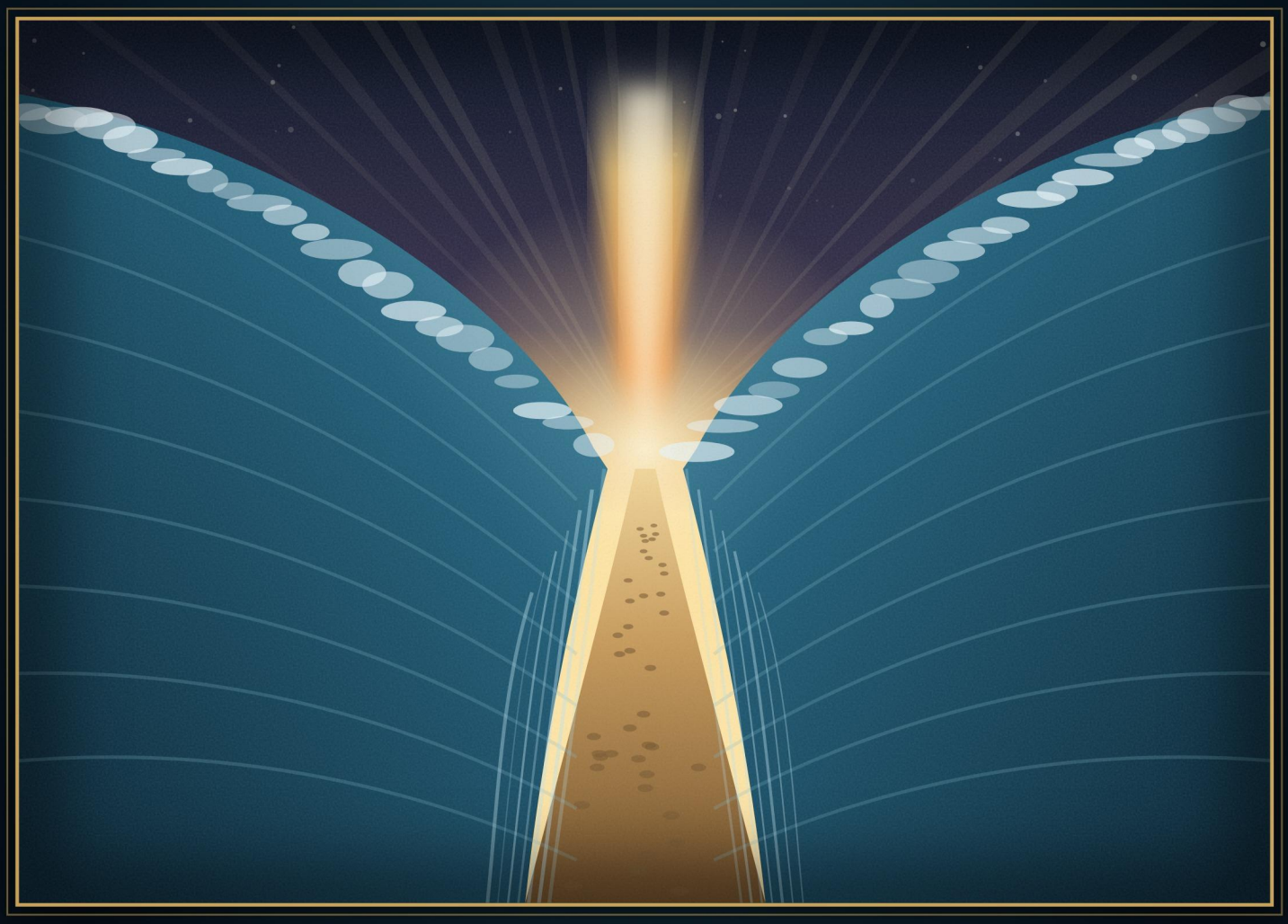
BY HIS MIGHTY HAND

Every Miracle in the Bible, Who Saw It, and What History Adds



Real people. Real places. A God who still keeps His word.

ANDREW DOMINGUEZ

TRINFINITY Enterprises

By His Mighty Hand

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Andrew Dominguez

By His Mighty Hand: Every Miracle in the Bible, Who Saw It, and What History Adds

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This book offers Bible teaching. It is not medical advice. Pray for healing and keep seeing your doctor; the two go together.

A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Before You Begin

> *You **are** the God who does wonders; You have made known Your strength among the peoples.*
>
> Psalm 77:14 (SLB)

The Bible is full of miracles. A sea splits in two. Fire falls on a soaked altar. A widow's last bit of flour never runs out. A man born blind sees his parents' faces for the first time. A dead man walks out of his own tomb still wrapped in grave clothes. And at the center of all of it, a crucified Man is seen alive by hundreds of people who knew He had died.

People argue about Bible miracles without ever reading every account from Genesis to Revelation. Writing a study on every book of the Bible, I wanted one clear look at every miracle: who saw it and what the text says. I wrote this book for readers who want what the Bible actually says, not speculation. God's power in history gives us confidence in His promises today.

Most of us know a handful of these stories from Sunday school. Very few of us have ever sat down and looked at all of them together, in order, from Genesis to Revelation. That is what this book does.

What You Will Find in This Book

I have tried to gather every miracle in the Bible that God did, either directly, through a person, or through an angel, and that people saw. Each one gets its own numbered entry, and each entry tells you four things:

1. **Where to read it.** Every entry gives the Bible references, including the parallel accounts when more than one book tells the same story.
2. **Who God used.** Sometimes God acted directly. Sometimes He worked through Moses, Elijah, Peter, or Paul. Sometimes He sent an angel. And in the Gospels, Jesus Himself did the work.
3. **Who saw it.** A miracle is not a private feeling. The Bible names the witnesses again and again, and I list them.
4. **What happened and what it shows.** I retell each event in plain words and point out what it teaches about God.

Where a writer outside the Bible speaks to an event, such as the Jewish historian Josephus, the Roman historian Tacitus, the Greek historian Herodotus, or an early Christian writer like Quadratus, you will find a gray box marked **Outside the Bible**. I quote their own words wherever I could open and check the text myself, and I tell you where to find it.

How I Handle Outside Sources

I want to be straight with you about outside sources, because a lot of books are not. Some writers will grab any old claim that seems to support the Bible and print it as proof. That does more harm than good.

When a Christian passes along something that turns out to be false, the skeptic stops listening, and he has a right to.

So every outside source in this book carries one of three labels:

- **Text confirmed.** We have the writer's words, the text is not seriously in doubt, and I opened it and checked the quote.
- **Disputed.** Scholars argue over whether the words are genuine, whether they were changed later, or what they mean. I tell you what the argument is and leave it there.
- **Background.** The source, often a dig or an ancient inscription, confirms a person, a place, or an event around the miracle, but not the miracle itself. That still matters. It shows the Bible is talking about real people in real places. But I will not stretch it into more than it is.

I also want you to know something up front. Most miracles in the Bible have no outside witness at all, and we should not expect them to. Nobody in Zarephath was writing history when Elijah raised a widow's son. The Bible itself is the record, written by people who were there or who talked to people who were there. Outside sources are a welcome bonus, not the foundation. The foundation is God's Word.

What Counts as a Miracle

This is harder than it sounds, and Chapter 1 spends some time on it. Here is the short version of the line I drew.

I included events where God did something beyond the normal course of nature, in a way people could see, hear, or touch: the sea parting, the sick healed, the dead raised, fire from heaven, a donkey that talks. I included judgments that came straight from God's hand, like leprosy striking Miriam or the ground opening under Korah. I included visible appearances of God or His angels when something physical happened with them, like the burning bush that did not burn up.

I left out three kinds of things, not because they are unimportant, but because they belong somewhere else. I left out ordinary dreams and visions where nothing outward happened, prophecies and their fulfillment, and God's quiet providence, where He works through normal events, as in the book of Esther. God was just as much at work in those, but they are not miracles in the sense this book uses the word. I also did not number the fake signs done by sorcerers or by the enemy. Those get their own chapter.

Good Bible teachers draw the line in slightly different places, so your count may not match someone else's. That is fine. The point is not the number. The point is the God who did them.

How the Book Is Laid Out

Part One: Understanding Miracles answers the basic questions. What is a miracle? Can they really happen? And who are the outside witnesses, and how much weight do they carry?

Part Two: Miracles of the Old Testament walks through every miracle from Genesis to Malachi, in Bible order, grouped by the great seasons when God worked them: the early days in Genesis, Moses and the Exodus, Joshua and the Judges, the kings, Elijah and Elisha, and Daniel in Babylon.

Part Three: The Miracles of Jesus covers His birth, His power over nature, His healings, His victory over demons, the three times He raised the dead, and the greatest miracle of all, His own resurrection.

Part Four: The Apostles, the Enemy, and the Days Ahead follows the miracles in the book of Acts, looks at the counterfeit signs the Bible warns us about, lays out the main views on whether miracles continue today, looks ahead to the miracles still to come, and closes with what all of this means for you.

At the back you will find a master list of every miracle in one table, a chart of Jesus' miracles across the four Gospels, a summary of every outside source, a list of words to know, a list of sources, and an index of every Bible verse cited, with page numbers.

Every chapter ends with **Study Questions** for your own reading or for a small group.

A Few Notes Before We Start

Scripture quotations in this book come from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). Words set in bold italics inside a quotation are words added in English to make the sentence read clearly. When I don't quote a passage, I give the reference so you can read it for yourself, and I hope you will. Don't take my word for anything in this book. Open your Bible and check it, the way the Bereans did in Acts 17:11.

I capitalize the pronouns that refer to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit (He, Him, His, You, Your) as a sign of reverence. Inside a Scripture quotation, I leave the capitals exactly as the translation prints them. Inside quotations from other writers, like Josephus, I leave their words exactly as they were translated.

Most of the older outside sources are quoted from the standard public domain English translations: William Whiston's translation of Josephus (1737), the Church and Brodribb translation of Tacitus, G. C. Macaulay's Herodotus, and the translations in the Ante-Nicene Fathers and the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Their English is old fashioned in places. I left it alone so you can trust that it is what they wrote.

Last, this is a book about what God has done, not a promise of what He must do for you this afternoon. God still answers prayer, and He is still able to do anything He chooses. But He is God and we are not. Chapter 22 talks about that honestly.

Part One: Understanding Miracles

Chapter 1: What Is a Miracle?

> *Therefore Jesus indeed also did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*
>
> John 20:30-31 (SLB)

People use the word miracle for almost anything. A team comes back from twenty points down, and the announcer calls it a miracle. A baby is born healthy, and the parents call it a miracle. Somebody finds a parking spot at the mall two days before Christmas, and that gets called a miracle too.

I understand why. Every one of those can be a gift from God, and we should thank Him for them. But if we are going to study the miracles of the Bible, we need to be clearer than that. When the Bible talks about the Red Sea parting or Lazarus walking out of the tomb, it is not talking about a lucky break. It is talking about God stepping in and doing something nature could never do on its own.

My wife agreed to one date with me in 1988. That one date became 36 years of marriage, two daughters and granddaughters. No law of nature was set aside. It was God's quiet providence guiding everyday events. God works through quiet providence just as faithfully as He does through public miracles.

A Working Definition

Here is the definition I will use in this book:

A miracle is an event in which God acts directly, beyond the normal working of the world He made, in a way people can see, as a sign that points to Himself and His purposes.

Let me take that apart one piece at a time.

God acts directly. A miracle is not luck, and it is not a trick. It is God at work. Sometimes He acts with no human in the picture at all, like the fire that fell on the first offerings at the tabernacle (Leviticus 9:24). Sometimes He works through a person, like Moses lifting his staff. But even then the Bible is careful to say whose power it was. When the crowd stared at Peter after a lame man stood up and walked, Peter told them not to look at him “as if by our own power or godliness we had made him walk” (Acts 3:12). The power was God’s.

Beyond the normal working of the world. God made the world to run in a steady, dependable way. Water runs downhill. Iron sinks. Dead people stay dead. That steadiness is a gift. You could not plant a field or build a house in a world where nothing was dependable. A miracle is not God breaking His own rules out of carelessness. It is the Maker of the rules doing something more than the rules on their own would ever do.

In a way people can see. A miracle in the Bible is public. It happens in front of witnesses: a crowd, a family, a city, an army, a nation. That is why I list the witnesses in every entry.

As a sign that points to Himself. Miracles in the Bible are never just tricks to impress people. Jesus refused to do a show for Herod (Luke 23:8-9), and He refused when the Pharisees demanded a sign from heaven just to test Him (Mark 8:11-12). Every miracle has a purpose. It says something about who God is and what He is doing.

The Words the Bible Uses

The Bible does not have one single word for miracle. It uses several, and each one shows a different side of the same thing.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew writers used these three most often:

- **Pele** (say it PEH-leh), a wonder, something too marvelous for us to explain. Isaiah uses it for the coming Messiah, whose name is called "Wonder" (Isaiah 9:6).
- **Oth** (say it OATH), a sign, something that points beyond itself. The same word is used for the rainbow after the flood (Genesis 9:13) and for the signs Moses did in Egypt.
- **Mopheth** (say it mo-FATE), a wonder or portent, an event that grabs attention and serves as proof. It often appears paired with oth: "signs and wonders" (Deuteronomy 6:22).

The New Testament was written in Greek, and it has its own set:

- **Semeion** (say it say-MAY-on), a sign. It shows up 77 times in the Greek text behind the SLB. John uses it 17 times. In John's Gospel, the miracles of Jesus are almost always called signs, because they point to who He is.
- **Teras** (say it TEH-ras), a wonder, something that makes people stop and stare. It appears 16 times, and every time it is in a verse that also uses semeion. The New Testament never talks about wonders by themselves. A wonder that does not point to God is just a spectacle.
- **Dunamis** (say it DOO-nah-mis), power, or a mighty work. It appears 120 times, sometimes for power in general and sometimes for a miracle itself. Our word dynamite comes from it, though Paul certainly never had dynamite in mind.
- **Ergon** (say it AIR-gon), a work. Jesus often called His miracles His works, the works His Father gave Him to do (John 5:36).

Peter used three of these words in one sentence on the day of Pentecost, when he told the crowd that Jesus was "attested to you by God by miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22). The SLB translates dunamis there as "miracles." Put those three together and you have the whole picture. A miracle is a mighty work that shows God's power, a wonder that makes people stop, and a sign that points them to the truth.

> *Israelite men, hear these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves also know* (Acts 2:22)

Notice the last phrase: "as you yourselves also know." Peter was not telling the crowd about something that happened far away. He was reminding them of what they had seen with their own eyes, in their own city, a few weeks earlier. Nobody in the crowd stood up and said, "That never happened." They knew it had.

Miracle or Providence?

There is a difference between a miracle and what Bible teachers call providence. Providence is God's ongoing care and control over everything that happens. He holds the world together (Colossians 1:17). He feeds the birds and clothes the lilies (Matthew 6:26-30). He works all things together for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28). Most of the time, He does that through ordinary means: rain, crops, doctors, a kind word from a friend, a job offer that comes at the right time.

The book of Esther is a great example. God's name is never mentioned in it, and nothing happens that breaks the normal working of nature. A king can't sleep and has the records read to him. A young Jewish woman happens to be queen at just the right moment. A wicked man is hanged on the gallows he built for someone else. No fire falls from heaven. No sea splits. And yet anybody who reads it can see God's hand on every page.

That is providence, and it is every bit as much God's work as a miracle is. But it is a different kind of work, and I have not numbered it as a miracle in this book.

Some events sit right on the line. When God sent a strong east wind all night to push back the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21), He used a natural force, wind. But wind does not stand water up like a wall on both sides, it does not come at the exact moment a man lifts a staff, and it does not stop at the exact moment the enemy is in the middle. The timing, the size, and the purpose make it a miracle, even though God used something He made to do it.

Why Did God Do Miracles?

If you read through the whole Bible, you will notice that miracles are not spread out evenly. Long stretches of history go by with very few. Then they come in bursts. Most Bible teachers point to four great seasons of miracles:

1. **Moses and Joshua**, when God brought Israel out of Egypt, gave them His law, and brought them into the Promised Land.
2. **Elijah and Elisha**, when Israel had turned to Baal worship and God showed He was the living God.
3. **Daniel and the exile**, when God's people were captives in Babylon and God showed the most powerful kings on earth who really ruled.
4. **Jesus and the apostles**, when God's Son came into the world and the good news of the gospel first went out.

Some teachers count Daniel's time as part of the prophets and speak of three great seasons. Either way, the pattern is clear. The bursts come at turning points, when God is doing something new and His message needs to be confirmed.

When you look at the reasons the Bible itself gives, they boil down to a few.

So people would know who the true God is. God told Moses that the plagues would come so that "you shall know that I ***am*** the LORD" (Exodus 10:2), and Pharaoh's own Egyptians would learn it too: "Egypt

will know that I ***am*** the LORD" (Exodus 7:5). On Mount Carmel, Elijah prayed that the people would know "that You, O LORD, ***are*** the God" (1 Kings 18:37).

To confirm God's messenger and His message. Nicodemus said it plainly to Jesus: "no one is able to do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:2). Hebrews 2:3-4 says the message of salvation was confirmed by those who heard the Lord, "God bearing witness with ***them***, both by signs and wonders and various miracles."

To show who Jesus is. This is the big one in the New Testament. John says he wrote down the signs "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). When John the Baptist sat in prison and wondered whether Jesus really was the One, Jesus told John's messengers to go back and report what they saw: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised (Matthew 11:4-5). Those were the very signs Isaiah said the Messiah would bring (Isaiah 35:5-6).

Out of compassion. Again and again the Gospels say Jesus was moved with compassion before He healed someone (Matthew 14:14; 20:34; Mark 1:41). He did not heal people only to prove a point. He healed them because He loved them.

To judge sin and protect His people. Some miracles are frightening. The flood, Sodom, the plagues in Egypt, Korah, Ananias and Sapphira. God is patient, but He is also holy, and some of the miracles show what His holiness means.

To give a preview of what is coming. Every healing is a small picture of the day when there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain (Revelation 21:4). Every time Jesus raised someone from the dead, He was giving a sneak preview of the resurrection.

What Miracles Cannot Do

One more thing before we start. Miracles do not force anyone to believe. That surprises people, but the Bible is very clear about it.

Pharaoh watched ten plagues and still hardened his heart. Israel watched the Red Sea split and was complaining about water three days later (Exodus 15:22-24). After Jesus raised Lazarus, some of the leaders went straight from the tomb to plot how to kill Jesus, and Lazarus too (John 11:45-53; 12:10). Jesus said it Himself in His story about the rich man and Lazarus: "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

> *But though He had done so many signs before them, they were not believing in Him* (John 12:37)

Miracles open a door. They do not drag anyone through it. A person who has decided ahead of time that he will not believe can always find a way to explain a miracle away. That was true in the first century, and it is true now.

But for the person who is honestly looking, the miracles are a gift. They are God saying, "I am here. I am real. I am powerful. And I care."

Study Questions

1. Before reading this chapter, what would you have called a miracle? Has your definition changed?
2. Read Acts 2:22. What do the words miracles, wonders, and signs each add to the picture?
3. What is the difference between a miracle and God's providence? Can you think of a time you saw God's providence in your own life?
4. Why do you think miracles come in bursts in the Bible rather than evenly spread out?
5. Read John 12:37 and Luke 16:31. Why don't miracles force people to believe? What does that tell us about the human heart?

Chapter 2: Can Miracles Really Happen?

> *'Ah, Lord GOD! Look, You, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great strength and by Your outstretched arm; nothing is too difficult for You*
>
> Jeremiah 32:17 (SLB)

Somebody is going to read this book and think, "This is all nice, but miracles don't happen. Science settled that a long time ago." Maybe that person is you. If so, I'm glad you're here, and I want to take the question seriously, because it deserves an honest answer.

The Big Question Comes First

Whether miracles can happen really boils down to one question: is there a God?

If there is no God, if the universe is just matter and energy bumping around with no mind behind it, then of course miracles can't happen. There would be nobody to do them. Every story of a miracle would have to be a mistake, a legend, or a lie.

But if there is a God who made the universe, then miracles are not strange at all. A God who could make the whole universe out of nothing could certainly part a sea, heal a body, or raise a man from the dead. The person who made a house can move a wall in it. The author of a book can add a chapter.

The Bible starts right there. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). That is the first miracle, and in a way it is the biggest one. Everything else in this book is smaller than that. If you can believe the first verse of the Bible, the rest is not hard.

> *By faith we understand the ages to have been formed by **the** word of God, so that the things which are seen have not come into being out of things that are visible.* (Hebrews 11:3)

David Hume's Argument

The most famous argument against miracles comes from the Scottish thinker David Hume, in a section called "Of Miracles" in his book An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, published in 1748. A lot of people who have never heard of Hume are repeating his argument, so it is worth knowing.

Hume wrote:

> "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."
>
> *David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Section X, Part I*

Put simply, Hume said this. Everybody's experience tells us that dead people stay dead. So no matter how good the witnesses are, it will always be more likely that the witnesses are wrong than that a dead man came back to life.

Hume had a point in one way. We should be careful. Plenty of people have claimed miracles that never happened. A wise person does not believe every story he hears. Hume himself wrote that "a wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence," and I agree with that.

But there is a problem with his argument, and many writers since have pointed it out. Hume says miracles go against everybody's experience. How does he know that? Only if he already knows that every report of a miracle is false. But that is the very question we are asking. He assumed his answer before he started. It is like a judge who says, "I have never seen this man commit a crime, so I will not listen to any witnesses who say he did."

There is a second problem. The laws of nature describe what normally happens when nothing outside the system steps in. They do not forbid something from outside stepping in. C. S. Lewis made this point with a simple picture in his book Miracles. If you put some coins in a drawer one day and more the next, the laws of arithmetic tell you how many coins should be there later. But if a thief opens the drawer in between, you will find fewer. The thief did not break the laws of arithmetic. He added something the laws did not account for. A miracle is God reaching into the drawer. The laws are still true. They just are not the only thing going on.

Miracles Are Not Primitive Thinking

Another common idea is that ancient people believed in miracles because they didn't understand how the world works. They did not know about germs or weather patterns, so they credited everything to the gods.

There is a little truth in that. People in every age have made up explanations for things they did not understand. But it does not fit the Bible at all.

Think about Joseph. When Mary turned up pregnant, he did not say, "Oh well, these things happen." He knew exactly how babies are made, and that is why he planned to send her away quietly (Matthew 1:18-19). It took an angel to change his mind.

Think about Zechariah. When the angel told him his wife Elizabeth would have a son in her old age, he said, "By what will I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife ***is*** advanced in her days" (Luke 1:18). He knew perfectly well that old women don't have babies.

Think about Thomas. He knew dead men stay dead. That is why he would not believe the others until he could touch the wounds himself (John 20:24-25).

The people in the Bible did not believe in miracles because they did not understand nature. They recognized miracles because they did understand nature. You can only notice something unusual if you know what is usual.

How Do We Test a Miracle Story?

So how should a careful person weigh a miracle claim, whether it is in the Bible or in the news today? Here are the questions I ask, and they are the same questions a good detective or a good jury would ask.

1. **How close are the witnesses to the event?** Were they there? Did they write it down soon after?
2. **How many witnesses are there, and do they agree on the main facts?** Small differences in detail are normal. Four people who tell a car crash word for word the same way have probably rehearsed it.
3. **Did the witnesses have anything to gain by lying?** Or did they lose everything for saying it?
4. **Did anyone who was there deny it?** Enemies of a claim are some of the best witnesses, because they have every reason to expose it if it is false.
5. **Does the miracle fit the character of God and the message He has already given?** The Bible itself says that a sign that leads people away from God is a fake, no matter how impressive it is (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

When we put the miracles of the Bible through those tests, especially the resurrection of Jesus, they hold up remarkably well. Chapter 18 does that in detail. For now, I will just say this. The apostles who said they saw Jesus alive gained nothing from saying so. They were beaten, jailed, and, according to early church tradition, most of them were killed. People will die for something they wrongly believe is true. But nobody dies for something he knows he made up.

Why Believing Isn't Blind

Some people think faith means believing something with no evidence, or even against the evidence. That's not how the Bible uses the word. Biblical faith is trust in God based on what He has shown us. The disciples did not believe first and then go looking for evidence. They saw, and then they believed.

> *That which was from **the** beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we looked upon and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life—*
> (1 John 1:1)

John wanted his readers to know he was not passing on a rumor. He heard Jesus. He saw Him. He touched Him. Luke says the same thing at the start of his Gospel. He carefully investigated everything from the beginning, using the accounts of eyewitnesses, so that his reader could "know the certainty concerning the words" he had been taught (Luke 1:4).

So I am not asking you to switch off your brain to read this book. I am asking you to do the opposite. Look at the evidence. Look at the witnesses. And ask yourself honestly which explanation fits.

Study Questions

1. Why does the question "Can miracles happen?" really depend on the question "Is there a God?"
2. In your own words, what was David Hume's argument against miracles? Where does it go wrong?
3. Read Luke 1:18 and Matthew 1:18-19. What do Zechariah and Joseph show us about whether ancient people understood how the world normally works?
4. Which of the five tests for a miracle story do you think is the most important? Why?
5. Read 1 John 1:1-3. How does John describe the evidence he and the other apostles had? How is that different from blind faith?

Chapter 3: Witnesses Outside the Bible

> *For the king knows about these things, to whom also I speak with boldness; for I am not persuaded that any of these things escapes his notice, not one; for this has not been done in a corner.*
>
> Acts 26:26 (SLB)

When Paul stood before King Agrippa and told him about Jesus rising from the dead, he said something bold: "this has not been done in a corner." Paul was saying, "You know about this, King. Everybody knows about this. It happened out in the open."

That raises a fair question. If the miracles of the Bible happened out in the open, did anybody outside the Bible write about them? The answer is yes, some did. But we need to be careful and honest about what they said and how much weight it carries. This chapter introduces the main outside witnesses you will meet in the gray boxes all through the book.

Why We Should Not Expect Too Much

Before we look at them, keep three things in mind.

First, most ancient writing is lost. Historians guess that only a small fraction of what was written in the ancient world has survived. Whole libraries burned. Papyrus rots. Most of what we have survived because somebody thought it was worth copying by hand, over and over, for a thousand years.

Second, most ancient writers did not care about the things the Bible records. A Roman historian writing about emperors and wars had no reason to mention a carpenter's son healing a blind beggar in a small province at the edge of the empire. The surprise is not that outside writers say so little about Jesus. The surprise is that they say anything at all.

Third, the Bible itself is the best ancient source we have. People sometimes talk as if the Bible doesn't count as evidence and only outside sources do. That is backwards. The New Testament is a collection of twenty-seven documents written in the first century by people who knew Jesus or knew those who did. No other ancient person has that many early sources. Any historian would be thrilled to have that much on Alexander the Great.

With that said, here are the outside witnesses.

Flavius Josephus

Josephus is the most important outside writer for this book. He was a Jewish priest and military commander, born in Jerusalem around A.D. 37, just a few years after the crucifixion. He fought against Rome in the Jewish revolt, was captured, and ended up living in Rome under the protection of the emperor's family. There he wrote two huge history books: The Jewish War, finished around A.D. 75, and Jewish Antiquities, finished around A.D. 93 or 94.

Antiquities retells the whole history of the Jewish people from creation to his own day. For the Old Testament period, Josephus mostly retells the Bible in his own words, sometimes adding Jewish traditions and quotes from other ancient historians. That makes him useful in three ways.

- He shows how the Jews of the first century understood the miracles. He treats them as real history from "the sacred books."
- He sometimes quotes other ancient writers who are lost today, such as Berosus of Babylon and Nicolaus of Damascus, who mention the same events.
- Now and then he adds something from his own day, like the spring at Jericho that Elisha healed, which was still flowing sweet in his time.

Josephus was not a Christian. That is exactly why his few words about John the Baptist, James, and Jesus matter so much. He had no reason to make Christians look good.

I quote Josephus from William Whiston's 1737 English translation, which is in the public domain and is still the most widely available. References use the standard book, chapter, and section numbers in that translation. For example, Antiquities 18.3.3 means Book 18, chapter 3, section 3.

The Testimonium Flavianum

The most famous passage in Josephus is his paragraph about Jesus in Antiquities 18.3.3. Scholars call it the Testimonium Flavianum, which is Latin for "the testimony of Flavius," Josephus' Roman name. Here is the whole thing as Whiston translated it:

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 18.3.3 (*Disputed*)

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

I have marked this passage **disputed**, and here is why. Every Greek copy of Antiquities we have contains it. But those copies were made by Christians, many centuries later. Some lines do not sound like a Jew who never became a Christian, especially "He was [the] Christ" and "he appeared to them alive again the third day." The church writer Origen, around A.D. 248, said Josephus did not believe Jesus was the Christ (Against Celsus 1.47), which is hard to square with the passage as it stands.

Scholars have three main views:

1. **All of it is genuine.** A small number hold this view.
2. **None of it is genuine.** A Christian added the whole thing later. This was popular a century ago, but fewer scholars hold it today.
3. **Josephus wrote a shorter, neutral paragraph about Jesus, and a Christian copyist later added a few lines.** This is the view most scholars hold today, Christian and non-Christian alike. An Arabic version of the passage, quoted by a tenth century bishop named Agapius and published by the scholar

Shlomo Pines in 1971, reads more cautiously. It says Jesus' disciples "reported" that He appeared to them alive, and that He was "perhaps" the Messiah. Many take that as a hint of what the original said.

Here is what matters for our book. Even scholars who take out the Christian additions usually keep the phrase "a doer of wonderful works." In Greek it is paradoxon ergon poietes, a maker of startling deeds. It sounds like Josephus, because he uses the same kind of language elsewhere, and it is not the kind of thing a Christian would choose to say about Jesus. Luke uses that same word, paradoxa, when the crowd says, after Jesus healed the paralyzed man, "We have seen remarkable things today" (Luke 5:26). So even in its most cautious form, the passage has a non-Christian Jewish historian of the first century saying that Jesus was known for doing amazing works.

I will not rest anything on the disputed lines. You don't need them. But it would be wrong to ignore the passage altogether, and it would be wrong to pretend it is not disputed.

Josephus on James and on John the Baptist

Two other passages in Josephus are not seriously disputed by most scholars.

In Antiquities 20.9.1, Josephus tells how the high priest Ananus took advantage of a gap between Roman governors, around A.D. 62, to have some men stoned. He names one of them as "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James." That is a quiet but important line. It confirms that Jesus was a real person, known as the Christ, with a brother named James, the same James who became a leader in the Jerusalem church (Galatians 1:19). And it fits a remarkable fact we will look at in Chapter 18: James did not believe in his brother while Jesus was alive (John 7:5), but he became a leader of the church after Jesus appeared to him risen from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:7).

In Antiquities 18.5.2, Josephus describes John the Baptist as "a good man" who "commanded the Jews to exercise virtue" and "to come to baptism," and says Herod had him put to death at the fortress of Machaerus. Josephus gives Herod's motive as fear of a rebellion. The Gospels give the more personal reason, John's rebuke over Herod's marriage (Mark 6:17-18). Both can be true at once.

Tacitus

Cornelius Tacitus was a Roman senator and historian, and no friend of Christians. Writing around A.D. 116 about the great fire of Rome in A.D. 64, he explains that the emperor Nero blamed the Christians. Then he tells his readers who they were:

Outside the Bible: Tacitus, Annals 15.44 (*Text confirmed*)

"Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome." (Church and Brodribb translation)

Tacitus does not mention any miracles. But look at what he confirms. Jesus was executed under Pontius Pilate while Tiberius was emperor. That stopped the movement "for the moment." Then it "again broke out," and spread all the way to Rome within about thirty years. Something happened after the crucifixion

that brought a crushed movement back to life. Tacitus calls it a superstition. The Bible calls it the resurrection.

Enemies Who Admitted the Miracles

Some of the most interesting outside witnesses are the ones who hated Christianity. They did not deny that Jesus did miracles. They said He did them by evil power. That is exactly what His enemies said in the Gospels too: "By the ruler of the demons He casts out the demons" (Matthew 9:34).

The Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud is a huge collection of Jewish teaching put in writing over several centuries after Christ. A passage in the tractate Sanhedrin, page 43a, says that a man named Yeshu was hanged on the eve of Passover because he practiced sorcery and led Israel astray. Most scholars believe this refers to Jesus, though a few argue it does not. The passage was written down long after the events, so its value as history is limited, and I could not open a full English text of it to quote it word for word. But notice what it does not say. It does not say Jesus was a fraud who did nothing. It says He did things that His enemies had to call sorcery.

Celsus. Celsus was a Greek philosopher who wrote a book attacking Christianity around A.D. 175. His book is lost, but the Christian scholar Origen answered it point by point around A.D. 248 and quoted it as he went. Celsus claimed Jesus worked for a time in Egypt, "and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God" (quoted in Origen, Against Celsus 1.28). Again, the enemy does not deny the miracles. He tries to explain them away.

Justin Martyr. Writing to the Roman emperor around A.D. 155, the Christian teacher Justin said the reason he had to answer the charge was that people were claiming Jesus "performed what we call His mighty works by magical art" (First Apology 30). The charge of magic was the standard pagan answer to the miracles. Nobody seems to have tried the answer "it never happened."

Quadratus: Healed People Still Living

One of the earliest Christian writers outside the New Testament was a man named Quadratus. Around A.D. 125 he wrote a defense of the faith to the emperor Hadrian. Almost all of it is lost, but the church historian Eusebius, writing around A.D. 325, quoted one remarkable sentence from it:

Outside the Bible: Quadratus, quoted in Eusebius, Church History 4.3.2 (*Text confirmed*)
"But the works of our Saviour were always present, for they were genuine:—those that were healed, and those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when they were healed and when they were raised, but were also always present; and not merely while the Saviour was on earth, but also after his death, they were alive for quite a while, so that some of them lived even to our day." (McGiffert translation, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers)

Think about what Quadratus is saying. People Jesus healed, and even people He raised from the dead, lived on for years afterward, and some were still alive within living memory of his own day. Anyone could

go and ask them. We only have the words through Eusebius, so I label this as the text of Eusebius confirmed. We cannot check Quadratus' original, because it is lost.

