

Chapter Twelve

JESUS' MIRACLES

In reply, Jesus said to them: "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them. Blest is the man who finds no stumbling block in me."

[Matthew 11:4-6]

Human beings have always been fascinated by the supernatural and by miracles. Often the desire to see miracles is stronger than the desire to know the truth.

Jesus encountered this, as is illustrated in Matthew 12:38. He was teaching, after being charged with using the help of Satan to expel the demon from a blind mute man when:

Some of the scribes and Pharisees then spoke up, saying, "Teacher, we want to see you work some signs."

[Matthew 12:38]

As if they had not just seen a sign!

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

Living as we do in an age of modern technological miracles, we have perhaps become somewhat jaded. After all, modern medicine brings about miraculous cures for hitherto hopeless cases on a daily basis. Surgeons have even been known to revive the dead—when they lose someone on the operating table, and then are able to resuscitate them.

For us, many of the most astonishing miracles of Jesus are no longer that exceptional. In fact, many disregard them totally. That is why God sends signs or miracles which speak to the people of the time. For the contemporaries of Jesus, miraculous healings were appropriate signs. For modern times, an intricate code pervading the fabric of a 1400 year old scripture is more effective.

So what is a miracle?

Reginald Fuller begins with the following definition in his “*INTERPRETING THE MIRACLES*” (Westminster Press, 1963. pp. 8-9):

A...scholarly definition, approved by many modern theologians, is that of St. Augustine: a miracle is an occurrence which is contrary to what is known of nature.

He then expands:

Everything that happens in the realm of what we call nature is the handiwork of God himself....Nature merely furnishes the stage for the major work of God.... History is the arena where God intervenes specifically from time to time, succouring men, pressing his demands upon them and judging them for their disobedience. It is these extraordinary interventions which, properly speaking, are the miracles of the Bible. They are not necessarily breaches of the laws of nature.... But they are sufficiently startling, unusual and unexpected to call attention to themselves.

Thus, for Fuller the miracles of Jesus were the manifestations of God’s action through him. This is a good definition for our purposes.

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

The scriptures demonstrate that miracles serve two main purposes:

1. They serve as authenticating proofs that the messengers are indeed authorized by God to deliver His messages. When Moses, for example, was dispatched to Egypt’s Pharaoh and assigned the task of delivering the Children of Israel out of Egypt, he was given certain miracles to prove that he was carrying out divine orders. He threw down his staff, and it turned into a serpent before Pharaoh’s eyes.

Then the Lord told Moses and Aaron, “If Pharaoh demands that you work a sign or wonder, you shall say to Aaron: Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, and it will be changed into a snake.”

[Exodus 7:8-9]

Moses said, “O Pharaoh, I am a messenger from the Lord of the universe. My assignment is to deliver to you God’s truth. I come to you with a message from your Lord: Let the Children of Israel go.” Pharaoh said, “If you brought a sign, let us see it, if you are truthful.” Moses then threw down his staff, and it turned into a great serpent. He took out his hand, and it looked white to the beholders.

[Quran 7:104-108]

This type of miracle was Moses’ sign that he was empowered by God to perform miracles and to deliver God’s message to Pharaoh.

2. Miracles also can serve as a practical means of carrying out God’s plan under extraordinary circumstances. A good example is Moses’ parting of the Red Sea. The

Children of Israel were being led by Moses out of Egypt, toward the holy land. Pharaoh and his army were in hot pursuit.

Suddenly, Moses and his people found themselves trapped between the Red Sea in front of them, and Pharaoh's army behind them. God inspired Moses to strike the sea with his staff, whereupon the sea split. Thus God carried out His plan of delivering the Israelites from the Egyptians' tyranny.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. And you, lift up your staff and, with hand outstretched over the sea, split the sea in two, that the Israelites may pass through it on dry land."

[Exodus 14:15-16]

The Egyptians pursued them towards the East. When the two groups could see each other, Moses' companions said, "We will get caught." He said, "No way; my Lord is with me. He will show me the way out." We then inspired Moses: "Strike the sea with your staff." Whereupon, the sea parted; each part like a great hill (of water). Thus, we enabled them to pass through; we delivered Moses and those who accompanied him, and we drowned the others.

