

I. Introduction (Image: Orion's Rainbow of Infrared Light Spitzer Space Telescope and Herschel)

Good morning! The opening words of the Bible are (**Genesis 1:1**), **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** The God of the Bible is the Creator of all things. Starting with this supernatural act of creation, it is very clear that the God of the Bible is a God of miracles, with power and wisdom beyond all human understanding. God created the heavens and the earth; He knows all there is to know about the universe He created it and everything in it.



Psalm 147:4-5 tells us, **“He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.”** (Photo: Globular Star Cluster Messier 9, Hubble Telescope)



Many people are skeptical about the idea that there are miracles. But, we are all faced with the reality of the world and the existence of time, space, matter, energy, and the infinite complexity of the universe and the amazing reality of life. The atheist looks at all of these things and somehow concludes that it is all a random and meaningless accident with no purpose. But the Bible teaches us that there is an all-wise and all-powerful God who is the Creator of all things and that God has done all of these things with a set purpose of bringing men and women into a loving relationship with Him.

Which is easier to believe – that it is all a meaningless accident? Or, that God is the Author of History? All of human experience tells us that nothing exists without being made and nothing works without being carefully designed. In fact, even with tens of thousands of hours of careful design work and millions of dollars spent bringing the designs to form, half of the time our computers and technology still don't work the way they are supposed to. And yet, the atheist would have us accept the idea that the incredible complexity of the human body and mind, and the entire universe which makes human existence and life possible is just a random accident.

To be quite honest, even before I became a Christian, I never had enough faith in the power of coincidence to believe that the universe could exist by accident and that life could be formed out of randomness. Regardless of what processes might have been used to form the world we live in, I always believed that a wise and powerful guiding hand, the Hand of God, was essential to any reasonable explanation of life and the universe.

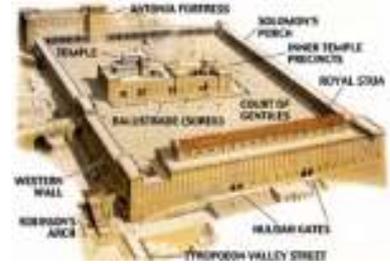
The existence of the universe and of life points to the existence of God. And, once we accept this, it should be quite simple for us to accept the possibility of miracles. A God who has the power and wisdom to create all things would obviously have the power to reach into the universe He has created and suspend the natural laws that He established anytime He chose to do so. And, a God who created mankind with the purpose of bringing us into a loving relationship with Him would have good reason to reveal Himself through miracles at appropriate times and places.

In today's Bible passage we will read of a time at the beginning of church history when God was revealing Himself daily through many amazing miracles. These events are recorded as history and they occur at an established time and place that is well-known to historians. In the passage, it is mentioned that the disciples met at Solomon's Colonnade. The colonnade no longer exists, but I marked the former location, which is also called Solomon's Porch, in this photo of the temple mount in



Jerusalem.

This diagram shows the temple mount as it looked in New Testament times. In that time, the massive platform that supported the temple was surrounded by a covered walkway supported by pillars. The orientation of the diagram is different than the orientation of the photo, but you can clearly see the place marked Solomon's Porch. It is a huge structure, so although the pillars look tiny in the diagram, but they were actually very large.



Just to help us to imagine the scene of today's Bible passage; here is a covered walkway that is similar to what once existed on the temple mount, so you can imagine what Solomon's Colonnade looked like. As you can see, there is room for thousands of people to gather and listen to the teaching of Peter and the other apostles. The acoustics of the structure were also probably very good, so that thousands of people could hear even without an electronic sound system.



With that introduction, let's continue our study in Acts with a look at a short, but powerful, passage, Acts 5:12-16.

II. Scripture Acts 5:12-16 (NIV 1984)

12 The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. 13 No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. 14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. 15 As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. 16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.

III. Teaching

Verse 16 tells us that crowds came from near and far, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. In the early days of the church, miracles of healing were part of the everyday experience of the brothers and sisters. Besides miracles of healing, there were other amazing miracles as well, Acts 5:12 says, **“The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people.”** The phrase, “signs and wonders,” likely included many different kinds of miracles. Where did the apostles get this power to work miracles? They got it from God, from the Lord Jesus. How did they get this power? They asked for it in prayer. Of course, it was not their power; it was the power of God working through them.

In Acts 4:29-30, the disciples prayed, **“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”** The Lord answered this prayer with a powerful, “Yes,” and the apostles began to minister in such an amazing and powerful way that the people set the sick out on the streets, where they thought the apostles would walk, so that the shadow of Peter might fall on the sick and bring miraculous healing. Of course, the power was not the power of Peter or of his shadow; it was the power of the Lord Himself. And, likewise, the purpose of the miracles was not to make Peter great, or rich and famous; the purpose was so that people might believe in Jesus Christ.

