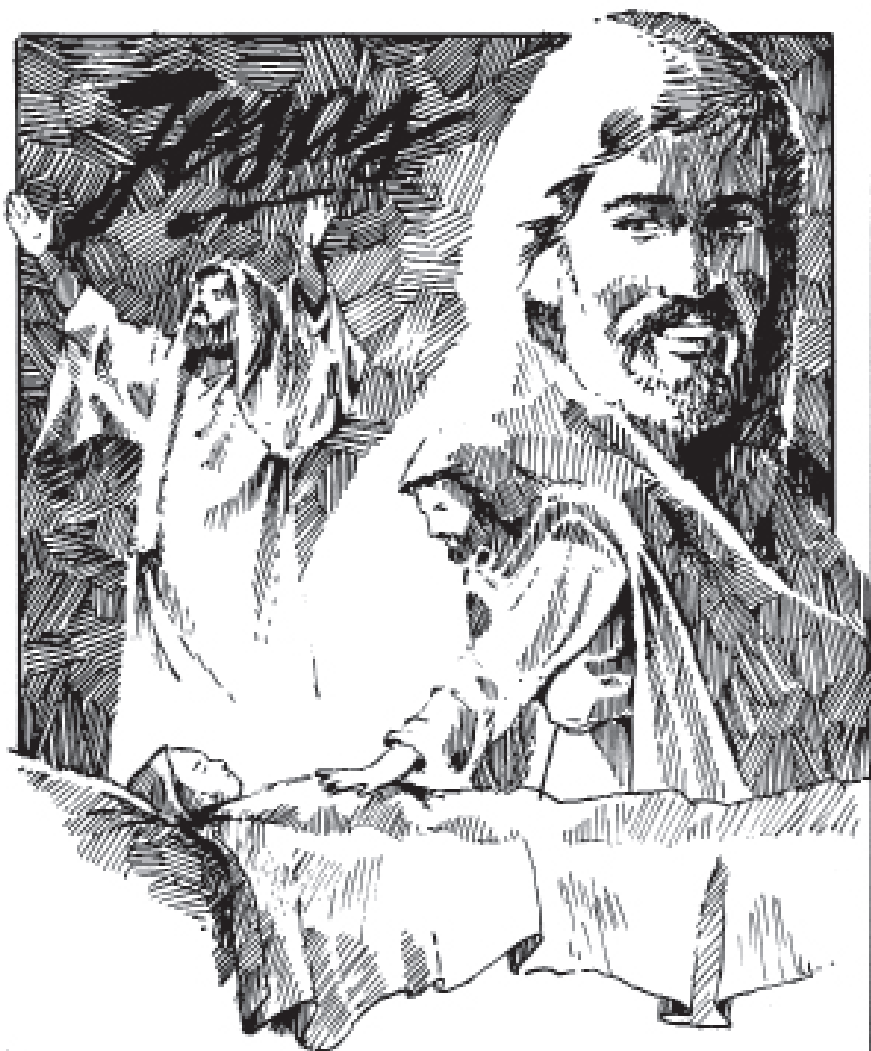


*The Nature of*



*The Miraculous*

As always, if we can help you in any way, please contact the church here at P.O.  
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# *The Nature of the Miraculous*

There is much discussion about the role of the “miraculous” (I’ll use this word to cover the whole gamut, if you will allow me that) in christendom today. Undoubtedly there is too much discussion about miraculous “things.” I say that because so often in our circles we mistake the bantering of words, theological musing, and dogma for “scholarship” and “defending the Faith.” Oh, my brothers and sisters, how we rob God of His Glory when we do this. And how we relegate a Risen, Living Jesus to a place on the sidelines, straining to overhear which of us will win the debate about who He really is in this universe of the 20th century. May it never be!

I earnestly pray for God’s chastening if I only add, in this writing, more words to the foolish mountain. Yet I feel compelled to chance a few more pages—with snipping out the “Gordian Knot” of confusion, unbelief, and division as the passionate prayer of my heart. Will you come along, and explore some thoughts with me? First, I’m persuaded it’s necessary to ascend in the proverbial “helicopter” and deal with a broader issue. When we discover Truth in the Word of God, how should we “handle” that Truth?

## *A Vision Not on the Gray-Scale*

A young man was recently asked why he was so enthusiastic about the church that he had just become a part of.