[Quran 26:60-66]

JESUS' MIRACLES NOW PROVEN

The miracles manifested through Jesus were numerous and profound. All miracles, manifested through any of God's messengers, have been controversial. Many believers accept such extraordinary events on faith, others harbor doubts, and the majority of people do not believe in miracles at all—even when they have just seen one—like the accusers of Jesus who had just seen him expel a demon and then asked to see a sign!

However, as we have said before, we now have new evidence regarding the miracles narrated in the scripture. We now possess tangible, incontrovertible evidence confirming that such miracles did indeed take place. Thus, any numerically structured narration of an unusual event brings to us not only the event itself, but also a built-in proof that this event did take place.

THE MIRACLES THROUGH JESUS

While some of the miracles attributed to Jesus are mentioned in the Bible, often with the same miracle described in more than one Gospel, a number of his miracles are unique to the Quran. Some of the latter are confirmed in apocryphal writings.

Many books have been written on the miracles of Jesus, with arguments for and against their validity. To my knowledge, none of them reference the Quran. Yet, we now have Quranic verification for a number of those miracles:

1. Jesus' virgin birth is of course the first miraculous phenomenon associated with Jesus. Of all of the descendants of Adam and Eve, Jesus is the only human being to be conceived without a father. For the scriptural references dealing with his birth, see the previous chapter.

2. Jesus spoke as a newborn infant. This miracle was mainly manifested to absolve his mother of an otherwise obvious violation of the extremely strict Mosaic law against sexual activity outside of marriage. Certainly, when a newborn infant speaks, and with great wisdom, the audience listens. Mary was thus absolved of any immorality. Had this not been the case, she would surely have been stoned to death, as required by Mosaic law.

This unique and convincing miracle of speaking as a newborn also established the identity of Jesus as the expected Messiah, and God's messenger to the Children of Israel.

While none of the canonized Gospels make any mention of this significant miracle, it is reported in Apocrypha as well as in the Quran:

The following accounts we found in the book of Joseph the high-priest, called by some Caiaphas:

He relates that Jesus spake even when he was in the cradle, and said to his mother: "Mary, I am Jesus, that word which thou didst bring forth according to the declaration of the angel Gabriel to thee, and my father has sent me for the salvation of the world."

[LOST BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, I:1-3, p. 38]

Mary returned to her family carrying the baby. They said, "O Mary, you have committed a horrendous crime. O descendant of Aaron, your father was never an evil man, nor was your mother unchaste." She simply pointed to the baby; they gasped, "How can we communicate with an infant in the cradle?" (The infant Jesus) spoke and said, "I am a servant of God. He has decreed that I shall receive the scripture; He has appointed me a prophet."

[Quran 19:27-30]

3. Jesus shaped birds from clay, then blew into them, and they became live birds "by God's leave." Again, the canonized Gospels do not mention this 'creation' miracle. However, this miracle is described in the Apocrypha, and the Quran mentions it prominently in two places, 3:49 and 5:110. The Quran makes it clear that Jesus' blowing into the clay figures was done "by God's leave" and that it parallels God's blowing into the clay figure of Adam to give him life:

Your Lord said to the angels, "I am creating a human being from aged potters' clay. Once I perfect him and blow into him from My spirit, you shall bow down before him."

[Quran 15:28-29]

God taught Jesus the scripture and wisdom: the Torah and the Gospel. He sent him as a messenger to the Children of Israel, saying, "I come to you with a sign from your Lord: I create for you from clay, the figures of birds, then I blow into them, and they become live birds by God's leave."

[Quran 3:48-49]

Then Jesus took from the bank of the stream some soft clay and formed out of it twelve sparrows.... Then Jesus, clapping together the palms of his hands, called to the sparrows, and said to them: Go, fly away; and while ye live remember me. So the sparrows fled away, making a noise. The Jews seeing this, were astonished, and went away, and told their chief persons what a strange miracle they had seen wrought by Jesus.

