

So here is Peter, sleeping and chained between two Roman soldiers with guards at the door. This tells me there is rest in Christ even during the most intense trials that may come our way.

These Roman soldiers were the best of the best. If you fell asleep on duty, you could be put to death. But God causes the guards to go to sleep and these chains that were around Peter fell off. We see Peter just walk by these sleeping guards as if he were a free man, and I guess he was, God freed him! This was an awesome miracle. So much so that Peter first thought he was just dreaming, but it was very real and God set him free! This was truly a miracle of God!

MIRACLES IN THE CHURCH TODAY

1. THE MULTIPLICATION OF FOOD IN MEXICO

Several years ago my wife took our Youth Group on a mission's trip to Mexico. They partnered up with Youth For Truth and ministered to the poverty stricken areas, those that had nothing in these villages. On one of their trips they were bringing bags of rice to the people and they expected about 50 to 75 people and thus, took the appropriate amount with them to this village.

Now when the rice was handed out it was only given to the women, not because they cooked the food, but because the men would take the rice and make an alcoholic beverage with it, leaving their family with no food. As they arrived there they encountered a problem. There were twice as many people as they expected and they only had food for about 75 people!

So the kids went back and forth bringing out the rice bags, expecting to run out, but when they were done, all the people had food! That was a miracle. They had only brought enough food for, at the most 75 people and now they were able to hand out food to 150! The beauty of this was not only the ministering to the people, but the kids saw the power of God, that He still does miracles, that He still multiplies food! This was a miracle; there was no earthly explanation for it!

2. YELL, "JESUS LOVES YOU" WITH YOUR HEAD IN A MAILBOX

Now this is one of those where you just shake your head in amazement. One of the pastors at a pastor's conference was sharing a story that happened in his church. There was a young man who just came to the faith. He was a new Christian and just had a zeal to serve the Lord, but again, he was very young in the faith.

One day he was driving through a very expensive area of California, an exclusive area, they are all expensive. He felt the Lord telling him to stick his head in a mailbox and yell, "Jesus loves you!" Well, immediately he rebuked the devil for putting that foolish idea in his head, but as he continued to drive he kept feeling the Lord was telling him to do this. He kept struggling with this, thinking this is foolish, it is ridiculous, but he could not get it out of his mind.

Finally he slowed his car down, saw this big metal mail box, and stopped in front of it. He got out of his car, still feeling foolish, put his head in this big metal mailbox and yelled, "Jesus loves you!" at the top of his lungs. Then he ran back to his car to get out of there as fast as he could.

But before he could leave, he saw a man running out of his house towards him and he felt foolish and sorry he had done this. The man came to the car and the young Christian apolo-

gized for what he did, but the man stopped him. He said to this young Christian, "Right before you yelled that, I was standing on a chair with a rope around my neck ready to hang myself. Before I did, I just cried out to God and said that if He is real He needs to show me right now. As soon as I said that I heard the words, 'Jesus loves you!' You saved my life!"

There is no way that this young Christian, on his own, could just stop in front of this man's house seconds before he commits suicide and say the words that would stop him! That is the gift of miracles, or the operation of the gift of miracles!

3. GOD CLOSED THE SWITCH

Listen to the story and you will see this miracle of God. We are told,

A remarkable incident occurred some years ago when a Christian called upon God in a time of great danger. A 12-car passenger train was speeding along in eastern Missouri. On board were hundreds of happy children on their way to [a] Sunday School picnic. The sky was cloudless when the excursion began, but it wasn't long before they ran into a severe thunderstorm. The heavy downpour caused the concerned engineer to slow down to about 35 miles an hour. As the train rounded a curve, the man saw that the switch just ahead had been left wide open. He jammed on the brakes, but he was sure they faced certain disaster.

"Stick with it!" he shouted to the fireman. "Hundreds of children are on board." "I intend to!" came the reply. Then the fireman, who was a Christian, cried, "O God, help us!" His words were drowned out by a thunderclap as a bolt of lightning struck right in front of the engine.

The next thing they knew, they were safely past the danger point. After stopping the train, the men hurried back to find out what had happened. To their amazement they discovered that the lightning had struck the rails and closed the switch. This in turn kept them from being shunted onto a spur which would have caused certain derailment. - Henry Bosch

You see, God used the natural, lightning, in a supernatural way and this miracle saved the lives of these children and the workers on the train! There is no earthly explanation for this; it was a miracle of God!

4. THE MULTIPLICATION OF FOOD AT VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

At our VBS Graduation Party we bought food for about 80 people and had a little more. We had about 95 pieces or about 1 piece for each person who attended, about 76. The amazing thing is that people were taking seconds and thirds. Some had 3 or 4 burgers on one bun. We should have run out of food, but we had leftovers!

Not only that, but we only had 3-4 cans of beans and yet, the last person who came through the line took the last plate of beans. We had just enough and then we ran out. We had a refrigerator full of soda to start with and we ended with the same. Yet people were drinking all day! I truly believe that this was a miracle of God!