*“OK,” said the inquirer. “So, where on the spectrum between an unnamed high-pressure, program-oriented church that we know of, and the ubiquitous sunday-go-to-meeting churches, does this church lie?”*

*He replied, “That’s a little bit like asking: ‘On this end of the spectrum we have Grandma’s homemade apple pie, and on the other end of the spectrum we have McDonald’s apple pie. Where on this spectrum would you put a BMW?’”*

The real Truth about a subject is often not on the theological spectrum that has evolved over the years. Often the real Truth will even defy our sense of reason. God offends our intellect and blows apart the issues that we are “absolutely certain of” to reveal whether our allegiance is truly to Him, or to our belief system and personal security. This is frustrating to our twentieth-century “scientific method” mentalities, but it is as it should be. “Reason,” “leaning on our own understanding,” eating from “the tree of knowledge,” destroyed our Life in the Garden, and has historically gone on to splinter christendom into 10,000 pieces. And, of course, all of these groups that have been so splintered by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of “Good and Evil,” “Biblical and Un-Biblical,” (rather than the Tree of LIFE), claim to be the correct “Biblical” expression. As the crown jewel of this Ishmaelic and unbiblical and heart-breaking way to view Truth and the Bible, the “experts” in reasoning and “scholarship” in the Bible were indisputably the men that crucified Jesus, the Lord of Glory. As our brother Paul said, “It is the same now.” The real Truth about a subject such as Baptism in water, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” Eschatology, Worship, speaking in Tongues, Church government...or the proper view of the miraculous, is often entirely lost. Our routine practice is to sacrifice God’s glorious vision on the altar of “horizontal hermeneutics”—approaching God as if He were a black (white?) hole to be scientifically analyzed, rather than a friendship to be explored. Our ill-advised intellectual arrogance and a bastion of pride and self-preservation have blinded us in many cases to the Way and to the Truth and to the Life. The only remedy? A real-time **Fellowship** with the I AM.

*“Do you believe in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit—Yes or No? Where on the spectrum are you on this subject?”*

God’s view is likely not even on our flawed continuum.

*“Baptism in water is essential—True or False?”*

*“Prayer and accepting people where they’re at is always good. Making a whip and turning over pews in church are always evil.”*

*“Miracles don’t happen anymore since we now have Biblia (Books). Where do you stand on this?”*

*“Some say glossolalia is the proof of one’s conversion. Others say that it is proof of one’s sin and apostasy or fertile imagination and wishful thinking, since ‘God doesn’t work that way anymore and their fruit is so bad.’ Where on the continuum are you?”*

God’s view is like a BMW on the “apple pie spectrum”—not anywhere near our haughty reasoning.

*“Taking Scriptures out of context, and misquoting them, is always evil. Unless you’re Jesus, or live in the first century. Then it would be OK.”*

*“Making a ‘graven image’ is always sin, unless a plague is destroying your nation. In that case a bronze serpent would be acceptable.”*

*“Are you liberal or conservative? Where are you at on the doctrinal spectrum of \_\_\_\_\_?”*

Truth, as defined by Jesus, isn’t “an accurate Biblical concept.” “Aletheia,” the Greek Word translated “truth,” means “Reality.” Truth is in Koinonia with a living Person—with Whom and in Whom we share our hearts, our souls, our minds and our strength. If it’s not a current Him that you are in communion with and enthralled by, it is a counterfeit of Christ-ianity. Or at least it is a life that is tragically impoverished, unnecessarily.

*“For in Him we live and move and have our being...” Acts 17:28*

*“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’” John 14:6*

*“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life.’” John 11:25*

*“For the Son of Man is Lord even of the [scriptural interpretation of the] Sabbath.” Matthew 12:8*

*“His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” Revelation 1:14-18*

*“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” John 5:39-40*

*“And this is eternal life, that they may know [have a living, vital intimacy with] You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” John 17:3*

Our religion has been so earth-bound and legal and far, far, far from Him! Consequently, most of our doctrinal framework, the “truth” that we defend, dispute and divide over—is the wrong game in the wrong ballpark. We’re each intent, of course, on being the “perfect balance” of every doctrine. How will we react, then, when we learn that we are wrestling to find and defend the “truth” on a continuum on which God is nowhere to be found? Well, with humility, of course. As we, as “disciples”/ “learners”, always have in the past. Right?

*“Where there is no vision, no revelation, the people cast off restraint, they perish...” Proverbs 29:18*

*“And the Glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one.” John 17:22*

**Without vision, there will always be division.** *Unless we turn the “eyes of the heart” (as the Bible calls them) upward to see Jesus and the staggering fullness of His Glory, there will always be division. And envy. And hostility.*

*“But he [Stephen], being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’*

*“Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him.” Acts 7:55-58*

As for the doctrine of signs and wonders and miracles? Some deny that God presently participates in any such thing. Others, who have, by their vocabulary, behavior, and approach to this most precious subject, forced the aforementioned school to come into existence, are at the “other end of the spectrum.”