[LOST BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, pp. 60-61]

4. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, miraculous healings were important signs for Jesus' contemporaries. In fact, if you categorize all the miracles of Jesus given in the Gospels, healings and the expelling of disabling demons count as the vast majority. Jesus cured a number of different ailments by God's leave.

In Matthew 9:1-8, we see that he healed a man who was paralyzed:

...[Jesus] then said to the paralyzed man— "Stand up! Roll up your mat, and go home." The man stood up and went toward his home. At the sight, a feeling of awe came over the crowd, and they praised God for giving such authority to men.

[Matthew 9:6-8]

Leprosy, a dreaded and incurable disease, was miraculously treated. Lepers were restored to health by Jesus:

A leper approached him with a request, kneeling down as he addressed him: "If you will to do so, you can cure me." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said: "I will do it. Be cured." The leprosy left then and there, and he was cured.

[Mark 1:40-42]

A man with a shriveled hand was cured, as reported in Matthew:

[Jesus] left that place and went into their synagogue. A man with a shriveled hand happened to be there, and they put this question to Jesus, hoping to bring an accusation against him: "Is it lawful to work a cure on the sabbath?" He said in response: "Suppose one of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath. Will he not take hold of it and pull it out? Well, think how much more precious a human being is than a sheep. Clearly, good deeds may be performed on the sabbath." To the man he said, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and it was perfectly restored; it became as sound as the other.

[Matthew 12:9-13]

The cure of a woman who was hemorrhaging is reported in Luke:

A woman with a hemorrhage of twelve years duration, incurable at any doctor's hands, came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak. Immediately her bleeding stopped. Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" Everyone disclaimed doing it, while Peter said, "Lord, the crowds are milling and pressing around you!" Jesus insisted, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone forth from me."

[Luke 8:43-46]

There are reports of additional healing incidents. One is where Jesus cured a nobleman's son:

...At Capernaum there happened to be a royal official whose son was ill. When he heard that Jesus had come back from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and begged him to come down and restore health to his son, who was near death. Jesus replied, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you do not believe." "Sir," the royal official pleaded with him, "come down before my child dies." Jesus told him, "Return home. Your son will live..." He was on his way home when his servants met him with the news that his boy was going to live.... He and his whole household thereupon became believers.

[John 4:46-53]

Peter's mother-in-law was healed by Jesus when she suffered from fever:

Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and the first thing they did was to tell him about her. He went over to her and grasped her hand and helped her up, and the fever left her. She immediately began to wait on them.

[Mark 1:30-31]

While the Quran does not validate these specific incidents of healing, Jesus' ability to heal, "by God's leave," is documented there. In Chapter 3, Mary is addressed by the angel sent to deliver to her the news of a son:

"As a messenger to the Children of Israel, he will proclaim: 'I come to you with proof from your Lord.... I restore vision to the blind, I heal the leprous, and I revive the dead by God's leave....'"

[Quran 3:49]

In the Quran's Chapter 5, Verse 110 God Himself addresses Jesus on the Day of Resurrection:

"...You healed the blind and the leprous by My leave, and revived the dead by My leave...."

[Quran 5:110]

5. The last two verses quoted directly above tell us that Jesus also restored sight to the hopelessly blind. This is also reported in the Gospel of Matthew:

As Jesus moved on from there, two blind men came after him crying out, "Son of David, have pity on us!" When he got to the house, the blind men caught up with him. Jesus said to them, "Are you confident I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they told him. At that he touched their eyes and said, "Because of your faith it shall be done to you;" and they recovered their sight...

[Matthew 9:27-30]

6. The Gospels and the Quran report a number of incidents where Jesus restored life, "by God's leave," to a number of different people who had died:

Soon afterward he went to a town called Naim, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. As he approached the gate of the town a dead man was being carried out, the only son of a widowed mother. A considerable crowd of townsfolk were with her. Jesus was moved with pity upon seeing her and said to her, "Do not cry." Then he stepped forward and touched the litter; at this, the bearers halted. He said, "Young man, I bid you get up." The dead man sat up and began to speak. Then Jesus gave him back to his mother. Fear seized them all and they began to praise God. "A great prophet has risen among us," they said....