Today we are looking at the book of Acts in the New Testament. But the God of the Bible has always been a God of miracles. Do you remember the story of Daniel in the lion's den? It is a very famous Bible story and many people know it. But sometimes people miss the point of the story. Yes, the Lord saved Daniel because Daniel was His faithful servant. But there was also a larger purpose. God saved Daniel from the lions so that He Himself would be glorified among the nations. Specifically, so that He would be

glorified among the nations by the testimony of King Darius.

Take a look at the letter the king wrote right after Daniel was miraculously saved from the lions. **Daniel 6:25-27**, “**Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: “May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.”**

The God of the Bible, our Lord and Savior, has always been a God of signs and wonders. He has always been ready to perform miracles of every kind when it fits His purpose and brings glory to Him. And God does not change. Take a look at **Hebrews 13:6-8**, “**So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”** Our Lord Jesus is the same today as He was in the time of the Old Testament prophet Daniel and in the time of the apostles in Acts. He is the same, and He is still performing signs and wonders at the times and places of His choosing and for His glory.



I know this from the Scriptures, and I also know this because I have a little bit of personal experience with miracles. For example, I was miraculously healed of alcoholism when I trusted in Jesus as my Lord and Savior and then later, I was filled with the Holy Spirit and received the gift of tongues spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12:10. Some people might imagine that I received these miracles because of strong faith, but I think it was actually quite the opposite. I think God gave me these miracles because God knew that my faith was weak, too weak to continue trusting in Him without some direct evidence of His supernatural power. The Lord wanted to send me out as a missionary, but if I didn't have these miraculous experiences, I might not have been ready to trust the Lord when He called Karen and me to come to Japan. These miracles were not a reward for strong faith; on the contrary, they were the means God used to strengthen my weak faith.

This raises a question though. If God does many kinds of miracles still today, why are there still so many Christians who believe in Jesus but have never seen a miracle? In the end, only the Lord knows for sure the reasons why He does dramatic, obvious miracles in one place and only quiet, almost unnoticeable, miracles in another place. However, from my own study of the Bible, I have come to think that perhaps the Lord simply works according to the method that brings the most glory to Him and the clearest testimony of His love to people in each particular time and place. In one place, a miracle may bring a clear testimony for Jesus, but in another place, because of cultural issues or the local situation, a miracle might be misunderstood and result only in confusion. For example, compared to the miracle stories we hear from South America or China, we hear of very few dramatic miracles in Japan. Why? I don't know, but I wonder if perhaps it is because people in Japan might tend to see miracles as a sign that the Christian was a great person instead of seeing the miracles as proof that Jesus is Lord.

But it is also possible that part of the reason we see few miracles is because our love for the Lord is only lukewarm. We all need to examine our hearts, and wherever sin is found, we need to repent and trust in the Lord anew. But if you have repented and prayed for the Lord to work through you for His glory, and you still don't experience miracles, do not be discouraged. Remember instead what Jesus told doubting Thomas in **John 20:29**. After Thomas had seen the nail prints in Jesus' hands and the wound in Jesus' side, Thomas confessed his faith in Jesus as Lord and God. But Jesus replied, “**Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**”



Have you experienced miracles in your walk with the Lord? If so, give thanks and praise the Lord!

But if you are walking faithfully with Jesus without having experienced any dramatic miracles, give thanks and praise the Lord! The biggest miracle of all is faith in the human heart. And, perhaps the heavenly reward for those who trust Jesus without supernatural evidence will be even greater than the reward for the miracle workers.

I am firmly convinced that God is still doing miracles today whenever and wherever it is part of His plan and purpose. At the same time, I think I also need to share a word of caution. There are many false miracle workers who put on a show to bring wealth and honor to their selves instead of serving the Lord. So, we should all be cautious about claims of miracles and doubly cautious of those who seem to want to draw lots of attention to their selves. We should guard our hearts and pray for wisdom and discernment.

IV. Conclusion

We should be cautious about trusting the claims of others. We should trust in the Lord alone regardless of whether we see miracles or not. But at the same time, the Scripture tells us to be bold in our prayers for the Lord to work among us for His glory. Let us be bold in our witness to the Good News of Jesus and bold in our prayers, even as the apostles were. Let us set out on the bold adventure of faith daily and have the courage to pray for miracles, knowing that our Lord hears us and provides a loving answer to every cry of our hearts.

Let's close with **1 John 5:13-15**. **"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: 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 what we asked of him."**

Let's pray.

V. Prayer

Dear heavenly Father,

Loving Lord, You are the Creator God who made all things. You are Lord over all of creation. We give thanks for the wonders of Your love and grace and for the amazing salvation You have provided for us through the cross of Christ Jesus. Lord, teach us to love You even as You have first loved us. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit so that we might learn to boldly proclaim Your love and grace. Set us apart and make us a holy people. Make us bold witnesses to Your goodness and glory. Be glorified among us. (Acts 4:30), **"Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."** Come Lord Jesus! Come Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of Your people. Be glorified in our lives, our homes, in our church, and throughout this land. In Jesus' precious Name I pray, amen.