My impression is that God’s view isn’t even on that spectrum at all. It is entirely in a different dimension. A dimension consisting of, and swallowed by, Fellowship with the Godhead. A dimension that is simply an acknowledgement that “Heaven reigns.” Truly! the seen world is not an unmovable irresistible object. As the Bible says, the seen world is “a shadow” of the Realities that are in Christ and the current, tangible, manifest *unseen* world. The seen world and its statistical probabilities are only temporary surroundings that we followers of Jesus, “aliens and strangers,” abide and work in for the present as we are equipped by our Faith and Obedience for our future jillion year adventure. The unseen world always reigns over the seen world! As Daniel said, “Heaven Reigns.”

It is with this perspective of the seen world that Jesus lived out His life here. And the Way that God invites you and I to live—“a new and living Way.” Only in that context will we comprehend baptism,

what a church *really* is, eschatology, church government, church gatherings, worship...or the miraculous. Christ “is all in all”—in HIM all things are held together. HE is the Word that became flesh and tabernacled among us, and the current embodiment of Truth. As the apostle Paul has told us, no one can know what the inspired Scriptures mean unless by God’s Grace, or by living in the same Life that wrote them (Mat.11:25-27; 1Cor.2:9-3:3). **Only Christ in His current Glory is worthy to open the Scroll and to loose its seals.**

*“Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Colossians 2:2-3*

With that as a backdrop of perspective, we should go on. Consider with me for a moment the two ends of the present day continuum of doctrinal views of the miraculous works of our Father.

### *Christianity Was Not Ever Meant to be a Magic Show*

*“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” James 4:3*

*“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” Matthew 7:22-23*

*“And no wonder! For satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” 2 Corinthians 11:14-15*

*“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who*



*did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2  
Thessalonians 2:9-12*

The fastest growing end of the spectrum (that the Truth seems to lie nowhere on) is a Hollywood version of “signs and wonders.” Sadly, this side of christendom generally exalts mere men and feeds men’s lust for “success” and material gain.

Remember, as a side note, that according to the Word of God, not all of the miracles performed in Jesus’ Name are truly from Him at all (Mat.7). Their source, according to Jesus, can be entirely other than our Father—even when in the context of Christian gatherings. Like “Jannes and Jambres” (2Tim.3:8, the magicians of Pharaoh’s court that counterfeited the miracles that God did through Moses), for those that want to know the Truth, “their folly will be evident to all.” A recognition that everything that claims to be of God *is not necessarily so* may change entirely our perspective of what we see or very much want to see.

No doubt many are innocent of intentional abuses, yet unfortunately there do seem to be many blemishes in modern day religious activities. As an example, at times we make God (in our humanness) to be a sort of Genie-in-a-bottle that will “jump through a hoop” if we say all the magic words. He can, some teach, make us rich and heal our illnesses, at our command. Never spoken, but evident over time, is the doctrine that infers the Almighty One’s sole purpose for existing is to do tricks for us and gratify our ambitions and desires. While the impenitent world has set a crash course for destruction, we pack coliseums with impenitent church-goers that safari from meeting to meeting (and man to man). Something inside of each of us loves to see or experience something to titillate the senses and to meet our perceived needs. Those that didn’t grow up doing religion to fulfill those yearnings probably satiated them instead with sports, knowledge, physical appearance, family or profession. But it’s all the same stuff, isn’t it? I’m certain that you get the point.

Another frequent casualty is the follower of Jesus with a serious need that was never met. Still with their physical or material need, and

guilt added to the severity of their already unbearable situation, they are now on the verge of “throwing in the towel.” Their “miracle” never came as the preacher had said it would. Their “faith” to be healed had swelled to tidal wave power during the meeting...only to be defeated against the rocky shore of their reality the next day or the next week. Such case histories are more than legion. The heartache and physical affliction are intensified by the usual assertion that it was their own personal lack of Faith that had undermined God’s desire and ability to heal them. Please, brothers and sisters!

*“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”*

On the other hand....

### *The DEISTIC End of the Spectrum is Every Bit as Sinful*

Deism is commonly labeled (incorrectly) as “conservatism.” The Funk and Wagnall’s Dictionary defines Deism as “Belief that God created the world subject to natural laws, but takes no interest in it.” Some mask this belief by calling blind luck (“the rain falls on the just and the unjust”—daringly taken out of context) by the name “God’s providence.” Providential Deism? “An onion by any other name would smell as sweet?”

While the practicing proponents of this form of “christianity” would naturally deny the designation of Deist, the “theology” (Deology) comes out at exactly the same place. “By its fruit ye shall know it.” It is blasphemy to add to the Word of God by saying: “He doesn’t work that way anymore.”

