

## Opening Words

We are told that miracles contradict science. Therefore, miracles cannot exist and the stories we read in the Gospel are false? Is this true. Let's learn about this today as we continue Tough Questions for Today's Christians.

### 221 04 TQ Do Miracles Contradict Science – Part 1?

As you know we are in a series we call, Tough Questions for Today's Christian, and we are using the modern classic by Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, as our guide. We are looking at eight serious objections to the Christian faith. We have already dealt with the first one, "how can a good and loving God allow evil in the world?" Today we move to issue #2, "Since miracles contradict science, they cannot be true."

In 1937 Max Planck, a German physicist said, "Faith in miracles must yield ground, step by step, before the steady and firm advance of the forces of science, and its total defeat is indubitably a mere matter of time." In our time, atheist Richard Dawkins has said, "The virgin birth, the resurrection, the raising of Lazarus, even the Old Testament miracles, all are freely used for religious propaganda, and they are very effective with an audience of unsophisticates and children."

Really? Is that true? – that the report of miracles in the Bible is just propaganda promoted by ignorant people and believed by other ignorant people? If that is true, then why, for example does nuclear physicist Hugh Siefken say, "My faith can be summed up in this one paradox: I believe in science and I believe in God and I plan on testifying to both." I don't think Siefken is an unsophisticate nor are the other tens of thousands of scientists, doctors, lawyers, and university professors who believe in God and in miracles.

In his book, *The Case for Faith*, Strobel mentioned that he travelled to Atlanta, Georgia to meet with Dr. William Lane Craig who holds doctorates in philosophy from the University of Birmingham, England and in theology from the University of Munich. He is the member of nine professional societies including the American Philosophical Association and has written numerous books. We would hardly call him an unsophisticate!

Like Lee Strobel, William Lane Craig was not born into the faith. He thought the Christian message was absurd, but as he studied and learned he discovered the weight of the evidence was too great not to believe, and he became a Christian. Craig is helpful in this discussion about miracles and science, and his definition of a miracle is insightful, "A miracle is an event which is not producible by the natural causes that are operative at the time and place that the event occurs." Let me repeat it for you. "A miracle is an event which is not producible by the natural causes that are operative at the time and place that the event occurs."

Let's explain this. Miracles are outside of science but they don't contradict science. The job of science is to discover how things work in the natural world. As a Christian, we accept this wholeheartedly. We agree! The job of science is to discover how things work, and we believe

scientists can discover how things work because God created the universe with order and precision. But this does not mean miracles cannot happen. Remember, a miracle is an event that is not producible by natural causes. That is why it is a miracle – it is not producible by natural causes and for a person to say that a miracle cannot happen is to assume that only natural causes can occur and something supernatural cannot occur.

Let me provide a simple explanation for this. We understand what gravity is. Think of the last time you fell to the ground. Ouch! Think of an apple tree. Every time an apple gets too heavy for its stem it will fall directly to the ground, every time, unless, someone interjects himself into the situation. Let's say you are standing under the apple tree looking at a delicious, red, juicy apple. Your mouth is watering and it falls off the tree and is headed for the ground just as all other apples fall to the ground because the law of gravity demands that it fall to the ground, but you stick out your hand and catch the apple before it hits the ground, bring it to your mouth, and start enjoying it.

Now, was the law of gravity working? Yes, it was. But did this apple hit the ground, like all the other apples? No, it did not. Why not? Because an outside agent, you, intervened in the normal process and kept the apple from falling to the ground. Did this outside agent cause the law of gravity to stop working? No, of course not. The outside agent overruled the law of gravity in that situation.

In the same way, miracles do not work against science. Miracles simply interject an outside agent, which we call God. He can overrule the laws of science that he created in the first place!

There are illustrations of this happening all the time in God's world. For example, Craig tells us that when oxygen and potassium are mixed they always combust. But our bodies contain oxygen and potassium and they do not combust. Why not? Because there are other agents at work in our body to keep the law of combustion from happening in our bodies!

The problem with people who say miracles cannot happen is that they rule out other agents – the supernatural as an explanation. But this is prejudice. Who says there cannot be an outside agent? That is simply a bias against a supernatural force.

