

Why believe in miracles?

If you've never seen a miracle (and I would guess most people would say they have not), it can be hard to believe in them, particularly when our modern age seems to put them in the category of myth. So let me try to explain why I find it reasonable to believe in miracles.

Before I begin though, let me make sure we are clear on what I am talking about when I speak of miracles. When I speak of a miracle, I am not talking about that which is just unusual or rare. We might say it's a miracle the Cubs won the World Series, but we probably don't mean any divine intervention was involved. When I speak of miracles here, I am not speaking of something that is just rare, but something for which there is no plausible natural explanation.

For me, there are two questions involved when it comes to miracles. First, are miracles even possible? And, second, even if they are possible, can we say that any have actually occurred? In regards to the first question, our conclusion is ultimately tied to whether there is a supernatural realm and whether the supernatural is willing to engage in our world. If, for example, an all-powerful God exists who is interested in our cosmos, then it is perfectly reasonable to believe miracles can occur. However, if there is no such thing as a supernatural being, then a miracle is just the word we use for an unusual event we cannot explain and therefore does not exist as I've defined it. You might say, then, that the miracle question is really an 'is there a God' question. Since I have already given [evidences as to the existence of God](#), I will not do so here.

Now, some might say, "But even if there is a God, there can't be miracles, because that would break the laws of nature." Being hesitant to throw aside the laws of nature is a good thing, but I'm not so sure a miracle would do that. Let's suppose I throw a ball with the right speed and trajectory to reach my son's waiting arms thirty yards away, but just when I release it from my hand a big truck comes racing by. As you might imagine, the draft created by the truck's movement takes my ball off course. In such an instance, we don't say the laws governing the flight of my ball were broken, we just say that another law came into play that the laws of flight had to accommodate. I see miracles acting on nature in the same way. They do not break the laws of nature; they simply provide another input that changes the trajectory of where things would have gone otherwise. You might say, "But if this happened all the time, then we couldn't make sense of nature at all." But miracles at least as I've defined them are not just derived from a supernatural source, but are also very rare. That's why we recognize them as miracles in the first place. If they were commonplace, we probably wouldn't call them miracles, and we certainly wouldn't be surprised by them.

Let's assume for the sake of discussion that miracles are something that could at least theoretically happen. We still have to answer the question of whether a miracle has ever taken place. To answer that question, I would like us to consider at least one biblical miracle, and the evidence surrounding it. If we allow ourselves the possibility of miracles, we then must let evidence convince us one way or another as to whether a miracle has happened.

Before diving into the particulars of this biblical miracle, it is helpful to say something about the manuscript in which it is found. The manuscript was written by an eyewitness in a genre typical for historical records of its day. It also includes people and places and events that are well attested outside of the Bible. In other words, there is nothing about the manuscript that suggests it is mythological, metaphorical, or fictional. Now, of course, some will say that the presence of miracles themselves is

proof that the manuscript is not historical in nature, but that is discounting what is reported not based on evidence, but on a pre-decided assumption that miracles cannot happen.

The miracle I'd like to examine is that of Jesus healing a blind mute (Matt 12:22-24). At Jesus' command the man is able to see and talk. The crowd that saw the event was astonished, as I am sure you or I would have been. Among the crowd were those who were enemies of Jesus. Even they admitted that a miracle had taken place. Now consider, what we have in this story. First, we have an account written by an eyewitness. Second, we have a clear before and after description of the person who was healed. Third, the account involves a public event with multiple witnesses who could have discredited the event. And fourth, we have the very enemies of Jesus agreeing that a miracle occurred.

What is interesting about most of the miracles we see recorded in the Bible is that the set-up is the same. The story is told by an eyewitness or those with access to eyewitnesses. There is a clear before and after result that can't be explained by natural forces or chance. There are multiple witnesses to the public event, and there are detractors who admit to what has happened. These factors, for example, exist when Jesus healed a lame man or when he himself was raised from the dead. If these factors existed for a reported, non-miraculous event (like a homerun in the 1903 World Series by Jimmy Sebring), I would be compelled to believe the event happened. This is why I am compelled to believe that miracles like those recorded in the Bible are more than just possibilities and have actually occurred.

Of course, you might say, "But if we are looking to the Bible as evidence of miracles, can we *really* believe the Bible provides us a reliable historical record?" That's a great question and one for a [later conversation!](#)

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