We must not develop an imaginary man-made belief system to justify our low-level existence these past centuries. To make bold “doctrinal” statements about God’s alleged unwillingness to break earth’s temporary natural laws for one of His loved ones, simply because *you* have not experienced such a thing, is very dangerous.

God's intervention in the affairs of His People is not extinct. And it never will be. He remains, as Jesus revealed Him, a loving Father Who loves to give good gifts, and bread from heaven, "continuously" to His children.

To those suffering Christians addressed in the Book of Hebrews, God encouraged them by the chronicle of Christ's Power working in their Forefathers (chapters 10-12). He then called them to turn to their Pioneer, their Author and Completer—the Enabler of their Forefathers! What He did in those that have gone before, He can do in you! Thus, He wrote to us,

*"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." Hebrews 13:8*

*"After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ **does** (continuously) the church." Ephesians 5:29*

Even the angels and their current role are often disregarded or forgotten, to our loss....

*"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them." Psalm 34:7*

*"If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the Lord, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways." Psalms 91:9-11*

*"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." Matthew 18:10*

*"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" Hebrews 1:14*

*"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." Hebrews 13:2*

The very nature of Christ-ianity itself demands a Faith that allows God to deal “miraculously” (intervening in and interrupting the normal course of events to show Himself Mighty to save). More than that, Biblical Faith always expects Him to move in a powerful way. He **currently** “*feeds and cares for the church!*” We await in eager anticipation and admiration to see His Genius as He advances His Cause for us and through us. And, if history is any clue, God will assert Himself and affirm His Word and Purposes in a way unexplainable in terms of human logic and experience. Maybe we could just simplify things by learning the Biblical word. “Faith.”

*“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” 1 John 5:4*

What is this Faith?

*“But **without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a (continual) rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6*

*“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Hebrews 11:1*

*“Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead....” Hebrews 11:19*

*“Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to **those who are of the faith of Abraham**, who is the father of us all (as it is written, ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’) in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.” Romans 4:16-17*

It is clearly “impossible” to even please God **without** this kind of Faith, Trust. Again, we can only please Him if we view Him as a Father who “loves to give good gifts to His children” and to intervene in our family, finances, job, neighbors, children, crises and events of every sort. It is simple, base-line, normal Biblical Christ-ianity to turn to El Shaddai, the Lord of Hosts and eagerly anticipate that He will hear your cry and answer. If not, what was Jesus talking about,

and living, while He was here?! If not, what in the world is “prayer”? Is it what one “professor” (double meaning?) of a christian college recently taught: the equivalent of TM, good therapy?

Or is it always for time and eternity, yesterday, today and forever better described by God to us as:

*“Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man **just like us**, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.” James 5:16-18*

Is this Scripture true? Or, at what point did this become untrue, obsolete, a fabrication from God? Or could it be that the problem is on our part? **Is there not in our lives and churches the distinct lack of confession of, and repentance from, sin (though the Sunday morning “show must go on”)? Are men truly “righteous” in the priorities and secret places of their lives? Is there a fervency—which requires faith that God will act? Could it be that it would be more honest to admit our sin of faithlessness, than to institute a new theology characterized by an indifferent or impotent God?** Would we make God into a disciple of Zeno? (Zeno was the founder, three hundred years before Christ, of the Greek School of thought that, among other things, elevated knowledge to the supreme place. His doctrine was named “Stoicism.”)

Must we invent a theology and a christianity that is nowhere to be found in the Bible—to justify our poverty? The Deistic end of the spectrum is a sad place to live. The rejection of the self-centered “name it, claim it” escapades is understandable. However, the “conservative” school’s renown for bitterness, mockery, debating and slander towards those they don’t agree with or understand is ample proof that they too are out of touch with God’s Heart and Word.

Some of these have jeered, “If you’re so hot, let’s just take you out to the graveyard and see you raise some people from the dead.” Other

“experts” strut by and gibe, “C’mon down to the cancer ward of the hospital and prove it to me!”

***“Jesus answered and said unto them, ‘You do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.’”***

*“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will... have a form of godliness (also translated ‘an outward form of religion’) but deny its power. And from such people turn away!” 2 Timothy 3:1-5*

### *Oh, Yes—God Has Always Used Everyday Homo Sapiens*

Throughout history the Glorious Creator of the Galaxies has used men to do His bidding. He has always used, in addition to an infinite number of other means, folks like you and me to part the Red Sea, raise the dead, heal the sick, call down fire from Heaven, and to give sight to the blind. The list seems endless of the wonderful displays of His Kindness and His Power that he has worked through men. Certainly, many times, our God intervened in what we might call “providential” ways. He is well capable of mighty deeds “all by Himself”—or without any more involvement on our part than prayer. He struck entire armies blind, destroyed Dagon’s idol without man’s “help,” and made the sun stand still. Still, often, it has pleased Him to refine our character and fortify our Faith by using mere men to do the Work that He could have easily done without us.