Older Witnesses for the Old Testament

For the Old Testament, the outside witnesses are fewer, and mostly they confirm the setting rather than the miracle itself. You will meet these in Part Two:

- **Herodotus**, the Greek historian of the 400s B.C., tells a story from Egyptian priests about the Assyrian king Sennacherib's army being defeated overnight near Egypt. It is a different version of the event, but a striking one (Chapter 11).
- **Berosus**, a Babylonian priest who wrote around 280 B.C., is quoted by Josephus about the flood and the ark, and possibly about Sennacherib (Chapters 4 and 11).
- **Assyrian royal records**, such as the clay prisms of Sennacherib, describe his campaign against Hezekiah and Jerusalem from his side (Chapter 11).
- **The Mesha Stele**, a stone inscription found in 1868 in what is now Jordan, gives the king of Moab's side of the war in 2 Kings 3, where Elisha's water miracle happened (Chapter 10).
- **Archaeology** confirms many of the places where miracles happened, such as Jericho, Shiloh, Capernaum, the Pool of Bethesda, and the Pool of Siloam.

Claims I Did Not Use

You may have heard of other "proofs" that I have left out on purpose. I want to tell you why, so you don't think I missed them.

- **Chariot wheels in the Red Sea.** Pictures of coral-covered "wheels" have gone around the internet for years. No scientist or archaeologist has ever published a study confirming them, and nobody has brought one up to examine. I don't use them.
- **The "missing day" found by NASA.** This story, about space program computers finding a missing day in history that matches Joshua's long day, has gone around since the 1960s. No such study was ever published, nobody has ever produced the data, and computers cannot find a "missing day" that way in the first place. Many Christian writers have warned against using it. I don't use it.
- **The Ipuwer Papyrus.** This old Egyptian poem describes disaster in Egypt, including a river "of blood." Some writers connect it to the plagues. Most Egyptologists date it far too early or treat it as poetry about a different time of troubles. It is possible there is a connection, but it is too uncertain to use as evidence.

Leaving those out does not weaken the case. It makes it stronger. When you tell people about the miracles of the Bible, use the evidence that holds up. The truth doesn't need help from rumors.

Study Questions

1. Why should we not expect ancient writers outside the Bible to mention most of the miracles?
2. What do the three views on the Testimonium Flavianum say? Why do even cautious scholars usually keep the phrase "a doer of wonderful works"?
3. What does Tacitus confirm about Jesus, even though he did not like Christians?
4. Why is it significant that enemies of Christianity like Celsus said Jesus did miracles by magic, rather than saying He did no miracles at all?

5. Why is it important to leave out weak or false evidence, even when it seems to support the Bible?

Part Two: Miracles of the Old Testament

Chapter 4: Genesis: From the First Families to Egypt

> *Is anything **too** wonderful for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, when the time revives, and Sarah **will have** a son.*
>
> Genesis 18:14 (SLB)

The first miracle in the Bible is creation itself, and nobody was there to watch it but God. “Where were you when I founded the earth?” God asked Job (Job 38:4). Since this book is about miracles people saw, I have not given creation a number. But every miracle that follows rests on it. The God who spoke the world into being is the same God who closes the mouths of lions and opens the eyes of the blind.

In Genesis, miracles are few and far apart. Most of the book is the story of families: births, marriages, quarrels, journeys, and deaths. But at key moments God steps in, and when He does, the world changes.

My recovery since May 29, 2020, has left lessons I will never forget. I cannot erase the past. But God used that painful season to bring me back to Him and to help me write New Beginnings for others. Like Jacob walking away with a limp, sometimes God's greatest blessings come with a lasting reminder to depend on Him.

1. Enoch Walks With God and Is Taken

Where to read it: Genesis 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:5
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Enoch’s family and the people of his day, who looked for him and could not find him

Enoch is one of the quietest characters in the Bible, and one of the most amazing. The list of names in Genesis 5 has the same rhythm over and over: he lived, he had children, “and he died.” Then we come to Enoch, and the rhythm breaks.

> *And Enoch walked with God, and he **was** not, for God took him.* (Genesis 5:24)

Hebrews tells us what that means. Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death, “and he was not found, because God had taken him up” (Hebrews 11:5). The words “was not found” suggest that people went looking for him. One day he was there, and the next he was gone, and everyone knew why.

What it shows: Death is not the end of the story for those who walk with God. Very early in the Bible, before the law and the prophets, God gave a hint of what He would one day do for all His people. Only one other man in the Old Testament left this world without dying: Elijah (Chapter 9).

2. The Flood

Where to read it: Genesis 6:9 to 8:22; Matthew 24:37-39; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5
Who God used: God directly; Noah built the ark at God's command
Who saw it: Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives, eight people in all

The world had become so violent and corrupt that God was grieved in His heart that He had made man (Genesis 6:6). He told Noah, a righteous man, to build a huge boat and bring his family and pairs of every kind of land animal into it. Then the fountains of the great deep burst open, the windows of heaven were opened, and rain fell for forty days and forty nights (Genesis 7:11-12). The water covered the high mountains, and every land creature outside the ark died.

It took Noah a little more than a year from the day the rain started until he walked out on dry ground (Genesis 7:11; 8:14). Then God made a promise and gave a sign with it: the rainbow in the clouds, a reminder that He would never again destroy all flesh with a flood (Genesis 9:11-17).

Several things in the account point beyond nature. God brought the animals to Noah (Genesis 6:20; 7:9). God Himself shut the door of the ark (Genesis 7:16). And God remembered Noah and made a wind pass over the earth to bring the water down (Genesis 8:1).

Jesus treated the flood as real history. He compared the days before His coming to the days of Noah, when people ate and drank and married "until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and took all away" (Matthew 24:38-39).

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 1.3.5-6 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus says the people of Armenia called the place where the ark landed "The Place of Descent," and that "its remains are shown there by the inhabitants to this day." He then quotes Berosus, a Babylonian priest of about 280 B.C.: "It is said there is still some part of this ship in Armenia, at the mountain of the Cordyaeans; and that some people carry off pieces of the bitumen, which they take away, and use chiefly as amulets for the averting of mischiefs." He also quotes Nicolaus of Damascus, the court historian of Herod the Great, about a great mountain in Armenia where "one who was carried in an ark came on shore upon the top of it."

What this does and does not prove: it shows that in the ancient world, people outside Israel told of a great flood and a saved ark, and pointed to a mountain in the region of Armenia. Nobody today knows where the ark rests, and claims to have found it on Mount Ararat or elsewhere have never been confirmed.

Outside the Bible: Ancient flood stories (*Background*)

Many ancient peoples told of a great flood. The best known outside the Bible is the Babylonian story in the Epic of Gilgamesh, where a man named Utnapishtim builds a boat, saves animals, and sends out birds to find dry land. Skeptics say the Bible borrowed from Babylon. Many Bible scholars answer that a widespread memory of a real flood explains why so many peoples tell such a story. The Bible's account stands apart in one big way: it is about one holy God judging sin and saving the righteous, not a crowd of quarreling gods who are annoyed by human noise.

What it shows: God takes sin seriously, and He also makes a way of escape. Peter says the ark is a picture of salvation in Christ (1 Peter 3:20-21). There was one door into the ark, and there is one way to be saved.

3. The Languages Confused at Babel

Where to read it: Genesis 11:1-9
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: All the people building the city and tower in the land of Shinar

After the flood, the whole earth had one language. The people gathered on a plain in Shinar, in what later became Babylonia, and decided to build a city and a tower with its top in the heavens. Their goal was to make a name for themselves and to avoid being scattered over the earth (Genesis 11:4), which went directly against God's command to fill the earth (Genesis 9:1).

God came down and confused their language so they could not understand one another. The project collapsed, and the people spread out across the earth. The city was called Babel, which sounds like the Hebrew word for confuse.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 1.4.3 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus quotes a writing he calls the Sibyl: "When all men were of one language, some of them built a high tower, as if they would thereby ascend up to heaven, but the gods sent storms of wind and overthrew the tower, and gave every one his peculiar language; and for this reason it was that the city was called Babylon."

The Sibylline writings Josephus knew were a mix of pagan and Jewish material, so this may be a Jewish retelling rather than an independent witness. I list it because Josephus does, not because it proves anything on its own.

What it shows: Human pride that tries to reach heaven on its own always ends in confusion. On the day of Pentecost, God did the reverse of Babel. People from many nations each heard the gospel in their own language (Chapter 19).

4. The Men of Sodom Struck Blind

Where to read it: Genesis 19:1-11
Who God used: Two angels
Who saw it: Lot, his family, and the men of Sodom who surrounded the house

Two angels came to Sodom in the evening. Lot, Abraham's nephew, took them into his house. Before they could go to bed, the men of the city, young and old, surrounded the house and demanded that Lot bring out his guests so they could abuse them. When Lot went out and tried to stop them, they rushed at him.

The angels pulled Lot back inside and shut the door. Then they struck the men at the door with blindness, "from small even to great, and they wearied ***themselves*** to find the entrance" (Genesis 19:11). Even blinded, the crowd kept groping for the entrance.

What it shows: God protects those who belong to Him, even in the worst places. And sin blinds people long before any angel strikes their eyes.

5. Fire and Brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah

Where to read it: Genesis 19:12-29; Deuteronomy 29:23; Luke 17:28-30; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Lot and his two daughters; Abraham, who saw the smoke rising from the plain the next morning

The angels told Lot to take his family and flee, because the LORD was about to destroy the city. His sons-in-law laughed it off. Even Lot lingered, until the angels took him, his wife, and his two daughters by the hand and led them out, "in the compassion of the LORD on him" (Genesis 19:16).

Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from the LORD out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, the whole plain, and everyone living there (Genesis 19:24-25). The next morning Abraham got up early, went back to the spot where he had stood praying for the city, and looked toward the plain. He saw the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of a furnace (Genesis 19:28).

Outside the Bible: Josephus, The Jewish War 4.8.4 (*Text confirmed*)
Describing the Dead Sea, Josephus writes that the country of Sodom "was of old a most happy land, both for the fruits it bore and the riches of its cities, although it be now all burnt up. It is related how, for the impiety of its inhabitants, it was burnt by lightning; in consequence of which there are still the remainders of that Divine fire, and the traces [or shadows] of the five cities are still to be seen." He adds, "And thus what is related of this land of Sodom hath these marks of credibility which our very sight affords us."

Outside the Bible: Tall el-Hammam (*Disputed*)
In 2021 a team of scientists published a paper arguing that a city in the Jordan Valley called Tall el-Hammam was destroyed about 1650 B.C. by a blast from an exploding space rock, and some connected it to Sodom. Other scientists strongly challenged the paper's evidence and conclusions, and in April 2025 the journal retracted it. Bible scholars also disagree about where Sodom stood and when. It is an interesting idea, but it is far from settled, and I would not build anything on it.

What it shows: God is patient. He was willing to spare the whole city for the sake of ten righteous people (Genesis 18:32). But His patience has an end. Jesus pointed to Sodom as a warning about how suddenly judgment will come at His return (Luke 17:28-30).

6. Lot's Wife Becomes a Pillar of Salt

Where to read it: Genesis 19:17, 26; Luke 17:32
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Lot and his daughters, who were fleeing just ahead of her

The angels gave one clear instruction: "Do not look behind you" (Genesis 19:17). As they fled, Lot's wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Jesus summed up the lesson in five words: "Remember the wife of Lot" (Luke 17:32). Her body left Sodom, but her heart did not.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 1.11.4 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus writes that Lot's wife "was changed into a pillar of salt; for I have seen it, and it remains at this day."

Josephus wrote those words. What he actually saw, we cannot know. There are salt formations around the Dead Sea, and local guides have pointed to one or another as "Lot's wife" for a very long time. I include his statement because it shows the account was treated as history in his day, not because it identifies the real pillar.

What it shows: Being close to rescue is not the same as being rescued. You can walk right out of the city behind a righteous man and still be lost if your heart wants to go back.

7. God Closes and Opens the Wombs in Abimelech's House

Where to read it: Genesis 20:1-18
Who God used: God directly, in answer to Abraham's prayer
Who saw it: Abimelech king of Gerar, his wife, his servants, and Abraham

Abraham did the same foolish thing twice. To protect himself, he told people his wife Sarah was his sister. Abimelech, king of Gerar, took Sarah into his household. Before he could touch her, God warned him in a dream that she was another man's wife. God had also closed every womb in Abimelech's household because of it. When Abimelech returned Sarah, Abraham prayed, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children again (Genesis 20:17-18).

What it shows: God kept His promise about Sarah's son safe, even when Abraham put it at risk. God's plans do not depend on our being perfect.

8. Sarah Gives Birth at Ninety

Where to read it: Genesis 17:15-19; 18:9-15; 21:1-7; Romans 4:19-21; Hebrews 11:11
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Abraham, Sarah, their whole household, and everyone who heard about it

God promised Abraham a son through Sarah when he was ninety-nine and she was eighty-nine. Sarah had been unable to have children her whole life, and she was well past the age of childbearing (Genesis 18:11). When she overheard the promise, she laughed to herself. The LORD asked Abraham why Sarah laughed, and then said the words that sit at the top of this chapter: "Is anything too wonderful for the LORD?" (Genesis 18:13-14).

A year later, at the exact time God had said, Sarah gave birth to Isaac at age ninety. His name means "he laughs." Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh for me" (Genesis 21:6).

What it shows: Paul says Abraham considered his own body "already having become dead" and the deadness of Sarah's womb, and yet "with respect to the promise of God he did not waver in unbelief" (Romans 4:19-20). The birth of Isaac was a small resurrection, life from a dead womb, and it pointed ahead to the much greater one.

9. God Opens Hagar's Eyes to a Well

Where to read it: Genesis 21:14-21
Who God used: The Angel of God
Who saw it: Hagar, and her son Ishmael

After Isaac was born, Abraham sent Hagar and her son Ishmael away. In the wilderness of Beersheba the water ran out. Hagar put the boy under a bush and sat down a bowshot away, because she could not bear to watch him die. God heard the boy crying. The Angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, told her not to be afraid, and promised that God would make Ishmael a great nation. "And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water" (Genesis 21:19). She filled the skin and gave the boy a drink.

What it shows: God hears the cry of the outsider, the rejected, and the desperate. Ishmael was not the son of promise, but God still saw him and cared for him.

10. The Angel Stops Abraham and a Ram Is Provided

Where to read it: Genesis 22:1-19; Hebrews 11:17-19
Who God used: The Angel of the LORD, speaking from heaven
Who saw it: Abraham and Isaac

God tested Abraham by telling him to offer Isaac, the son of promise, as a burnt offering on a mountain in the land of Moriah. Abraham obeyed. On the way up, Isaac asked, "where ***is*** the lamb for a burnt offering?" and Abraham answered, "God will see to the lamb for Himself for a burnt offering, my son" (Genesis 22:7-8).

At the last moment, with the knife in his hand, the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven and stopped him. Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket, and he offered it in his son's place. He named the place "The LORD Will See," meaning the LORD will see to it and provide (Genesis 22:14).

Hebrews says Abraham went up that mountain believing God could raise Isaac from the dead if He had to (Hebrews 11:19).

What it shows: This is one of the clearest pictures of the gospel in the whole Old Testament. On the same range of hills, about two thousand years later, God did not spare His own Son. There was no ram in the thicket for Jesus. He was the Lamb.

11. Barren Wombs Opened for Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel

Where to read it: Genesis 25:21; 29:31; 30:22-24
Who God used: God directly, in answer to prayer
Who saw it: Isaac and Rebekah; Jacob, Leah, Rachel, and their whole household

One of the patterns in Genesis is that the women God chose to carry His promise could not have children on their own. Sarah was barren. So was Rebekah, until Isaac prayed for her and the LORD answered, and she conceived twins, Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25:21). Leah was unloved, and the LORD opened her womb

(Genesis 29:31). Rachel waited for years while her sister had son after son. Then "God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her, and opened her womb" (Genesis 30:22), and she gave birth to Joseph.

I have counted these three together, as Genesis presents them as a pattern. Some would count each one separately.

What it shows: The promised line was never going to come about by human effort. Every link in the chain was a gift from God. That pattern continues with Hannah, Samson's mother, and Elizabeth, and it reaches its peak in a virgin who conceived with no human father at all.

12. Jacob Wrestles With God

Where to read it: Genesis 32:22-32; Hosea 12:3-4
Who God used: God, appearing as a Man
Who saw it: Jacob alone; his family saw the result, as he walked away limping

The night before Jacob met his brother Esau, whom he had cheated twenty years earlier, he sent his family across the river Jabbok and stayed behind alone. "A man wrestled with him until the going up of the dawn" (Genesis 32:24). When the Man saw He was not winning, He touched the socket of Jacob's hip and put it out of joint. Even then, Jacob would not let go until he received a blessing. The Man changed his name from Jacob to Israel. Jacob named the place Peniel, which means "the face of God," saying, "I have seen God face to face, and my life has been delivered" (Genesis 32:30). The sun rose on him as he crossed over, limping on his hip.

Hosea says Jacob "struggled with ***the*** angel and prevailed; he wept and sought His favor" (Hosea 12:4). Many Bible teachers believe this was an appearance of God the Son before He was born at Bethlehem.

What it shows: God sometimes has to wrestle us down before He can bless us. Jacob had spent his life grabbing for blessings by tricks. He finally got the blessing by clinging to God and refusing to let go, and he carried the limp for the rest of his life as a reminder.

What About Joseph?

You may wonder why the life of Joseph, which fills the last quarter of Genesis, has no numbered miracles. God gave Joseph dreams and gave him the ability to explain Pharaoh's dreams (Genesis 41:16). But Genesis presents the rest of his story as God's providence, working through ordinary events: a jealous family, a slave sale, a false accusation, a forgotten promise in prison, and a famine. Joseph summed it up for his brothers: "you planned evil against me; God planned it for good" (Genesis 50:20). That may be the greatest miracle of all, though it is not the kind we are counting.

Study Questions

1. Read Genesis 5:21-24 and Hebrews 11:5-6. What does it mean to walk with God? Why do you think God took Enoch?
2. Jesus said, "Remember the wife of Lot." What are some ways a person can leave the world's sin with their feet but not with their heart?

3. Why do you think God so often chose women who could not have children to carry His promise forward?

4. Read Genesis 22:7-14. How does the story of Abraham and Isaac point ahead to Jesus?

5. Jacob walked away from his wrestling match blessed and limping. Has God ever blessed you through something that also left a mark?

Chapter 5: Moses and the Signs in Egypt

> *And yet for this I have caused you to stand: in order to show you My power, and in order to recount My name in all the earth.*
>
> Exodus 9:16 (SLB)

For about four hundred years after Joseph, the Bible goes quiet, and Exodus picks up the story. The family of Jacob has grown into a nation, and that nation has become slaves in Egypt. A new king who did not know Joseph has put them to hard labor and ordered their baby boys thrown into the Nile.

Then God moves, and the first great season of miracles begins. In one short stretch of time, God does more public, nation-shaking miracles than in all the centuries before. And He tells us why: so that Israel, Egypt, and the whole earth would know that He is the LORD.

13. The Burning Bush

Where to read it: Exodus 3:1-6; Acts 7:30-34
Who God used: The Angel of the LORD; God spoke from the bush
Who saw it: Moses

Moses was eighty years old and had spent forty of those years tending sheep in the wilderness of Midian. One day near Horeb, the mountain of God, he saw something strange.

> *And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush; and he looked, and look, the bush **was** burning with fire, and the bush **was** not consumed.* (Exodus 3:2)

When Moses turned aside to look, God called to him from the bush, told him to take off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground, and sent him back to Egypt to bring His people out. When Moses asked God's name, God answered, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14).

What it shows: A fire that burns without using anything up is a good picture of the God who needs nothing and depends on no one. He is not running down. He never runs out. That is the God who was sending Moses.

14. Moses' Staff Becomes a Snake

Where to read it: Exodus 4:1-5, 30-31
Who God used: God, through Moses and Aaron
Who saw it: Moses at the bush; later the elders of Israel

Moses objected that the Israelites would not believe him. So God gave him three signs to show them. The first: "Throw it to the ground." Moses threw his shepherd's staff down, and it became a snake, and Moses ran from it. Then God told him to grab it by the tail, and it became a staff again in his hand (Exodus 4:3-4). When Moses and Aaron got to Egypt, Aaron did the signs in front of the people, "And the people believed" (Exodus 4:31).

What it shows: The plain stick in a shepherd's hand became the "staff of God" (Exodus 4:20). God likes to use ordinary things and ordinary people.

15. Moses' Hand Turns Leprous and Is Healed

Where to read it: Exodus 4:6-8
Who God used: God, through Moses
Who saw it: Moses; later the elders of Israel

The second sign was even more personal. God told Moses to put his hand inside his cloak. When he pulled it out, it was leprous, white like snow. When he put it back and pulled it out again, it was healthy, like the rest of his flesh (Exodus 4:6-7).

What it shows: God has power over disease, to send it and to heal it. Leprosy in the Bible is often a picture of sin, which only God can cleanse.

16. Nile Water Turns to Blood on the Ground

Where to read it: Exodus 4:9, 30
Who God used: God, through Moses and Aaron
Who saw it: The elders and people of Israel

The third sign was a preview of the first plague. If the people still did not believe, Moses was to pour some water from the Nile on dry ground, and it would become blood (Exodus 4:9). Exodus 4:30 says Aaron "did the signs before the eyes of the people," so I have counted this sign as done.

17. Aaron's Staff Swallows the Magicians' Staffs

Where to read it: Exodus 7:8-13
Who God used: God, through Aaron
Who saw it: Pharaoh, his officials, his wise men and magicians

When Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh, Aaron threw down his staff and it became a serpent. Pharaoh called his magicians, and they did the same thing "by their secret arts" (Exodus 7:11). Then "the staff of Aaron swallowed up their staffs" (Exodus 7:12).

Paul names two of these magicians in 2 Timothy 3:8, Jannes and Jambres, names preserved in Jewish tradition. Whatever the magicians did, whether a trick or real dark power, Chapter 21 looks at the Bible's teaching on counterfeit signs. What matters here is how it ended. Aaron's staff ate theirs.

What it shows: Counterfeits can look impressive for a while. But God's power swallows them whole.

The Ten Plagues

The ten plagues are the longest run of miracles in the Old Testament. Each one was announced ahead of time, came at the moment Moses said it would, and stopped when he prayed. Several of them struck Egypt but skipped the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived. That alone rules out a run of bad luck. Natural disasters do not read maps.

Many Bible teachers have noticed that the plagues seem aimed at the gods of Egypt. The Egyptians worshiped the Nile, frogs were linked to a goddess of birth, cattle were sacred, and the sun god Ra was one of their greatest gods. God Himself said it before the last plague: "on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments. I ***am*** the LORD" (Exodus 12:12). Not every plague can be matched to a single Egyptian god, and some popular charts push the idea too far. But the main point stands. One by one, the things Egypt trusted were shown to be powerless.

18. The First Plague: Water to Blood

Where to read it: Exodus 7:14-25; Psalm 78:44; 105:29
Who God used: God, through Moses and Aaron
Who saw it: Pharaoh, his servants, and all Egypt

> *And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD had commanded; and he raised the staff, and he struck the waters that **were** in the Nile in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants; and all the waters that **were** in the Nile were changed into blood.* (Exodus 7:20)

The fish died, the river stank, and the Egyptians had to dig along the Nile for drinking water. Pharaoh's magicians did something similar on a small scale, and Pharaoh's heart was hardened. The plague lasted seven days (Exodus 7:25).

Outside the Bible: The Ipuwer Papyrus (*Disputed*)
An Egyptian poem known as the Admonitions of Ipuwer, kept in a museum in Leiden, Netherlands, describes a time of chaos in Egypt and includes a line usually translated as saying that the river is blood. Some writers connect it with the plagues. Most Egyptologists date the poem's composition earlier than most dates given for the Exodus and read it as a lament about social collapse, not a record of a specific event. I mention it because you will hear it quoted. It is not solid evidence either way.

19. The Second Plague: Frogs

Where to read it: Exodus 8:1-15
Who God used: God, through Moses and Aaron
Who saw it: Pharaoh and all Egypt

Frogs came up out of the river and covered the land. They got into houses, bedrooms, beds, ovens, and kneading bowls. The magicians managed to bring up more frogs, which was the last thing anyone needed. Pharaoh begged Moses to pray, and the frogs died at the exact time Pharaoh chose, "so that you may know that there is none like the LORD our God" (Exodus 8:10). The Egyptians piled the dead frogs in heaps, and the land stank.

20. The Third Plague: Gnats

Where to read it: Exodus 8:16-19
Who God used: God, through Aaron
Who saw it: Pharaoh, his magicians, and all Egypt

Aaron struck the dust, and it became gnats on people and animals all over Egypt. This time the magicians tried and failed. They told Pharaoh, "It ***is*** the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). Pharaoh's own experts admitted it, and he still would not listen.

21. The Fourth Plague: Swarms of Flies

Where to read it: Exodus 8:20-32
Who God used: God directly, announced by Moses
Who saw it: Pharaoh, his officials, and all Egypt; Israel in Goshen, who were spared

Starting with this plague, God drew a line. Swarms filled the houses of Egypt, but none came into Goshen. God said, "I will put a ransom between My people and your people" (Exodus 8:23). The word means a dividing line, a separation that sets His people apart.

22. The Fifth Plague: Livestock Die

Where to read it: Exodus 9:1-7
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Pharaoh, who sent men to check, and all Egypt

God set a time: tomorrow. The next day the livestock of Egypt died, "and of the livestock of the sons of Israel not one died" (Exodus 9:6). Pharaoh actually sent someone to check, and it was true. His heart was still hard.

23. The Sixth Plague: Boils

Where to read it: Exodus 9:8-12
Who God used: God, through Moses
Who saw it: Pharaoh and all Egypt

Moses threw handfuls of soot from a furnace into the air in front of Pharaoh, and it became painful boils on people and animals. The magicians could not even stand before Moses, "for the boils were on the magicians and on all Egypt" (Exodus 9:11). The experts were now patients.

24. The Seventh Plague: Hail and Fire

Where to read it: Exodus 9:13-35
Who God used: God, through Moses
Who saw it: Pharaoh, his servants, and all Egypt; Israel in Goshen, who were spared

God gave Egypt a day's warning, and some of Pharaoh's own servants believed it and brought their slaves and animals inside (Exodus 9:20). Then came hail with "fire flashing in the midst of the hail, very heavy, the like of which had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation" (Exodus 9:24). It struck

down people, animals, crops, and trees. “Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel ***were***, there was no hail” (Exodus 9:26).

For the first time, Pharaoh confessed, “I have sinned this time; the LORD ***is*** the righteous ***one***” (Exodus 9:27). But when the hail stopped, so did his repentance.

25. The Eighth Plague: Locusts

Where to read it: Exodus 10:1-20
Who God used: God, through Moses, with an east wind
Who saw it: Pharaoh, his servants, and all Egypt

Even Pharaoh’s servants begged him to give in: “Do you not yet know that Egypt has perished?” (Exodus 10:7). He refused. An east wind blew all day and night and brought locusts that covered the face of the land until it grew dark, and they ate every green thing the hail had left (Exodus 10:15). When Pharaoh begged again, God sent a strong west wind that carried every locust into the Red Sea. Not one was left.

26. The Ninth Plague: Darkness

Where to read it: Exodus 10:21-29
Who God used: God, through Moses
Who saw it: Pharaoh and all Egypt; Israel, who had light

> *And Moses stretched out his hand toward the heavens, and **there** was darkness of gloom in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see each man his brother, and **each** man did not rise from his place three days; and for all the sons of Israel **there** was light in their dwellings.* (Exodus 10:22-23)

This was a darkness people could “feel” (Exodus 10:21). For three days nobody in Egypt moved. And in the middle of that darkness, every Israelite home had light. The Egyptians worshiped the sun. Their sun went out, and the God of their slaves kept the lights on in Goshen.

27. The Tenth Plague: Death of the Firstborn and the Passover

Where to read it: Exodus 11:1 to 12:36; Psalm 78:51; Hebrews 11:28
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Pharaoh and all Egypt; every Israelite family that put the blood on its door

The last plague was the most terrible, and God gave the most warning about it. Every family in Israel was to kill a lamb, put its blood on the sides and top of the doorframe, and eat the meal dressed for travel. God said, “I will see the blood, and I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:13).

> *And it came about in the middle of the night, and the LORD struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the captive who **was** in the house of the pit, and every firstborn of livestock. And Pharaoh rose up **by** night, he and all his servants and all Egypt; and **there** was a great cry in Egypt, for **there** was not a house where **there** was not **one** dead.* (Exodus 12:29-30)

That night Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron and told them to go. The Egyptians pushed them out and gave them silver, gold, and clothing on the way out the door (Exodus 12:33-36).

What it shows: The Passover is one of the clearest pictures of Christ in the whole Bible. The lamb had to be without blemish, and its blood had to be applied. The houses with the blood were safe, not because the people inside were better than the Egyptians, but because a lamb had died in their place. Paul says it plainly: "our Passover was sacrificed for us: Christ" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

What About the Outside Evidence?

People often ask why Egyptian records do not mention the plagues or the Exodus. It is a fair question, and the honest answer is that we don't have an Egyptian record of these events. But there are a few things to keep in mind.

Egyptian kings did not carve their defeats on temple walls. They recorded victories. A disaster that humiliated Pharaoh and his gods is exactly the kind of thing that would not be written down. And most papyrus records from the Nile Delta, where Goshen was, have rotted away in the damp soil.

What we do have is background. A stone carved for Pharaoh Merneptah around 1208 B.C., now in the Cairo museum, mentions a people called Israel already living in Canaan. That is the oldest mention of Israel outside the Bible. It does not tell us how they got there. The Bible does.

Study Questions

1. Read Exodus 3:1-6. Why do you think God chose a bush that burned but was not consumed to call Moses?
2. Pharaoh's magicians said, "It is the finger of God." Why do you think Pharaoh still would not listen, even when his own experts gave up?
3. Several plagues struck Egypt but not Goshen. What does that tell you about God's care for His people?
4. Pharaoh said "I have sinned" and then went right back to his old ways. What is the difference between being sorry and truly repenting?
5. Read Exodus 12:1-13 and 1 Corinthians 5:7. List every way the Passover lamb points to Jesus.

Chapter 6: The Red Sea and the Wilderness

> *Who **is** like You among the gods, O LORD? Who **is** like You, glorious in holiness, awesome **in** praises, doing wonders?*
>
> Exodus 15:11 (SLB)

Getting Israel out of Egypt took ten plagues. Getting Egypt out of Israel took forty years. This chapter covers the miracles from the night Israel left Egypt to the edge of the Promised Land. Some of them are miracles of rescue, some are miracles of daily care, and some, sadly, are miracles of judgment on God's own complaining people.

28. The Pillar of Cloud and Fire

Where to read it: Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19-20; 40:34-38; Numbers 9:15-23; Nehemiah 9:12, 19
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The whole nation of Israel, day and night, for forty years; the Egyptian army at the sea

> *And the LORD **was** going before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them **on** the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give light to them, to go by day and by night. The pillar of the cloud by day and the pillar of the fire by night did not depart from before the people.* (Exodus 13:21-22)

This was not a one-time event. For forty years, every Israelite could step out of his tent and see it. When the cloud lifted, they packed up and followed. When it settled, they camped, whether for a day or a year (Numbers 9:22). At the Red Sea, the cloud moved behind Israel and stood between them and the Egyptians, dark to one side and giving light to the other (Exodus 14:19-20).

What it shows: God does not just give directions and wish us luck. He goes with His people. He goes ahead of them, and when the enemy comes from behind, He stands behind them too.

29. The Red Sea Parts

Where to read it: Exodus 14:1-22; Psalm 106:9; Acts 7:36; 1 Corinthians 10:1-2; Hebrews 11:29
Who God used: God, through Moses, with a strong east wind
Who saw it: The whole nation of Israel; Pharaoh's army

Pharaoh changed his mind and chased Israel with six hundred of his best chariots and the rest of his army. Israel was trapped between the army and the sea, and the people panicked. Moses told them, "Do not be afraid; station yourselves, and see the salvation of the LORD" (Exodus 14:13).

> *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD caused the sea to go by a strong east wind all the night, and He made the sea into dry ground; and the waters were split. And the sons of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters **were** a wall for them on their right and on their left.* (Exodus 14:21-22)

Notice three things. The water stood as a wall on both sides. The ground was dry, not mud. And a whole nation, with children, old people, and animals, crossed in one night.

The Hebrew name for this body of water is yam suph, which can be translated "Sea of Reeds." Scholars argue about exactly where the crossing happened, whether at one of the lakes near the modern Suez Canal or at the Gulf of Suez or the Gulf of Aqaba, arms of what we call the Red Sea. Some have tried to explain the crossing as a shallow marsh that a strong wind blew dry. But a marsh shallow enough to walk through is too shallow to drown an army, and the Bible says the water stood like a wall on each side. Wherever it happened, it was a miracle.

30. Pharaoh's Army Drowned

Where to read it: Exodus 14:23-31; 15:1-21; Psalm 136:15; Hebrews 11:29
Who God used: God, through Moses
Who saw it: The whole nation of Israel, who saw the Egyptians dead on the shore

The Egyptians followed Israel into the sea. Just before morning, God threw their army into confusion and made their chariot wheels come off or drag (Exodus 14:24-25). The Egyptians tried to turn back, shouting that the LORD was fighting for Israel. Moses stretched out his hand again, and the sea returned. "Not even one remained among them" (Exodus 14:28).

> *And Israel saw the great hand which the LORD had worked against Egypt, and the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in Moses His servant.* (Exodus 14:31)

Moses and Israel sang the first great song of praise in the Bible (Exodus 15), and Miriam led the women with tambourines and dancing.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 2.16.5 (*Text confirmed*)

After retelling the crossing, Josephus writes, "As for myself, I have delivered every part of this history as I found it in the sacred books; nor let any one wonder at the strangeness of the narration." He compares it to a story about Alexander the Great: "for the sake of those that accompanied Alexander, king of Macedonia... the Pamphylian Sea retired and afforded them a passage through itself." He ends, "But as to these events, let every one determine as he pleases."