[Luke 7:11-16]

Before Jesus had finished speaking to them, a synagogue leader came up, did him reverence, and said, "My daughter has just died. Please come and lay your hand on her and she will come back to life." Jesus stood up and followed him, and his disciples

did the same... When Jesus arrived at the synagogue leader's house and saw the flute players and the crowd who were making a din, he said, "Leave, all of you! The little girl is not dead. She is asleep." At this they began to ridicule him. When the crowd had been put out he entered and took her by the hand, and the little girl got up.

[Matthew 9:18-19, 23-25]

God says to Jesus, the son of Mary, (on the Day of Resurrection), "I have bestowed many a favor upon you and your mother; I supported you with the Holy Spirit which enabled you to speak as a newborn infant, as well as when you grew up; I taught you the scripture, wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel; you created from clay the figures of birds, by My leave; you healed the hopelessly blind and the lepers, by My leave; and you revived the dead, by My leave. I protected you from the Children of Israel when you went to them with these clear signs and wonders; those among them who disbelieved said, 'This is no more than witchcraft.' "

[Quran 5:110]

The best known incident where Jesus revived the dead, the resurrection of Lazarus, is reported in the Gospel of John:

...Jesus looked upward and said: "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I know that you always hear me but I have said this for the sake of the crowd, that they may believe that you sent me." Having said this, he called loudly, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, bound hand and foot with linen strips, his face wrapped in cloth. "Untie him," Jesus told them, "and let him go free."

[John 11:41-44]

7. One of Jesus' miracles which is clearly stated in the Quran and in the Gospel of John is that he exhibited extrasensory abilities:

(Jesus said,) "...I can tell you what you ate and what you store in your homes. These should be sufficient signs for you if you are believers."

[Quran 3:49]

He also showed these abilities when talking with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well:

He said to her, "Go call your husband, and then come back here." "I have no husband," replied the woman. "You are right in saying you have no husband!" Jesus exclaimed. "The fact is, you have had five, and the man you are living with now is not

your husband. What you said is true.” “Sir,” answered the woman, “I can see you are a prophet.”

[John 4:16-19]

8. According to the Quran, Jesus’ disciples challenged him to bring down a feast from the sky. After some hesitation, he prayed for such a feast. God answered Jesus’ prayer and a feast descended for Jesus and his disciples:

The disciples said, “O Jesus, son of Mary, Could your Lord send down to us a feast from the sky?” He said, “Reverence God, if you are really believers.” They said, “We wish to eat therefrom, and to assure our hearts, and to know that you have told us the truth. We wish to be witnesses thereof.” Jesus, son of Mary, said, “Our God and our Lord, send down to us a feast from the sky. Let it satisfy each and every one of us; a provision from you. You are the best provider.” God said, “I am sending it down. But then, if any of you disbelieves thereafter, I will surely commit him to such retribution as I never imposed on anyone else.”

[Quran 5:112-115]

The closest thing to this miracle in the Gospels are the reports of Jesus feeding the multitudes, as in Matthew 14:15-21 where Jesus was reported to have fed five thousand.

All of these miracles make it very clear that Jesus was God’s messenger and special servant. In fact, the Quran recognizes that Jesus was given a special honor. It tells us that Jesus was “*born as a prophet of God.*” This is amply demonstrated by the proven fact that Jesus preached the worship of God alone from the time he was a newborn infant.

This prophethood from birth is reflected in the fact that the Quran reports errors committed by many other prophets and/or messengers of God, including Moses, Abraham, Muhammad and all of the best known prophets, but no mistakes are attributed to Jesus.

CONCLUSION

While the Quran stresses the humanity of Jesus, it also honors him as a prophet from birth. In its mathematically guarded verses, it relates many miracles which God performed through him. In doing so, it confirms the validity of those miracles.

For the first time in human history we know for a fact that indeed Jesus did raise the dead, heal the hopelessly blind and the afflicted.

We also know that these, and his other miracles do not in any way confer divinity upon him.