*“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.’” Exodus 14:15-16*

Why did Almighty God require Moses’ help? He didn’t; but it was His *choice* to Glorify Himself by using a mere man. The Victory over satan himself was, and will be, by **men!!!** That’s the glorious mystery that is *mind-blowing* to even the angels!!! (Col. 1:27, 2:15; Eph.3:10, 20; 1Tim.3:16; Acts 7:56; Rom.16:20; 2Cor.4:6-7; John 14:12-14; Mark 11:22-25). He uses men! It is, after all, His prerogative.

*“Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.’ So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.” Exodus 17:9-13*

Now tell me, why couldn't the Creator of the Universe just destroy Israel's adversaries with a celestial bonfire? Why all the drama? Why use a mere man to do a miracle? Why use anyone?

*“So I have come down to deliver them .... Come now, there fore, and I will send **you**.....” Exodus 3:8-10*

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” John 13:20*

*“Then Jesus said to them again, Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” John 20:21*

*“For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says.” Mark 11:23*

*“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” Hebrews 11:32-35*

*“And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, ‘Look at us.’ So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from*

*them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.' And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.” Acts 3:4-10*

*“Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, ‘Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.’ Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. “At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. “When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, ‘Tabitha, arise.’ And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.” Acts 9:32-42*

Who did all of these things? “*What I have I give to you?*” Mere men? Of course it was “not their own power or godliness” as Peter himself had said. Even so, it was still through men. Not just “Dear God, if it be thy will....” —but “what I have, I give to you.” Amazing that a



mere man could say such a thing. Yes, God uses men, not just remote answers to vague doubting prayer.

*“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.” Acts 6:8*

*“Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.” Acts 15:12*

*“Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.” Acts 19:11-12*

Is all of this just for a particular group of people in a particular place and time? Did God only desire to use men “in the olden days?” **Is the extent of God’s Activity amongst men really limited to our supernatural heroes like John and Paul and Thomas now imprisoned for eternity as gaunt, two-dimensional men... sunday-morning cartoons on our “church” windows?** As we have seen, if this were true it would invalidate the Word of God.

*“Elijah was a man just like us, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.” James 5:17-18*

As the parallel passage in Mark 16:20 demonstrates, “*Lo, I’ll be with you always to the very end of the Age*” is **not simply a promise of companionship.**

Here’s the dilemma. If God truly uses “mere men,” why *can’t* we grab some man of God that He’s used to do some miraculous things in the physical and spiritual worlds—and drag them out to a graveyard to “prove it”? This is the point at which we must leap from the carnal spectrum usually warred over, into another dimension of understanding of the “miraculous.”

## *Jesus, Peter and Paul Never Went to the Graveyards*

Though God has always used men to do marvelous things in His Name, it has never been the case that those men could do miracles “carte blanche,” at their own whim and will. Though by their human hands, it was not by their own “power or godliness” (Acts 3:12) that the wonders were wrought. If there is automatic “power” to do random miracles, simply because miracles through men are still Biblically possible, then...

1) Why did the apostle Paul leave his good friend and co-worker Trophimus desperately ill in Miletus? Why didn't Paul simply lay hands on him and heal him? No problem for an apostle, right?

2) Why did Paul write to Timothy (himself called an apostle by the Scriptures) and tell him to “use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities?” Couldn't Paul have sent a miraculous handkerchief to Timothy through the mail (Acts 19:11-12) instead of advice about how to treat his chronic sicknesses? “Some kind of apostles these guys are.”

3) What was the great concern over Epaphroditus on his death bed? Surely for a “brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier” Paul could have set aside the time to do a healing. With his apostolic power, why did he instead just mourn at his brother's bedside and imminent death? Would you taunt, or doubt, the apostle Paul? Not I!

Maybe you can see already that the mockery about graveyards and hospitals mentioned earlier isn't very Biblical, or Godly?

Note this:

*“Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.”  
2 Corinthians 12:12*

In the context of Paul's life, this obviously does **not** mean that Paul (or any of the other apostles) must be able to do magic tricks to impress the cynics on cue.

Jesus Himself had a response to the type who said, “If you really believe in that stuff, let’s just go out to the graveyard and you can raise some dead people. If you do, then I’ll believe God still is able and willing to work that way.” The Christ of God said to those:

***“If they do not hear the Word of God, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”***

*“A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign.”*

Maybe a few more glimpses of what seems to me to be more characteristic of the true nature of the miraculous—stripped of its Hollywood trappings, would be helpful.