Josephus was writing for Roman readers who found miracles hard to swallow, so he points to a story they already accepted. The Alexander story is itself disputed. Some ancient writers say the sea drew back for Alexander; others say his men waded through rough water. It is not evidence for the Exodus. It shows how Josephus defended it.

What it shows: God saves His people completely. Paul says the crossing was a kind of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). Israel went into the sea as slaves and came out free, with their old masters gone for good.

31. The Bitter Water at Marah Made Sweet

Where to read it: Exodus 15:22-26
Who God used: God, through Moses
Who saw it: The whole nation of Israel

Three days after the sea, Israel found water at a place called Marah, which means bitter. They could not drink it, and the people complained. Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. He

threw it into the water, and the water became sweet (Exodus 15:25). Then God made a promise: "I ***am*** the LORD who heals you" (Exodus 15:26).

32. Quail in the Evening

Where to read it: Exodus 16:1-13
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The whole nation of Israel

In the Wilderness of Sin, the people grumbled that they would have been better off dying in Egypt by the meat pots. God promised meat in the evening and bread in the morning. "And it was in the evening, and the quail came up and covered the camp" (Exodus 16:13).

Quail do migrate across the Sinai, and that is a fair point. But God promised them on a certain day, at a certain hour, in a certain spot, and they came. A natural event that shows up exactly when God says it will is still God's doing.

33. Manna From Heaven for Forty Years

Where to read it: Exodus 16:13-36; Numbers 11:7-9; Deuteronomy 8:3; Joshua 5:12; Psalm 78:24-25; John 6:31-35
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The whole nation of Israel, every morning for forty years

The morning after the quail came, the ground around the camp was covered with something thin and flaky, like frost. The people asked each other, "What ***is*** it?" In Hebrew that is man hu, and that is where the name manna comes from. Moses said, "It ***is*** the bread which the LORD has given to you for food" (Exodus 16:15).

Look at all the miracles packed into this one gift:

- It came every morning, six days a week, for forty years (Exodus 16:35).
- Each person gathered about the same amount, however much they tried to grab (Exodus 16:17-18).
- Any left over until morning bred worms and stank, except on the sixth day, when a double portion kept fresh through the Sabbath (Exodus 16:20, 22-24).
- None fell on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:27).
- It stopped the day after Israel ate the produce of Canaan, and never came again (Joshua 5:12).

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 3.1.6 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus calls the manna "so divine and wonderful a food," and adds, "And even now, in all that place, this manna comes down in rain, according to what Moses then obtained of God."

Josephus seems to be thinking of the sweet, sticky substance that certain insects leave on tamarisk trees in the Sinai, which local people still call manna. It is real, but it only appears for a few weeks a year, in small amounts, and does not behave anything like the manna in Exodus. I list Josephus because he wrote it, but I do not think the tamarisk sap explains the Bible's manna. It came every day for forty years, enough for a nation, and skipped the Sabbath.

What it shows: God provides for His people one day at a time. Jesus said the manna pointed to Him: "My Father gives you the true bread out of heaven" (John 6:32). "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).

34. Water From the Rock at Horeb

Where to read it: Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 78:15-16; 1 Corinthians 10:4
Who God used: God, through Moses
Who saw it: The elders of Israel and the whole nation

At Rephidim there was no water at all, and the people were angry enough to stone Moses. God told him to take the elders, go ahead to the rock at Horeb, and strike it with his staff. "And Moses did so in the eyes of the elders of Israel" (Exodus 17:6), and water came out for the whole nation. Moses named the place Massah and Meribah, which mean testing and quarreling.

What it shows: Paul says the rock was a picture of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4). Christ was struck for us, and from Him flows living water (John 7:37-39).

35. Victory Over Amalek While Moses' Hands Are Raised

Where to read it: Exodus 17:8-16
Who God used: God, while Moses held up the staff of God
Who saw it: Joshua and the army of Israel; Aaron and Hur; the Amalekites

Amalek attacked Israel at Rephidim. Joshua led the fighting men, while Moses stood on a hill with the staff of God in his hand. "And it was, when Moses lifted up his hand, Israel prevailed; and when he let his hand rest, Amalek prevailed" (Exodus 17:11). When Moses' arms got tired, Aaron and Hur sat him on a stone and held up his hands, one on each side, until sunset, and Israel won.

I have counted this as a miracle because the Bible ties the outcome of the battle directly to the raised hands, not to the skill of the soldiers. Some would call it an answer to prayer, which it also was.

What it shows: Victory comes from God, not from our strength. And sometimes the most important help we can give is to hold up the arms of a tired leader.

36. God Descends on Mount Sinai

Where to read it: Exodus 19:16-25; 20:18-21; Deuteronomy 4:10-13; 5:22-26; Hebrews 12:18-21
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The whole nation of Israel at the foot of the mountain

On the third morning at Sinai there was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud on the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that everyone in the camp trembled.

> *And Mount Sinai smoked, all of it, because the LORD had come down on it in the fire; and its smoke went up like the smoke of the furnace, and the whole mountain trembled exceedingly.* (Exodus 19:18)

Then God spoke the Ten Commandments out loud, and the whole nation heard Him (Deuteronomy 5:22-24). It was so frightening that the people begged Moses to speak to them instead, so they would not die (Exodus 20:19). Even Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling" (Hebrews 12:21).

What it shows: God is holy. The law came with fire, smoke, and fear. Hebrews 12 contrasts that with the gospel: we have not come to a mountain that burns with fire, but to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.

37. Moses' Face Shines

Where to read it: Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18
Who God used: God, after speaking with Moses
Who saw it: Aaron and all the people of Israel

When Moses came down from Sinai the second time with the tablets of the law, "the skin of his face shone because of His speaking with him" (Exodus 34:29). Moses did not know it. Aaron and the people were afraid to come near him. After he spoke to them, he put a veil over his face, and he took it off whenever he went in to speak with the LORD.

Paul explains that Moses wore the veil so Israel would not see the glow fade away (2 Corinthians 3:13). The glory of the old covenant was real, but it was fading. The glory of the new covenant does not fade.

38. Fire From the LORD Consumes the First Offerings

Where to read it: Leviticus 9:22-24
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Moses, Aaron, and all the people

When the tabernacle was finished and Aaron offered the first sacrifices as high priest, the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.

> *And fire went out from before the LORD, and it consumed on the altar the burnt offering and the fat **portions**; and all the people saw, and they shouted, and they fell on their faces.*
> (Leviticus 9:24)

God lit the first fire on the altar Himself. The priests were then told to keep it burning and never let it go out (Leviticus 6:13).

39. Fire Consumes Nadab and Abihu

Where to read it: Leviticus 10:1-7; Numbers 3:4
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Moses, Aaron, his other sons Eleazar and Ithamar, and the people

Almost right away, two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, took their incense pans and offered "strange fire" before the LORD, fire He had not commanded. "And fire went out from before the LORD, and it consumed them, and they died before the LORD" (Leviticus 10:2). Moses told Aaron that God had said, "Among those near Me I will be sanctified." And Aaron was silent (Leviticus 10:3).

What it shows: The same fire that accepted the right offering consumed the wrong one. Coming close to God is a privilege, but it is never casual. He tells us how to come to Him, and today that way is through Jesus Christ alone.

40. Fire at Taberah

Where to read it: Numbers 11:1-3
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The people of Israel

The people complained about their hardships, "and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed in the outskirts of the camp" (Numbers 11:1). When Moses prayed, the fire died down. The place was named Taberah, which means burning.

41. Quail and a Plague at Kibroth Hattaavah

Where to read it: Numbers 11:4-34; Psalm 78:26-31
Who God used: God directly, by a wind
Who saw it: Moses, the seventy elders, and the whole nation

This time the people wept because they were tired of manna and wanted meat. Moses doubted God could feed six hundred thousand men with meat for a month. God answered, "Is the hand of the LORD short?" (Numbers 11:23). Then a wind brought quail from the sea and dropped them all around the camp, about a day's walk in every direction, piled about three feet deep (Numbers 11:31). The people gathered them for two days. But "the meat ***was*** still between their teeth" when the LORD struck them with a severe plague (Numbers 11:33). The place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, which means graves of craving.

What it shows: Sometimes the worst thing God can do is give us exactly what we demand. Psalm 106:15 says He gave them their request but sent leanness into their soul.

42. Miriam Struck With Leprosy and Healed

Where to read it: Numbers 12:1-16; Deuteronomy 24:9
Who God used: God directly; healed after Moses prayed
Who saw it: Moses, Aaron, and the whole camp, which waited seven days for her

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, partly over his wife and partly out of jealousy: "Has the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses?" (Numbers 12:2). God called all three of them to the tent of meeting and defended Moses. When the cloud lifted from the tent, Miriam was leprous, white as snow (Numbers 12:10). Aaron begged Moses, and Moses cried out, "God, please heal her, please" (Numbers 12:13). God healed her, but she had to stay outside the camp for seven days, and the whole nation waited for her before moving on.

43. The Earth Swallows Korah, Dathan, and Abiram

Where to read it: Numbers 16:1-34; 26:9-11; Deuteronomy 11:6; Psalm 106:17
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The whole congregation of Israel

Korah, a Levite, and Dathan and Abiram, from the tribe of Reuben, led a revolt of two hundred fifty leaders against Moses and Aaron. Moses told the people to move away from their tents and said that if these men died a normal death, then the LORD had not sent him. But if the LORD did something new and

the ground opened up and swallowed them, they would know these men had despised the LORD (Numbers 16:28-30).

> *And it happened, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground which **was** under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and every man who **belonged** to Korah, and all the property. And they and all that **was** theirs went down alive to Sheol; and the earth covered them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.* (Numbers 16:31-33)

Interestingly, Numbers 26:11 tells us that the sons of Korah did not die. Their descendants became temple singers, and eleven of the Psalms carry their name, including Psalm 46: "God ***is*** a refuge and strength for us."

44. Fire Consumes the Two Hundred Fifty

Where to read it: Numbers 16:35-40
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The whole congregation of Israel

At the same time, "fire came forth from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men bringing near the incense" (Numbers 16:35). Their bronze incense pans were hammered into a covering for the altar, as a reminder that only priests from Aaron's family could offer incense.

45. Aaron Stops the Plague

Where to read it: Numbers 16:41-50
Who God used: God, through Aaron's offering of incense
Who saw it: The whole congregation of Israel

You would think the people had learned their lesson. The very next day, the whole congregation grumbled that Moses and Aaron had killed the LORD's people. The glory of the LORD appeared, and a plague broke out. Moses told Aaron to take his incense pan and run into the middle of the crowd to make atonement. Aaron ran. "And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was restrained" (Numbers 16:48). Even so, 14,700 died.

What it shows: This is a powerful picture of what Jesus our High Priest did. He stood between the dead and the living and took the judgment on Himself.

46. Aaron's Rod Buds, Blossoms, and Bears Almonds

Where to read it: Numbers 17:1-13; Hebrews 9:4
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Moses, then all the leaders of the twelve tribes and all Israel

To end the arguing over who God had chosen as priest, God told each tribe's leader to bring a wooden rod with his name on it. Aaron's name was written on the rod for Levi. The rods were left overnight in the tabernacle.

> *And it happened on the next day, and Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and look, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had budded, and it had brought forth buds and blossomed blossoms and ripened almonds.* (Numbers 17:8)

A dead stick, in one night, went through the whole cycle of life: buds, flowers, and ripe fruit. The rod was kept in the ark of the covenant as a sign (Hebrews 9:4).

What it shows: God chooses whom He will, and He proves His choice by giving life where there was none. The rod is a fitting picture of Christ, our High Priest, who came back from the dead.

47. Water From the Rock at Meribah

Where to read it: Numbers 20:1-13; Psalm 106:32-33
Who God used: God, through Moses
Who saw it: The whole congregation of Israel

Near the end of the forty years, at Kadesh, there was again no water. This time God told Moses to speak to the rock in front of the people. Instead, Moses, worn out and angry, said, "Listen, please, you rebels! From this rock shall we bring out water for you?" (Numbers 20:10). Then he struck the rock twice. "And much water came out, and the congregation and their livestock drank" (Numbers 20:11).

God still gave the water. But He told Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in Me, to treat Me as holy in the eyes of the sons of Israel," they would not lead Israel into the land (Numbers 20:12).

What it shows: God's power does not depend on the perfection of the person He uses. But leaders are held to a high standard. Moses took the glory to himself ("shall we bring out water"), and he paid dearly for it.

48. The Bronze Serpent

Where to read it: Numbers 21:4-9; 2 Kings 18:4; John 3:14-15
Who God used: God, through Moses
Who saw it: The people of Israel who were bitten

When the people spoke against God and Moses again, God sent poisonous snakes among them, and many died. When the people confessed their sin, God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole.

> *And Moses made a serpent of bronze, and he set it on the standard; and it happened, if the serpent had bitten a man, and he looked to the serpent of bronze, and he lived.* (Numbers 21:9)

Notice that nobody was healed by medicine or by effort. They were healed by looking in faith at what God provided. Centuries later, the Israelites had turned the bronze serpent into an idol, and King Hezekiah broke it to pieces (2 Kings 18:4).

Jesus told Nicodemus exactly what it meant: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14-15).

49. Balaam's Donkey Speaks

Where to read it: Numbers 22:21-35; 2 Peter 2:16; Jude 11
Who God used: The Angel of the LORD; God opened the donkey's mouth
Who saw it: Balaam, his two servants, and the Moabite officials traveling with him

Balak, king of Moab, hired the prophet Balaam to curse Israel. God allowed Balaam to go but was angry at his heart. On the road, the Angel of the LORD stood in the way with a drawn sword. The donkey saw Him, though Balaam did not, and three times she turned aside. Three times Balaam beat her.

> *And the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"* (Numbers 22:28)

Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel and fell on his face. Peter says the donkey "restrained the madness of the prophet" (2 Peter 2:16).

What it shows: God can speak through anything He chooses. The so-called seer could not see what his donkey saw. Greed blinds a man, even a man who knows the right words about God. When Balaam finally spoke, he could only bless Israel (Numbers 23-24).

50. Clothes and Sandals That Did Not Wear Out

Where to read it: Deuteronomy 8:4; 29:5; Nehemiah 9:21
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The whole nation of Israel for forty years

At the end of the forty years, Moses reminded Israel of a miracle they may have hardly noticed while it was happening: "your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot" (Deuteronomy 29:5). He also said their feet did not swell (Deuteronomy 8:4).

What it shows: Some of God's miracles are so steady that we take them for granted. Forty years of daily bread, water in the desert, and sandals that never wore out. Moses wanted Israel to look back and see that God had carried them the whole way.

The Death of Moses

At the end of Deuteronomy, Moses climbed Mount Nebo, and God showed him the whole Promised Land. Then Moses died there, and "He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab... and no man knows his burial place until this day" (Deuteronomy 34:6). He was a hundred and twenty years old, and "his eye had not grown dim, and his vigor had not fled" (Deuteronomy 34:7). Nobody saw the burial, so I have not counted it. But it is one more sign of God's personal care for His servant. Many centuries later, Moses stood on a mountain again, this time in the Promised Land, talking with Jesus (Matthew 17:3).

Study Questions

1. The pillar of cloud and fire went before Israel for forty years. How does God guide His people today?
2. Read Exodus 14:13-14. What does it mean to "station yourselves, and see the salvation of the LORD"? When is it right to stand still, and when is it right to move forward?

3. Israel saw some of the greatest miracles in history and still complained again and again. Why do you think miracles did not cure their complaining?

4. Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it. Why was God so serious about it?

5. Read Numbers 21:4-9 and John 3:14-15. How is looking at the bronze serpent like trusting in Jesus?

Chapter 7: Joshua and the Judges

> *so that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it **is** mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God all the days.*
>
> Joshua 4:24 (SLB)

Moses was dead. A new generation stood on the east bank of the Jordan River, looking across at the land God had promised Abraham five hundred years earlier. Their leader was Joshua, Moses' longtime assistant. God told him, "Just as I was with Moses, I will be with you" (Joshua 1:5), and He proved it right away with the same kind of miracle He had done at the Red Sea.

After Joshua, the miracles thin out. The book of Judges covers a dark and messy stretch of Israel's history, when "each man did what ***was*** right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). But even then, when Israel cried out, God raised up deliverers and sometimes did astonishing things through very flawed people.

After about 35 years at a public utility, I moved on to new work. Staying put looked safer on paper. Looking back, I can see doors open that I could never have forced open myself. Obedience often means taking the first step before we see the whole map.

51. The Jordan River Stops Flowing

Where to read it: Joshua 3:1 to 4:24; Psalm 114:3-5
Who God used: God, as the priests carrying the ark stepped into the river
Who saw it: The whole nation of Israel; the kings of the Amorites and Canaanites heard of it (Joshua 5:1)

It was harvest time, when the Jordan overflows all its banks (Joshua 3:15). God told Joshua to have the priests carry the ark of the covenant into the edge of the water.

> *and as those who carried the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who carried the ark were dipped in the edge of the waters (and the Jordan is full over all its banks all the days of harvest), and the waters which were coming down from above stood **still**; they rose up **in** one heap very far away from Adam, the city which **is** beside Zarethan; and those which were going down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho.* (Joshua 3:15-16)

The priests stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed until the whole nation had crossed. Joshua had twelve men take twelve stones from the riverbed and set them up at Gilgal as a memorial, so that when children asked what the stones meant, their parents could tell them (Joshua 4:6-7, 21-24). When the priests stepped out, the river came rushing back.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 5.1.3 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus retells the crossing: "as soon as the priests had entered the river first, it appeared fordable, the depth of the water being restrained and the sand appearing at the bottom." When all had crossed, "the river, as soon as the Hebrews were come out of it, arose again presently, and came to its own proper magnitude as before."

Outside the Bible: Landslides near Adam (*Background*)

The town of Adam is generally placed at Tell ed-Damiyeh, about 16 miles north of the crossing near Jericho, where the river runs between high clay banks. Writers on the Jordan, including the archaeologist John Garstang in the 1930s, reported that an Arab historian recorded the river being blocked there by a collapsing bank in A.D. 1267, and that the 1927 earthquake in the region did the same for about a day. I have not been able to check those reports in their original sources, so I give them only as background. If true, they show how God could have stopped the river at that very spot. But a landslide that comes the exact moment the priests' feet touch the water, at flood stage, and lasts until a nation crosses, is still God's doing.

What it shows: Joshua said the point was "so that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it ***is*** mighty" (Joshua 4:24). And it worked. When the kings of Canaan heard about it, "their heart melted" (Joshua 5:1).

52. The Walls of Jericho Fall

Where to read it: Joshua 5:13 to 6:27; Hebrews 11:30
Who God used: God, as Israel marched, blew trumpets, and shouted
Who saw it: The whole army of Israel; the people of Jericho; Rahab and her family, who were spared

Just before the battle, Joshua met a Man with a drawn sword near Jericho. When Joshua asked whose side He was on, He answered, "No, for I ***am*** the commander of the army of the LORD" (Joshua 5:14). Joshua fell on his face, and the Commander told him to take off his sandals, just as God had told Moses at the burning bush.

God's battle plan made no military sense at all. The army was to march around the city once a day for six days, with seven priests blowing ram's horn trumpets in front of the ark. On the seventh day they marched around seven times. Then the priests gave a long blast, and the people shouted.

> *And the people shouted, and they blew the trumpets. And it was, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted* ***with*** *a great shout, and the wall fell in its place; and the people went up into the city, each man straight before him, and they captured the city.* (Joshua 6:20)

Rahab, the woman who had hidden Israel's spies, and her family were spared, as the spies had promised. She is named in Jesus' family line (Matthew 1:5) and in the great chapter on faith (Hebrews 11:31).

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 5.1.6 (*Text confirmed*)

"When they had gone round it seven times, and had stood still a little, the wall fell down, while no instruments of war, nor any other force, was applied to it by the Hebrews."

Outside the Bible: The digs at Jericho (*Disputed*)

Jericho (Tell es-Sultan) is one of the most dug-up sites in the world. In the 1930s John Garstang reported a city destroyed by fire, with collapsed walls, which he dated to about 1400 B.C., close to the date many conservative scholars give for Joshua. In the 1950s Kathleen Kenyon re-dated that destruction to about 1550 B.C. and concluded there was little or no city to conquer in Joshua's time. In 1990 Bryant Wood argued that Kenyon's pottery dating was mistaken and that the destruction fits Joshua's day. Later Italian and Palestinian digs have

mostly sided with Kenyon.

Some details found at the site do fit the Bible's story well. Diggers found fallen mud brick piled at the base of the city's retaining wall, many large jars still full of burned grain (which suggests a short siege at harvest time, and a city burned without being looted), and a great fire. But the date is hotly debated, and I would not tell anyone that archaeology has proven Joshua 6. The fair thing to say is that the case is open.

What it shows: The first city in the Promised Land was a gift. Israel did not knock down a single brick. Hebrews says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell" (Hebrews 11:30). Faith in Scripture is not a feeling. It is doing what God says when it makes no sense to anyone else.

53. Great Hailstones at Beth Horon

Where to read it: Joshua 10:1-11
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Joshua, the army of Israel, and the five Amorite armies

Five Amorite kings, led by the king of Jerusalem, attacked the city of Gibeon because it had made peace with Israel. Joshua marched all night to rescue Gibeon and caught the armies by surprise. As they fled down the pass of Beth Horon, "the LORD threw down on them great stones from the heavens as far as Azekah, and they died. More ***were*** those who died by the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword" (Joshua 10:11).

Hail that hits only the enemy, while Israel chases them in the same valley, is not ordinary weather.

54. The Sun and Moon Stand Still

Where to read it: Joshua 10:12-14; Habakkuk 3:11
Who God used: God, in answer to Joshua's prayer
Who saw it: Joshua and all Israel; the fleeing Amorites

That same day, Joshua did something nobody did before or since. He spoke to the LORD in front of all Israel and said, "Sun, be still at Gibeon, and moon, in the valley of Aijalon."

> *And the sun was still, and the moon stood, until the nation took vengeance on its enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stood in the middle of the heavens and did not hurry to go* ***down*** *about a whole day. And there has been no day like that before it or after it,* ***that*** *the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.* (Joshua 10:13-14)

People have argued for centuries about how this happened. Did God stop the earth from turning? Did He bend the light, so that it stayed bright where Israel was fighting? Some have even suggested that Joshua was asking for the sun to stop shining, so the army could fight in the cool of a cloudy day. The Bible does not tell us the mechanism. It tells us the result: the day lasted long enough for Israel to win, and nothing like it ever happened again. The God who made the sun and moon is perfectly able to manage both.

The Bible mentions a lost book, the book of Jashar, that also recorded the event (Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18). Books with that name exist today, but they are much later writings, not the book the Bible mentions.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 5.1.17 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus says God assisted Joshua "by thunder and thunderbolts, as also by the falling of hail larger than usual. Moreover, it happened that the day was lengthened, that the night might not come on too soon, and be an obstruction to the zeal of the Hebrews in pursuing their enemies." He adds that the lengthened day "is expressed in the books laid up in the temple."

What it shows: God listens to the prayers of His people, even bold ones. Joshua did not pray a timid prayer. He asked God to do the impossible, because he knew God had promised the victory.

55. Fire From the Rock Consumes Gideon's Offering

Where to read it: Judges 6:11-24
Who God used: The Angel of the LORD
Who saw it: Gideon

During a time when the Midianites raided Israel every harvest, the Angel of the LORD found Gideon threshing wheat in a winepress, hiding from the enemy. He greeted him, "The LORD ***is*** with you, O mighty man of valor" (Judges 6:12), which must have sounded like a joke to a man hiding in a hole. Gideon asked for a sign and brought out an offering of meat and bread.

> *And the angel of the LORD stretched out the end of the staff that **was** in his hand, and he touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and the fire went up from the rock, and it consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. And the angel of the LORD went from his eyes.* (Judges 6:21)

Gideon was terrified that he had seen the Angel of the LORD face to face, but God told him, "Peace ***be*** to you; do not be afraid; you shall not die" (Judges 6:23). Gideon built an altar there and named it "The LORD ***is*** Peace" (Judges 6:24).

56. Gideon's Fleece Wet, Then Dry

Where to read it: Judges 6:36-40
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Gideon

Gideon asked for two more signs. First, he put a wool fleece on the threshing floor overnight and asked God to put dew on the fleece only, with the ground dry. In the morning he wrung a whole bowl of water out of it. Then, perhaps thinking the first could happen naturally, since wool soaks up moisture, he asked for the opposite: a dry fleece on wet ground. "And God did so on that night" (Judges 6:40).

I have counted the two fleeces as one miracle, since they answer one request for assurance.

People sometimes "put out a fleece" today to make a decision. Be careful with that. Gideon already knew what God wanted him to do. God had told him plainly. The fleece did not tell him what to do. It strengthened his weak faith to do what God had already said. God was very patient with him, and He is patient with us too. But the better path is to trust what God has already said in His Word.

57. The Midianites Turn Their Swords on Each Other

Where to read it: Judges 7:1-25
Who God used: God, as Gideon's three hundred blew trumpets and broke jars
Who saw it: Gideon and his three hundred men; the Midianite and Amalekite armies

God cut Gideon's army from 32,000 men down to 300, because, as He said, "The people who ***are*** with you ***are*** too many for Me to give Midian into their hand, lest Israel glorify itself against Me" (Judges 7:2). The 300 surrounded the enemy camp at night with trumpets and torches hidden inside clay jars. At the signal they broke the jars, held up the torches, blew the trumpets, and shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" Then "the LORD set the sword of each man against his neighbor, and against all the camp" (Judges 7:22), and the huge army fled.

What it shows: God sometimes makes us weaker on purpose so that everyone can see the victory is His.

58. The Angel Goes Up in the Flame, and a Barren Woman Bears Samson

Where to read it: Judges 13:1-25
Who God used: The Angel of the LORD
Who saw it: Manoah and his wife

The Angel of the LORD appeared to the wife of Manoah, a woman who had never been able to have children, and told her she would have a son who would begin to save Israel from the Philistines. He was to be a Nazirite from birth, set apart to God, and no razor was ever to touch his head.

When Manoah offered a young goat to the LORD on a rock, and asked the Angel's name, the Angel said it was "wonderful," beyond understanding (Judges 13:18). Then the LORD did something wonderful in front of them.

> *And it was, when the flame went up from on the altar toward the heavens, and the angel of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar, and Manoah and his wife were looking on; and they fell on their faces to the ground.* (Judges 13:20)

Manoah was afraid they would die because they had seen God. His wife answered sensibly that if God had meant to kill them, He would not have accepted their offering or told them all these things (Judges 13:23). The child was born, and they named him Samson.

The Strength of Samson

Samson is one of the strangest heroes in the Bible. He was set apart to God from birth and given supernatural strength, and he wasted much of his life chasing Philistine women and getting even with his enemies. And yet Hebrews 11:32 lists him among the heroes of faith. His strength was never in his muscles. It was the Spirit of the LORD rushing on him, and the sign of that gift was his uncut hair, the mark of his vow. I have counted five of his deeds separately, because each one is described as a distinct act of God's power.

59. Samson Tears Apart a Lion

Where to read it: Judges 14:5-6
Who God used: God, as the Spirit of the LORD rushed on Samson
Who saw it: Samson alone; he told no one

On the way to Timnah, a young lion came roaring at Samson. “And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and he tore it apart as one tears apart a kid, and ***there was*** nothing in his hand” (Judges 14:6). Nobody saw it, and he did not even tell his parents. Later he found bees and honey in the lion’s carcass and made a riddle out of it.

60. Samson’s Ropes Melt and He Strikes Down a Thousand

Where to read it: Judges 15:9-17
Who God used: God, as the Spirit of the LORD rushed on Samson
Who saw it: The men of Judah who tied him up; the Philistine army at Lehi

To stop a Philistine attack on Judah, three thousand men of Judah tied Samson with two new ropes and handed him over. When the Philistines came shouting to meet him at Lehi, “the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and the ropes that ***were*** on his arms became like flax that they have burned with fire, and his bonds melted from off his hands” (Judges 15:14). He grabbed a fresh jawbone of a donkey and struck down a thousand men with it.

61. God Splits the Rock and Gives Samson Water

Where to read it: Judges 15:18-19
Who God used: God directly, in answer to Samson’s prayer
Who saw it: Samson

Afterward Samson was so thirsty he thought he would die, and for once in his life he prayed for himself. “And God split open the hollow that ***is*** at Lehi, and water came out from it, and he drank, and his spirit returned, and he revived” (Judges 15:19). He named the spring En Hakkore, which means the spring of the one who called.

62. Samson Carries Off the Gates of Gaza

Where to read it: Judges 16:1-3
Who God used: God, through Samson’s strength
Who saw it: The men of Gaza who had been waiting to ambush him

The men of Gaza found out Samson was in their city and waited at the city gate to kill him at dawn. At midnight he got up, took hold of the doors of the gate and both posts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill facing Hebron (Judges 16:3). If that means a hill near Hebron, it was a climb of about forty miles, most of it uphill. City gates were heavy, solid timber, often covered in metal. You don’t pick those up by accident.

63. Samson Brings Down the Temple of Dagon

Where to read it: Judges 16:21-31
Who God used: God, in answer to Samson's last prayer
Who saw it: About three thousand Philistines on the roof, and the rulers and crowd inside the temple

Samson finally told Delilah the secret of his vow, she had his head shaved, and "the LORD had departed from on him" (Judges 16:20). The Philistines gouged out his eyes and made him grind grain in prison. But his hair began to grow again.

At a great feast to their god Dagon, the Philistines brought Samson out to mock him. He asked the boy leading him to let him feel the two central pillars that held up the house. Then he prayed.

> *And Samson called out to the LORD and said, "Lord GOD, remember me, please, and strengthen me, please, only this time, O God, that I may be avenged **with** one vengeance for my two eyes on the Philistines."* (Judges 16:28)

He pushed with all his strength, and the house fell on the rulers and all the people. "And the dead whom he put to death in his death were more than those whom he had put to death in his life" (Judges 16:30).

Outside the Bible: Philistine temples (*Background*)

Archaeologists have dug Philistine temples at Tell Qasile, in modern Tel Aviv, and more recently at Gath. The Tell Qasile temple had a roof held up by two wooden pillars set on stone bases close together near the center. That does not prove anything about Samson. But it shows that a temple held up by two central pillars, close enough for one man to reach both, is exactly how the Philistines built.

What it shows: Samson's story is a warning and a comfort. A warning, because a man with great gifts can throw them away on his own desires. A comfort, because even after Samson had failed completely, blind and in chains, God still heard him when he called.

Study Questions

1. Read Joshua 4:1-7. Why did God want Israel to set up memorial stones? What "stones" do you have in your life that remind you of what God has done?
2. God's plan for Jericho made no military sense. Has God ever asked you to do something that did not make sense to you at the time?
3. Gideon asked for signs even after God had told him what to do. What is the difference between seeking God's will and doubting God's word?
4. Why do you think God cut Gideon's army down to three hundred?
5. What can we learn from Samson's life, both from his failures and from his last prayer?

Chapter 8: Samuel, Saul, and David

> *and that all this assembly may know that not by sword and by spear does the LORD save; for the battle **belongs** to the LORD, and He will give you into our hand.*
>
> 1 Samuel 17:47 (SLB)

The books of Samuel cover the years when Israel moved from loose tribes led by judges to a nation with a king. It is a story of great faith and terrible failure: Hannah's prayer, Samuel's faithfulness, Saul's pride, David's courage and his sins. Miracles are not as frequent here as in the days of Moses, but when they come, many of them center on one object: the ark of the covenant, the gold-covered chest that stood for God's presence among His people.

You may notice that one famous story is missing from the numbered list: David and Goliath. David killed Goliath with a sling and a stone. It was a stunning act of faith, and David said plainly that the victory was the LORD's (1 Samuel 17:47). But the Bible does not describe anything beyond nature in it. A skilled slinger could hit a man in the forehead. The miracle was in David's heart, not in the stone.

64. Hannah Bears Samuel

Where to read it: 1 Samuel 1:1-28; 2:21
Who God used: God directly, in answer to prayer
Who saw it: Hannah, Elkanah, Eli the priest, and their families

Hannah could not have children, and her husband's other wife made her life miserable over it, year after year. At the tabernacle in Shiloh she poured out her heart to God so intensely that Eli the priest thought she was drunk. She promised that if God gave her a son, she would give him back to the LORD for his whole life.

> *And they rose early in the morning and bowed down before the LORD, and they returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. And it was at the turning of the days, and Hannah conceived and bore a son; and she called his name Samuel, "For from the LORD I asked for him."* (1 Samuel 1:19-20)

Hannah kept her promise. When Samuel was weaned, she brought him to Eli at Shiloh and said, "For this lad I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked from Him" (1 Samuel 1:27). God later gave her three more sons and two daughters (1 Samuel 2:21).

65. Dagon Falls Before the Ark

Where to read it: 1 Samuel 4:1 to 5:5
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The priests and people of Ashdod

Israel lost a battle to the Philistines, and the elders had a bad idea. Instead of asking why God let them lose, they decided to bring the ark into battle like a lucky charm (1 Samuel 4:3). Israel lost again, worse

than before, and the Philistines captured the ark. They carried it to Ashdod and put it in the temple of their god Dagon, as a trophy.

> *And the Ashdodites rose early on the next day, and look, Dagon **was** fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon and returned it to its place. And they rose early in the morning on the next day, and look, Dagon **was** fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and the two palms of its hands **were** cut off at the threshold; only Dagon was left on it.* (1 Samuel 5:3-4)

I always smile at "they took Dagon and returned it to its place." When your god needs you to pick him up off the floor, it might be time to find another god.

66. Tumors and Death Among the Philistines

Where to read it: 1 Samuel 5:6-12
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The people of Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron, and the rulers of the Philistines

"And the hand of the LORD was heavy on the Ashdodites, and He devastated them, and He struck them with tumors" (1 Samuel 5:6). The Philistines moved the ark to Gath, and the same thing happened there. They moved it to Ekron, and the people of Ekron cried out that it would kill them all. "For there was a panic of death in all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there" (1 Samuel 5:11).

