it at that speed a billion times, that does not mean that light might NEVER be measured at another speed. We don't know that. We can't know that. That's beyond science to say.

THE LAWS OF NATURE DESCRIBE REALITY. THEY DON'T DICTATE REALITY.

(i) Dinesh D'Souza gives an example of SWANS to make this point.

He writes, *"For thousands of years before Australia was discovered, the only swans people in the West had seen had been white. Consequently, the entire Western world took it for granted that all swans are white, and expressions like "white as a swan" abounds in Western literature. It was considered to be a scientific law that if one saw a swan it would be white. Then Europeans landed in Australia and saw, for the first time, a black swan. What was previously considered a scientifically inviolable truth had to be retired.*

The same was true when the PLATYPUS was discovered in Australia. Before that, it was a scientific law that every mammal was BORN LIVE. Then came the report that a mammal was discovered – warm-blooded, nursing - which was EGG-LAYING, with a snout resembling a duck’s bill. The world responded by saying it was a HOAX, a myth. Even when a carcass was brought back to Europe, they said it was rigged! Eventually, however something OUTSIDE the known system of scientific laws was affirmed: The platypus is an egg-laying mammal!

A. *It was David Hume himself who said all scientific laws are empirically unverifiable.*

= Meaning, by experience or experiment you cannot fully / absolutely verify a scientific law, proclaiming that something outside of the law cannot happen.

The “laws” of nature describe reality. They don’t dictate reality. Therefore miracles – which are exceptions to the normal laws of nature – are always theoretically possible.

### 3. SO WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US?

I like this statement of Josh McDowell (outline): *“A miracle is an event that is unique and without a precedent. It is impossible to account for it as we do other events. But the proper way of determining if something happened is not whether we can explain it (science keeps humbling us this way). The first question to be asked is not CAN it happen, ... (For we can logically never say whether something can or cannot happen. That is beyond our capability as scientists, as humans.) ... but DID it HAPPEN?”*

(i) DID this water miraculously turn into wine?

It’s interesting that, neither within or outside of the Bible, were any of the miracles of Jesus DENIED by his critics. They never asked IF Jesus did these miracles. They only wondered where he received the power & authority to do them. This was the issue, not the miracle itself.

It’s also important to note that the miracles of Jesus are recorded by people, like John, WHO WERE THERE. They were written down by a generation of people who witnessed or experienced them first-hand.

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ARE MIRACLES POSSIBLE? Yes, they’re possible! Both logically & because God exists.

DID the Biblical miracles occur? We have every historical reason to affirm that they did.

... so now we come to the question, WHY DID JESUS DO THESE MIRACLES through the power of God, His Father?

#### IV. THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

Verse 11 – Referring to the miracle of the turning of water to wine ... *This, the first of the miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He THUS revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.*

Jesus did not do miracles to show off. He was no VEGAS ACT! Whenever he sensed people wanted him to do miracles for that reason, he backed away. He was no VEGAS ACT! His miracles weren't for the sake of ENTERTAINMENT, they were for REVELATION.

Verse 11 gives 3 clear PURPOSES behind Jesus' miracles.

##### 1. First, they're called SIGNS.

SIGNS are pointers. The RR crossing sign is a pointer to the fact that the RR tracks are about to come. Like that, Jesus miracles are SIGNS of God's kingdom on earth.

They are signs that HEAVEN has broken in, and is about to come!

(i) When He miraculously broke bread to feed the multitudes, it was a sign that the feeding & provisions of the heavenly kingdom had come on earth in Him.

##### 2. Second, Jesus' miracles REVEAL HIS GLORY! They reveal WHO HE IS.

(i) The bread BROKEN revealed that.

= Jesus is God's manna on earth ... the bread of life ... who would be BROKEN to feed us the love of heaven. The breaking of the bread to feed the multitudes revealed the brokenness that Jesus would undergo in his death to feed heavenly love to His people.

(ii) When Jesus opened the eyes of the blind, it was a SIGN that God's light had come in Him. That miracle revealed His glory – He is the Light of the World – God's Truth, God's Way.

(iii) When Jesus raised the dead, it was a SIGN that heavenly / eternal LIFE had come on earth in Him. That miracle revealed His glory – He is the resurrection & the life. It prefigured His own resurrection from the dead.

3. So what is the sign of this water-to-wine miracle? What aspect of Jesus glory did it reveal?

(i) The SIGN is that in Him the covenant promises of God are CELEBRATED!

- That's what a wedding feast is all about – celebrating the vows that a man and woman make to each other – to love one another, for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; In sickness & health; till death do us part!

A. DOES GOD LOVE ME THAT WAY?

We might wonder ... until Jesus STEPS IN & assures - Yes, HE DOES ... no matter how sick or poor or worse you are today, God Almighty loves you with covenant-keeping, faithful love ... nothing can separate you from it! That's why He turned the water to wine. He wants you to grab a glass, TOAST & celebrate & dance in that truth today!

(ii) And how does this miracle reveal his glory?

The wine prefigures the blood we must drink in order to partake in this celebration of God's covenant love.

John makes effort to point out that the water was put in Jewish ceremonial jars – used for washing hands & feet (6 of them, a number of incompleteness). But the ceremonial ways have been taken over & fulfilled by Jesus. He HIMSELF is now our cleansing!

In the new covenant, our washing is at that “fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins ... and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.”

A. ... Or to use the image of the wedding feast, Jesus said, “*HE WHO DRINKS MY BLOOD HAS ETERNAL LIFE!*”

That's why Jesus performed this miracle:

IT'S A SIGN OF THE KINGDOM – the covenant is kept in Jesus, to be celebrated  
... and a REVELATION OF HIS GLORY – His blood is the drink of the kingdom!

## **V. CONCLUSION**

When they saw the sign and the revelation of glory, the story concludes, “*His disciples put their faith in Him!*”

That's the ultimate purpose of Jesus' miracles. This miracle was done not only for you to understand the nature of God's Kingdom and the glory of Jesus (as I've taught it), it's for you to RAISE A GLASS, TOAST OUR SAVIOR, and JOIN THE WEDDING FEAST ... today!

- That's what faith does!

1. You may be feeling like that groom & his family at the wedding:
  - Things are drying up
  - Things are in irreversible decay – going from bad to worse!

DON'T BELIEVE IT! Jesus is here!

Recognize the sign ... see the glory ... grab a glass & toast our Savior!!!

- (i) The power of God through Him brings NEW LIFE out of decay & death.
  - Trust Him ... call upon Him (like Mary did) ... His time is NOW HERE!!!

The system of this age is not CLOSED. Decay & death are not inevitable!

Jesus is the INTERVENER! ... THE MIRACLE-WORKING GOD!

2. So like the disciples did that day, put your faith in Him ... and join the wedding feast!

AMEN!