4) Read Acts 13:9-12 and 14:19. On Cyprus, Paul struck Elymas, Bar-Jesus, blind. Was this “apostolic power” Paul’s possession, based on the verse about “the signs of an apostle” quoted above? Obviously not. A short time later he missed a fabulous opportunity to exercise the “proof of his apostolicity.” What a choice moment to utilize your apostolic authority to strike men blind—when adversaries are about to pummel you with rocks until you are dead! “Paul, if you’re really an apostle, prove it. Just think how effective that would have been and how many would have believed that you were really a man of God if you had struck the assailants blind.”

Actually, the “miraculous” isn’t like that. And it never was.

5) Read Acts 17:1-34. If Paul was really a “miracle-working apostle” why didn’t he just do a light show for the Athenians? Then they would have believed he was a “sent one,” an “apostolos.” But again, that’s not the nature of the miraculous. And it never was.

6) Paul said to the brothers and sisters in Galatia, “As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.” “Physician, Heal Thyself!” Was Paul a fraud because he couldn’t heal himself and his friends whenever he wanted to? I really think not. The *Gospel According to Hollywood* and the *Church According to Constantine and Rome* have ruined both ends of the spectrum! Some are “goo-goo,” chasing signs and wonders. Others are so turned off because

of abuses that they've lapsed into cynicism and deism (which is Biblically known as unbelief). There is a higher way!

Let's strip away a tad more of the misconception that surrounds the common continuum of the "miraculous"....

7) James, the brother of John, walked with Jesus in the enviable position as one of the three men closest to the Master. He, along with his fishing partners Peter and John, had been continually right there by Jesus' side receiving special training. The "three" were the only Disciples invited to the mount of Transfiguration, the raising of the dead child of the synagogue ruler, and the inner circle at the Garden of Gethsemane. Even the other apostles of the Lord had not received the degree of intimate grooming and spiritual cultivation that James and his two comrades had received from Rabboni, Jesus. Surely God had very special plans for James. The Omniscient Son had poured so much extra time into him that God, the Apostles and the church would have every reason for keeping James alive, right? Enter Herod. In Acts, chapter 12, we find recorded the execution of James "by the sword." With all of those super-naturally empowered apostles nearby, and James himself (allegedly) licensed to do the miraculous at will, why didn't someone protect him? Or at least raise him from the dead? James' body was slain. *Surely* if anyone had the qualifications to stay alive by miraculous power it was James. But, in fact, the miraculous of God is not that way. And it never was.

8) In Acts, chapters 6 - 8, a great man of God named Stephen emerged from the ranks of the new Christians into a place of service in visible leadership. As Dr. Luke, the scribe of God's Word in the Book of Acts, wrote: Stephen was "*a man full of God's grace and power, who did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.*" In spite of his "power" to do miracles, it certainly could not have been a *carte blanche* freedom to do whatever he pleased, whenever he pleased. If he had that "ability," he was rather masochistic to allow the angry religious leaders to pound him with religious rocks until he was dead. And then, to top that inconsistency in the usual continuum of thought, the Bible records that "*Godly men buried Stephen, and mourned deeply for him.*" Surely it was an easy matter for any apostle

to raise him from the dead instead of simply mourning for him. By modern reasoning, “These apostles are frauds! They can’t even do the ‘signs of an apostle’ of 2 Corinthians 12:12 and Romans 15:19.” Or, just maybe, they weren’t frauds. Maybe, just maybe, we’ve not quite understood the miraculous. Yes, God uses special men.

Sometimes their discernment:

*“This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, ‘Stand up straight on your feet!’ And he leaped and walked.”*  
Acts 14:9-10

And sometimes, at His discretion, He used even their shadows, or a used hanky of a Man of God (Acts 5:15; Acts 19:11-12)! Yet, there is something very remarkable that you must see about the nature of the miraculous....

9) **Jesus** Himself, the “Rosetta Stone”—the translation key of all Scripture, never went to the graveyards, except to retrieve His friend Lazarus. Never to demonstrate power in a spurious way. Nor did our Lord frequent the “cancer wards,” or the leper colonies. If one can fathom such a de-Hollywood-ized possibility, the evidence is overwhelming that Jesus didn’t randomly exert “miraculous power” any more than the men of God that followed in His steps. In one case in point (John 5:2-13), Jesus stood at the five porches of the Pool of Bethesda where “*lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered.*” Here He seemingly healed only one man before “*Jesus had conveyed Himself away, a multitude being in that place.*” With all of that grieving, writhing humanity in one place, the evidence is unmistakable that Jesus stepped over the innumerable broken bodies without healing any but the one. How could this be?! Is it possible that even Jesus “could do only what He sees the Father doing” (John 5:19)? That is what the Bible says. Consider it. And again,

*“Now it happened on a certain day, as He [Jesus] was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.”* Luke 5:17

This passage doesn't really fit anywhere on the normal continuum of the "doctrine of the miraculous." If Jesus had unlimited authority to do miracles whenever He wished, why would the Holy Spirit distinguish a time when "the power of the Lord was present." And why could Jesus do **only** what He currently saw the Father doing, "binding on earth what He saw had been bound by His Father in Heaven"?