The Gift of Miracles is still around today!

What the Bible says about . . . Gifts of the Spirit Part 6

5. GIFT OF MIRACLES

In I Corinthians 12:7-10 Paul speaks of another supernatural gift that the Holy Spirit can give to us. That is the gift of miracles or the working of miracles in our lives. This is different from healings in that miracles deal with all other supernatural happenings that come from God. This is not something that man has the ability to do; it is beyond all he can do and that is why it is a miracle!

The word that Paul uses for "miracles" is very interesting; it is a word we would probably not expect. It is the Greek word DUNAMIS, and we can translate this gift as "the operation of powers." It is speaking of dynamic power. It is the same Greek word that is used in Acts 1:8 where Jesus spoke of the power of the Holy Spirit that He will give to us to move the Gospel message forward; that dynamic, that explosive power. That is the kind of power this word is speaking of!

GIFT OF MIRACLES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. CROSSING OF THE RED SEA - EXODUS 14

Remember as the children of Israel left the bondage they were in by the hands of the Egyptians, as they were on the move, God had them rest in Pi Hahiroth. Now from a safety point of view, this was a bad idea. There were mountains on either side of them and they also had the Red Sea in front of them. The only way out was to return the way you came. Now that was going to be blocked off by the Egyptian army who were called to action by Pharaoh after he changed his mind about letting the children of Israel go free. He wanted his slaves back!

As the Egyptian army drew close and the children of Israel saw what was happening, they began to complain and murmur that they were going to die in the wilderness and it was better for them to be slaves in Egypt. (Exodus 14:11-12).

Now, from a human perspective they were right. There was no way out. They were dead! The problem for them was they negated the power of God; that God said He was going to bring them into the Promise Land and thus, He had to provide a way out of this hopeless situation. He would provide a miracle for them!



We see Moses, their leader, do the right thing. As Moses begins to pray, God tells him, and I am paraphrasing, "Son, now is not the time to pray. Now is the time to move!" Now that was a big problem; for where were they going to go? How can over 2 million Jews make it across the Red Sea? Well God had a plan. As Moses lifted up his rod and stretched out his hands over the Red Sea, the waters were divided and the children of Israel were able to cross on dry ground. To hold off the Egyptians until they were able to cross, God sent a pillar of cloud to hamper their movement.

Finally, as the Egyptians came after them, also passing through the Red Sea on dry ground, God took off the bolts that held their chariot wheels which then fell off. At this point, the Egyptians realized they were no match for God. They tried to high tail it out of there, but the waters came back upon them, destroying them all.

Now that was a miracle to say the least.

But there are those out there that try to discredit this miracle. They say that the children of Israel didn't cross at the Red Sea, but at the Sea of Reeds, which is very shallow. They say if the wind is right, and it is strong enough; it could push that water away, all 6 inches or so of it, allowing the children of Israel to pass through. If you believe that then you also believe in miracles, for the entire Egyptian army drowned in 6 inches of water. I guess they forgot their water wings! I believe what God has said in Genesis 1:1 and thus, I have no problem with what God has done here. He is God and this was truly a miracle. There is no earthly explanation for this!

2. RAINING HAILSTONES AND THE SUN STANDING STILL - JOSHUA 10

Another miracle in the Old Testament is found in Joshua chapter 10. Here we see the five Amorite kings come against Gibeon, who had made a peace deal with Joshua and the children of Israel. God tells Joshua, "... **'Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you.'**" Joshua 10:8.

The first miracle we see regarding this battle is God raining hailstones down upon the Amorites, killing more of them with these hailstones than Joshua and the children of Israel did with the sword. God was a good shot! Don't forget, none of the children of Israel were hit with these hailstones. This was a miracle, not just a hailstorm! God had guided these hailstones to the target He wanted and He was very accurate; 100% accurate with His shots!

But the story is not over. As the day was passing by, Joshua had not completely wiped them out, so he prayed that the sun would stand still, that it would not go down until they had completed their mission. Again, people laugh at this, but if you believe in Genesis 1:1, this is nothing for God. Also keep this in mind; if there is a long day on this side of the earth, then there must be a long night on the opposite side of the earth. Is there any historical evidence for this event to show us this really took place? Yes there is!

Immanuel Velikovsky in his book, Worlds In Collision, records that the Mayans have a record of a long night on the opposite side of the earth, just as you might expect. This is not only seen in the Mayans historical record, but with other people around the world. God did a miracle with the hailstones and the sun standing still for almost a whole day! Once again there is no earthly explanation for this. It is a miracle!

3. ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL - I KINGS 18

In I Kings chapter 18, we read of the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. King Ahab, the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was a wicked king. Along with his wife Jezebel, they led

the people in Baal worship. They were the demonic duo of the Old Testament you might say! Elijah comes on the scene and confronts Ahab, telling him to gather the prophets of Baal together on Mount Carmel, and when the day was over the real God would be seen. There would be no mistake about who is the true and living God!