67. The Cows Carry the Ark Straight to Beth Shemesh

Where to read it: 1 Samuel 6:1-16
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The rulers of the Philistines, who followed the cart; the people of Beth Shemesh harvesting wheat

After seven months, the Philistine priests came up with a test. They put the ark on a new cart pulled by two cows that had just given birth and had never been yoked. Their calves were shut up at home. Any farmer knows what nursing cows will do: head straight back to their calves. The priests said that if the cows instead went up the road to Beth Shemesh, in Israel's territory, then Israel's God had done this. If not, "we shall know that His hand did not touch us; it happened to us ***by*** chance" (1 Samuel 6:9).

> *And the cows went straight on the road, on the road of Beth-shemesh; on one highway they went, going and lowing, and they did not turn aside **to the** right or left. And the rulers of the Philistines **were** going after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.* (1 Samuel 6:12)

The cows bawled for their calves the whole way, and they still went the other direction. The Philistines got their answer.

68. The Men of Beth Shemesh Struck

Where to read it: 1 Samuel 6:19-21
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The people of Beth Shemesh

The people of Beth Shemesh rejoiced to see the ark come home. But some of them looked into it, which God had forbidden even the Levites to do (Numbers 4:20), and God struck them. The Hebrew text gives the number as "seventy men, fifty thousand men," an unusual phrase that has puzzled scholars for a long time. Many believe the number seventy is the original and that the larger figure came in by a copying mistake, since Beth Shemesh was a small town. Josephus gives the number as seventy (Antiquities 6.1.4). The people said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God?" (1 Samuel 6:20).

What it shows: Being God's people does not make us safe to treat Him casually. The Philistines were struck for treating the ark as a trophy. The Israelites were struck for treating it as a curiosity.

69. Thunder Routs the Philistines at Mizpah

Where to read it: 1 Samuel 7:3-14
Who God used: God directly, while Samuel offered a sacrifice and prayed
Who saw it: Samuel, the army and people of Israel at Mizpah, and the Philistine army

Twenty years later, Samuel called Israel to put away their idols and gathered them at Mizpah to pray. When the Philistines heard Israel was gathered, they attacked. Samuel kept praying and offering the sacrifice. "And the LORD thundered with a great sound on that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel" (1 Samuel 7:10). Samuel set up a stone and named it Ebenezer, which means stone of help, saying, "Until now the LORD has helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12).

70. Thunder and Rain at Wheat Harvest

Where to read it: 1 Samuel 12:16-19
Who God used: God, in answer to Samuel's prayer
Who saw it: All Israel, gathered at Gilgal when Saul was made king

At Saul's coronation, Samuel gave a farewell speech and warned the people that asking for a king like the other nations had been a rejection of God as their King. Then he gave them a sign. Wheat harvest, in early summer, is the dry season in Israel. Rain then is very rare.

> *Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, and He will give thunder and rain; and know and see that your evil which you have done in the eyes of the LORD **is** great, in asking for yourselves a king. And Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD gave thunder and rain on that day; and all the people feared the LORD and Samuel exceedingly.* (1 Samuel 12:17-18)

Rain at harvest could ruin the crop. The people begged Samuel to pray for them. He told them not to fear, but to serve the LORD with all their heart, and promised, "far be it from me to sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23).

71. An Earthquake Panics the Philistine Camp

Where to read it: 1 Samuel 14:1-23
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Jonathan and his armor bearer; the Philistine garrison and army; Saul's watchmen at Gibeah

Saul's son Jonathan and his armor bearer climbed up a cliff by themselves to attack a Philistine outpost. Jonathan said, "there is no restraint for the LORD to save by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6). They killed about twenty men in a small area, and then God took over. "And there was trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people; the outpost and the raiders, they also trembled; and the earth quaked, and it became a trembling of God" (1 Samuel 14:15). Saul's watchmen saw the Philistine army melting away, and in the confusion the Philistines started fighting each other.

72. The Spirit Comes on Saul's Messengers and on Saul

Where to read it: 1 Samuel 19:18-24
Who God used: The Spirit of God
Who saw it: Samuel, David, the prophets at Naioth, and three groups of Saul's messengers

David fled from Saul and went to Samuel at Naioth in Ramah. Saul sent men to arrest him. When they saw the prophets prophesying with Samuel standing over them, the Spirit of God came on Saul's men, and they prophesied too. Saul sent a second group, then a third, and the same thing happened. Finally Saul went himself, and the Spirit of God came on him on the road. He spent all that day and night lying on the ground, prophesying before Samuel, stripped of his outer clothes (1 Samuel 19:23-24).

What it shows: No one can lay a hand on the person God is protecting until God allows it. Saul came to capture David and ended up flat on the ground. And sadly, it shows that an outward experience of the Spirit is not the same as a changed heart. Saul went right back to trying to kill David.

73. The Sound of Marching in the Balsam Trees

Where to read it: 2 Samuel 5:22-25; 1 Chronicles 14:13-17
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: David and his army

After David became king, the Philistines came against him in the Valley of Rephaim. God told him not to attack head on, but to circle around behind them near the balsam trees. "And let it be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then you shall act decisively, for then the LORD has gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines" (2 Samuel 5:24). David did as he was told and won.

I have counted this because the sound came as God's own signal, not by chance, and the Bible says the LORD Himself went out ahead of the army.

74. Uzzah Struck Down Beside the Ark

Where to read it: 2 Samuel 6:1-11; 1 Chronicles 13:5-14; 15:13
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: David, thirty thousand chosen men, and the crowd celebrating with music

David wanted to bring the ark to Jerusalem, a good desire. But he did it the Philistine way, on a new cart, instead of the way God's law required, carried on poles by Levites (Numbers 4:15; 7:9). When the oxen stumbled, Uzzah put out his hand to steady the ark. "And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for the error, and he died there beside the ark of God" (2 Samuel 6:7).

David was angry and afraid. He left the ark at the house of a man named Obed-edom for three months, and God blessed that whole household. Then David went back, this time doing it God's way, with Levites carrying the ark, and he admitted the first attempt failed "for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance" (1 Chronicles 15:13).

What it shows: This is one of the hardest stories in the Bible for modern readers. Uzzah meant well. But God had made His instructions very clear, and the whole parade had ignored them. Good intentions do not replace obedience. God is not a thing for us to handle on our terms.

75. The Angel, the Plague, and Fire From Heaven on David's Altar

Where to read it: 2 Samuel 24:1-25; 1 Chronicles 21:1 to 22:1; 2 Chronicles 3:1
Who God used: The angel of the LORD; God answered with fire
Who saw it: David, the elders of Israel, Araunah (also called Ornan) and his four sons

Late in his reign, David took a census of his fighting men out of pride, trusting in numbers rather than in God. Even his tough general Joab warned him against it. God gave David a choice of three punishments, and David chose to fall into the hands of the LORD, "for His compassions ***are*** many" (2 Samuel 24:14). A plague swept through Israel and seventy thousand died.

> *And David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between the earth and the heavens, and his sword drawn in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem. And David fell, and the elders, covered in sackcloth, on their faces.* (1 Chronicles 21:16)

Araunah and his sons, threshing wheat nearby, saw the angel too and hid (1 Chronicles 21:20). David bought the threshing floor, refusing to take it as a gift: "I will not offer up to the LORD my God burnt offerings without cost" (2 Samuel 24:24). He built an altar and offered sacrifices, "and he called to the LORD, and He answered him with fire from the heavens on the altar of the burnt offering" (1 Chronicles 21:26). The angel put his sword back in its sheath.

This threshing floor was on Mount Moriah, and it became the site of Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 3:1), on the same range of hills where Abraham had offered Isaac.

What it shows: Judgment stopped at the place of sacrifice. That is the gospel in one scene.

What About Saul and the Medium of Endor?

In 1 Samuel 28, King Saul, cut off from God, went in disguise to a medium at Endor and asked her to call up the dead prophet Samuel. Something appeared, and the woman screamed. Bible teachers disagree on what happened: whether God allowed Samuel himself to appear, or whether it was a deceiving spirit. Chapter 21 looks at this along with the Bible's warnings about the occult. I have not numbered it here.

Study Questions

1. Hannah prayed so hard that Eli thought she was drunk. What does her story teach about bringing our deepest pain to God?
2. The elders of Israel treated the ark like a lucky charm. In what ways are people tempted to use God, or religious objects, the same way today?
3. The Philistine priests tested whether God or "chance" had struck them. How did God answer? Why does it matter?
4. Uzzah meant well. Why do you think God took his action so seriously? What does it teach us about worship?
5. David said he would not offer God something that cost him nothing. What does it look like to give God something that costs us?

Chapter 9: Solomon's Temple and the Ministry of Elijah

> *And all the people saw, and they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, He **is** the God! The LORD, He **is** the God!"*
>
> 1 Kings 18:39 (SLB)

Under Solomon, Israel reached the height of its wealth and power, and Solomon built the temple his father David had dreamed of. God showed His approval in a way no one could miss. But Solomon's heart turned to other gods in his old age, and after his death the kingdom split in two: Israel in the north, with its capital eventually at Samaria, and Judah in the south, with Jerusalem.

The northern kingdom never had a single godly king. Its low point came under King Ahab and his wife Jezebel, a princess from Sidon who brought the worship of Baal with her and tried to wipe out the prophets of the LORD. Baal was the Canaanite storm god, the one people believed sent the rain and the lightning. Into that darkness God sent a prophet named Elijah, whose name means "My God is the LORD." The second great season of miracles had begun, and notice how many of Elijah's miracles involve rain and fire. God was taking on Baal on his own home turf.

76. The Glory Cloud Fills the Temple

Where to read it: 1 Kings 8:1-11; 2 Chronicles 5:2-14
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Solomon, the priests and Levites, the singers and musicians, and the assembled leaders of Israel

When the priests brought the ark into the Most Holy Place of the new temple, and the singers and trumpeters praised the LORD with one voice, the cloud of God's glory filled the house.

> *And it was, when the priests came out from the holy place, and the cloud filled the house of the LORD, and the priests were not able to stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.* (1 Kings 8:10-11)

It was the same glory that had filled the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exodus 40:34-35). God was saying that this was His house, and that He lived among His people.

77. Fire From Heaven at the Temple Dedication

Where to read it: 2 Chronicles 7:1-3
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Solomon, the priests, and all the people of Israel

> *And as Solomon finished praying, then the fire came down from the heavens, and it consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests were not able to go into the house of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD. And all the sons of Israel **were** seeing as the fire came down and the glory of the LORD **was** on the house, and they knelt **with** faces to the ground on the pavement, and they*

*bowed down, and **they** gave thanks to the LORD: "For **He is** good, for His steadfast love **is** forever."* (2 Chronicles 7:1-3)

This is the fourth time in the Old Testament that God sent fire on an offering to show He accepted it: for Aaron at the tabernacle, for Gideon, for David at the threshing floor, and now for Solomon. The fifth is coming soon, on Mount Carmel.

78. Jeroboam's Hand Withers and the Altar Splits

Where to read it: 1 Kings 12:25 to 13:6
Who God used: God, through an unnamed man of God from Judah
Who saw it: King Jeroboam and the crowd at the altar in Bethel

After the kingdom split, Jeroboam, the first king of the north, was afraid his people would go back to Jerusalem to worship and switch their loyalty back to Judah. So he made two golden calves, one at Bethel and one at Dan, and told the people, "Look, your gods, O Israel" (1 Kings 12:28). It was the same thing Aaron said at Sinai.

As Jeroboam stood by the altar at Bethel to burn incense, a man of God from Judah called out against the altar and gave a sign: the altar would split apart and its ashes would pour out. The king stretched out his hand and shouted, "Seize him!"

*And it was, when the king heard the word of the man of God which he called out against the altar in Bethel, and Jeroboam stretched out his hand from **beside** the altar, saying, "Seize him!" And his hand which he had stretched out against him dried up, and he was not able to bring it back to himself. And the altar was torn apart, and the ash was poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.* (1 Kings 13:4-5)

Jeroboam begged the man of God to pray for him, and his hand was restored "as at the first" (1 Kings 13:6). I have counted the withered hand, the split altar, and the healing together, since they happened in one moment.

Outside the Bible: The altar at Dan (*Background*)
Archaeologists digging at Tel Dan, in the far north of Israel, uncovered a large raised platform and the remains of an altar area that many date to the time of Jeroboam and his successors. It was clearly a major place of worship. It shows the kind of rival shrine Jeroboam set up, though nothing found there names the golden calf.

79. The Lion Stands Over the Disobedient Prophet

Where to read it: 1 Kings 13:7-32
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Men passing by on the road; the old prophet of Bethel

God had told the man of God from Judah not to eat or drink in Bethel and to go home a different way. An old prophet in Bethel lied to him, claiming an angel had told him to bring the man home for a meal. The man of God believed him and went. On the way home, a lion met him and killed him.

What happened next was not normal lion behavior. “The lion had not eaten the corpse, and it had not mauled the donkey” (1 Kings 13:28). The lion and the donkey both stood beside the body in the road, and people passing by saw it and reported it in the town. A hungry lion does not kill a man and then stand guard over him next to a donkey. Everyone could see God’s hand in it.

What it shows: When God has clearly spoken, no one, not even someone who claims to be a prophet or claims an angel told him otherwise, has the right to overrule it. Paul said the same thing centuries later: even if an angel from heaven preaches a different gospel, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:8).

The Ministry of Elijah

80. Elijah Shuts the Sky

Where to read it: 1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41-45; Luke 4:25; James 5:17-18
Who God used: God, in answer to Elijah’s prayer
Who saw it: King Ahab and all Israel; the surrounding nations

Elijah walked into Ahab’s court out of nowhere and said, “***As*** the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew and rain these years, except according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1). And for three and a half years it did not rain. James uses Elijah as an example of prayer: “Elijah was a man of like nature to us, and he prayed with prayer that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the earth ***for*** three years and six months” (James 5:17).

Outside the Bible: Menander of Ephesus, quoted in Josephus, Antiquities 8.13.2 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus quotes Menander, a Greek writer who translated the old records of the city of Tyre, writing about Ethbaal, king of Tyre: “Under him there was a want of rain from the month Hyperberetmus till the month Hyperberetmus of the year following; but when he made supplications, there came great thunders.” Josephus adds, “By these words he designed the want of rain that was in the days of Ahab, for at that time it was that Ethbaal also reigned over the Tyrians.”

This is a striking detail. Ethbaal of Tyre was Jezebel’s father (1 Kings 16:31). Menander’s drought lasts one year, not three and a half, so it may describe only part of the same drought, or a different one. We only have Menander’s words through Josephus. But it is an ancient non-Israelite record of a drought in the same region in the reign of the same king.

81. Ravens Feed Elijah

Where to read it: 1 Kings 17:2-7
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Elijah

God sent Elijah to hide by the brook Kerith, east of the Jordan. “And the ravens ***were*** bringing him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and from the wadi he drank” (1 Kings 17:6). Ravens are scavengers. They take food. They do not deliver it. When the brook dried up, God moved him on.

82. The Widow's Flour and Oil Do Not Run Out

Where to read it: 1 Kings 17:8-16; Luke 4:25-26
Who God used: God, through Elijah's word
Who saw it: Elijah, the widow of Zarephath, and her son

God sent Elijah to Zarephath, a town in Sidon, Jezebel's home country. He found a widow gathering sticks to make one last meal for herself and her son before they starved. Elijah asked her to make him a small cake first and promised her that God had said, "The jar of flour shall not be used up, and the jug of oil shall not be lacking, until the day ***that*** the LORD gives rain on the face of the ground" (1 Kings 17:14). She did what he asked, and it happened just as he said.

Jesus brought this up in His hometown synagogue at Nazareth. There were many widows in Israel in Elijah's day, but Elijah was sent to a Gentile widow in Sidon (Luke 4:25-26). The people of Nazareth were so angry at the point He was making that they tried to throw Him off a cliff.

83. Elijah Raises the Widow's Son

Where to read it: 1 Kings 17:17-24; Hebrews 11:35
Who God used: God, in answer to Elijah's prayer
Who saw it: The widow of Zarephath

Later, the widow's son became sick and stopped breathing. In grief she blamed Elijah. He carried the boy up to his room, laid him on his bed, stretched himself on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD to let the boy's life return.

> *And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the lad returned into his inward parts, and he lived. And Elijah took the lad and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and he gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son **is** alive." And the woman said to Elijah, "Now this I know, that you **are** a man of God, and the word of the LORD in your mouth **is** truth."* (1 Kings 17:22-24)

This is the first time in the Bible that anyone is raised from the dead. Hebrews 11:35 remembers it: "Women received their dead by resurrection."

84. Fire Falls on Mount Carmel

Where to read it: 1 Kings 18:17-40
Who God used: God, in answer to Elijah's prayer
Who saw it: King Ahab, 450 prophets of Baal, and a great crowd of Israelites

This is one of the most dramatic scenes in the Old Testament. Elijah called for a contest on Mount Carmel: him against 450 prophets of Baal. He challenged the crowd, "How long ***will*** you ***be*** limping on the two crutches? If the LORD ***is*** the God, walk after Him; and if the Baal, walk after him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Each side would prepare a bull on an altar, but put no fire under it. Each would call on their god. "The god who answers by fire, he ***is*** the God" (1 Kings 18:24). The prophets of Baal went first. They called on Baal from morning until noon, danced around their altar, and cut themselves with swords and spears until the blood flowed. At noon Elijah started mocking them. Maybe Baal was thinking, or busy, or traveling, or

asleep and needed to be woken up (1 Kings 18:27). Nothing happened. “There was no voice, and there was no one answering, and there was no attention” (1 Kings 18:29).

Then Elijah rebuilt the LORD’s broken altar with twelve stones, dug a trench around it, laid out the wood and the bull, and had the whole thing drenched with water three times, until the trench was full. Then he prayed a short, simple prayer.

> *And it was, at the offering up of the grain offering, and Elijah the prophet drew near and said, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that You **are** God in Israel, and I **am** Your servant, and at Your word I have done all these things. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, **are** the God, and You have turned their heart back.” And the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and the water which **was** in the trench it licked up. And all the people saw, and they fell on their faces and said, “The LORD, He **is** the God! The LORD, He **is** the God!”* (1 Kings 18:36-39)

The fire did not just light the wood. It burned up the stones, the dirt, and the water.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 8.13.5 (*Text confirmed*)
Josephus retells the contest in his own words. In his version Elijah says, “How long will you live thus in uncertainty of mind and opinion?” and he adds that Elijah had the people come near and watch, “lest he should privately hide fire among the pieces of wood.” Then “a fire came on a sudden from heaven in the sight of the multitude, and fell upon the altar, and consumed the sacrifice, till the very water was set on fire, and the place was become dry.” Josephus tells it in his own words, but he tells it as a real event.

What it shows: The question on Carmel is still the question today. People are still limping between two opinions. God does not accept half our hearts. If the LORD is God, follow Him.

85. The Drought Ends at Elijah’s Prayer

Where to read it: 1 Kings 18:41-46; James 5:18
Who God used: God, in answer to Elijah’s prayer
Who saw it: Elijah, his servant, King Ahab, and all Israel

Right after the fire, Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bowed down to the ground with his face between his knees, and prayed for rain. Six times he sent his servant to look out toward the sea, and six times there was nothing. The seventh time, the servant said, “Look, a small cloud like the palm of a man ***is*** coming up from the sea” (1 Kings 18:44). In a little while the sky went black with clouds and wind, and a heavy rain came down.

86. Elijah Outruns Ahab's Chariot

Where to read it: 1 Kings 18:46
Who God used: God, as "the hand of the LORD" came on Elijah
Who saw it: King Ahab and his chariot driver

"And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab until you come to Jezreel" (1 Kings 18:46). From the area of Carmel to Jezreel is roughly fifteen to twenty miles. Elijah ran it ahead of the king's chariot, in a downpour, after one of the longest days in his life. The Bible credits it to the hand of the LORD, so I have counted it.

87. An Angel Feeds Elijah for a Forty Day Journey

Where to read it: 1 Kings 19:1-8
Who God used: The angel of the LORD
Who saw it: Elijah

After all that, Jezebel sent Elijah one message, a threat to kill him, and he ran for his life. He went a day's journey into the wilderness south of Beersheba, sat under a broom tree, and asked God to let him die. He was worn out, and he fell asleep.

> *And he lay down and slept under a certain broom tree; and look, here **was** an angel touching him, and he said to him, "Arise, eat." And he looked, and look, at his head **was** a cake **baked on** hot coals and a jug of water; and he ate and drank, and he lay down again. And the angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Arise, eat, for the journey **is too** great for you." And he arose and ate and drank, and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.* (1 Kings 19:5-8)

I love how gentle God is here. No lecture. Just sleep, a hot meal, more sleep, and another meal. Sometimes the most spiritual thing a burned-out servant of God can do is eat something and get some rest.

88. Wind, Earthquake, Fire, and a Gentle Whisper at Horeb

Where to read it: 1 Kings 19:9-18
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Elijah

At Horeb, the same mountain where God had met Moses, God told Elijah to stand on the mountain before Him. A great wind tore the mountains and broke the rocks, but the LORD was not in the wind. Then an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. Then a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. "And after the fire a sound of a thin silence" (1 Kings 19:12). Many English Bibles call it a still small voice. Elijah wrapped his face in his cloak and went out to meet God.

God gave Elijah a new assignment and some news that changed his outlook. He was not the only faithful one left. God had kept seven thousand in Israel who had never bowed to Baal (1 Kings 19:18).

What it shows: God can work in the earthquake and the fire, and He had just done so on Carmel. But He often speaks most clearly in the quiet.

89. The Wall Falls at Aphek

Where to read it: 1 Kings 20:26-30
Who God used: God, as He had promised through a prophet
Who saw it: King Ahab and the army of Israel; Ben-hadad and the Aramean army

Ben-hadad, king of Aram, attacked Israel a second time. His advisers had told him the LORD was only a god of the mountains, so they would win if they fought on the plain. God sent a prophet to Ahab: "Because Syria has said, 'The LORD ***is*** a god of mountains, and He ***is*** not a god of valleys,' I will give all this great multitude into your hand" (1 Kings 20:28). Israel won the battle, and the survivors fled into the city of Aphek, "and the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand men who remained" (1 Kings 20:30).

The Bible does not say how the wall fell. I have counted it because God had promised this victory specifically to show who He is, and the wall coming down on the fleeing army completed it.

90. Fire Falls on Two Companies of Soldiers

Where to read it: 2 Kings 1:1-17; Luke 9:54-55
Who God used: God, at Elijah's word
Who saw it: King Ahaziah's three captains and their men

Ahab's son Ahaziah fell through a window and was badly hurt. Instead of asking the LORD, he sent messengers to ask Baal-zebub, the god of the Philistine city of Ekron, whether he would recover. Elijah met them on the road and sent them back with a message: because you went to Baal-zebub, you will die.

The king sent a captain with fifty soldiers to arrest Elijah. Elijah said, "And if I ***am*** a man of God, let fire come down from the heavens and consume you and your fifty" (2 Kings 1:10), and it did. It happened a second time with another captain and fifty. The third captain fell on his knees and begged for mercy, and the angel of the LORD told Elijah to go with him. Elijah went and told the king to his face what God had said, and Ahaziah died.

Centuries later, when a Samaritan village refused to welcome Jesus, James and John asked if He wanted them to call down fire from heaven, "as Elijah also did." Jesus rebuked them (Luke 9:54-55). There was a time for that kind of judgment. It was not their job to decide it.

91. Elijah Parts the Jordan

Where to read it: 2 Kings 2:1-8
Who God used: God, through Elijah's cloak
Who saw it: Elisha and fifty of the sons of the prophets, who watched from a distance

On the day God was going to take Elijah, Elisha refused to leave his side. They came to the Jordan, with fifty of the prophets watching from a distance. "And Elijah took his cloak and rolled ***it*** up and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there; and the two of them passed over on the dry ground" (2 Kings 2:8).

92. Elijah Taken Up in a Whirlwind

Where to read it: 2 Kings 2:9-18; Malachi 4:5; Matthew 17:3
Who God used: God directly, with a chariot and horses of fire
Who saw it: Elisha; the fifty prophets searched for three days and did not find him

On the far side of the river, Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him before he was taken. Elisha asked for a double portion of his spirit, the share a firstborn son would inherit. Elijah said that was a hard thing, but if Elisha saw him taken, he would have it.

> *And it was, they **were** walking, walking on, and speaking; and look, a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and they separated between the two of them; and Elijah went up in the whirlwind to the heavens. And Elisha **was** seeing, and he **was** crying out, "My father, my father, the chariotry of Israel and its horsemen!" And he did not see him again. And he took hold of his clothes and tore them into two pieces.* (2 Kings 2:11-12)

The fifty prophets insisted on searching for Elijah in case the Spirit had set him down on a mountain somewhere. They searched three days and found nothing (2 Kings 2:16-18).

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 9.2.2 (*Text confirmed*)
"Now at this time it was that Elijah disappeared from among men, and no one knows of his death to this very day... And indeed, as to Elijah, and as to Enoch, who was before the deluge, it is written in the sacred books that they disappeared, but so that nobody knew that they died."

What it shows: Elijah did not die. Like Enoch, he went straight into God's presence. The last book of the Old Testament promised he would come again before the day of the LORD (Malachi 4:5), and Jesus said that in one sense that promise was fulfilled in John the Baptist (Matthew 11:14), who came, as the angel Gabriel had said, "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). And Elijah appeared again, on the Mount of Transfiguration, talking with Jesus.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think so many of Elijah's miracles involved rain and fire? What was God showing Israel about Baal?
2. Read 1 Kings 18:21. In what ways do people limp on "two crutches" today?
3. Elijah went from the victory on Carmel to wanting to die under a broom tree. Have you ever crashed right after a spiritual high? How did God care for Elijah?
4. What do the wind, earthquake, fire, and quiet whisper at Horeb teach us about the ways God speaks?
5. James says Elijah was "a man of like nature to us." What encouragement does that give you about prayer?

Chapter 10: The Ministry of Elisha

> *And he said, "Do not be afraid, for more **are** those who **are** with us than those who **are** with them."*
>
> 2 Kings 6:16 (SLB)

Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and God gave it to him. The Bible records more miracles through Elisha than through any other person in the Old Testament except Moses. Where Elijah was a man of fire who confronted kings, Elisha spent much of his time among ordinary people: widows, farmers, students in the schools of the prophets, a foreign army commander, and a woman who simply set up a guest room for him. Many of his miracles are quiet, kind, and practical, and some of them look ahead to the miracles of Jesus in surprising ways.

93. Elisha Parts the Jordan

Where to read it: 2 Kings 2:13-15
Who God used: God, through Elisha with Elijah's cloak
Who saw it: The sons of the prophets at Jericho, watching from across the river

Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak, which had fallen when he was taken, walked back to the Jordan, and struck the water, saying, "Where ***is*** the LORD, the God of Elijah?" (2 Kings 2:14). The water divided as it had for Elijah, and Elisha crossed over. The prophets watching from Jericho said, "The spirit of Elijah has rested on Elisha" (2 Kings 2:15).

What it shows: God's power did not leave when His prophet did. The question "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" is answered the same way in every generation: right here.

94. The Spring at Jericho Healed

Where to read it: 2 Kings 2:19-22
Who God used: God, through Elisha
Who saw it: The men of Jericho

The men of Jericho told Elisha their city was in a pleasant spot, but the water was bad and the land was barren. He asked for a new bowl with salt in it, threw the salt into the spring, and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'I have healed these waters; there will not be from there again death and miscarriage'" (2 Kings 2:21). "And the waters were healed until this day."

Outside the Bible: Josephus, The Jewish War 4.8.3 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus describes "a fountain by Jericho, that runs plentifully, and is very fit for watering the ground." He says the report is that it once "caused not only the blasting of the earth and the trees, but of the children born of women," but "that it was made gentle, and very wholesome and fruitful, by the prophet Elisha." Josephus says that in his own day it watered a plain "seventy furlongs long, and twenty broad," with gardens and palm trees, and that "he who should pronounce this place to be divine would not be mistaken."

Outside the Bible: The spring at Tell es-Sultan (*Background*)

A strong spring still flows at the foot of ancient Jericho. Local people call it Ein es-Sultan, and Christians have long called it Elisha's Spring. It has watered the oasis of Jericho for thousands of years and still does today. That does not prove what happened in 2 Kings 2, but it is the spring Josephus was describing, and it is still running.

95. Bears Come Out on the Mocking Youths

Where to read it: 2 Kings 2:23-25
Who God used: God, after Elisha's curse in the name of the LORD
Who saw it: Elisha and the people of Bethel

On the road up to Bethel, the center of Jeroboam's calf worship, a crowd of young men came out of the city and mocked Elisha: "Go up, bald ***one***! Go up, bald ***one***!" (2 Kings 2:23). Elisha cursed them in the name of the LORD, and two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of them.

This story bothers a lot of readers, and some imagine little children teasing an old man. The Hebrew words can describe young men of fighting age, not toddlers. And "Go up" was likely a jeer at Elijah's going up to heaven, a way of saying, "Why don't you disappear too?" A gang of at least forty-two young men from the capital of false worship was mocking the LORD's prophet and the LORD's work. The curse was not Elisha losing his temper over his bald head. It was God defending His name and His messenger at the very start of Elisha's ministry.

96. Water Fills the Valley and Looks Like Blood to Moab

Where to read it: 2 Kings 3:1-27
Who God used: God, through Elisha's word
Who saw it: The kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom and their armies; the Moabite army

After Ahab died, Mesha, king of Moab, stopped paying tribute to Israel. Ahab's son Jehoram marched against him with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the king of Edom. They took a long route through the wilderness, and after seven days the army and the animals ran out of water. Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet of the LORD, and they found Elisha.

Elisha told them to dig ditches in the dry valley. "You will not see wind, and you will not see rain, and that wadi will be filled ***with*** water" (2 Kings 3:17). The next morning, water came flowing from the direction of Edom and filled the land. When the Moabites looked out at sunrise, "the sun shone on the water, and Moab saw the water opposite ***them*** red like blood" (2 Kings 3:22). They thought the three kings had turned on each other and rushed in to plunder the camp, straight into the Israelite army.

Outside the Bible: The Mesha Stele (*Background*)

In 1868 a black basalt stone nearly four feet high was found at Dhiban in modern Jordan, the Dibon of the Bible. It is now in the Louvre in Paris. On it Mesha, king of Moab, boasts of throwing off the rule of Israel. He names Omri, king of Israel, says Israel oppressed Moab for many days, and credits his victories to his god Chemosh. It even mentions the God of Israel by His name, YHWH, one of the oldest mentions of that name outside the Bible. The stone tells Mesha's side and does not mention Elisha or the water. But it confirms that the king named in

2 Kings 3 was real, that he ruled Moab, and that he rebelled against Israel, just as the Bible says.

97. The Widow's Oil Fills Every Jar

Where to read it: 2 Kings 4:1-7
Who God used: God, through Elisha
Who saw it: The widow, her two sons, and her neighbors who lent the jars

The widow of one of the prophets came to Elisha in tears. Her husband had died in debt, and the creditor was coming to take her two sons as slaves. All she had left was a small jar of oil. Elisha told her to borrow empty jars from all her neighbors, "do not get few," then shut the door and pour her oil into them. She poured, and her sons kept bringing jars. When every jar was full, she told her son to bring another one. "There is not another vessel." "And the oil stopped" (2 Kings 4:6). Elisha told her to sell the oil, pay her debt, and live on the rest.

What it shows: The oil stopped when the jars ran out. God's supply was limited only by the room she made for it.

98. A Son Promised to the Shunammite Woman

Where to read it: 2 Kings 4:8-17
Who God used: God, as promised through Elisha
Who saw it: The Shunammite woman and her husband; Gehazi, Elisha's servant

A well-to-do woman in Shunem fed Elisha whenever he passed through and talked her husband into building a little room on the roof for him, with a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp. She said, "I know that he ***is*** a holy man of God" (2 Kings 4:9). Elisha wanted to repay her kindness. Gehazi pointed out that she had no son and her husband was old. Elisha told her that this time next year she would be holding a son. She could hardly bear to hope: "No, my lord, man of God, do not lie to your maidservant." But a year later she had a son, just as he said (2 Kings 4:16-17).

99. Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son

Where to read it: 2 Kings 4:18-37; 8:1-6; Hebrews 11:35
Who God used: God, in answer to Elisha's prayer
Who saw it: The boy's mother, Gehazi, and the household

When the boy was older, he went out to his father in the fields at harvest and cried, "My head, my head!" A servant carried him home, and he sat on his mother's lap until noon and then died. She laid him on the prophet's bed, shut the door, and rode straight to Elisha at Mount Carmel without telling anyone he was dead.

Elisha sent Gehazi ahead with his staff to lay on the boy's face, but nothing happened. Then Elisha came himself, shut the door, and prayed to the LORD.

> *And he went up and lay on the child, and he put his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes and his palms on his palms, and he crouched over him; and the flesh of the child became*

> *warm. And he went back and walked in the house, once here and once there; and he went up and crouched over him. And the lad sneezed up to seven times, and the lad opened his eyes.*
> (2 Kings 4:34-35)

Years later, when this same woman came to the king to ask for her land back after a famine, Gehazi happened to be telling the king this very story, and he said, "this ***is*** the woman, and this ***is*** her son whom Elisha restored to life" (2 Kings 8:5). The king gave her land back with all its crops.

100. Death in the Pot Made Harmless

Where to read it: 2 Kings 4:38-41
Who God used: God, through Elisha
Who saw it: The sons of the prophets at Gilgal

During a famine at Gilgal, Elisha told his servant to cook a big pot of stew for the students of the prophets. One of them gathered wild gourds without knowing what they were and sliced them into the pot. As the men started eating, they cried out, "Death ***is*** in the pot, man of God!" Elisha threw some flour into the pot and said to serve it. "And there was no bad thing in the pot" (2 Kings 4:40-41).

Flour does not cure poison. The flour was the sign, as the salt had been at Jericho. The cure came from God.

101. A Hundred Men Fed With Twenty Loaves

Where to read it: 2 Kings 4:42-44
Who God used: God, through Elisha's word
Who saw it: Elisha's servant and about a hundred men

A man from Baal-shalishah brought Elisha twenty barley loaves and some fresh grain, the first of his harvest. Elisha said to give it to the people. His servant objected, "What, shall I set this before a hundred men?" Elisha said, "Give to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: '***They*** will eat and leave over.'" They ate, and there were leftovers (2 Kings 4:43-44).