Skeptics have also said this about the miracles in the Bible, especially the miracles of Jesus: they are legends which were the product of Greek and Roman mythologies influencing the beliefs and writings of the Gospels over time. But is this true? Is that what historical scholarship teaches? Not by a mile. Historical research teaches the opposite. The Gospels show no dependence upon Greek and Roman mythologies. The Gospels show the opposite. They show that they were written with the Jewish worldview. The background to the Gospels is not pagan tales but the story told in the Old Testament. Furthermore, legends take time to develop, as in hundreds of years. The earliest sources for the Gospels were written within a few years of the events. There wasn't enough time for the plain stories to evolve into a legend or for some creative storyteller to embellish them with fantastic details. Eyewitnesses were present, and if the stories had been changed or embellished the eyewitnesses would have stepped forward to correct these inaccuracies.

One other argument that helps to confirm our belief in the accuracy of the Gospel records, and, therefore our belief in the miracle stories of Jesus, is that they are found in all the sources! It is not

that we have one Gospel that speaks of miracles and the others do not. All of them speak of miracles. All the sources are consistent in this regard.

But some might say, “yes, but that doesn’t make Christianity unique. Islam teaches that Mohammed performed miracles. Mormonism is based upon a miracle with Joseph Smith. You don’t believe those.” Let’s examine this for a moment. First, the so-called miracles in Islam. There are no miracles done by Mohammed reported in the Koran. None! The stories of Mohammed performing miracles came hundreds of years after these so-called events were to have taken place. One can read about them in the Hadith, i.e., the traditions of Islam. Some believe they were included to counteract the claims of uniqueness by Christians and the fact that the Koran speaks of the miracles of Jesus! In this case, the history shows embellishment or legends arising around a person, but the person around whom the legends arise is Mohammed and not Jesus.

When we come to Mormonism and the so-called golden plates that he saw with the writings upon them, no one else saw them. There was and is no corroborating evidence for them. Contrast that with the testimony of the Gospels which speak of multitudes of eyewitnesses. In addition, archaeology has not substantiated any of the claims of Mormonism.

There is one more line of reasoning we must explore. Really, all this talk boils down to whether God exists. If God exists, of course miracles are possible. God can be like the person standing under the apple tree. God created the apple tree and he created gravity. God set it up so that every time an apple ripens and becomes too heavy gravity takes over and it falls to the earth. But that doesn’t keep God from catching an apple and keeping it from falling to the earth. That doesn’t contradict the law of gravity or the law of apple trees producing apples. It just means that God can interject himself into the normal flow of events. And if God can interject himself into the normal flow of events, then miracles can happen.

The greatest miracle of all is the resurrection of Jesus. This is really what this discussion is about because Jesus based everything upon his resurrection. The resurrection proves that Jesus is who he said he is. The resurrection proves that God has intervened in the greatest way possible, not just to intervene as if this is some big game, but to intervene for the salvation of mankind.

Some have said, “But the resurrection is so improbable if not impossible.” How true, unless there is a God! When we think of improbabilities we must remember that if the resurrection did not take place then it would be highly unlikely that the tomb would have also been empty. If the resurrection did not take place, then it would be highly unlikely that multitudes would have reported that he appeared to them, talked with them, and ate with them. If the resurrection did not take place, then it would have been highly unlikely that their lives would have been changed, that the church would have started, that the gospel would have spread like a wildfire in the first century, and that men and women were willing to be martyred for their belief that Jesus had risen from the dead and was the true Lord.

But the evidence is that the tomb was empty! The evidence is that multitudes did see Jesus after his death. The evidence is that their lives were radically changed. The evidence is that the highest

ethical teaching rose from the early church. These fit with the story, with the evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. This is not hard to believe if a Creator really does exist!

As I close today, I tell you this, if the Creator does exist, if miracles do happen, and if Jesus did rise from the dead, then he is the world's true Lord and he calls you into a relationship with himself. Come to Jesus today and let him forgive you of your sins and be your Lord and Savior.