### *I Tried To Tell Ya. It Ain't On the Spectrum!*

In a word, the way that our Lord and His Followers walked in the miraculous was Faith born in Fellowship. Not Hocus-Pocus. It never was hocus-pocus. Faith born in Fellowship. Faith born in Fellowship with Him.

No doubt we can trace much of the division and misunderstandings that have taken place over the decades to time spent trying to decipher the Holy Scriptures for an answer that truly lies nowhere on our "spectrum of doctrine" at all. There is only one hope for unity with the Godhead, the Purposes of the Godhead on this planet in our lifetimes, and a unity with one-another. It must be...a unity that's based on a living Fellowship with Him "which was from the beginning," LIFE, rather than "the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil."

As I mentioned regretfully a little earlier, the "miraculous" seems to me to be so abused by some that our Father has become a kind of Cosmic Santa. I know that so many hearts want desperately to see something worthy of the Lord of Glory, "on earth as it is in Heaven." That's so right! Don't ever give up on that heart-plea! Please, though, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus and **His Character and Word.**

Others have been almost irreparably damaged by some of the extremes, and have "fallen short of the Glory" and the true Splendor and joy of the second (and **LAST!**—there is no third) Covenant. Brothers! Please don't let any mere men rob you, either by their abuses or by their empty doctrines and traditions. Look with an open heart and mind at the only New Testament church and Life

that is portrayed and displayed in the pages of His inspired Word! There is no other kind of Christ-Life, no other kind of Christ-ianity, no other kind of church, than the one recorded in the Bible that “lived life to the full” by the “power of an indestructible Life!” Settle for nothing less.

*Have You Been PLUNDERED  
by the Traditions of Men???*

If you were put on a “polygraph” (lie detector) machine, would you be able to truthfully answer that you are living a life described as:

*“Tasting the powers of the Coming Age”*

*“Rivers of Alive Water gushing from your belly”*

*“Peace that transcends understanding”*

*“Joy inexpressible and full of Glory”*

*“Life to the Full” ?*

Oh, how I hope so! Jesus deserves that from each of us. If it's *not* true in your life, but simply poetry that you study in the original language during “class”—then you are not “participating in the Divine Nature” and true Christianity as it is described in the **only** Biblical account. Please! Settle for nothing less! No matter what the cost. You've only one life to live. Don't let anyone persuade you to accept anything less than the substance, the nature, the magnitude of the individual and church life that you read about in the Word of God. OK?! Anything else is a guaranteed self-fulfilling prophecy:

*“Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief.” Mark 6:5-6*

*“So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be removed and be cast into the sea,” and does not doubt in his*

*heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.” Mark 11:22-24*

*“Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast him out?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.” Matthew 17:19-20*

No one without the Faith that God is able and desirous to make for Himself a great Name will see anything more than random “providence.”

### *The Faith “OF” God*

But where does this “Faith” to throw mountains into the sea for “all who believe” come from? Conjuring it up? Fleshly ambition? Brute force determination: “I will believe, I will not doubt. I will believe. I’ve got a picture of it in my mind now. OK. No, no, no! I refuse to doubt! On the count of three: One. Two. Three... Jump mountain!” Too many have been deeply hurt by that teaching. It’s not that at all! It can’t be that. The answer to which mountains God intends to use us to “cast into the sea” lies in an unshakable faith born in Fellowship with Him, not our horizontal ideas and desires.

*“So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith of (or ‘in’) God.” Mark 11:22*

*“Now faith is the substance (in the Greek, the ‘title deed’) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1*

It cannot be random, shot-in-the-dark “faith” in whatever we decide to ask about. Rather, it is faith resting in the “title deed” that He has conferred upon us in our Fellowship with Him. Our prayer originates from Him and we return it to Him. On the other hand, it is easy to see that the response to abuses is not to write all of the



verses on prayer and God's character out of the Bible by a man-invented, undocumented theory of "first century only!" That's not Christianity anymore. *At least not one that you can find any reference to in the Bible.*

*"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." 1 John 5:14-15*

This verse is either true or it isn't. I'm convinced that it is 100% true, in every case. How about you? How do you view the Scriptures? Do you really *embrace* them as God's Word?