If that sounds familiar, it should. A servant's doubt, barley loaves, a crowd fed, and food left over. Jesus did the same thing on a much larger scale, with five barley loaves for five thousand men (John 6:9-13). The people who knew their Bibles would have noticed.

102. Naaman the Syrian Healed of Leprosy

Where to read it: 2 Kings 5:1-19; Luke 4:27
Who God used: God, through Elisha's word
Who saw it: Naaman and his servants; a young Israelite slave girl; the king of Israel

Naaman was the commander of the army of Aram, a great man and a brave soldier, but he had leprosy. A young Israelite girl, taken captive in a raid and serving Naaman's wife, said she wished her master could meet the prophet in Samaria, because he would heal him.

Naaman showed up at Elisha's door with horses, chariots, and a fortune in gifts. Elisha did not even come out. He sent a messenger: "Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh shall return to you, and

be clean" (2 Kings 5:10). Naaman was furious. He had expected the prophet to come out, call on his God, and wave his hand over the spot. And weren't the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? His servants talked sense into him. If the prophet had asked you to do something hard, you would have done it. Why not something simple?

> *And he went down and dipped in the Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh returned like the flesh of a young lad, and he was clean. And he went back to the man of God, he and all his camp, and he came and stood before him, and he said, "Look, please, I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel. And now, please accept a blessing from your servant."* (2 Kings 5:14-15)

Elisha refused any payment. Jesus pointed to Naaman as another Gentile God chose to heal: "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:27).

What it shows: Pride wants to be healed in an impressive way, with a payment that proves we earned it. God's way is humble and free. You just do what He says.

103. Gehazi Struck With Naaman's Leprosy

Where to read it: 2 Kings 5:20-27
Who God used: God, through Elisha's word
Who saw it: Elisha, and later anyone who saw Gehazi

Gehazi could not stand to see all that silver and clothing go home to Syria. He chased after Naaman, made up a story that Elisha had changed his mind and wanted some of it for two visiting prophets, took the gifts, and hid them. When he came back, Elisha asked where he had been. "Your servant has not gone here or there" (2 Kings 5:25). Elisha said, "Did my heart not go ***with you*** when a man turned from on his chariot to meet you?" and pronounced that Naaman's leprosy would cling to him. "And he went out from before him leprous like snow" (2 Kings 5:26-27).

104. The Axe Head Floats

Where to read it: 2 Kings 6:1-7
Who God used: God, through Elisha
Who saw it: The sons of the prophets cutting timber at the Jordan

The school of the prophets had outgrown its meeting place, so the students went to the Jordan to cut beams for a bigger one, and Elisha went with them. As one man was chopping, the iron axe head flew off and sank in the river. "Alas, my lord! And it was borrowed!" Elisha asked where it fell, cut a stick, threw it in, "and he made the iron float" (2 Kings 6:5-6). The man reached out and picked it up.

I love this one. It is not a big public miracle. A poor student lost a borrowed tool he could not afford to replace, and God cared. Nothing is too small to bring to Him.

105. Elisha Tells the King of Israel Aram's Secret Plans

Where to read it: 2 Kings 6:8-12
Who God used: God, revealing the plans to Elisha
Who saw it: The king of Aram and his officers; the king of Israel

The king of Aram kept setting ambushes for Israel's army, and every time, Elisha warned the king of Israel where they would be. The king of Aram was sure he had a spy in his inner circle. One of his officers said, "No, my lord the king; for Elisha the prophet who ***is*** in Israel tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in the chamber of your bed" (2 Kings 6:12).

106. The Servant Sees the Mountain Full of Chariots of Fire

Where to read it: 2 Kings 6:13-17
Who God used: God, in answer to Elisha's prayer
Who saw it: Elisha's servant

So the king of Aram sent a large force with horses and chariots to surround the town of Dothan by night and capture Elisha. In the morning his servant went out, saw the army surrounding the city, and panicked. "Alas, my lord! How shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15).

> *And he said, "Do not be afraid, for more **are** those who **are** with us than those who **are** with them." And Elisha prayed and said, "LORD, please open his eyes, that he may see." And the LORD opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; and look, the mountain **was** full of horses and chariotry of fire all around Elisha.* (2 Kings 6:16-17)

What it shows: There is more going on around us than we can see. I don't know of a better verse for a scared believer than "Do not be afraid, for more ***are*** those who ***are*** with us than those who ***are*** with them."

107. The Aramean Army Blinded, Led to Samaria, and Fed

Where to read it: 2 Kings 6:18-23
Who God used: God, in answer to Elisha's prayer
Who saw it: The Aramean soldiers; the king of Israel and his men in Samaria

As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed, "Please strike this nation with blindness," and God did (2 Kings 6:18). The word likely means a kind of confusion or dazzled sight, since the soldiers could still walk and follow. Elisha told them they were in the wrong place and led them about ten miles to Samaria, the capital of Israel. There he prayed again, God opened their eyes, and they found themselves in the middle of the enemy's city.

The king of Israel was thrilled. "Shall I strike ***them*** down? Shall I strike ***them*** down, my father?" (2 Kings 6:21). Elisha said no. Set bread and water before them, let them eat and drink, and send them home (2 Kings 6:22). So the king threw a great feast for them and sent them back to their master. "And the raiding bands of Syria did not again come into the land of Israel" (2 Kings 6:23).

What it shows: This is the Old Testament version of "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44) and "if your enemy is hungry, feed him" (Romans 12:20). Kindness ended the raids when force could not.

108. The Siege of Samaria Lifted by the Sound of an Army

Where to read it: 2 Kings 6:24 to 7:20
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Four lepers at the gate; the Aramean army; the people of Samaria and the king's officer who doubted

Later the king of Aram besieged Samaria, and the famine inside the city grew so bad that a donkey's head sold for eighty pieces of silver and some people turned to eating their own children (2 Kings 6:25-29). Elisha announced that by this time tomorrow, fine flour and barley would sell cheap in the gate of Samaria. The king's officer scoffed that even if God opened windows in heaven it could not happen. Elisha told him he would see it with his eyes but not eat any of it.

That night, "the Lord had caused the camp of Syria to hear a sound of chariotry, a sound of horses, a sound of a great army" (2 Kings 7:6). The Arameans thought Israel had hired the Hittites and the Egyptians against them, and they fled in the dark, leaving their tents, horses, donkeys, food, and silver behind. Four starving lepers, who had decided they might as well surrender to the enemy, walked into an empty camp. After filling their own stomachs, they said, "We are not doing right. This day ***is*** a day of good news" (2 Kings 7:9), and they went and told the city.

By that evening, flour and barley were selling in the gate at exactly the prices Elisha had named (2 Kings 7:16). The king's officer was trampled in the gate by the rush of hungry people, just as Elisha had said.

What it shows: The four lepers are a good picture of every believer. We have found the feast. We are not doing right if we keep the good news to ourselves.

109. A Dead Man Revives at the Touch of Elisha's Bones

Where to read it: 2 Kings 13:20-21
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The men who were burying him

Elisha died of an illness, and he was buried. Some time later, men were burying another man when they spotted a band of Moabite raiders. In a hurry, they threw the body into Elisha's tomb. "And the man went and touched the bones of Elisha, and he lived and rose up on his feet" (2 Kings 13:21).

That is the last miracle in Elisha's story, and it happened after he was dead. The Bible never tells us the name of the man who came back to life. I have always wondered what he and the men who threw him in said to each other on the way home.

What it shows: The power was never in Elisha. It was in God. And even in Elisha's grave, God was giving a picture of what He would one day do: bring life out of a tomb.

Elisha and Jesus

Bible readers have long noticed how much Elisha's ministry points ahead to Jesus. Both began their work at the Jordan. Both fed a crowd with barley loaves and had leftovers. Both cleansed lepers, raised the only

son of a mother, and cared for the poor and forgotten. Both showed mercy to foreigners. And from the tomb of each came new life. Elisha was a servant of God doing God's works. Jesus is the Son of God, doing them in His own name.

Study Questions

1. Elisha asked, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" How would you answer that question in your own life today?
2. The widow's oil stopped when the jars ran out. What "empty jars" might God be asking you to bring Him?
3. Why was Naaman so angry at Elisha's simple instructions? How does pride get in the way of receiving God's grace?
4. Read 2 Kings 6:15-17. When have you felt surrounded? How does this passage change the way you see your situation?
5. The four lepers said, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news." Who in your life needs to hear the good news from you?

Chapter 11: Later Kings, Hezekiah, and Jonah

> *And he said, "Pay attention, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'You, do not be afraid, and do not be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle **is** not yours, but God's."*
>
> 2 Chronicles 20:15 (SLB)

After Elisha, the northern kingdom of Israel slid downhill until Assyria destroyed it in 722 B.C. The southern kingdom of Judah lasted longer, with a mix of good and bad kings, until Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. This chapter covers the miracles God did in those last centuries before the exile: two great rescues of Jerusalem, two kings who learned something about God the hard way, and a runaway prophet who got the strangest ride in the Bible.

110. The LORD Sets Ambushes Against Judah's Enemies

Where to read it: 2 Chronicles 20:1-30
Who God used: God directly, while Judah's singers praised Him
Who saw it: King Jehoshaphat, the army and people of Judah; the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir

A huge army of Moabites, Ammonites, and men from Mount Seir marched against Judah. King Jehoshaphat was afraid, and he did the right thing with his fear. He called the whole nation to fast and pray, and he stood before them in the temple and prayed one of the most honest prayers in the Bible: "we do not know what we should do; but our eyes ***are*** on You" (2 Chronicles 20:12).

God answered through a Levite named Jahaziel: "the battle ***is*** not yours, but God's... Take your stand, stand, and see the salvation of the LORD with you" (2 Chronicles 20:15, 17).

The next morning Jehoshaphat did something no general would do. He put the choir in front of the army. They marched out singing, "Give thanks to the LORD, for His steadfast love ***is*** forever."

> *And at the time **when** they began with a ringing cry and praise, the LORD set ambushers against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and the mountain of Seir who were coming against Judah, and they were struck down. And the sons of Ammon and Moab rose up against the inhabitants of the mountain of Seir to devote **them** to destruction and to destroy **them**; and when they had finished with the inhabitants of Seir, they helped, each man against his neighbor, to destruction.* (2 Chronicles 20:22-23)

When Judah got to the watchtower, all they saw were bodies. It took three days to collect the plunder. They named the place the Valley of Beracah, which means blessing (2 Chronicles 20:26).

What it shows: Worship is not a break from the battle. Sometimes it is the battle.

111. King Uzziah Struck With Leprosy in the Temple

Where to read it: 2 Chronicles 26:16-23; 2 Kings 15:5
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Azariah the high priest and eighty other priests

Uzziah, also called Azariah, was one of Judah's best kings for most of his long reign. He loved farming, built towers and cisterns, strengthened the army, and God helped him. "And when he was strong, his heart was lifted up" (2 Chronicles 26:16). He walked into the temple to burn incense, a duty God had given only to the priests. Azariah the high priest and eighty brave priests stood up to him and told him to leave.

> *And Uzziah was enraged, and in his hand **was** a censer to burn incense; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy rose up on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense.* (2 Chronicles 26:19)

Uzziah lived in a separate house as a leper until he died, and his son Jotham ran the kingdom. It was in the year King Uzziah died that Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up, in the temple (Isaiah 6:1). The king who tried to push into God's presence on his own terms died outside it. The prophet who fell on his face was welcomed in.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 9.10.4 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus adds a detail from Jewish tradition: "In the mean time a great earthquake shook the ground and a rent was made in the temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized upon him immediately."

The Bible does not connect the earthquake and the leprosy. But it does remember a famous earthquake in Uzziah's day (Amos 1:1; Zechariah 14:5), and geologists and archaeologists have found evidence of a strong earthquake in the region in the 700s B.C., including damage at Hazor. Josephus seems to have joined the two memories together.

Outside the Bible: The Uzziah burial plaque (*Background*)

In 1931 a stone plaque was found in a collection on the Mount of Olives. Written in Aramaic in the style of the first century B.C. or A.D., it says, in translation, that the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah, were brought here, and warns the reader not to open it. It is now in the Israel Museum. It seems Uzziah's bones were moved and reburied centuries after his death, and the people who did it still remembered he had been a leper, buried apart from the other kings (2 Chronicles 26:23).

The Prophet Jonah

Jonah son of Amittai was a real prophet of the northern kingdom in the days of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25). God sent him to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, Israel's most brutal enemy, to preach against it. Jonah went the other way. Jesus treated Jonah as a real man and his three days in the fish as a real event, and He used it as the sign of His own death and resurrection (Matthew 12:39-41).

112. The Storm on the Sea and the Sudden Calm

Where to read it: Jonah 1:1-16
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The sailors and captain of the ship to Tarshish

Jonah went down to Joppa and bought a ticket to Tarshish, probably in Spain, about as far west as a ship could go. "And the LORD hurled a great wind to the sea, and there was a great storm on the sea, and the ship thought to be broken up" (Jonah 1:4). The sailors prayed to their own gods and threw the cargo overboard, while Jonah slept below deck. They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. He told them to throw him overboard. They tried rowing for shore first, but finally they did it.

> *And they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea stopped from its raging. And the men feared the LORD **with** a great fear, and they sacrificed a sacrifice to the LORD, and they vowed vows.* (Jonah 1:15-16)

The pagan sailors ended up worshiping the LORD. Jonah, the prophet, was the only one on board running from Him.

113. Jonah Swallowed by a Great Fish and Brought Back Alive

Where to read it: Jonah 1:17 to 2:10; Matthew 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-30
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Jonah; later the people of Nineveh heard his message

> *And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the inward parts of the fish three days and three nights.* (Jonah 1:17)

Inside the fish, Jonah prayed. His prayer in chapter 2 is full of quotes from the Psalms, and it ends, "Salvation ***belongs*** to the LORD" (Jonah 2:9). Then "the LORD said to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah onto the dry land" (Jonah 2:10).

People love to argue about what kind of fish could swallow a man. The Hebrew says a great fish, and Matthew's Greek uses a word for a sea monster or huge sea creature. It does not say whale, though many old translations used that word. But the size of the fish is not the point. The Bible says God "appointed" the fish, just as He later appointed a plant, a worm, and a wind. Whatever it was, God prepared it for this job. And keeping a man alive inside it for three days was a miracle no matter what species it was.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 9.10.2 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus writes, "It is also reported that Jonah was swallowed down by a whale, and that when he had been there three days, and as many nights, he was vomited out upon the Euxine Sea, and this alive, and without any hurt upon his body." He adds, "Now I have given this account about him as I found it written [in our books.]"

The Euxine Sea is the Black Sea. That detail is Josephus' own guess or a tradition, not something the Bible says.

What it shows: Jesus said, "For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (Matthew 12:40).

Jonah came back from what should have been his grave and preached to the Gentiles. So did Jesus' message, after He rose.

114. The Plant, the Worm, and the East Wind

Where to read it: Jonah 4:1-11
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Jonah

Jonah finally preached in Nineveh, and the whole city repented, from the king down. God spared it. And Jonah was furious. He admitted the real reason he had run: he knew God was gracious and compassionate and would forgive them (Jonah 4:2). He sat outside the city to see what would happen.

God gave Jonah one more lesson, an object lesson made of three small miracles. "And the LORD God appointed a plant, and it went up over Jonah to be a shade over his head" (Jonah 4:6), and Jonah was very happy about the plant. The next dawn, "God appointed a worm," and it killed the plant. Then "God appointed a scorching east wind," and the sun beat on Jonah's head until he wanted to die (Jonah 4:7-8).

God asked him: you cared about a plant you did not plant or grow, which came up in a night and died in a night. "And I, should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city, in which there are more than one hundred twenty thousand people who do not know ***the difference*** between their right hand and their left, and much livestock?" (Jonah 4:11). The book ends with that question, and Jonah never answers it. We are meant to.

Hezekiah and the Assyrians

Hezekiah was one of the best kings Judah ever had. He tore down the idols and trusted the LORD. But in his fourteenth year, around 701 B.C., Sennacherib, king of Assyria, the superpower of that day, swept through Judah and took its fortified cities. Hezekiah paid him a huge tribute of silver and gold (2 Kings 18:13-16), stripping even the temple doors. It was not enough. Sennacherib sent his field commander to Jerusalem to demand surrender, mocking Hezekiah and the LORD in front of the people on the walls. No god of any nation had saved its people from the king of Assyria, he said, and the LORD would not save Jerusalem either.

Hezekiah took Sennacherib's threatening letter into the temple, spread it out before the LORD, and prayed (2 Kings 19:14-19). God answered through the prophet Isaiah: the king of Assyria would not come into this city or shoot an arrow there.

115. The Angel of the LORD Strikes the Assyrian Army

Where to read it: 2 Kings 19:1-37; 2 Chronicles 32:20-22; Isaiah 36:1 to 37:38
Who God used: The angel of the LORD
Who saw it: The people of Jerusalem who woke to find the camp full of dead; Sennacherib, who went home

> *And it was in that night, and the angel of the LORD went out and struck down in the camp of Assyria one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and they rose early in the morning, and look, all of them **were** dead corpses.* (2 Kings 19:35)

Sennacherib went home to Nineveh. Years later, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, two of his sons killed him with the sword, and another son, Esarhaddon, took the throne (2 Kings 19:36-37).

This is one of the best documented events in the Old Testament from outside sources. No outside source describes the angel. But several ancient records line up remarkably well with the Bible's account.

Outside the Bible: Sennacherib's own records (*Background*)

Sennacherib recorded this campaign on clay prisms, including the Taylor Prism in the British Museum and copies in Chicago and Jerusalem. He boasts that he captured forty-six of Hezekiah's walled cities and shut Hezekiah up in Jerusalem, in one standard translation, "like a bird in a cage." He lists Hezekiah's tribute, including thirty talents of gold, the same amount the Bible gives (2 Kings 18:14), though he claims more silver. What is just as telling is what he does not say. He never claims to have taken Jerusalem or captured Hezekiah. Assyrian kings did not record defeats. For a king who boasted about everything, the silence about the end of this campaign is loud. I have not opened a full translation of the prism myself, so I give these details from the standard published accounts.

Outside the Bible: The Lachish reliefs (*Background*)

In the 1840s, the British explorer Austen Henry Layard dug up Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh. On its walls were huge carved stone panels showing the siege and capture of Lachish, one of Judah's main cities (2 Kings 18:14, 17). They show battering rams, archers, and captives from Judah being led away. The panels are now in the British Museum. Sennacherib decorated his palace with the siege of Lachish, not the siege of Jerusalem. That says a lot.

Outside the Bible: Herodotus, Histories 2.141 (*Text confirmed*)

Writing about 270 years later, the Greek historian Herodotus repeats a story told by Egyptian priests. "Sanacharib king of the Arabians and of the Assyrians marched a great host against Egypt." An Egyptian priest-king prayed in his temple, and his god promised help. Then "there swarmed by night upon their enemies mice of the fields, and ate up their quivers and their bows, and moreover the handles of their shields, so that on the next day they fled, and being without defence of arms great numbers fell." (Macaulay translation)

This is a different version, told from Egypt's side, with Egypt's god getting the credit. But it remembers Sennacherib's army being suddenly struck down overnight, on the same campaign, when the Assyrians were near the border of Egypt (Isaiah 37:9 says Sennacherib heard that the king of Cush, ruler of Egypt, was coming against him). Some scholars think the mice point to a plague, since rodents carry disease.

Outside the Bible: Berosus, quoted in Josephus, Antiquities 10.1.4-5 (*Disputed*)

Josephus quotes the Babylonian writer Berosus about Sennacherib, then continues with a passage that, in Whiston's translation, appears inside the quotation: "for God had sent a pestilential distemper upon his army; and on the very first night of the siege, a hundred fourscore and five thousand, with their captains and generals, were destroyed." It goes on to tell of Sennacherib's murder by his sons. Scholars question whether all of that comes from Berosus or whether Josephus switched back to retelling the Bible in his own words. I have marked it disputed for that reason.

Outside the Bible: The death of Sennacherib (*Background*)

A Babylonian chronicle tablet in the British Museum records that Sennacherib was killed by his son in a revolt in 681 B.C., about twenty years after the Jerusalem campaign. Esarhaddon, another son, recorded his own struggle against his brothers to take the throne. That matches 2 Kings 19:37: Sennacherib killed by his sons and Esarhaddon reigning in his place. The Bible does not say how much time passed between his return home and his death, and the Assyrian records show it was about two decades.

What it shows: The field commander had asked, "Have the gods of the nations really delivered, each one his land, from the hand of the king of Assyria?" (2 Kings 18:33). It was a fair question about the gods of the nations. It was the wrong question about the God of Israel.

116. Hezekiah Healed and Given Fifteen More Years

Where to read it: 2 Kings 20:1-7; Isaiah 38:1-22; 2 Chronicles 32:24
Who God used: God, in answer to Hezekiah's prayer, through Isaiah
Who saw it: Hezekiah, Isaiah, and the royal household

About the same time, Hezekiah got sick and was about to die. Isaiah came and told him to put his house in order. Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and wept and prayed. Before Isaiah had even left the palace courtyard, God sent him back with a new message: "I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look, I ***am*** healing you. On the third day you will go up ***to*** the house of the LORD. And I will add to your days fifteen years" (2 Kings 20:5-6).

Isaiah told them to put a cake of figs on Hezekiah's boil, and he recovered (2 Kings 20:7). God used an ordinary remedy, but the healing came on God's schedule, with God's promise of exactly fifteen years. Using medicine and trusting God are not opposites.

117. The Shadow Goes Back Ten Steps

Where to read it: 2 Kings 20:8-11; Isaiah 38:7-8, 21-22; 2 Chronicles 32:24, 31
Who God used: God, in answer to Isaiah's prayer
Who saw it: Hezekiah, Isaiah, and the court; envoys from Babylon later came to ask about it

Hezekiah asked for a sign that he would really be healed. Isaiah offered a choice: should the shadow on the steps go forward ten steps or back ten steps? Hezekiah said going forward would be easy. Shadows do that every afternoon. Let it go back.

> *And Isaiah the prophet called to the LORD, and He brought the shadow back on the steps by which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz, backward ten steps.* (2 Kings 20:11)

The "steps of Ahaz" were probably a stairway built by Hezekiah's father that worked as a kind of sundial, with the shadow of a pillar or wall creeping down the steps through the day. As with Joshua's long day, the Bible does not tell us how God did it, whether by moving the shadow alone in that one place or something larger. It does say the sign was noticed far away. Envoys came from Babylon "to inquire ***about*** the sign that had happened in the land" (2 Chronicles 32:31).

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 10.2.1 (*Text confirmed*)
Josephus says Hezekiah "desired that he would make the shadow of the sun, which he had already made to go

> down ten steps [or degrees] in his house, to return again to the same place, and to make it as it was before. And when the prophet prayed to God to exhibit this sign to the king, he saw what he desired to see, and was freed from his distemper."

What it shows: Hezekiah asked for something harder because he wanted to be sure it was God. And God, who made the sun, was happy to give it. Sadly, the story did not end well. Hezekiah proudly showed the Babylonian envoys all his treasures, and Isaiah told him that one day Babylon would carry all of it away (2 Kings 20:12-18). Even a man who has seen a miracle can fall into pride.

Study Questions

1. Jehoshaphat prayed, "we do not know what we should do; but our eyes are on You." When have you prayed something like that? What happened?
2. Uzziah's pride grew when he was strong. Why is success sometimes more dangerous to our faith than hard times?
3. Jonah was angry that God spared Nineveh. Is there anyone you would secretly rather God did not forgive? How does Jonah 4:11 speak to that?
4. Look at the outside evidence for Sennacherib's campaign. Why do you think Sennacherib never claimed to have captured Jerusalem?
5. Hezekiah was healed with a fig poultice and God's promise. What does that teach us about medicine and prayer?

Chapter 12: Daniel and the Exile

> *From before me a decree is made, that in all the dominion of my kingdom they shall be trembling and fearing before the God of Daniel; for He **is** the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom **is one** which will not be destroyed, and His dominion **will be** to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He does signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, who has delivered Daniel from the hand of the lions.*
>
> Daniel 6:26-27 (SLB)

In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took a group of young men from the noble families of Jerusalem back to Babylon to train them for his service. Among them were Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, whom the Babylonians renamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Nineteen years later, Babylon burned Jerusalem and the temple to the ground.

It looked like the end. God's people were captives, His city was in ruins, and His house was ashes. If the gods of the nations were judged by how their people did in war, the God of Israel had lost. So God did something remarkable. In the capital of the empire that had beaten His people, He showed the most powerful kings on earth who really ruled. The miracles of Daniel are aimed as much at Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius as at Daniel himself, and each of those kings ended up saying something about the God of Israel.

118. Daniel Tells the King His Dream and Its Meaning

Where to read it: Daniel 2:1-49
Who God used: God, revealing the dream to Daniel
Who saw it: Nebuchadnezzar, his wise men, and Arioch, captain of the guard

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled him so much he could not sleep. He called in all his magicians, conjurers, sorcerers, and astrologers and gave them an impossible task. They had to tell him not only what the dream meant but what the dream was. If they could not, they would be torn limb from limb. If they could make up an interpretation, they could surely tell him the dream itself.

The wise men told the king the truth: "There is not a man on the earth who is able to declare the matter of the king... there is not another who can declare it before the king except gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Daniel 2:10-11). The king ordered all the wise men of Babylon killed, including Daniel and his friends, who had not even been asked.

Daniel asked for time, and he and his three friends prayed. "Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in the vision of the night" (Daniel 2:19). He went to the king and was careful to give God the credit: "there is a God in the heavens ***who*** reveals mysteries" (Daniel 2:28). Then he described the dream, a great statue of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay, struck by a stone cut out without hands that became a mountain filling the whole earth, and told what it meant.

I don't usually count revealed knowledge as a miracle in this book, but this one is different. It was public, it was tested in advance in a way nobody could fake, and the king's own experts said only a god could do it. Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and said, "Truly your God, He ***is*** the God of gods and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries" (Daniel 2:47).

119. Three Men Walk in the Fiery Furnace With a Fourth

Where to read it: Daniel 3:1-30; Hebrews 11:34
Who God used: God, who sent His angel
Who saw it: Nebuchadnezzar, his satraps, prefects, governors, and counselors

Nebuchadnezzar set up a gold statue ninety feet tall on the plain of Dura and ordered everyone to bow down to it when the music played, on pain of being thrown into a blazing furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow. Given one last chance, they answered with some of the bravest words in the Bible.

> *If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of the burning fire, and from your hand, O king, He will deliver* ***us****. And if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not serving your god, and we will not pay homage to the image of gold which you have set up.* (Daniel 3:17-18)

The king had the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. It was so hot that the soldiers who threw the three men in were killed by the flames (Daniel 3:22). Then Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in alarm.

> *Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was alarmed, and he rose up in haste. He answered and said to his counselors, "Did we not throw three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "Certainly, O king." He answered and said, "Look, I see four men loosed, walking in the midst of the fire, and there is no harm on them; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of* ***the*** *gods."* (Daniel 3:24-25)

When they came out, all the king's officials crowded around to look. The fire had not touched their bodies. Their hair was not singed, their robes were not scorched, "and the smell of fire had not passed onto them" (Daniel 3:27). The only thing the fire burned was the ropes.

Nebuchadnezzar said the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego "has sent His angel and has delivered His servants" (Daniel 3:28). Many Christians believe the fourth man was the Son of God Himself, appearing before He was born. Either way, God did not keep them out of the fire. He met them in it.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 10.10.5 (*Text confirmed*)
Josephus writes that Daniel's companions were "cast immediately into the fire, but were saved by Divine Providence, and after a surprising manner escaped death, for the fire did not touch them." He adds, "This was done by the power of God, who made their bodies so far superior to the fire, that it could not consume them."

What it shows: "And if not." Faith does not mean being sure God will do what we want. It means being sure of God, whatever He does.

120. Nebuchadnezzar Driven Out Like an Animal and Restored

Where to read it: Daniel 4:1-37
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Nebuchadnezzar, his court, and his whole kingdom

Daniel 4 is unusual. It is written as a letter from Nebuchadnezzar himself to all the peoples of his empire, telling what the Most High God had done to him.

Nebuchadnezzar had another dream, of a great tree cut down to a stump. Daniel told him it meant the king would be driven from people and live like an animal until he acknowledged that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of men. Daniel begged him to turn from his sins. A year later, the king was walking on the roof of his palace, looking out over Babylon.

> *The king answered and said, "Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built for a house of the kingdom by the strength of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word **was** still in the mouth of the king, a voice fell from the heavens: "To you they say, O King Nebuchadnezzar: the kingdom has passed from you."* (Daniel 4:30-31)

That very hour he lost his mind. He was driven out, ate grass like cattle, and his hair grew long like eagle feathers and his nails like bird claws (Daniel 4:33). At the end of the set time, he lifted his eyes to heaven, and his reason came back. His throne was restored to him, and he wrote, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of the heavens, for all His works ***are*** truth and His ways ***are*** justice; and those who walk in pride He is able to bring low" (Daniel 4:37).

Outside the Bible: Babylonian records of Nebuchadnezzar (*Background*)

Nebuchadnezzar really did build on a massive scale, and he bragged about it. Thousands of bricks from Babylon are stamped with his name, and his building inscriptions describe the palaces, walls, and temples he built for his own glory. That fits Daniel 4:30 perfectly. No Babylonian record describes his madness, which is no surprise, since royal records did not record a king's humiliation. Some scholars point to a broken Babylonian text that seems to speak of a king acting strangely and neglecting his duties, but it is badly damaged and its meaning is debated, so I do not lean on it.

121. The Handwriting on the Wall

Where to read it: Daniel 5:1-31
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: King Belshazzar, his thousand nobles, his wives and concubines, and the queen mother

Years later, Belshazzar was ruling in Babylon. He threw a huge feast for a thousand of his nobles, and with the wine flowing, he ordered the gold and silver cups taken from the temple in Jerusalem brought out so they could drink from them while praising their gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

> *In that very moment fingers of a man's hand came out, and they were writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the palace of the king; and the king was seeing the palm of the hand that was writing. Then the king's brightness changed on him, and his thoughts*

alarmed him; and the joints of his loins were loosened, and his knees were knocking this against this. (Daniel 5:5-6)

None of the wise men could read it. The queen mother remembered Daniel, now an old man. He read it: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. "MENE, God has numbered your kingdom and has finished it. TEKEL, you have been weighed in the scales and have been found lacking. PERES, your kingdom has been divided and has been given to Media and Persia" (Daniel 5:26-28). "In that night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed" (Daniel 5:30).

Outside the Bible: Belshazzar in the Babylonian records (*Background*)

For a long time critics said Belshazzar never existed, because Greek historians named Nabonidus as the last king of Babylon and never mentioned him. Then in the 1800s, clay cylinders were found at Ur in which Nabonidus prays for Belshazzar, whom he calls his firstborn son. Another tablet, the Nabonidus Chronicle, says Nabonidus spent years away at the desert oasis of Tema while the crown prince ran things in Babylon. That explains a small detail in Daniel. Belshazzar promised that whoever read the writing would "rule ***as*** the third in the kingdom" (Daniel 5:16, 29). Third, because Nabonidus was first and Belshazzar himself was second. The critics were wrong. The Bible was right.

What it shows: God sees what we do with holy things, and He weighs every life. Belshazzar knew what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel told him so: "you... have not brought low your heart, inasmuch as you knew all this" (Daniel 5:22). Knowing better and not doing better is its own kind of guilt.

122. Daniel Delivered From the Lions' Den

Where to read it: Daniel 6:1-28; Hebrews 11:33
Who God used: God, who sent His angel
Who saw it: King Darius; the officials who accused Daniel

Under Darius the Mede, Daniel was one of three top officials over the whole kingdom, and the king planned to put him over everyone. The other officials were jealous and looked for something to accuse him of, but they could not find any corruption. "We will not find any occasion against this Daniel unless we have found ***it*** against him in the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5). They tricked Darius into signing a law that for thirty days no one could pray to any god or man except the king, on pain of the lions' den.

Daniel did not change a thing. He went home, opened his windows toward Jerusalem, and knelt and prayed three times a day, "just as he had been doing from before this" (Daniel 6:10). Darius was sick about it and tried all day to find a way to save him, but the law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed. As Daniel was thrown in, the king said, "Your God whom you serve continually, may He deliver you" (Daniel 6:16). A stone was rolled over the mouth of the den and sealed.

The king spent the night without food or sleep. At dawn he hurried to the den.

And as he approached the den, he cried out to Daniel with a pained voice. The king answered and said to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" Then Daniel spoke with the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the mouth of the lions, and they have not harmed

me, because before Him innocence was found in me; and also before you, O king, I have done no crime." (Daniel 6:20-22)

The men who accused Daniel were thrown in with their families, and "they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and shattered all their bones" (Daniel 6:24). The lions were not tame, and they were not full.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 10.11.6 (*Text confirmed*)
Josephus adds a tradition that answers a skeptic's question. Daniel's enemies "would not own that he was preserved by God, and by his providence; but they said that the lions had been filled full with food, and on that account it was, as they supposed, that the lions would not touch Daniel." So the king "gave order that they should throw in a great deal of flesh to the lions; and when they had filled themselves, he gave further order that Daniel's enemies should be cast into the den," and "the lions spared none of them, but tore them all to pieces, as if they had been very hungry." The extra test is not in the Bible, but it shows that even in the ancient world people tried to explain the miracle away, and that the Jewish answer was the same as Daniel 6:24.

What it shows: Notice what Daniel had in common with Jesus. A man with no fault found in him, accused by jealous leaders, condemned under the law by a ruler who wanted to release him, put into a pit with a stone sealed over its mouth, and brought out alive in the morning. The parallels are hard to miss.