Elijah made this deal with them about what was to take place. The deal went like this. Each group was to offer a sacrifice to their God and whoever's sacrifice was accepted by fire consuming it, would win. The prophets of Baal went first. They chose a bull, cut it in pieces and placed it upon their altar. For several hours they cried out to Baal. They even jumped up and down, trying to get Baal to see them, but nothing happened.

I can relate to Elijah, he is my kind of man. You see, by noon Elijah was getting tired and bored of all they were doing, and he begins to mock their efforts, saying "... **Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.**" I Kings 18:27. I like that and it did get their attention. In fact, the words of Elijah drove them nuts and they began to cry out louder. They began to cut themselves until the time of the evening sacrifice, and still nothing. By this time they were a bloody and beaten mess and their sacrifice remained on the altar. Their god was silent!

Now it was Elijah's turn. He gathered the people around, prepared the altar and the sacrifice, then made a huge trench around the altar. He also had 4 water pots filled with water and poured them on the sacrifice. He repeated this three times. There was so much water poured, that it filled the trench around the altar.

Elijah prayed to God and "**Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!'**" I Kings 18:38-39.

This miracle pointed the children of Israel back to God, for they were wavering between the two; the true and living God and Baal. This miracle showed them who was God! There is once again no earthly explanation for this event; it was a miracle of God!

4. THE FLOATING AX HEAD - II KINGS 6

The last one we are going to look at in the Old Testament is found in II Kings chapter 6. During this period of time, we see the number of prophets growing and that they needed a larger place to dwell. So they decided to build a bigger place and they asked the prophet Elisha to help them in this work.

As they were cutting down the trees, one of the ax heads fell into the water. The problem for this man who lost this ax head was that it was not his. He borrowed it. Is this a big deal? It was a big deal! Ax heads were expensive and hard to come by. You could not run to Fleet Farm or Menards, not even Lowes to buy another one.

We read beginning in verse 6 of II Kings chapter 6, "**And the man of God said, 'Where did it fall?' And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float. Therefore he said, 'Pick it up for yourself.' So he reached out his hand and took it.**" II Kings 6:6-7.

You may be thinking that this was not such a big deal, not such a big miracle, but it was if you lost that ax head you borrowed. This tells me that God is concerned about even the little things in our life. He even numbers the hairs of our head, which changes all the time! Again, to have an axe head float in the water is truly a miracle. It is beyond scientific explanation!

Now those are just a few of the many miracles that occurred in the Old Testament and I think you should be able to see that the gift of miracles was in operation even in the Old Testament. It wasn't just a New Testament work!

GIFT OF MIRACLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. THE FEEDING OF THE 5,000 - JOHN 6

In John chapter 6:8-14 we see the feeding of the 5,000 men, plus women and children, maybe upwards of 15,000 to 20,000 people! Here we see a great multitude follow Jesus to the Sea of Galilee. He had compassion on them, knowing they did not bring enough food to eat. Philip, when questioned by Jesus on what they could do, told Jesus basically, "Where in the world could we get the money to buy that amount of food?"

As you read this portion of John you can see that this was truly a miracle. God multiplied the food. With just two small fish and 5 little crackers and the people were filled. In fact they were stuffed. They could eat no more. They even had leftovers, 12 baskets full! This was a miracle of God. There is no earthly explanation for it!

2. SALVATION - MATTHEW 19

Here is one that we might not think of being a miracle, but it is one of the greatest miracles of all and that is our salvation. Here we see God take these dead spiritual bodies and make them alive again in Christ! And folks, if we saw no other miracles than that of salvation, we should be satisfied. To me, as I have said, salvation is the greatest miracle!

In Matthew chapter 19:16-26 we read of the story of the rich young ruler who was so close to heaven and yet he refused to give his life to Christ. His possessions hindered him.

You see, salvation is impossible from a human perspective. We can do nothing to merit God's favor; to climb our way into heaven. Yet, with God all things are possible. We can be saved, not by our works, but by the completed work of Christ on the cross of Calvary. The stairway to heaven is Christ! Paul in Ephesians 2:1-10 makes that point very clearly!

So, if I had to pick out the greatest miracle in the Bible, this would be it; our salvation. Without it, we would still be dead in our trespasses and sins! But God has made us alive in Christ! There is no earthly explanation for this; it is a miracle of God!

3. PETER RELEASED FROM PRISON - ACTS 12

The last miracle we will look at in the New Testament, and there are many, is found in Acts chapter 12:7-11. In this portion of Scripture we see Herod coming against the Christians. He has James the brother of John killed by the sword and Peter is locked in prison, waiting for his turn. Peter was guarded by four squads of soldiers who were to bring him out the next morning. He was not going to escape! In fact, he was going to be put to death just as James was!