(Whatever we do, let's not abuse this passage to mean "We just throw up arbitrary, haphazard prayers and God will allow them to 'hit or miss' at his discretion. It's all a matter of wild chance that you might accidentally pray something that is 'according to His Will.'" The Greek word for that is "Bologna.")

If this verse is true, absolutely, and the answer to prayer is dependent upon "knowing that He hears us," then how do we "know that He hears us?" I'm only going to plant a seed or two, but may God grant that someday, before it's all over, we might all discover a Life in Him that is not even in the same dimension as the doctrinal continuum that has robbed so many (on both ends of that spectrum).

Here's that Seed that only Jesus Himself really understood and walked in to its fullest measure: You'll never know much about faith in prayer and the miraculous...unless you know Him in intimacy. It can only ever be **Faith born in Fellowship**. *"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."*

As the Master-Teacher said at one point to His disciples, "Go and learn what this means." This is no cutesy theology or nursery rhyme! It's all the reason and Hope of Eternity! (John 17:3; Rom.8:14-17). Spend much time "eating the Scrolls" (rather than simply skimming them, or analyzing them, or pigeon-holing). Pray actively through

these verses and actively lay your life before God as a living sacrifice. “Go and find the meaning” of these verses....

Jesus, God’s Son, prayed to His Father,

*“And **this** [Heavenly Father] is eternal life, that they [those that would be Christians] may **know** You (“ginosko”—**have intimacy** with, as the word is used also in Matthew 1:25, **not intellectual knowledge**. Also Matthew 7:23, and other very revealing places.), the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” John 17:3*

In accordance with this prayer for us, the only “Jesus-kind-of-Life” (Christ-ianity) is described again by Jesus Himself as:

*“Then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.’” John 5:19*

*“I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” John 8:28-29*

*“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.” John 14:10*

Is that not also a beautiful description of Christ’s Life in us? “**Christ in you, the hope of Glory!**” (Col.1:26-27)

*“A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” John 14:19-21*

*“He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” John 15:5-8*

*“And I will give **you** the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.”  
Matthew 16:19*

Catch this! With a life marked with that kind of Fellowship with Him, you’ll grow to ask very little that is not “according to His Will.” The heartbreaks and failures that you do encounter will serve only to draw you deeper into the “full measure of the stature of Jesus Christ”—which, of course, is the Father’s ultimate objective for you and I. (Prayers answered or unanswered are only one of God’s tools to move us closer to that awesome Stature that He has called us to participate in, and has equipped us to enjoy.) Keep God’s “end” in mind—don’t simply look at the boundary markers along the Way!

I would love to say so much more. But that’s enough, I pray, to cause us all to realize the adventure and the power and the beauty of what lies ahead as we all pursue Him and His Purposes for us, individually and corporately. As we take a forward look, I hope that we see a Holy Nation, a Royal Priesthood, a church that the Gates of Hell are no longer prevailing against! A Chosen People who are living as the Corporate Christ that brings all men into the “Valley of Decision,” “binding on earth what they see has already been bound in Heaven.” A Community of God’s Elect that are not “following signs” for their own benefit. Simply a Church that is bringing forth such a pure and powerful Testimony of the Son, His Son’s Kingdom, and His Word that God can, after such a long, long drought, afford to “confirm His Word” and vindicate His Faith-filled Servants. Long for the Day! Press towards the Day!

By the way, no one who knows the King of all the Kings, Jesus, the Christ of God, personally (as a friend) could have any remaining question about His Character and Power! Or His commitment to

act on behalf of His People—now and for time and eternity! That’s just Jesus. When you stand in His Presence, you drop all attempts to analytically pigeon-hole Him! That’s our Jesus. That’s who He is! The **I AM**.

*“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Job 42:5-6*

Here is a trustworthy saying, worthy of full acceptance: “If the church continues to lay its head in the lap of Delilah, it will certainly continue to be shorn of all of its power and be made a buffoon before its enemy.”

But those days are over. Amen?

*“And who is like Your people, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a People, to make for Himself a name—and to do for You great and awesome deeds for Your land.”*

*“Then Moses said to him, ‘If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?’”*

*“Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn your young men will come to you like the dew.”*

*“The intent is that **now**, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.”*

*“And the God of peace will crush satan under **your** feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”*

**As for you? Only one mortal man walked on water with Jesus that stormy night. The one that stepped out of the boat of doubt and**

**fear, peer pressure and man's carnal logic. Will you, like most, die of old age in that boat? Or will you plant your feet firmly on that which only the power of God can sustain? Will you?**

*MP*