Visions and the Rest of the Exile

Ezekiel, a priest taken to Babylon in 597 B.C., saw some of the most amazing visions in the Bible: the glory of God on a living chariot by the river Chebar (Ezekiel 1), the glory leaving the temple (Ezekiel 10-11), and the valley of dry bones coming to life (Ezekiel 37). Daniel saw visions of the empires to come and of the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven (Daniel 7). These are among the most important passages in all of Scripture, but they were visions, seen by the prophets alone, with nothing physical happening outside them, so I have not numbered them.

After the exile, when the Persians let the Jews go home, God worked through providence again. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther tell of kings who changed their minds, enemies who were stopped, and a Jewish queen who was in the right place at the right time. The prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi spoke God's word to the returned exiles. Then, after Malachi, the voice of prophecy went quiet for about four hundred years.

The next time an angel spoke to a man in the temple, it was to announce that the forerunner of the Messiah was about to be born.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think God did so many public miracles in front of pagan kings during the exile?
2. Read Daniel 3:16-18. What does "And if not" mean for your own faith?
3. Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built?" How can pride creep into our view of our own accomplishments?

4. Belshazzar knew what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar and did not learn from it. Why do people repeat the mistakes they have seen others make?

5. Daniel prayed “just as he had been doing from before this.” How did his everyday habit of prayer prepare him for the crisis?

Part Three: The Miracles of Jesus

Chapter 13: The Coming of the Son

> *For with God no declaration will be impossible.*
>
> Luke 1:37 (SLB)

Four hundred years after Malachi, heaven broke the silence. The fourth great season of miracles was about to begin, and it would be the greatest of all, because this time God was not sending a prophet. He was coming Himself.

The miracles around the birth of Jesus are different from the ones that come later in His ministry. Jesus did not perform them. They happened to Him and around Him, as God the Father announced to the world that His Son had arrived. They involved angels, a star, an old priest, a teenage girl, and a group of shepherds on a hillside, and they all point to one thing: the child born in Bethlehem was not just another baby.

123. Gabriel Appears to Zechariah, Who Is Struck Mute

Where to read it: Luke 1:5-23, 57-66
Who God used: The angel Gabriel
Who saw it: Zechariah; the worshipers outside the temple, who saw he could not speak; later, family and neighbors at John's naming

Zechariah was an old priest, and he and his wife Elizabeth were "both righteous before God" (Luke 1:6). They had no children, and they were both old. One day Zechariah was chosen by lot for the honor of a lifetime: burning incense inside the holy place of the temple. While the crowd prayed outside, an angel appeared standing at the right side of the altar.

The angel said, "Do not fear, Zechariah, because your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear a son to you, and you will call his name John" (Luke 1:13). This son would go before the Lord "in ***the*** spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17).

Zechariah asked for proof, and he got it.

> *And answering, the angel said to him, "I am Gabriel, the one standing before God, and I was sent to speak to you and to announce these **things** to you as good news. And look, you will be silent and not able to speak until the day that these **things** happen, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their season."* (Luke 1:19-20)

When Zechariah came out, the people knew he had seen a vision because he could only make signs to them (Luke 1:22). Nine months later, at the baby's naming, the relatives wanted to name him after his father. Zechariah asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "John is his name." "Then his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue, and he was speaking, blessing God" (Luke 1:63-64). The whole hill country of Judea talked about it.

124. Elizabeth Conceives in Her Old Age

Where to read it: Luke 1:24-25, 36-45, 57-58
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Zechariah, Mary, and Elizabeth's neighbors and relatives

"Now after these days Elizabeth his wife conceived" (Luke 1:24). After a lifetime of being unable to have children, she said God "looked upon ***me*** to take away my disgrace among men" (Luke 1:25). When she was six months along, Mary came to visit, and the baby leaped in Elizabeth's womb at the sound of Mary's greeting. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, "and they were rejoicing with her" (Luke 1:58).

The last of the long line of barren women in the Bible gave birth to the last of the Old Testament prophets, the one Jesus called the greatest man ever born of a woman (Matthew 11:11).

125. The Virgin Conception of Jesus

Where to read it: Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-7; Isaiah 7:14; Galatians 4:4
Who God used: God the Holy Spirit
Who saw it: Mary; Joseph, after an angel told him in a dream; Elizabeth, who knew by the Spirit

Six months after Gabriel visited Zechariah, God sent him to Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, to a young woman named Mary who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. Gabriel told her she would conceive and give birth to a son, and name Him Jesus. He would be called the Son of the Most High, and His kingdom would never end.

Mary's question was not doubt like Zechariah's. It was a practical question: how?

> *Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I do not know a man?" And answering, the angel said to her, "**The** Holy Spirit will come upon you, and **the** power of **the** Most High will overshadow you; therefore also the holy **One** being born of you will be called Son of God."*
> (Luke 1:34-35)

Gabriel added, "For with God no declaration will be impossible" (Luke 1:37), and Mary answered with simple faith that she was the Lord's servant.

Joseph, finding his fiancee pregnant, planned to break off the engagement quietly. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "do not fear to take Mary ***as*** your wife, for that which has been conceived in her is from ***the*** Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). Matthew adds that this fulfilled what the Lord had said through Isaiah: "Look, the virgin will have ***a child*** in ***the*** womb, and will bear a son, and they will call His name Immanuel," which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

Nobody saw the moment of conception, but I have counted it as witnessed because Mary herself knew she had never been with a man, and it was confirmed to Joseph and Elizabeth by God. Matthew tells the story from Joseph's side and Luke from Mary's, and Luke says he got his information from careful research among eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-3). Mary herself, who "was treasuring up all these declarations, pondering ***them*** in her heart" (Luke 2:19), is the most likely source.

Outside the Bible: Celsus, quoted in Origen, Against Celsus 1.28 (*Text confirmed*)

Origen reports that the pagan critic Celsus, writing around A.D. 175, accused Jesus "of having 'invented his birth from a virgin.'" Celsus went on to claim that Mary was a poor country woman whose husband, a carpenter, turned her out of the house for unfaithfulness.

Notice that even Christianity's enemies in the second century knew the Christians taught the virgin birth, and they knew there was something unusual about Jesus' birth that needed explaining. Celsus' explanation was scandal. The Gospels' explanation is God.

What it shows: The virgin conception is not a side detail. It is how God the Son became a man without ceasing to be God. He was fully human, born of a woman, and fully God, conceived by the Holy Spirit. Without the miracle at the start of His life, there is no sinless Savior at the end of it.

126. Angels Announce the Birth to the Shepherds

Where to read it: Luke 2:8-20
Who God used: An angel of the Lord, joined by a multitude of the heavenly army
Who saw it: Shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem; Mary and Joseph; everyone the shepherds told

That night, shepherds were living out in the fields near Bethlehem, keeping watch over their flocks. Shepherds were not important people. Their testimony did not even count for much in court. They were the first people God told.

> *And look, an angel of **the** Lord stood by them, and **the** glory of **the** Lord shone around them, and they feared a great fear. And the angel said to them, "Do not fear; for look, I announce to you great joy as good news, which will be to all the people. For there has been born to you today a Savior, who is Christ **the** Lord, in **the** city of David. And this **is** the sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in the manger." And suddenly **there** was with the angel a multitude of **the** heavenly army, praising God and saying, "Glory in **the** highest to God, and on earth peace, among men good will!"* (Luke 2:9-14)

The shepherds hurried into Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger, exactly as they had been told. They told everyone what the angel had said about this child, "And all those who heard marveled" (Luke 2:18). They went back to their sheep "glorifying and praising God for all ***the things*** which they had heard and seen, just as it was spoken to them" (Luke 2:20).

127. The Star Leads the Magi to the Child

Where to read it: Matthew 2:1-12; Numbers 24:17
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The magi from the east; King Herod and all Jerusalem, who were troubled at the news

Some time after Jesus was born, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem asking, "Where is the ***One*** who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:2). The magi were likely wise men or astrologers from Persia or Babylon, possibly from the same class of wise men Daniel had once been placed over. King Herod was alarmed, and the chief priests told him the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

> *And having heard the king, they went away; and look, the star which they saw in the east was going before them, until, having come, it stood over where the child was. And having seen the star, they rejoiced **with** exceedingly great joy.* (Matthew 2:9-10)

What was the star? People have suggested a comet, an exploding star, or a rare lineup of planets. Jupiter and Saturn came together three times in the constellation Pisces in 7 B.C., and some astronomers think that could have caught the attention of Babylonian star watchers. Any of those might explain why the magi set out. None of them explains a star that went ahead of travelers on the road south from Jerusalem and stopped over one particular house in Bethlehem. Ordinary stars and planets do not do that. Whatever God used, the last part of the journey was a miracle.

God then warned the magi in a dream not to go back to Herod, and warned Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt with Mary and the child. Herod, in a rage, killed the baby boys of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:12-18). I have not numbered the dreams, but God's guidance through them saved His Son's life.

128. Heaven Opens, the Spirit Descends, and the Father Speaks at Jesus' Baptism

Where to read it: Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34
Who God used: God the Father and God the Holy Spirit
Who saw it: John the Baptist; the crowds at the Jordan

When Jesus was about thirty, He came from Nazareth to the Jordan to be baptized by John. John tried to stop Him, saying he needed to be baptized by Jesus, not the other way around. Jesus said it was right for them to do it, "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

> *And having been baptized, Jesus immediately went up from the water; and look, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him. And look, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My Son, the beloved, in whom I was well pleased."* (Matthew 3:16-17)

Luke adds that the Spirit came down "in a bodily form as a dove" (Luke 3:22). This was not just an inner feeling. John the Baptist saw it and testified about it: "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him... And I have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God" (John 1:32, 34).

What it shows: Here, at the start of Jesus' ministry, all three Persons of the Trinity show up at once: the Son in the water, the Spirit descending like a dove, and the Father speaking from heaven. Before Jesus had preached a sermon or done a single miracle, His Father said He was well pleased with Him. That is grace.

Jesus' Own Miracles Begin

After His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He fasted forty days and was tempted by the devil. One of the temptations was to do a miracle for Himself: turn these stones into bread. Another was to throw Himself off the top of the temple so angels would catch Him in front of everyone. Jesus refused both (Matthew 4:1-11). That tells us something important before we look at His

miracles. Jesus never did a miracle to serve Himself or to put on a show. Every miracle He did was for His Father's glory and for the good of others.

John tells us that His first sign was at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. That is where the next chapter begins.

Study Questions

1. Zechariah doubted and was struck mute. Mary asked a question and was not. What was the difference between their responses?
2. Read Luke 1:34-38. What does Mary's answer teach us about responding to God when He asks something hard of us?
3. Why do you think God announced the birth of His Son to shepherds first, rather than to kings or priests?
4. What are some of the natural explanations offered for the star of Bethlehem? Why do they fall short of what Matthew describes?
5. At Jesus' baptism, the Father said He was well pleased with His Son before Jesus had done any public ministry. What does that teach us about God's love?

Chapter 14: Jesus, Lord Over Nature

> *And they feared a great fear, and they were saying to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"*
>
> Mark 4:41 (SLB)

The Gospels record about three dozen specific miracles of Jesus, and they also tell us that these were only a small sample. Over and over, the Gospel writers summarize: He healed many, He healed all who came, the whole city gathered at the door. John ends his Gospel by saying that if everything Jesus did were written down, "not even the world itself would have room for the books being written" (John 21:25).

In the next four chapters I have grouped Jesus' miracles by kind: His power over nature, His healings, His power over demons, and the three times He raised the dead. Each entry lists every Gospel that tells the story, and Appendix B puts them all side by side.

The miracles in this chapter are the ones that made His disciples stop and ask, "Who then is this?" Healing the sick was amazing. But only the Creator tells the wind to be quiet and it obeys.

129. Water Turned Into Wine

Where to read it: John 2:1-11
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: His mother Mary, His first disciples, the servants who drew the water, and the master of the feast

Jesus, His mother, and His first disciples were guests at a wedding in Cana, a village in Galilee. Weddings lasted for days, and running out of wine would have been a public embarrassment for the family. Mary told Jesus, "They have no wine." He answered that His hour had not yet come, but she told the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do ***it***" (John 2:3-5).

Six stone water jars were standing nearby, the kind used for Jewish washing rituals, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants to fill them to the brim with water, then draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.

> *Now when the master of the feast tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it was from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast calls the bridegroom and says to him, "Every man sets out the good wine first, and when they have drunk freely, then the inferior; you have kept the good wine until now."* (John 2:9-10)

"This beginning of the signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and He revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11).

What it shows: Jesus' first sign was not a dramatic rescue. It was quiet kindness at a party, so quiet that most of the guests never knew. It also says something about what He came to do. The water jars stood for the old ways of washing and religious rules. Jesus filled them with something better. The best was saved for last.

130. The First Great Catch of Fish

Where to read it: Luke 5:1-11
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John

Jesus borrowed Simon's boat to use as a pulpit while He taught the crowds on the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret, another name for the Sea of Galilee. Afterward He told Simon to put out into deep water and let down the nets. Simon was a professional fisherman, and he knew this was the wrong time of day. "Master, having toiled through the whole night, we took nothing; but at Your declaration I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). They caught so many fish that their nets started to break, and the catch filled two boats so full they began to sink.

Peter's reaction was not "Wow, what a payday." He fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord" (Luke 5:8). Jesus told him, "Do not fear; from now on you will be catching men" (Luke 5:10). They pulled their boats onto shore, left everything, and followed Him.

Outside the Bible: The Galilee boat (*Background*)
In 1986, during a drought that lowered the Sea of Galilee, two brothers from a kibbutz near Ginosar spotted the outline of an ancient wooden boat in the mud. Archaeologists dated it to roughly the first century B.C. to the first century A.D. It is about 27 feet long and 7.5 feet wide, big enough for a crew of about five plus passengers, and it is now on display at Ginosar. Nobody claims it belonged to Peter. But it shows the kind of fishing boat the disciples used, and how a boat like that could fill with water in a storm.

131. Jesus Calms the Storm

Where to read it: Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The disciples in the boat; Mark mentions other boats with them

One evening Jesus told His disciples to cross to the other side of the lake. He was so tired He fell asleep on a cushion in the stern. The Sea of Galilee sits low, about seven hundred feet below sea level, with hills around it, and sudden violent storms still sweep down on it. This was one of those.

> *And a great storm of wind comes, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that it was already being filled. And He Himself was on the stern, sleeping on the cushion. And they wake Him and say to Him, "Teacher, does it not concern You that we are perishing?" And having been awakened, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Be quiet! Be silenced!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.* (Mark 4:37-39)

Anyone who has been on a lake after a storm knows the wind can stop fairly quickly, but the waves keep rolling for a long time. Here the wind stopped, and the water went flat at once. "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mark 4:41). The disciples were more afraid after the storm than during it.

What it shows: These men knew their Bibles. Psalm 107 says of the LORD that "He settled the storm into a calm, and their waves were hushed" (Psalm 107:29). They had just watched Jesus do what the Psalms say only God does.

132. Five Thousand Fed With Five Loaves and Two Fish

Where to read it: Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The Twelve; about five thousand men, besides women and children

This is the only miracle of Jesus, other than the resurrection, that all four Gospels record. Jesus had taken His disciples away to rest after a busy stretch of ministry, but the crowds followed them on foot around the lake. "Jesus saw a great crowd, and He was moved with compassion toward them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd" (Mark 6:34). He taught them all day. When it got late, the disciples wanted to send the people away to buy food. Jesus said, "You give them something to eat."

Philip figured it would take more than half a year's wages to buy bread for that many. Andrew found a boy with five barley loaves and two small fish, "but these, what are they for so many?" (John 6:9). Jesus had the people sit down in groups on the green grass, took the loaves, gave thanks, and handed out the bread and fish through His disciples.

> *And Jesus took the loaves, and having given thanks He distributed **them** to the disciples, and the disciples to those reclining; likewise also of the small fish, as much as they were wanting. And when they were filled, He says to His disciples, "Gather together the fragments that are left over, so that nothing may be lost." Therefore they gathered **them** together and filled twelve baskets of fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over to those having eaten.*
> (John 6:11-13)

"And those eating were about five thousand men, apart from women and children" (Matthew 14:21). With families, the crowd may have been well over ten thousand people.

The crowd got the point, or part of it. They said, "This is truly the Prophet who is coming into the world," and wanted to force Jesus to become their king. He slipped away to the mountain by Himself (John 6:14-15). The next day He told them they were following Him for the free lunch, not for what the sign meant (John 6:26). Then He said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).

What it shows: A boy gave Jesus his lunch, and Jesus fed a multitude with it. What we hand Him never looks like enough. It doesn't have to be. And notice the leftovers. One basket for each disciple who had doubted.

133. Jesus Walks on the Water

Where to read it: Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The Twelve in the boat

That same night, Jesus sent the disciples across the lake by boat while He went up the mountain alone to pray. The wind was against them, and they were straining at the oars for hours. Between three and six in

the morning, they saw Jesus walking toward them on the water. They cried out in fear, "It is a ghost!" (Matthew 14:26). Jesus called back to them at once: "Take courage; I am ***He***; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). The Greek words behind "I am He" are ego eimi, simply "I am," the same words God used of Himself to Moses at the burning bush in the Greek Old Testament.

134. Peter Walks on the Water, and the Boat Reaches Shore at Once

Where to read it: Matthew 14:28-33; John 6:21
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The Twelve in the boat

Only Matthew tells this part. Peter said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the waters." Jesus said, "Come."

> *And He said, "Come." And Peter, having gone down from the boat, walked on the waters to come to Jesus. But seeing the strong wind, he was afraid; and having begun to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus, having stretched out the hand, took hold of him, and says to him, "**You** of little faith, why did you doubt?"* (Matthew 14:29-31)

When they got into the boat, the wind stopped, and the disciples worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are ***the*** Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). John adds one more detail: "immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going" (John 6:21).

I have counted Peter's walk separately from Jesus' walk. Jesus walking on water shows His own power. Peter walking on water shows that He can share it with anyone who trusts Him, for as long as they keep their eyes on Him.

What it shows: People are hard on Peter for sinking, but he was the only one who got out of the boat. And when he sank, he did the right thing. He prayed the shortest prayer in the Bible: "Lord, save me!" Jesus' hand was there immediately.

135. Four Thousand Fed With Seven Loaves

Where to read it: Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10, 19-21
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The disciples; four thousand men, besides women and children, mostly in Gentile territory

Some readers think this is the same story as the five thousand, told twice. But Jesus Himself spoke of them as two separate events, with different numbers of loaves and different numbers of baskets left over (Mark 8:19-21). This time the crowd had been with Him three days in a remote area, likely the Decapolis, a region with many Gentiles, east of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus said, "I am moved with compassion on the crowd, because already three days they remain with Me, and they do not have anything they might eat" (Mark 8:2). Seven loaves and a few small fish fed four thousand men, apart from women and children, with seven large baskets left over (Matthew 15:37-38).

The disciples' question beforehand is almost funny: where could anyone get enough bread out here? They had just seen Him feed five thousand. Jesus later asked them, "How do you not understand?" (Mark 8:21). We are a lot like them. We forget yesterday's miracle the moment today's problem shows up.

136. The Transfiguration

Where to read it: Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1:16-18
Who God used: God the Father, revealing the glory of the Son
Who saw it: Peter, James, and John

About a week after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain to pray.

> *And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as the light.* (Matthew 17:2)

Moses and Elijah appeared with Him, the great lawgiver and the great prophet, talking with Jesus "of His departure which He was about to fulfill in Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). The Greek word for departure is exodos. Peter, not knowing what to say, offered to build three shelters. Then a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My Son, the beloved, in whom I was well pleased; listen to Him" (Matthew 17:5). The disciples fell on their faces, terrified. When they looked up, they saw only Jesus.

Peter never forgot it. Decades later, near the end of his life, he wrote, "For not having followed cleverly devised myths did we make known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but having become eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). He said they heard the voice from heaven themselves, "being with Him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1:18).

What it shows: For a few minutes, the veil was pulled back, and three men saw who Jesus had been the whole time. And notice that Moses and Elijah were not dead, not asleep, and not forgotten. They were alive, in glory, and talking about the cross.

137. A Coin in the Fish's Mouth

Where to read it: Matthew 17:24-27
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: Peter

When Jesus and Peter came to Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax asked Peter whether his teacher paid it. Peter said yes. Jesus pointed out that kings do not tax their own sons, and the temple was His Father's house, so He did not really owe it. "But so that we may not cause them to stumble, having gone to the sea, cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and having opened its mouth, you will find a stater. Having taken that, give ***it*** to them for Me and you" (Matthew 17:27). A stater was a silver coin worth exactly the tax for two people.

Matthew does not actually say what happened next. But it is told as a command, and Matthew, a former tax collector, included it, so I have counted it.

What it shows: Jesus did not have to pay, and He paid anyway, to keep from putting a stumbling block in front of others. That is a good lesson for anyone who likes to stand on their rights.

138. The Fig Tree Withers

Where to read it: Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-25
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The Twelve

The day after Jesus rode into Jerusalem, He saw a fig tree in full leaf. Fig trees put out small early fruit along with their leaves, so a tree full of leaves seemed to promise something to eat. Jesus found nothing but leaves. He said, "May no one eat fruit from you anymore forever," and His disciples heard Him (Mark 11:14). The next morning they passed by and saw the tree dried up from the roots.

This is the only miracle of Jesus that brought harm, and it was to a tree, not a person. Mark sandwiches it around Jesus clearing the temple, where people were buying and selling in the courts of His Father's house. The temple was like that fig tree. It had all the leaves of religion, crowded and busy, and no fruit. Jesus used the withered tree to teach His disciples about faith and prayer (Mark 11:22-25).

Other Signs of His Power

The Gospels mention a few other moments when Jesus' power broke through in unusual ways. When the people of Nazareth tried to throw Him off a cliff, "He Himself, having passed through ***the*** midst of them, was going away" (Luke 4:30). The same kind of thing happened in the temple in John 8:59 and John 10:39. The Gospels don't say whether these were miracles or whether His enemies simply could not bring themselves to act. Either way, nobody could take His life before His time. As He said, "No one takes it away from Me, but I lay it down from Myself" (John 10:18). We will see the most striking example of that in the garden of Gethsemane.

Study Questions

1. Jesus' first sign was at a wedding. What does that tell you about His interest in ordinary life and celebrations?
2. Peter told Jesus, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Why do you think a miracle made him feel his sin?
3. The disciples were more afraid after Jesus calmed the storm than during it. Why?
4. A boy's lunch fed thousands. What small thing could you put in Jesus' hands this week?
5. Peter began to sink when he looked at the wind. What "wind" tends to pull your eyes off Jesus?

Chapter 15: Jesus the Healer

> ***the*** *blind receive sight, and* ***the*** *lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and* ***the*** *deaf hear,* ***the*** *dead are raised, and* ***the*** *poor have the gospel preached* ***to them****.*
>
> Matthew 11:5 (SLB)

More of Jesus' miracles were healings than anything else. If you add up the specific stories in the four Gospels, healings and casting out demons make up most of them. And the specific stories are only part of the picture. Again and again the Gospel writers say things like "great crowds followed Him, and He healed them all" (Matthew 12:15).

When John the Baptist sat in Herod's prison and sent messengers to ask if Jesus really was the One, Jesus didn't give a speech. He told them to report what they had seen: the blind seeing, the lame walking, lepers cleansed, the deaf hearing, the dead raised (Matthew 11:4-5). John would have known exactly what that meant. Isaiah had written about the day God would come to save His people: "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like the deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy" (Isaiah 35:5-6). The healings were the answer to John's question.

This chapter covers the healings of the body. Casting out demons gets its own chapter next, and raising the dead gets the chapter after that.

Every May 29 since 2020, I thank God for another year of sobriety and for what He restored. It is easy to call on God in a crisis and forget to come back once the storm passes. Gratitude keeps us grounded in who actually did the saving.

139. The Royal Official's Son Healed From a Distance

Where to read it: John 4:46-54
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The royal official at Cana; his servants and his whole household at Capernaum, who confirmed the hour

A royal official, likely a man who served Herod Antipas, came about twenty miles from Capernaum to Cana to beg Jesus to come heal his dying son. Jesus did not go with him. He simply said, "Go; your son lives" (John 4:50).

> *Jesus says to him, "Go; your son lives." And the man believed the word that Jesus said to him, and he was going. And as he was already going down, his servants met him and reported, saying, "Your boy lives." Therefore he inquired from them the hour in which he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at* ***the*** *seventh hour the fever left him." Therefore the father knew that* ***it was*** *at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household.* (John 4:50-53)

Notice the detail about the hour. The father checked. The boy got better at the exact moment Jesus spoke, twenty miles away. John calls this the second sign Jesus did after coming from Judea into Galilee (John 4:54).

140. Peter's Mother-in-Law Healed of a Fever

Where to read it: Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John, in Peter's house at Capernaum

"And having come to ***her***, He raised her up, having taken hold of her hand; and the fever left her immediately, and she was ministering to them" (Mark 1:31). There was no slow recovery. A woman who had been lying sick in bed got up and started serving dinner. That evening the whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who were sick (Mark 1:32-34).

Outside the Bible: The house of Peter at Capernaum (*Background*)
Under an eight-sided church from the fifth century at Capernaum, archaeologists found an ordinary house from the first century. One room in it had been plastered and set apart for gatherings early on, and its walls carry scratched inscriptions left by Christian visitors. Many scholars think it is the house the early church believed was Peter's. Nobody can prove that, but the church honored this spot very early.

141. A Leper Cleansed by Jesus' Touch

Where to read it: Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The leper; later the priest, as a testimony to them

Under the Law of Moses, a leper had to live apart and call out "Unclean!" so people would keep their distance (Leviticus 13:45-46). Nobody touched a leper. This man came and knelt in front of Jesus anyway.

> *And a leper comes to Him, imploring Him and kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You are able to cleanse me." And Jesus, having been moved with compassion, having stretched out His hand, touched him and says to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." And when He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.* (Mark 1:40-42)

Jesus could have healed him with a word. He touched him first. That man may not have felt a human hand in years. Jesus then sent him to the priest to offer what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them (Mark 1:44). The priest, who had the job of inspecting skin disease, would become a witness that the man was clean.

142. A Paralyzed Man Let Down Through the Roof

Where to read it: Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The four friends; the crowd in the house; scribes and Pharisees from Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem

The house was so packed that four men carrying their paralyzed friend could not get to the door, so they dug through the roof and lowered him down in front of Jesus. Jesus' first words to him were not about his legs. "Child, your sins have been forgiven you" (Mark 2:5).

The scribes were right about one thing: only God can forgive sins. So Jesus gave them something they could see.

> *But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins" (He says to the paralytic), "I say to you, rise, and take up your mat and go to your house." And immediately he arose, and having taken up the mat, he went out before all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw **it** thus!* (Mark 2:10-12)

What it shows: Anyone can say "your sins are forgiven." Nobody can check. But "get up and walk" can be checked in about two seconds. Jesus did the visible miracle to prove the invisible one. If He can do the one, He has the authority to do the other.

143. The Man at the Pool of Bethesda

Where to read it: John 5:1-15
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The healed man; the Jewish leaders, who questioned him about carrying his mat on the Sabbath

The man had been sick for thirty-eight years. He lay by the pool of Bethesda near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, where crowds of sick people waited for the water to be stirred. Jesus asked him a simple question: "Do you want to become well?" (John 5:6). The man said he had nobody to help him into the pool.

> *Jesus says to him, "Rise, take up your mat and walk." And immediately the man became well, and took up his mat and was walking. Now it was **the** Sabbath on that day.* (John 5:8-9)

Outside the Bible: John 5:3b-4, the angel stirring the water (*Disputed*)
The SLB, like the King James Version, includes a line that says an angel went down into the pool at certain times and stirred the water, and the first one in after that was healed. Many of the oldest Greek manuscripts do not have this line, and some that do have it mark it as doubtful, so many modern translations put it in a footnote. Either way, verse 7 shows that people at the pool believed the stirring brought healing. Jesus did not use the pool at all. He healed the man with a word. I have not counted the angel and the pool as a separate miracle.

Outside the Bible: The pool of Bethesda (*Background*)
North of the temple area, near the Church of St. Anne in Jerusalem, archaeologists have uncovered a large double pool with a wall running between its two basins. Its layout fits John's description of a pool by the Sheep Gate with five porches: four around the sides and one across the middle. For years some critics said John's pool was made

up. The digging there has shown John knew Jerusalem as it was before the Romans destroyed it in A.D. 70.

144. A Withered Hand Restored on the Sabbath

Where to read it: Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The synagogue crowd; the Pharisees, who were watching to accuse Him

The Pharisees were watching to see if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath so they could accuse Him. Jesus called the man up front where everyone could see and asked them a question they would not answer.

> *And He says to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbaths to do good or to do evil, to save a life or to kill?" But they were silent. And having looked around at them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their heart, He says to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched **it** out, and his hand was restored sound as the other.* (Mark 3:4-5)

Their answer was to go out and start planning with the Herodians how to kill Him (Mark 3:6). They had just watched a miracle, and it made them angry instead of grateful. Seeing is not the same as believing.

145. The Centurion's Servant Healed From a Distance

Where to read it: Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The centurion; the Jewish elders and friends he sent; the crowd following Jesus

A Roman centurion, an officer over about a hundred soldiers, had a servant who was paralyzed and close to death. Luke tells us the local Jewish elders spoke up for him because he loved their nation and had built their synagogue. When Jesus started toward the house, the centurion stopped Him.

> *And the centurion, answering, said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof; but only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under myself; and I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does **it**." And Jesus, having heard, marveled and said to those following, "Truly I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith."* (Matthew 8:8-10)

"And his servant was healed in that hour" (Matthew 8:13). The soldier understood authority. If Jesus gave the order, the sickness had to obey, whether Jesus was standing in the room or not.

146. A Woman Healed of Twelve Years of Bleeding

Where to read it: Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The woman; Peter and the disciples; the crowd pressing around Jesus

This woman had been bleeding for twelve years. Under the law that made her ceremonially unclean the whole time (Leviticus 15:25). Mark describes her as "having suffered much under many physicians, and

having spent all that she had, and having benefited nothing, but rather having come to the worse" (Mark 5:26). She came up behind Jesus in the crowd and touched His clothes.

> *And immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she knew in the body that she has been healed of the affliction. And immediately Jesus, having known in Himself that power had gone forth out of Him, having turned around in the crowd, was saying, "Who touched My garments?"* (Mark 5:29-30)

She told Him everything, shaking. He did not scold her. "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace, and be healthy from your affliction" (Mark 5:34). This healing story is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus speaks to someone directly as "daughter." This healing happened on the way to Jairus' house, which we'll come to in Chapter 17.

147. Two Blind Men Receive Their Sight

Where to read it: Matthew 9:27-31
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The two men; everyone in that region they told, though Jesus warned them not to

Two blind men followed Jesus calling Him "Son of David," a title for the Messiah. Inside the house, He asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (Matthew 9:28). They said yes. Jesus touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it come about for you" (Matthew 9:29). "And their eyes were opened" (Matthew 9:30).

148. A Deaf Man With a Speech Problem Healed

Where to read it: Mark 7:31-37
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The people who brought him, and the crowd in the Decapolis

In the Decapolis, a region of mostly Gentile towns east of the Sea of Galilee, people brought Jesus a deaf man who could hardly talk. Jesus took him aside, away from the crowd. He put His fingers in the man's ears, touched his tongue, looked up to heaven, sighed, and said, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened" (Mark 7:34). Jesus used things the man could feel, since he could not hear. "And immediately his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he was speaking correctly" (Mark 7:35). The people said, "He has done all things well; He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak" (Mark 7:37).

149. A Blind Man at Bethsaida Healed in Two Stages

Where to read it: Mark 8:22-26
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The people who brought him; the disciples

This is the only healing in the Gospels that happened in two steps. After Jesus touched him the first time, the man said, "I see the men like trees, walking" (Mark 8:24). Jesus laid His hands on his eyes again, "and he was restored, and he saw everyone clearly" (Mark 8:25).

Why two steps? The Bible doesn't say. It wasn't because Jesus' power ran short. Right after this, Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ but still could not accept that He would suffer (Mark 8:27-33). The disciples were seeing, but not clearly yet. The healing may have been a picture of where they were.

150. A Man Born Blind Healed at the Pool of Siloam

Where to read it: John 9:1-41
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The man; his neighbors; his parents; the Pharisees, who questioned him twice

This is the longest healing story in the Gospels, and it reads like a courtroom. The disciples asked whose sin made this man blind from birth. Jesus said nobody's: "***it was*** so that the works of God might be revealed in him" (John 9:3).

> *Having said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay from the spittle, and He smeared the clay on the eyes of the blind* ***man****. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). Therefore he went away and washed, and came seeing.*
> (John 9:6-7)

Then the investigation started. The neighbors argued about whether it was even the same man. The Pharisees questioned him. They called in his parents, who confirmed he was their son and that he was born blind. Then they questioned him again. The man's answer is one of the best lines in the Bible: "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one ***thing*** I know, that being blind, now I see" (John 9:25). He also pointed out, "Since the age ***began*** it has not been heard that anyone opened ***the*** eyes of one born blind" (John 9:32).

What it shows: This miracle was checked by people who wanted it to be false. They had every reason to find a hole in the story, and they couldn't. The parents confirmed the birth. The neighbors confirmed the man. All the leaders could do was throw him out of the synagogue.

Outside the Bible: The Pool of Siloam (*Background*)
In 2004, city workers repairing a sewer pipe in Jerusalem uncovered stone steps. Archaeologists Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron excavated the site and found a large pool from the time of Jesus, with wide steps leading down into the water, at the south end of the old City of David. Coins and pottery in the plaster date it to the first century. It is very likely the pool where the blind man washed.

151. A Woman Bent Over for Eighteen Years Is Straightened

Where to read it: Luke 13:10-17
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The synagogue crowd and its ruler, who objected because it was the Sabbath

"And look, ***there*** was a woman having a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and she was bent over and was not able to straighten up completely" (Luke 13:11). Jesus called her over and said, "Woman, you have been released from your infirmity" (Luke 13:12). "And He laid ***His*** hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she was glorifying God" (Luke 13:13). The synagogue ruler complained to the crowd

that there were six days for healing. Jesus pointed out that every one of them would untie his ox or donkey on the Sabbath to water it. How much more should this daughter of Abraham be untied from what Satan had bound for eighteen years (Luke 13:15-16)?

152. A Man With Dropsy Healed at a Pharisee's House

Where to read it: Luke 14:1-6
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The Pharisees and lawyers at the meal

Dropsy is an old word for swelling caused by fluid building up in the body, often from heart or kidney trouble. At a Sabbath meal in the home of a leading Pharisee, a man with this condition was right in front of Jesus. Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (Luke 14:3). "But they were silent. And having taken hold ***of him***, He healed him and released ***him***" (Luke 14:4).

153. Ten Lepers Cleansed, and One Comes Back

Where to read it: Luke 17:11-19
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The ten men; the priests they went to show themselves to

Ten lepers stood at a distance and shouted, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" (Luke 17:13). Jesus told them to go show themselves to the priests, which was what a healed leper did. They weren't healed yet when they started walking. "And it came to pass, in their going, they were cleansed" (Luke 17:14).

> *And one of them, having seen that he was healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on **his** face at His feet, giving thanks to Him; and he was a Samaritan. And answering, Jesus said, "Were not the ten cleansed? But the nine, where **are they**? Were none found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"* (Luke 17:15-18)

All ten got their health back. Only one came back to Jesus. Jesus told that man, "your faith has saved you" (Luke 17:19). The other nine got a healing. He got the Healer.

154. Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight at Jericho

Where to read it: Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: His disciples and the large crowd leaving Jericho

Bartimaeus was a blind beggar sitting beside the road out of Jericho. When he heard Jesus was passing, he started shouting, "Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47). The crowd told him to be quiet. He shouted louder.

> *And Jesus, answering, says to him, "What do you desire **that** I should do for you?" And the blind **man** said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive sight." And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has saved you." And immediately he received sight and was following Jesus on the way.* (Mark 10:51-52)

Matthew mentions two blind men there, and Mark and Luke focus on one, the one people knew by name. Mark may have named him because the early church knew him. The first thing Bartimaeus did with his new eyes was follow Jesus up the road toward Jerusalem, where Jesus was about to die.

155. Malchus' Ear Healed in Gethsemane

Where to read it: Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10-11
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: Peter and the disciples; the soldiers and officers who came to arrest Jesus

When the mob came to arrest Jesus, Peter pulled a sword and cut off the right ear of the high priest's slave. John gives us his name: Malchus (John 18:10). Jesus told Peter to stop. "And having touched his ear, He healed him" (Luke 22:51).

This was Jesus' last healing before the cross, and He did it for a man who came to arrest Him. Everyone there saw it, and they took Him anyway.

What His Enemies Admitted

Jesus' enemies did not deny that He did these things. They argued about where His power came from. The Pharisees said He cast out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons (Matthew 12:24). A hundred and fifty years later, the pagan writer Celsus said the same kind of thing in a different way.

Outside the Bible: Celsus, quoted in Origen, Against Celsus 1.28 (*Text confirmed*)

Celsus claimed that Jesus, "having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God."

Celsus was trying to tear Jesus down, and he still did not say the miracles never happened. He said they were Egyptian magic. That is the same move the Pharisees made, and it tells us that the reports of Jesus' miracles were too widely known for even His critics to wave away.

Chapter 3 covers the other outside witnesses, including the line in Josephus that calls Jesus a doer of startling deeds, which is in a disputed passage.

Study Questions

1. Jesus touched the leper before He healed him. Who in your life might need you to come close when others keep their distance?
2. Why did Jesus forgive the paralyzed man's sins before He healed his legs? What does that say about our greatest need?
3. The Pharisees saw the withered hand healed and went out to plan Jesus' death. What keeps people from believing even when they see the evidence?
4. Read John 9:24-34. How did the healed man handle pressure from the religious leaders? What can you learn from him?

5. Ten lepers were healed and only one came back to thank Jesus. When was the last time you went back to thank God for something He did?

Chapter 16: Jesus and the Powers of Darkness

> *The one who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil sins from **the** beginning. For this **purpose** the Son of God was revealed, so that He might destroy the works of the devil.*
>
> 1 John 3:8 (SLB)

Some people today are uncomfortable with this part of the Gospels. Demons sound like something out of a movie, and it is tempting to explain every one of these stories as epilepsy or mental illness that ancient people didn't understand. The Gospel writers were not that naive. They knew the difference between sickness and demons, and they often list them separately. Luke, a doctor, writes that people brought "all who had ***any*** ailing with various diseases," and then adds, "And demons also were coming out from many" (Luke 4:40-41). Some people were sick. Some were oppressed by evil spirits. Some, like the boy in this chapter, had both.

Jesus treated demons as real, and so does the rest of the Bible. What stands out in these stories is not how strong the demons are. It is how quickly they give up. Not one of them argues its way out. They beg.

How Jesus Did It

Exorcists were not unknown in Jesus' day. Jesus Himself mentions that the Pharisees had followers who cast out demons (Matthew 12:27). Josephus describes one of them.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 8.2.5 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus says he saw "a certain man of my own country, whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian, and his sons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers." Eleazar put a ring to the person's nose, "reciting the incantations" said to come from Solomon, and set out a cup of water for the demon to knock over on its way out as proof.

Compare that with what you are about to read. Eleazar needed a ring, incantations, and a stunt with a cup. Jesus spoke, and the demon left. That is why the crowd at Capernaum asked, "What is this?"

156. An Unclean Spirit Cast Out in the Synagogue at Capernaum

Where to read it: Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The whole congregation at the synagogue in Capernaum

This is the first miracle Mark records. Jesus was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath, and the people were already amazed because He taught with authority, not like the scribes. Then a man with an unclean spirit cried out.

> *saying, "Ha! What **is there** to us and to You, Jesus **the** Nazarene? Did You come to destroy us? I know You, who You are: the Holy **One** of God." And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silenced, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, having thrown him into convulsions and having cried*

> *out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all astonished, so as to question among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new teaching **is** this, that with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him?"* (Mark 1:24-27)

The demon knew exactly who Jesus was before the people did. Jesus would not accept its testimony. He told it to be quiet. Truth from the mouth of a demon was not the witness He wanted.

157. Legion Cast Out of the Man in the Tombs

Where to read it: Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The disciples; the men feeding the pigs; the people of the town and countryside who came out to see

On the east side of the Sea of Galilee, in Gentile country, a man lived among the tombs. Nobody could hold him. He had broken every chain they put on him, "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones" (Mark 5:5). When he saw Jesus, he ran and fell down in front of Him.

Jesus asked his name. "Legion ***is*** my name, because we are many" (Mark 5:9). A Roman legion was several thousand soldiers. The demons begged to be sent into a herd of pigs nearby, and Jesus allowed it.

> *And immediately Jesus allowed them. And having gone out, the unclean spirits entered into the pigs; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea (now they were about two thousand), and they were drowned in the sea. And those feeding the pigs fled and reported **it** in the city and in the fields. And they went out to see what it is that has happened. And they come to Jesus and see the **one** being demonized sitting and clothed and being of sound mind, the **one** having had the legion; and they were afraid.* (Mark 5:13-15)

Two thousand pigs going over a cliff is not something people forget or make up. The townspeople saw the result for themselves, and it scared them so much that they asked Jesus to leave. The healed man wanted to go with Jesus. Jesus told him to go home and tell his people "how much the Lord did for you" (Mark 5:19). He did, all through the Decapolis, the ten Gentile cities on that side of the lake, "and all were marveling" (Mark 5:20).

Matthew mentions two men, and Mark and Luke tell the story of the one who did the talking and became a witness afterward. The three writers also name the area in slightly different ways (Gerasenes, Gadarenes), probably because the town and the larger district had different names.

Outside the Bible: Kursi, on the eastern shore (*Background*)

At Kursi, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, a large Byzantine church and monastery were uncovered after road building in 1970. It is one of the few places on that shore where steep slopes come down close to the water. The early church believed this was where the pigs ran into the sea. We can't be sure, but it shows the geography in the Gospels fits the real lake.

158. A Mute Man Speaks When the Demon Is Cast Out

Where to read it: Matthew 9:32-34
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The crowds; the Pharisees

"And when the demon had been cast out, the mute ***man*** spoke" (Matthew 9:33). The crowds were amazed and said, "Never has it been seen like this in Israel!" (Matthew 9:33). The Pharisees had a different explanation: He did it by the ruler of the demons (Matthew 9:34). Notice again that nobody denied it happened.

159. A Blind and Mute Man Set Free

Where to read it: Matthew 12:22-30; Luke 11:14-23
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The crowds; the Pharisees

"Then one who was demon-possessed, blind and mute, was brought to Him; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute ***man*** both spoke and saw" (Matthew 12:22). The crowds started asking whether this could be the Son of David, the Messiah. The Pharisees said again that He did it by Beelzebul.

Jesus answered with plain logic. A kingdom divided against itself falls. If Satan were casting out Satan, his kingdom would be finished. Then He said what it really meant: "But if I cast out the demons by ***the*** finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). "The finger of God" is the same phrase Pharaoh's magicians used when they could not copy the third plague (Exodus 8:19).

160. The Syrophoenician Woman's Daughter Freed From a Distance

Where to read it: Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The mother, who found her daughter well at home; the disciples

Jesus went north into the region of Tyre and Sidon, outside Israel. A Gentile woman found Him and begged Him to cast a demon out of her little daughter. Jesus' first answer sounds hard: the children's bread should not be thrown to the little dogs. She did not take offense. She took Him at His word.

> *But she answered and says to Him, "Yes, Lord; for even the little dogs under the table eat from the crumbs of the little children." And He said to her, "Because of this word, go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." And having gone away to her house, she found the demon having gone out, and the daughter having been laid on the bed.* (Mark 7:28-30)

Matthew says Jesus told her, "O woman, great ***is*** your faith!" (Matthew 15:28). The only two people Jesus praised for great faith in the Gospels were both Gentiles: this mother and the Roman centurion in Chapter 15. Both of their miracles happened at a distance.

161. A Boy Freed From a Spirit That Threw Him Into Fire and Water

Where to read it: Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The father; the nine disciples who had failed; the scribes; the crowd

While Jesus was on the mountain of the Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, the other nine disciples were down below trying and failing to cast a demon out of a boy. The father told Jesus it had thrown his son into fire and water since childhood to destroy him. "But if You are able ***to do*** anything, help us, having compassion on us" (Mark 9:22).

> *And Jesus said to him, "If you are able to believe, all things **are** possible to the **one** believing." And immediately the father of the child, having cried out with tears, was saying, "I believe, Lord; help my unbelief."* (Mark 9:23-24)

That father's prayer is one of the most honest in the Bible, and Jesus answered it. He rebuked the spirit, and it came out so violently that the boy lay there like a dead man. "But Jesus, having taken hold of him by the hand, raised him up, and he arose" (Mark 9:27). When the disciples asked privately why they couldn't do it, He said, "This kind is able to come out by nothing except by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29). Some older manuscripts have only "prayer" here, without "and fasting." Either way the point is the same: the power was never in them.

162. Seven Demons Cast Out of Mary Magdalene

Where to read it: Mark 16:9; Luke 8:1-3
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The Twelve and the women who traveled with Jesus

The Gospels do not tell the story of when this happened. Luke simply lists her among the women who traveled with Jesus and supported Him: "Mary, the one called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out" (Luke 8:2). I have counted it because it was clearly an event that the people around Jesus knew about.

Look at what happened to her afterward. She stood at the cross when most of the disciples ran. She was at the tomb early Sunday morning. And she was the first person to see Jesus after He rose from the dead (John 20:11-18). The woman who had once been held by seven demons became the first witness of the resurrection.

Outside the Bible: Magdala (*Background*)
Magdala was a fishing town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, a few miles from Capernaum. Excavations that began in 2009 uncovered a first century synagogue there, with a carved stone block showing a seven-branched lampstand. It is one of the few synagogues found in Galilee from the time of Jesus.

Others Who Cast Out Demons in His Name

Jesus gave the Twelve "authority over unclean spirits" when He sent them out (Mark 6:7), and they "were casting out many demons" (Mark 6:13). Later He sent out seventy more, and they came back thrilled:

“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name” (Luke 10:17). Jesus said, “I was watching Satan fall like lightning out of heaven” (Luke 10:18). I have not given these separate numbers because the Bible gives no individual stories, but they belong in the record.

Peter later summed up Jesus’ whole ministry for a Roman officer this way: God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and He “went about doing good and healing all those being oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him” (Acts 10:38).

Study Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus would not let the demons announce who He was, even though what they said was true?
2. Compare how Eleazar cast out demons, according to Josephus, with how Jesus did it. What difference stands out to you?
3. The people near the tombs saw the healed man sitting and clothed and in his right mind, and they asked Jesus to leave. Why would anyone respond that way?
4. “I believe, Lord; help my unbelief.” Have you ever prayed something like that? What does it tell you that Jesus answered it?
5. Mary Magdalene went from being bound by seven demons to being the first witness of the resurrection. What does her story say about what Jesus can do with a life?

Chapter 17: Jesus Raises the Dead

> *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The **one** believing in Me, even if he dies, will live,"*
>
> John 11:25 (SLB)

Healing a fever is one thing. Some people get better on their own. Death is different. Nobody gets better from being dead. When Jesus listed the signs for John the Baptist, He put "the dead are raised" right before the end of the list (Matthew 11:5), and the Gospels give us three specific times He did it: a twelve-year-old girl who had just died, a young man on the way to his burial, and a grown man who had been in the tomb four days.

In the Old Testament, Elijah and Elisha each raised a boy from the dead (Chapters 9 and 10). They prayed, and they stretched themselves out on the child. Jesus took a hand or touched a funeral stretcher and gave an order.

I drifted from God more than once through my own bad choices. In those seasons, trusting my own judgment felt easier than taking Scripture at face value. Reading the Bible literally showed me that Jesus means exactly what He says. Faith grows when we stop editing God's Word to fit what feels possible to us.

163. Jairus' Daughter Raised

Where to read it: Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: Peter, James, and John; the girl's father and mother; the mourners who laughed at Jesus

Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue, a respected man in town. His only daughter, about twelve, was dying, and he fell at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come. On the way, Jesus stopped to deal with the woman who had touched His clothes (Chapter 15). Then the messengers arrived. "Your daughter died; why do you still trouble the Teacher?" (Mark 5:35). Jesus told Jairus, "Do not fear; only believe" (Mark 5:36).

At the house the professional mourners were already wailing. When Jesus said the child was only sleeping, "they were laughing at Him" (Mark 5:40). They knew she was dead. Jesus sent them all out and took only the parents and His three closest disciples into the room.

> *And having taken hold of the hand of the child, He says to her, "Talitha koumi," which is, being translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." And immediately the little girl arose and was walking; for she was twelve years **old**. And they were amazed with great amazement.*
> (Mark 5:41-42)

Mark keeps the actual Aramaic words Jesus said, "Talitha koumi." That is the kind of detail that sticks in an eyewitness's memory, and the early church believed Mark wrote down Peter's account, and Peter was in the room. Luke adds, "And her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately" (Luke 8:55). Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. She was not a ghost. She was a hungry little girl.

164. The Widow's Son Raised at Nain

Where to read it: Luke 7:11-17
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: His disciples; a large crowd traveling with Him; the funeral procession from the town

Two crowds met at the gate of a small town called Nain. One was following Jesus. The other was carrying a dead young man out to be buried. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow. In that world, a widow with no son had no one left to provide for her.

> *And having seen her, the Lord felt compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." And having come up, He touched the bier, and those carrying **it** stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead **man** sat up and began to speak, and He gave him to his mother.* (Luke 7:13-15)

Nobody asked Jesus to do this. There is no mention of anyone's faith. He saw a grieving mother, and He had compassion. The people said, "A great prophet has been raised up among us!" and, "God has visited His people!" (Luke 7:16). Nain is only a few miles from Shunem, where Elisha had raised another mother's son centuries before (2 Kings 4:8-37). The crowd would not have missed that.

Outside the Bible: Nain (*Background*)
An Arab village called Nein still sits on the slope of the Hill of Moreh in lower Galilee, near the ancient site of Shunem, and it is generally identified with the Nain of Luke 7.

165. Lazarus Raised After Four Days in the Tomb

Where to read it: John 11:1-46; 12:9-11, 17-18
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: Mary and Martha; the disciples; many Jews who had come from Jerusalem to comfort the sisters; later a large crowd who came to see Lazarus

This is the last and greatest of Jesus' signs in John's Gospel before the cross, and John tells it slowly.

Lazarus lived in Bethany, a village about two miles from Jerusalem, with his sisters Mary and Martha. Jesus loved all three of them. When Lazarus got sick, the sisters sent word to Jesus. And Jesus waited two more days before He went. By the time He arrived, "he had already been four days in the tomb" (John 11:17). Later Jewish writings (Genesis Rabbah 100.7) say the soul was thought to hover near the body for three days and then leave for good. Whatever people believed about that, after four days nobody doubted it. Lazarus was dead.

Martha met Him on the road. Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The ***one*** believing in Me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone living and believing in Me will certainly never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). Then Mary came and fell at His feet, weeping, and the people with her were weeping, and the shortest verse in the Bible tells us what Jesus did: "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). He knew what He was about to do, and He still wept with them.

> *Jesus says, "Take away the stone." The sister of the **one** who had died, Martha, says to Him, "Lord, already he stinks, for he is four days **dead**." Jesus says to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Therefore they took away the stone where the **one** who had died was laid. And Jesus lifted **His** eyes upward and said, "Father, I thank You that You heard Me. And I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the crowd standing around I said **it**, so that they may believe that You sent Me." And having said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" And the **one** who had died came out, bound feet and hands with linen strips, and his face had been bound around with a cloth. Jesus says to them, "Unbind him and allow **him** to go."* (John 11:39-44)

Look at how the religious leaders responded. They did not say it was a trick. They called a council and said, "What are we doing? For this man does many signs. If we let Him alone like this, all will believe in Him" (John 11:47-48). From that day on, they planned to kill Him (John 11:53). Then they planned to kill Lazarus too, "because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus" (John 12:11). You don't plot to kill a man who never died. Lazarus was walking evidence.

What it shows: Jesus raised Lazarus, but Lazarus would die again someday. This miracle was a preview. A few days later Jesus Himself would die and rise, never to die again, and He promises the same resurrection to everyone who believes in Him.

Outside the Bible: Bethany and the tomb of Lazarus (*Background*)

The village of Bethany is today the Palestinian town of al-Eizariya, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Its Arabic name comes from the name Lazarus. Christians were pointing to a tomb there as Lazarus' tomb by the fourth century, when the Bordeaux pilgrim (A.D. 333) and Eusebius both mention it. Whether it is the actual tomb can't be proven, but the memory of the miracle stayed tied to the town.

Witnesses Who Lived On

Who did Jesus raise, and what happened to them afterward? The Bible doesn't say, but one early Christian writer does. Quadratus, writing to the emperor Hadrian around A.D. 125, said that people Jesus healed and raised from the dead were seen for a long time afterward.

Outside the Bible: Quadratus, quoted in Eusebius, Church History 4.3.2 (*Text confirmed*)

"those that were healed, and those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when they were healed and when they were raised, but were also always present; and not merely while the Saviour was on earth, but also after his death, they were alive for quite a while, so that some of them lived even to our day."

Chapter 3 tells more about Quadratus and why this short sentence matters. His full letter is lost, so we have these words only because Eusebius copied them.

Study Questions

1. The mourners laughed at Jesus when He said the girl was only sleeping. When have you found it hard to take Jesus at His word?
2. Nobody asked Jesus to raise the widow's son. What does that story tell you about His heart?

3. Why do you think Jesus waited two days before going to Bethany?

4. “Jesus wept,” even though He knew He was about to raise Lazarus. What does that tell you about how He feels about your grief?

5. The leaders wanted to kill Lazarus because he was living proof. How is your life evidence of what Jesus has done?

Chapter 18: The Cross and the Empty Tomb

> *And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching **is** empty, and your faith also **is** empty.*
>
> 1 Corinthians 15:14 (SLB)

Everything in this book leads here. Paul said it plainly: if Jesus did not rise from the dead, Christianity is empty, and "your faith ***is*** futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). The Christian faith does not just include a miracle. It stands or falls on one.

The last week of Jesus' life was full of signs. Some happened around Him as He was arrested and as He died. Then came the greatest miracle in history, followed by forty days of appearances and His return to heaven. This chapter takes them in order.

166. The Arresting Party Falls to the Ground at "I Am He"

Where to read it: John 18:1-11
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The Roman cohort and temple officers; Judas; the disciples

A detachment of soldiers and temple officers came to the garden with lanterns, torches, and weapons, led by Judas. Jesus did not hide. He walked out to meet them.

> *Therefore Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, having gone out, said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus says to them, "I am **He**." And Judas also, who was delivering Him up, was standing with them. Therefore when He said to them, "I am **He**," they went backward and fell to the ground.* (John 18:4-6)

Armed men fell flat at two words from an unarmed man. Then Jesus let them take Him. He healed Malchus' ear in the same scene (Chapter 15). John wants us to see that nobody took Jesus by force. He went to the cross on purpose, just as He said: "No one takes it away from Me, but I lay it down from Myself" (John 10:18).

167. Darkness Over the Land for Three Hours

Where to read it: Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44-45
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Everyone at Golgotha and in Jerusalem: the soldiers, the priests and scribes, the crowd, and Jesus' mother and friends

"And it was about ***the*** sixth hour, and darkness came over all the land until ***the*** ninth hour. And the sun was darkened" (Luke 23:44-45). The Jewish day counted hours from sunrise, so this was from about noon to three in the afternoon, in the middle of the day.

It was not an ordinary eclipse. Passover was always held at the full moon, and a solar eclipse can only happen at the new moon, when the moon is between the earth and the sun. Even then, a total solar eclipse lasts only a few minutes, not three hours.

Outside the Bible: Phlegon, cited in Origen, Against Celsus 2.33 (*Disputed*)

Origen, writing around A.D. 248, says: "And with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Cæsar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place, Phlegon too, I think, has written in the thirteenth or fourteenth book of his Chronicles."

Phlegon was a freedman of the emperor Hadrian who wrote a chronicle in the second century. His book is lost. Origen and other early Christian writers say he recorded a great eclipse and earthquake in the reign of Tiberius, but we only have their summaries, Origen himself writes "I think," and Phlegon may have been describing a different event. I list it as disputed.

Outside the Bible: Thallus, cited by Julius Africanus (*Disputed*)

Julius Africanus, a Christian historian writing around A.D. 221, said that a writer named Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explained the darkness at the crucifixion away as an eclipse of the sun, and Africanus argued that was impossible at the full moon. Africanus' own work is also lost. Only a quotation of it survives in a Byzantine chronicle by George Syncellus from around A.D. 800. If the report is accurate, it means a non-Christian writer, possibly as early as the first century, knew about the darkness and felt he had to explain it. But we have it at third hand, and nobody is sure when Thallus wrote, so I list it as disputed.

168. The Veil of the Temple Torn From Top to Bottom

Where to read it: Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Not named; the priests serving in the temple that afternoon would have seen it

"And look, the veil of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51). This was the great curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, where only the high priest could go, once a year, with blood. It tore at three in the afternoon, the hour of the evening sacrifice, when priests would have been at work in the temple.

It tore from top to bottom. No man reached up and started the tear. God did.

What it shows: The way into God's presence was open. Hebrews says we now have "confidence for the entrance into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19-20).

169. The Earth Shakes and the Rocks Split

Where to read it: Matthew 27:51, 54
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The centurion and the soldiers guarding Jesus

At the moment Jesus died, "the earth was shaken, and the rocks were split" (Matthew 27:51). The Roman officer in charge of the execution had seen many men die on crosses. This was different. "And the

centurion and those with him keeping guard over Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were happening, feared greatly" (Matthew 27:54). They said, "Truly this was God's Son" (Matthew 27:54).

170. Saints Raised and Seen in Jerusalem

Where to read it: Matthew 27:52-53
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: "Many" in Jerusalem, according to Matthew

> *and the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and having come out of the tombs after His resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared to many.* (Matthew 27:52-53)

Only Matthew records this, and he gives it just two verses. He doesn't tell us who they were or what happened to them afterward. Bible teachers who all believe it happened read the details differently. Some think the tombs opened at the earthquake on Friday but the saints came out on Sunday, after Jesus rose. Others think they were raised to ordinary life and died again later, like Lazarus. Others think they were raised with new bodies and went to heaven with Jesus. The text doesn't settle it, and I won't pretend it does. What is clear is the message: Jesus' death broke the power of the grave, and His resurrection is the "firstfruits" of a great harvest to come (1 Corinthians 15:20).

171. Jesus Rises From the Dead

Where to read it: Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18; Acts 2:24, 32; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8
Who God used: Jesus, raised by the Father through the Spirit (John 10:18; Acts 2:24; Romans 8:11)
Who saw it: No one saw the moment itself; the empty tomb was seen by the women, Peter, and John; the risen Jesus was seen by more than five hundred people (see the list below)

On Friday afternoon, Jesus died on a Roman cross. A Roman soldier put a spear in His side to make sure (John 19:34). Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the council, and Nicodemus wrapped His body and laid it in Joseph's new tomb cut out of rock, and a large stone was rolled across the door. The chief priests remembered that Jesus had said He would rise after three days, so they asked Pilate for a guard. "And having gone, they made the tomb secure, having sealed the stone, with the guard" (Matthew 27:66).

Early Sunday morning, the tomb was empty.

> *And the angel, answering, said to the women, "Do not fear, you; for I know that you seek Jesus, who has been crucified. He is not here; for He has been raised, just as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord was lying."* (Matthew 28:5-6)

Notice who raised Him. The Bible says the Father raised Him (Acts 2:24), the Spirit raised Him (Romans 8:11), and Jesus said He would raise Himself: "I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again" (John 10:18). All three Persons of God were at work, just as at His baptism. This was a miracle of the one God.

172. An Angel Rolls Away the Stone, and the Guards Fall Like Dead Men

Where to read it: Matthew 28:2-4; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-7; John 20:11-13
Who God used: An angel of the Lord (Luke and John mention two)
Who saw it: The guards at the tomb; the women who came with spices; later Mary Magdalene

> *And look, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of **the** Lord, having descended out of heaven, having come, rolled away the stone from the door, and was sitting on it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And from the fear of him those keeping guard trembled and became as dead **men**.* (Matthew 28:2-4)

The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out. It was rolled away to let the witnesses in. The guards went to the chief priests and reported everything, and the priests paid them to say, "His disciples, having come by night, stole Him while we were sleeping" (Matthew 28:13). Matthew adds that this story was still going around when he wrote (Matthew 28:15).

Think about that cover story. It admits the tomb was empty. Nobody was claiming the body was still there. The only argument was about how it got out.

He Was Seen Alive

The risen Jesus was not a vision seen by one person in a dark room. He was seen by individuals and by groups, indoors and outdoors, by friends and by a skeptic and by an enemy, over forty days. "He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many clear proofs, appearing to them during forty days" (Acts 1:3). Here are the appearances the New Testament records.

Who saw Him	Where	Reference
Mary Magdalene	At the tomb	John 20:11-18; Mark 16:9
The other women	Near the tomb	Matthew 28:8-10
Peter (Cephas)	Not stated	Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5
Two disciples, one named Cleopas	On the road to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-35
The disciples, without Thomas	A locked room in Jerusalem	Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-23
The disciples, with Thomas	The same room, eight days later	John 20:26-29
Seven disciples	The Sea of Galilee	John 21:1-23
The eleven	A mountain in Galilee	Matthew 28:16-20
More than five hundred at one time	Not stated	1 Corinthians 15:6
James, His brother	Not stated	1 Corinthians 15:7
The apostles	Near Bethany, at the ascension	Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:3-9
Paul (Saul of Tarsus)	The road to Damascus	Acts 9:1-9; 1 Corinthians 15:8

173. Jesus Appears Alive to His Followers Over Forty Days

Where to read it: Luke 24:13-49; John 20:19-29; 21:1-23; Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:5-8
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: Individuals and groups, more than five hundred people in all, as listed in this chapter

I have given the appearances one number, but each one was its own miracle. He came into a locked room (John 20:19). He vanished from sight at Emmaus (Luke 24:31). He showed them the nail marks and the spear wound. He was no ghost: "touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, just as you see Me having" (Luke 24:39). Then He ate a piece of broiled fish in front of them (Luke 24:42-43).

Thomas had said he would not believe unless he put his finger in the nail marks. Eight days later Jesus invited him to do exactly that, and Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

174. The Second Great Catch: 153 Fish

Where to read it: John 21:1-14
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, and two other disciples

This miracle bookends the first catch in Chapter 14. Seven disciples fished all night on the Sea of Galilee and caught nothing. At dawn a man on the shore told them to throw the net on the right side of the boat. "Therefore they cast, and they were no longer able to haul it in because of the multitude of the fish" (John 21:6). John knew right away: "It is the Lord!" (John 21:7). Someone counted the fish, and John wrote the number down: "a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn" (John 21:11). That is the kind of detail a fisherman remembers.

Jesus had breakfast cooking on a fire on the beach. Over that meal He restored Peter, who had denied Him three times, by asking three times, "Do you love Me?" (John 21:15-17).

175. Jesus Ascends Into Heaven

Where to read it: Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11
Who God used: God the Father, receiving the Son
Who saw it: The apostles on the Mount of Olives near Bethany; two angels

After forty days, Jesus led His disciples out toward Bethany on the Mount of Olives.

> *And having said these things, while they were looking, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him from their eyes. And as they were looking intently into heaven as He was going, then look, two men stood by them in white clothing, who also said, "Galilean men, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same manner as you watched Him going into heaven."* (Acts 1:9-11)

The angels' promise is the bridge to Chapter 23. He left from the Mount of Olives in a cloud, and He will come back the same way.

Outside the Bible: The ending of Mark, Mark 16:9-20 (*Disputed*)
The SLB, like the King James Version, includes Mark 16:9-20. Two of the oldest complete Greek manuscripts of

the New Testament, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, both from the 300s, end Mark at 16:8. Most of the later manuscripts include these verses, and Irenaeus quoted Mark 16:19 around A.D. 180. Bible-believing scholars disagree about whether Mark wrote them. Nothing in these verses is needed to prove the resurrection, because Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, and Paul all record it. I have cited Mark 16:9-20 only where another passage says the same thing.

Why I Believe It Happened

You might ask, "How can anyone be sure something happened two thousand years ago?" It is a fair question. Here is what convinces me, and none of it requires you to assume the Bible is God's Word before you start.

1. **The tomb was empty.** The disciples preached the resurrection in Jerusalem, a short walk from the tomb. If the body were still there, the authorities could have ended Christianity in an afternoon by producing it. Instead, they paid the guards to say the body was stolen (Matthew 28:11-15), which admits it was gone.
2. **Women found it first.** In that culture a woman's testimony carried little weight. If the disciples had made the story up, they would never have made women the first witnesses. The Gospels even admit the men didn't believe the women at first: their words "appeared before them like nonsense" (Luke 24:11). Writers don't invent details that make their own heroes look bad.
3. **The list of witnesses is very early.** In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, written around A.D. 55, Paul repeats a summary of the gospel he says he "received" and passed on. Many scholars, including skeptical ones, date that summary to within a few years of the crucifixion. Paul added that most of the five hundred were still alive. In other words, go ask them.
4. **A skeptic and an enemy changed sides.** Jesus' own brothers did not believe in Him during His ministry: "For not even His brothers were believing in Him" (John 7:5). After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to James, and James became a leader of the church in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19). Josephus confirms that James was put to death for his faith around A.D. 62 (Chapter 3). Paul had been hunting Christians down until he met the risen Jesus. What makes a man die for the claim that his own brother is the Lord?
5. **The disciples were willing to suffer for it.** People will die for something they believe is true. Nobody dies for something they know is a lie. The apostles were in a position to know whether they had seen Him, and they went to prison, beatings, and in most cases death without backing down.
6. **The movement did not die.** The Roman historian Tacitus, who had no love for Christians, wrote that Christ "suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out" (Annals 15.44). Executing the leader should have finished it. Something made it break out again. The disciples said what it was.

Outside the Bible: Tacitus, Annals 15.44 (*Text confirmed*)

"Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome."

Tacitus wrote around A.D. 116 about Nero's persecution of Christians after the great fire of Rome in A.D. 64. He confirms the death of Christ under Pilate. He does not mention the resurrection, but he does tell us the faith

came roaring back after Christ's death, which is exactly what the Bible says happened.

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 20.9.1 (*Text confirmed*)

The high priest Ananus "assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others," and had them stoned.

Most scholars, including many who doubt the longer Testimonium passage in Chapter 3, accept this line as written by Josephus. It confirms that James, Jesus' brother, died for his faith.

"This has not been done in a corner," Paul told King Agrippa (Acts 26:26). The resurrection was a public event, preached in the same city, to the same people, within weeks.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think the arresting party fell to the ground when Jesus said "I am He," and then took Him anyway?
2. What does the torn veil mean for how you can come to God today?
3. The guards' cover story admitted the tomb was empty. Why does that matter?
4. Which of the six reasons in this chapter do you find the most convincing? Why?
5. Paul said that if Christ is not raised, our faith is empty. If He is raised, what difference should that make in your life this week?

Part Four: The Apostles, the Enemy, and the Days Ahead

Chapter 19: The Church Is Born

> *God bearing witness with **them**, both by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by distributions of **the** Holy Spirit according to His will.*
>
> Hebrews 2:4 (SLB)

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, and then to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). The book of Acts follows that exact path, and miracles go with the message every step of the way.

This is the fourth great season of miracles. Notice how the apostles did them. They never claimed the power was theirs. Peter told the crowd at the temple, "why do you look intently at us, as if by our own power or godliness we had made him walk?" (Acts 3:12). They acted in the name of Jesus, and God backed up their message about Jesus with signs, just as Hebrews says.

This chapter covers the miracles in Jerusalem and the land of Israel, mostly through Peter. The next chapter follows Paul.

For five straight years I helped lead youth mission trips to Baja, Mexico, with teams of 16 to 45 kids, ages 12 to 20 and up. A trip like that teaches you to depend on God for everything. You pray before you go and you pray the whole way. God delights in answering prayers that stretch our faith.

176. The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

Where to read it: Acts 2:1-41
Who God used: The Holy Spirit
Who saw it: The 120 believers; Jews from every nation who were in Jerusalem for the feast

Pentecost was a harvest feast fifty days after Passover, and Jerusalem was packed with Jewish pilgrims from all over the Roman world and beyond. The believers were together in one place.

> *And suddenly **there** came out of heaven a sound as of a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And **there** appeared to them tongues being distributed, as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with **the** Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues, just as the Spirit was giving them to speak forth.* (Acts 2:2-4)

The noise drew a crowd, and the crowd was stunned, "because each one was hearing them speaking in his own language" (Acts 2:6). Luke lists fifteen different nations and regions. These were real languages that real people recognized, spoken by Galileans who had never learned them. Some people mocked and said they were drunk. Peter stood up and said it was nine in the morning, far too early for that, and this was what the prophet Joel had promised: God pouring out His Spirit (Acts 2:15-17).

Peter then preached the first gospel sermon, centered on the resurrection. "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). About three thousand people were baptized that day (Acts 2:41).

What it shows: At Babel, God confused the languages and scattered the nations (Chapter 4). At Pentecost, He spoke to the nations in their own languages and gathered them into one church.

177. A Man Lame From Birth Healed at the Temple Gate

Where to read it: Acts 3:1-4:22
Who God used: Peter and John, in the name of Jesus
Who saw it: The crowd at the temple; the temple leaders and the council

Every day, people carried a man who had been lame since birth to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he begged. He was more than forty years old (Acts 4:22). Everyone who went to the temple knew him. When Peter and John came by at the afternoon hour of prayer, he asked them for money.

> *But Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have; but what I have, this I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, rise up and walk." And having taken him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were strengthened. And leaping up, he stood and was walking, and he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God.* (Acts 3:6-8)

Luke, the doctor, notes that it was his feet and ankles that were made strong. A man who had never walked didn't need physical therapy. He went in leaping.

The temple leaders arrested Peter and John, and then had a problem. The healed man was standing right there. Among themselves they admitted it: "What shall we do to these men? For indeed, that a notable sign has come to pass through them ***is*** evident to all those inhabiting Jerusalem, and we are not able to deny ***it***" (Acts 4:16). They couldn't deny it, so they told the apostles to stop talking about Jesus. Peter and John said they could not stop speaking about what they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20).

178. The Meeting Place Is Shaken

Where to read it: Acts 4:23-31
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: The believers gathered for prayer

When Peter and John were released, the believers prayed together. They did not ask God to make the threats go away. They asked for boldness, and for God to stretch out His hand to heal and do signs through the name of Jesus. "And when they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled was shaken; and they were all filled with ***the*** Holy Spirit, and were speaking the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

179. Ananias and Sapphira Fall Dead

Where to read it: Acts 5:1-11
Who God used: God directly, with Peter declaring the judgment
Who saw it: Peter; the young men who carried them out; the whole church

This one is hard to read. Believers were selling property and giving the money to help the poor in the church. A man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold land, kept part of the money, and claimed they

were giving all of it. Nobody required them to give everything. Peter said so: “While it remained, did it not remain yours?” (Acts 5:4). Their sin was lying to look generous. “You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:4).

Ananias fell down and died. Three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened, told the same lie, and died the same way. “And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all those who heard these things” (Acts 5:11).

God had just begun something holy, and He would not let it be rotted out from the inside by people playing at faith. It is like the judgment on Nadab and Abihu at the start of the tabernacle (Chapter 6), and on Achan at the start of the conquest (Joshua 7). Severe warnings come at the beginning of new things.

180. Many Healed in Jerusalem, Even by Peter’s Shadow

Where to read it: Acts 5:12-16
Who God used: God, through the apostles
Who saw it: Crowds from Jerusalem and the towns around it

“And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people” (Acts 5:12). People carried the sick into the streets on beds and mats, “so that when Peter came, at least the shadow might overshadow some of them” (Acts 5:15). Crowds came in from the towns around Jerusalem, “bringing sick ***people*** and those being tormented by unclean spirits, who were all being healed” (Acts 5:16).

Luke does not say Peter’s shadow had any power. He says people hoped it would, and that they were all healed. The power was God’s, not Peter’s shadow.

181. The Apostles Freed From Prison by an Angel

Where to read it: Acts 5:17-26
Who God used: An angel of the Lord
Who saw it: The apostles; the officers who found the prison locked and the guards standing at the doors

The high priest had the apostles thrown into the public jail. “But an angel of ***the*** Lord during the night opened the doors of the prison” (Acts 5:19) and brought them out. He told them, “Go, and standing, speak in the temple to the people all the declarations of this life” (Acts 5:20). The next morning the officers came back and reported that the prison was locked tight, the guards were standing at the doors, and nobody was inside (Acts 5:23). The apostles were already in the temple preaching.

Around this time, Luke tells us, Stephen, “full of faith and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8). He gives no specific story. As Stephen was being stoned, he saw heaven open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). That was a vision, so I have not numbered it, but it was the last thing a young man named Saul of Tarsus saw happen before he went out to destroy the church.

182. Signs Through Philip in Samaria

Where to read it: Acts 8:4-13
Who God used: God, through Philip
Who saw it: The crowds in a city of Samaria; Simon the sorcerer

When persecution scattered the church, Philip went to Samaria. "And the crowds with one accord were giving heed to the things being spoken by Philip, in their hearing and seeing the signs which he was doing" (Acts 8:6). Unclean spirits came out of people with loud cries, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed (Acts 8:7). A local magician named Simon, who had amazed the city for a long time, was amazed himself. We will come back to Simon in Chapter 21.

183. Philip Carried Away by the Spirit

Where to read it: Acts 8:26-40
Who God used: The Spirit of the Lord
Who saw it: The Ethiopian official

An angel sent Philip to a desert road, where he met an official from Ethiopia reading Isaiah 53 in his chariot. Philip explained that the passage was about Jesus, and the man believed and was baptized in water by the road.

> *And when they came up out of the water,* ***the*** *Spirit of* ***the*** *Lord snatched Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer; for he was going on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus; and passing through, he was preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.* (Acts 8:39-40)

The Greek word translated "snatched away" is harpazo, the same word Paul uses in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 for believers being caught up to meet the Lord. Azotus, the old Philistine city of Ashdod, was about twenty-five miles from Gaza, the road Philip had been sent to. The Bible doesn't explain how far Philip was carried or how. It just says he was gone and then found there.

184. Saul Meets the Risen Jesus on the Road to Damascus

Where to read it: Acts 9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18; 1 Corinthians 15:8
Who God used: Jesus
Who saw it: The men traveling with Saul; later Ananias of Damascus

Saul of Tarsus was on his way to Damascus with letters from the high priest to arrest Christians and drag them back to Jerusalem.

> *And as he was traveling, it came about* ***that*** *he was drawing near to Damascus; and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And having fallen on the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.* ***It is*** *hard for you to kick against goads."* (Acts 9:3-5)

The men with him heard the sound and saw the light but did not see anyone or understand the words (Acts 9:7; 22:9). When Saul got up, he was blind, and he stayed blind for three days without food or water.

The Lord then sent a disciple named Ananias to him. Ananias was afraid, since everybody knew what Saul had come to do, but he went. He laid his hands on Saul, "And immediately ***something*** like scales fell from his eyes, and he saw again at once" (Acts 9:18).

Paul would later list this meeting with the risen Jesus as the last of the resurrection appearances (1 Corinthians 15:8). It turned the church's worst enemy into its greatest missionary.

185. Aeneas Healed at Lydda

Where to read it: Acts 9:32-35
Who God used: Peter, in the name of Jesus
Who saw it: The people of Lydda and the plain of Sharon

Aeneas had been bedridden and paralyzed for eight years. Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you; rise up and make ***your bed*** for yourself." And immediately he rose up (Acts 9:34). Notice who Peter said was doing the healing. "And all those dwelling in Lydda and Sharon saw him, who turned to the Lord" (Acts 9:35).

186. Tabitha Raised From the Dead at Joppa

Where to read it: Acts 9:36-43
Who God used: Peter, through prayer
Who saw it: The widows she had helped; the believers at Joppa

Tabitha, also called Dorcas, was known in Joppa for "good works and charitable deeds" (Acts 9:36). She got sick and died. The believers sent for Peter, who was in Lydda about ten miles away. When he arrived, the widows showed him the coats and clothes she had made for them.

> *But Peter, having put them all outside and having bent the knees, prayed; and having turned to the body, he said, "Tabitha, rise up." And she opened her eyes, and having seen Peter, she sat up. And having given her **his** hand, he raised her up; and having called the saints and the widows, he presented her living. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.* (Acts 9:40-42)

Peter had been in the room when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter (Chapter 17). He did what he had seen Jesus do: put everyone out, then spoke to her. Jesus said "Talitha koumi." Peter said "Tabitha, rise up." The difference is that Peter got on his knees and prayed first. Jesus raised the dead by His own authority. Peter had to ask.

187. The Holy Spirit Falls on Cornelius and His Household

Where to read it: Acts 10:1-48; 11:15-18
Who God used: The Holy Spirit
Who saw it: Peter; the Jewish believers who came with him from Joppa; later the church in Jerusalem, who heard Peter's report

Cornelius was a Roman centurion in Caesarea who feared God. An angel told him to send for Peter. At the same time, God gave Peter a vision on a rooftop in Joppa that taught him not to call any person unclean. When Peter preached the gospel in Cornelius' house, something happened before he even finished.

> *While Peter was still speaking these declarations, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those hearing the word. And the believers of* ***the*** *circumcision, as many as had come with Peter, were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit has been poured out even upon the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and magnifying God. Then Peter answered* (Acts 10:44-46)

This settled a huge question for the early church. Gentiles did not have to become Jews first to be saved. God gave them the same Spirit, in the same way, and the Jewish believers saw it with their own eyes.

188. Peter Freed From Prison by an Angel

Where to read it: Acts 12:1-19
Who God used: An angel of the Lord
Who saw it: Peter; the believers praying at Mary's house, including the servant girl Rhoda; the guards and Herod

King Herod Agrippa I had the apostle James, John's brother, executed with the sword. When he saw it pleased the Jewish leaders, he arrested Peter too and planned to put him on trial after Passover. Peter was chained between two soldiers, with guards at the door. The church was praying hard for him.

> *And look, an angel of* ***the*** *Lord stood by, and a light shone in the cell; and having struck the side of Peter, he raised him up, saying, "Rise up quickly." And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he says to him, "Put your cloak around yourself and follow me." And having gone out, he was following him; and he did not know that what was happening through the angel is true, but he was thinking he was seeing a vision. And having passed through a first guard and a second, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which was opened to them by itself; and having gone out, they went on through one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.* (Acts 12:7-10)

Peter went to the house where the church was praying and knocked. The servant girl Rhoda was so excited when she recognized his voice that she forgot to open the door. The people praying for his release told her she was out of her mind (Acts 12:15). That should encourage anyone whose faith is a little shaky. God answered their prayer even while they doubted it.

189. Herod Agrippa I Struck Down

Where to read it: Acts 12:20-23
Who God used: An angel of the Lord
Who saw it: The crowd at Caesarea

Not long after, Herod sat on his throne in Caesarea in his royal robes and gave a speech. The crowd shouted, "***The*** voice of a god and not of a man!" (Acts 12:22).

> *And immediately an angel of **the** Lord struck him, because he did not give the glory to God; and having become eaten by worms, he breathed his last.* (Acts 12:23)

Outside the Bible: Josephus, Antiquities 19.8.2 (*Text confirmed*)

Josephus tells the same story from the other side. At a festival in Caesarea, Agrippa "put on a garment made wholly of silver," which shone in the morning sun, and "his flatterers cried out... that he was a god." "Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery." Then "A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner," and "when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life."

This is one of the clearest places where Josephus and the Bible tell the same event. Same king, same city, same festival setting, same flattery, same sudden sickness right after he accepted it. Josephus adds that Agrippa saw an owl and took it as a bad omen. Luke tells us the cause: an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give glory to God. Agrippa died in A.D. 44, which helps date this part of Acts.

"But the word of God was growing and being multiplied" (Acts 12:24). The king who killed James was dead. The church he tried to stop kept growing.

Study Questions

1. At Pentecost, people heard the gospel in their own languages. Why do you think God chose that sign for the birth of the church?
2. The council said, "we are not able to deny it," and still refused to believe. What does that tell you about the heart?
3. The believers prayed for boldness, not safety. What would it look like for you to pray that way?
4. Peter knelt and prayed before raising Tabitha, but Jesus spoke on His own authority. Why is that difference important?
5. The church prayed for Peter's release and then didn't believe it when he knocked. Have you ever been surprised when God answered your prayer?

Chapter 20: Signs on the Road With Paul

> *Indeed the signs of the apostle were performed among you in all endurance, in signs and wonders and miracles.*
>
> 2 Corinthians 12:12 (SLB)

From Acts 13 on, Luke follows Paul as he carries the gospel west across the Roman Empire: Cyprus, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Greece, and finally Rome. Luke traveled with Paul for parts of these trips, and you can tell where, because his story switches from "they" to "we" (starting at Acts 16:10). Some of these miracles Luke saw for himself.

Paul himself referred to these signs in his letters, written to the same churches who had seen them. He reminded the Corinthians that the signs of an apostle had been done among them (2 Corinthians 12:12). He told the Romans that Christ had worked through him "in ***the*** power of signs and wonders, in ***the*** power of ***the*** Spirit of God" (Romans 15:19). You don't remind people of miracles they never saw.

190. Elymas the Sorcerer Struck Blind

Where to read it: Acts 13:4-12
Who God used: God, through Paul
Who saw it: Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul of Cyprus; Barnabas

On the island of Cyprus, at the city of Paphos, the Roman governor Sergius Paulus wanted to hear the word of God. A Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, also called Elymas, worked for the governor and kept trying to turn him away from the faith. Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at him.

> *said, "O full of all deceit and all villainy, son of **the** devil, enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of **the** Lord? And now look, **the** hand of the Lord **is** upon you, and you will be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." And immediately a mist and darkness fell upon him, and going about, he was seeking **people** to lead **him** by the hand. Then the proconsul, having seen what had happened, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.* (Acts 13:10-12)

The blindness was only "for a season." Paul knew something about that. He had been struck blind on the Damascus road himself, and the blindness had led him to Christ.

Outside the Bible: Sergius Paulus (*Background*)

Luke calls Sergius Paulus a proconsul, the correct title for the governor of Cyprus at that time, since it was a senatorial province. Inscriptions from the period name members of the Sergius Paullus family, including a Lucius Sergius Paullus who served as one of the officials in charge of the banks of the Tiber in Rome under Claudius. Some scholars think he is the same man, and others are not sure. Either way, Luke got the title right, which is the kind of detail an invented story often gets wrong.

191. A Man Lame From Birth Walks at Lystra

Where to read it: Acts 14:8-18
Who God used: God, through Paul
Who saw it: The crowds of Lystra, and the priest of Zeus

At Lystra there was a man who had been lame from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul preach, and Paul saw he had faith to be healed. Paul said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet!" (Acts 14:10). "And he was leaping up and was walking" (Acts 14:10).

The crowd jumped to the wrong conclusion. They shouted in their local language, "The gods, having become like men, have come down to us!" (Acts 14:11). They called Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes, and the priest of Zeus brought bulls and wreaths to offer sacrifices to them. Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and ran into the crowd shouting that they were only men, and they pointed them to the living God who made heaven and earth (Acts 14:14-15).

A short time later, Jews from Antioch and Iconium turned that same crowd against Paul. They stoned him and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. "But when the disciples had surrounded him, having risen up, he entered into the city. And on the next day he went out with Barnabas to Derbe" (Acts 14:20). Luke doesn't say Paul died, so I have not counted it as a raising from the dead. But a man stoned until people thought he was dead does not usually get up and walk to the next town the following day.

Outside the Bible: Lystra and the visit of the gods (*Background*)

The Roman poet Ovid, writing around A.D. 8, tells an old legend set in Phrygia, the region right next to Lycaonia where Lystra stood, where Jupiter and Mercury (the Roman names for Zeus and Hermes) visited in human form. Only one poor old couple welcomed them, and everyone else was punished (Metamorphoses 8.611-724). Many scholars think a local story like that explains why the people of Lystra were so quick to decide that Zeus and Hermes had come back, and why they did not want to make the same mistake twice.

192. A Spirit of Divination Cast Out of a Slave Girl at Philippi

Where to read it: Acts 16:16-18
Who God used: God, through Paul, in the name of Jesus
Who saw it: Silas, Luke, Timothy; the girl's owners; the crowds of Philippi

This is one of the "we" passages, so Luke was there. A slave girl in Philippi had a spirit of divination. Her owners made a lot of money from her fortune-telling. For days she followed Paul and his team, shouting, "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to us a way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). What she said was true. But like the demons in Jesus' day, her testimony was not the kind Paul wanted.

Paul finally had enough. He turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out from her" (Acts 16:18). "And it came out that very hour" (Acts 16:18). Her owners saw their profit leave with the spirit, and they dragged Paul and Silas to the authorities.

193. An Earthquake Opens the Philippian Jail

Where to read it: Acts 16:19-34
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Paul and Silas; the other prisoners; the jailer and his household

Paul and Silas were beaten with rods, thrown in the inner cell, and had their feet locked in stocks.

> *Now about midnight Paul and Silas, praying, were singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly **there** came about a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and the chains of all were loosed.* (Acts 16:25-26)

The jailer woke up, saw the doors open, and drew his sword to kill himself, because a Roman guard who lost his prisoners could pay with his life. Paul shouted that everyone was still there. The jailer came in trembling and asked the most important question in the book: "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?" (Acts 16:30). They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). He and his whole family were baptized that night.

Earthquakes happen in that part of the world. An earthquake at midnight, right while two men are praying and singing, that opens every door and loosens every chain without bringing down the building, is something else. God's timing was the miracle.

194. Extraordinary Miracles at Ephesus

Where to read it: Acts 19:11-20
Who God used: God, through Paul
Who saw it: The people of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks

Paul spent more than two years in Ephesus, one of the biggest cities in the empire and a center of magic and the worship of the goddess Artemis.

> *And God was doing miracles of no ordinary **kind** through the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were carried from his skin to the sick, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out from them.* (Acts 19:11-12)

Luke is careful to say God was doing these miracles. The cloths were most likely Paul's work rags from his tentmaking. They had no power of their own, any more than Peter's shadow did. God chose to meet people where they were, in a city that believed in magic objects, and show them that the true power belonged to Him.

It worked. After the strange events with the sons of Sceva (Chapter 21), many who had practiced magic brought their books and burned them in public. The value of the books came to fifty thousand pieces of silver (Acts 19:19). "Thus with might the word of the Lord was growing and prevailing" (Acts 19:20).

Outside the Bible: Ephesus and magic (*Background*)
Ephesus was famous in the ancient world for magic. Greek writers mention the "Ephesian letters," magic words written on charms that people wore for protection. Many magical papyri, spell books in Greek from Egypt, have

survived from the centuries after Paul, and they show what kind of books the Ephesians were burning.

195. Eutychus Raised After Falling From a Window

Where to read it: Acts 20:7-12
Who God used: God, through Paul
Who saw it: Luke and the believers gathered at Troas

This is another "we" passage. Luke was in the room. The church at Troas met on Sunday evening to break bread, and Paul talked until midnight because he was leaving the next day. The room was upstairs, and there were a lot of lamps burning. A young man named Eutychus sat in the window and drifted off.

> *And a certain young man named Eutychus was sitting at the window, being overcome by deep sleep as Paul reasoned longer; having been overcome by the sleep, he fell down from the third story and was picked up dead. But Paul, having gone down, fell upon him, and having embraced* ***him****, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him."* (Acts 20:9-10)

Luke was a doctor (Colossians 4:14), and he says the boy was picked up dead. Paul did what Elijah and Elisha had done: he lay on the boy and held him (Chapters 9 and 10). Then Paul went back upstairs, ate, and kept talking until daybreak. "And they brought the boy alive, and were comforted not a little" (Acts 20:12). It is also a gentle reminder that even the apostle Paul once preached so long that someone fell asleep.

196. Paul Unharmed by a Viper on Malta

Where to read it: Acts 28:1-6
Who God used: God directly
Who saw it: Luke and the 276 people from the shipwreck; the people of Malta

On the way to Rome as a prisoner, Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Malta along with everyone aboard. All 276 people made it to shore alive, just as an angel had told Paul they would (Acts 27:23-24, 37). The islanders built a fire because of the rain and cold.

> *But when Paul had gathered a quantity of sticks and laid* ***them*** *on the fire, a viper, having come out from the heat, fastened on his hand. And when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they were saying to one another, "Surely this man is a murderer, whom, though he has been saved from the sea, Justice has not permitted to live." He then, having shaken off the creature into the fire, suffered no harm. But they were expecting him to be about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had been expecting* ***it*** *for a long while and saw nothing amiss happening to him, changing their minds, they were saying that he was a god.* (Acts 28:3-6)

Some critics point out that there are no venomous snakes on Malta today. That proves less than it sounds like. Malta has been heavily settled and cleared of forest for two thousand years, and animals that lived there in Paul's day have since disappeared. The islanders who lived there knew their snakes, and they fully expected him to die.

197. Publius' Father and the Sick of Malta Healed

Where to read it: Acts 28:7-10
Who God used: God, through Paul's prayer
Who saw it: Luke; Publius, the leading man of the island; the islanders

The leading man of the island, Publius, welcomed them for three days. His father was sick in bed "oppressed with fevers and dysentery" (Acts 28:8). Paul went in, prayed, laid his hands on him, and healed him. "So when this had happened, the rest also who had infirmities in the island were coming and were being healed" (Acts 28:9). Luke, the doctor, was right there.

When God Did Not Heal

Here is something important. Paul healed many people, but not everyone, and not always. His friend Epaphroditus got so sick he nearly died, and Paul does not say he healed him. He says, "God had mercy on him" (Philippians 2:27). Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach and "frequent ailments" (1 Timothy 5:23). He wrote, "Trophimus I left in Miletus sick" (2 Timothy 4:20). And Paul himself begged the Lord three times to take away his "thorn in the flesh," and the answer was no.

> *And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* (2 Corinthians 12:9)

The apostles were never able to heal whenever they wanted. God healed through them when He chose to, to confirm the message. When He chose not to, His grace was enough. That's still true.

Study Questions

1. The people of Lystra saw a miracle and decided Paul was a god. Why do you think Paul was so upset about that?
2. Paul and Silas sang hymns at midnight with bleeding backs. What does that teach you about praising God in hard times?
3. The Philippian jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?" How would you answer that question today?
4. The Ephesians burned their magic books after seeing God's power. Is there anything in your life that you need to get rid of?
5. Paul prayed three times for his thorn to be removed, and God said no. How does 2 Corinthians 12:9 help you when God doesn't answer the way you hoped?

Chapter 21: Counterfeit Signs

> *For false christs and false prophets will rise up, and they will give great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*
>
> Matthew 24:24 (SLB)

Not every supernatural thing comes from God. The Bible is very clear about that. Satan is a real being with real, limited power, and he is a liar. Paul says "Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Jesus warned that false prophets would do signs impressive enough to fool God's own people, if that were possible.

That is why I did not give numbers to the events in this chapter. They are part of the Bible's story of the supernatural, but they are not God's miracles. Some are tricks or dark arts. Some are harm Satan was allowed to do under God's control. Some are still to come. The point of this chapter is not to scare you. It is to help you tell the real from the fake.

Pharaoh's Magicians

When Aaron's staff became a serpent before Pharaoh, Pharaoh called in his sorcerers, "and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did so by their secret arts" (Exodus 7:11). They copied the first plague, turning water to blood, and the second, bringing up frogs (Exodus 7:22; 8:7). Paul gives us their names from Jewish tradition: Jannes and Jambres (2 Timothy 3:8).

Whether they used sleight of hand or real demonic power, the Bible does not say, and good teachers disagree. What the Bible does show is where they ran out. Aaron's staff swallowed theirs (Exodus 7:12). They could add more frogs but could not take any away. And at the third plague, "the magicians did so by their secret arts to bring forth the gnats, and they were not able" (Exodus 8:18). Their own verdict was, "It ***is*** the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). By the sixth plague, they couldn't even stand before Moses because of their boils (Exodus 9:11). That pattern runs through the whole Bible. The counterfeit can imitate for a while, but it always hits a wall that God does not.

Satan's Attack on Job

Job is the clearest look in the Bible behind the curtain. Satan came before the LORD and claimed Job only served God because God protected him. The LORD gave Satan permission to touch everything Job had, but not Job himself (Job 1:12).

In one day, raiders took Job's oxen, donkeys, and camels and killed his servants. "The fire of God fell from the heavens" and burned up his sheep and the servants with them (Job 1:16). Then "a great wind came from across the wilderness" and the house fell on his sons and daughters, and they all died (Job 1:19). Later, with God's permission, Satan "struck Job with bad boils from the sole of his foot and to his crown" (Job 2:7).

Notice two things. First, the servant called it "the fire of God," but we know from chapter 1 that Satan was behind it. Not everything that looks like it came from heaven did. Second, Satan could not go one inch past the limit God set. "Look, he ***is*** in your hand; only guard his life" (Job 2:6). Satan is not God's equal opposite. He is a creature on a leash.

Job never learned why it happened. His answer is one of the great statements of faith in the Bible: "The LORD has given, and the LORD has taken; let the name of the LORD be blessed" (Job 1:21).

The Medium at Endor

Chapter 8 tells how King Saul went to a medium and something that looked like Samuel appeared. God had forbidden every kind of contact with the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10-12), and the Bible says plainly that Saul died partly for "asking of a medium, to inquire ***of it***" (1 Chronicles 10:13). Whatever happened that night, it is not a pattern to follow. It is a warning.

Simon the Sorcerer

In Samaria, a man named Simon had amazed people for years with magic, "saying that he himself was someone great" (Acts 8:9). People called him "the great power of God" (Acts 8:10). When Philip came preaching Christ and doing real signs, Simon believed and was baptized, and he followed Philip around amazed (Acts 8:13).

Then Simon saw the Holy Spirit given through the apostles' hands, and he offered them money for that power. Peter's answer was blunt: "May your silver be with you for destruction, because you thought to acquire the gift of God through money!" (Acts 8:20). Simon's magic had been about Simon. God's miracles are about God, and they are not for sale. The church later named the sin of buying spiritual power after him: simony.

Outside the Bible: Justin Martyr, First Apology 26 (*Text confirmed*)

Justin, who grew up in Samaria himself, wrote to the emperor around A.D. 155: "There was a Samaritan, Simon, a native of the village called Gitto, who in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, and in your royal city of Rome, did mighty acts of magic, by virtue of the art of the devils operating in him. He was considered a god."

Justin adds that the Romans set up a statue to Simon on an island in the Tiber. In 1574 a statue base was dug up there with an inscription to Semo Sancus, an old Sabine god, and many scholars think Justin misread that inscription. So the statue detail may be a mistake, but Justin's report shows that Simon was remembered as a real man and a real magician in the second century. Later writers added many legends about "Simon Magus" that I have not used.

The Seven Sons of Sceva

In Ephesus, while God was doing extraordinary miracles through Paul (Chapter 20), some traveling Jewish exorcists decided to try Jesus' name like a magic word. Seven sons of a Jewish chief priest named Sceva were doing it. They said, "We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul proclaims" (Acts 19:13).

> *But the evil spirit, answering, said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I am acquainted with; but you, who are you?" And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaping on them and having overpowered them, prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.*
> (Acts 19:15-16)

The name of Jesus is not a magic formula. It works for people who belong to Him, because it is His authority, not theirs. The demon knew the difference. When the news spread, fear fell on all of Ephesus, and the name of the Lord Jesus was honored (Acts 19:17).

Signs Still to Come

The Bible says counterfeit signs will get worse before the end. Paul writes that the "lawless one" will come "according to the working of Satan in every power and signs and wonders of falsehood" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). John saw a second beast that "performs great signs, so that it even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth before men. And it deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs" (Revelation 13:13-14). He also saw "spirits of demons performing signs" going out to gather the kings of the earth for the final battle (Revelation 16:14).

Look at that. Fire from heaven, the very sign God gave Elijah on Mount Carmel (Chapter 9), will be faked to lead the world away from God.

I hold the pre-tribulation view: I believe Jesus will take His church to be with Him before this time of tribulation begins (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 3:10). Chapter 23 says more about that. But Jesus' warning is for us now too. John said the spirit of the antichrist "is coming, and now it is already in the world" (1 John 4:3), and false signs have been around since Pharaoh's court.

How to Tell the Difference

God did not leave us guessing. Here are the tests the Bible gives.

1. **Does it lead toward the true God, or away from Him?** This is the first test, and it is the one that matters most. Moses said that even if a prophet's sign comes true, if he says "Let us walk after other gods," "you shall not listen to the words of that prophet" (Deuteronomy 13:2-3). A real sign is not enough. The message has to be true.
2. **What does it say about Jesus?** "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ having come in ***the*** flesh is of God" (1 John 4:2). Anything that makes Jesus smaller than the Bible does fails the test.
3. **Does it agree with Scripture?** God does not contradict Himself. A sign that comes with a new message that goes against the Bible is not from Him (Galatians 1:8).
4. **Who gets the glory?** Simon the sorcerer wanted to be "someone great." Herod accepted the praise of a god and was struck down (Chapter 19). Peter and Paul refused worship every time it was offered. God's miracles point to God.
5. **What kind of life goes with it?** Jesus said many will claim to have done mighty works in His name, and He will say, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work lawlessness" (Matthew 7:23). A real servant of God bears good fruit (Matthew 7:16-20).

What it shows: The answer to fake signs is not to be afraid of the supernatural. It is to know the real thing so well that you recognize the fake. Bank tellers learn to spot counterfeit bills by handling real ones every day. Know your Bible, and know your Lord.

Study Questions

1. Pharaoh's magicians could copy some of God's signs but not all of them. What does that tell you about the limits of Satan's power?
2. Read Job 1:12 and 2:6. How does it help you to know that Satan cannot go past the limits God sets?
3. Simon the sorcerer wanted spiritual power for himself. In what ways can people today try to use God for their own gain?
4. Why do you think the sons of Sceva failed when they used Jesus' name?
5. Which of the five tests at the end of this chapter do you think people forget most often today?

Chapter 22: Does God Still Do Miracles?

> *Jesus Christ **is** the same yesterday and today and forever.*
>
> Hebrews 13:8 (SLB)

After reading about four seasons of miracles, you might ask the obvious question: what about now? Does God still part waters and raise the dead? Should I expect to see miracles in my church? Why don't I see them more?

Honest, Bible-believing Christians answer this question in different ways, and I am not going to pretend one side is plainly right and everyone else is foolish. This chapter lays out the main views fairly, shows where everyone agrees, and gives you the tools to think it through with your Bible open.

Where Every View Agrees

Before we look at the differences, look at how much common ground there is.

- God is all-powerful and can do a miracle any time He chooses. Nobody who believes the Bible says God is no longer able.
- God answers prayer, including prayer for the sick. James tells the sick to "call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, having anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:14-15).
- The Bible is complete. No new miracle today adds to Scripture or carries the same authority.
- Counterfeit signs are real, and every claim should be tested (Chapter 21).
- Miracles were never spread evenly through history. As Chapter 1 showed, they came in clusters at key turning points, with long stretches in between where God worked mostly through ordinary means.

View One: The Sign Gifts Have Ceased

Many Christians believe that the gifts of doing miracles, healing, tongues, and prophecy were given to the apostles and the first generation of the church to confirm the message while the New Testament was being written, and that those gifts stopped once that job was done. This view is often called cessationism.

Those who hold it point out that the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20), and you only lay a foundation once. Hebrews speaks of the message being confirmed "by those who heard," with God "bearing witness with ***them***, both by signs and wonders and various miracles" (Hebrews 2:3-4), as if that were something that had already happened. They also note that even Paul, late in his life, did not heal Trophimus or Epaphroditus at will (Chapter 20).

Cessationists still believe God heals in answer to prayer and can do anything He wants. What they deny is that individuals today have the same gift to work miracles that the apostles had.

View Two: All the Gifts Continue

Other Christians believe that all the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12, including "gifts of healings" and "workings of miracles" (1 Corinthians 12:9-10), are still given today and should be expected in the church. This view is often called continuationism, and it includes Pentecostal and charismatic churches along with many others.

Those who hold it point out that the Bible never says the gifts will stop before Jesus returns. Paul says tongues and prophecy will end "when the perfect comes" (1 Corinthians 13:10), and they understand "the perfect" to mean the return of Christ, not the completion of the Bible. They point to Jesus being "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), and to the many reports of healings from Christians around the world, especially where the gospel is reaching new places.

Careful continuationists also agree that many claims are false or exaggerated, and that a gift today is not on the same level as an apostle's ministry.

View Three: Open, but Cautious

Many Christians land somewhere in between. They would say God can and sometimes does work miracles today, especially where the gospel is going out for the first time, much like the book of Acts. But they are cautious about claims of regular, on-demand miracles, and they test reports carefully. They don't think the Bible clearly settles whether every gift continues, so they don't build a church around either answer.

What We May Not See

One more thing belongs here, whatever view you hold. Just because you and I have not seen a miracle doesn't mean God isn't doing them. Most of the miracles in this book were seen by a handful of people, and many happened in places the rest of the world never heard about until much later. God doesn't owe anyone a public announcement. He may be healing someone in a hospital room across town, or protecting a believer on the other side of the world, and we would never know it. With God nothing is impossible. Gabriel told Mary, "For with God no declaration will be impossible" (Luke 1:37). Not seeing a miracle is not proof that God has stopped doing them.

What the Early Church Said

Christians in the centuries after the apostles reported that God still healed. Some of the early writers mention healings and casting out demons in their own day. One famous example is Augustine of Hippo, one of the most important teachers in church history.

Earlier in his life, Augustine wrote that the great miracles had not been allowed to continue into his own time. Later he changed his mind, and he corrected that statement in a book reviewing his earlier writings. In his last great work, The City of God, written in the 420s, he explained why.

Outside the Bible: Augustine, The City of God 22.8 (*Text confirmed*)

"For even now miracles are wrought in the name of Christ, whether by His sacraments or by the prayers or relics

of His saints; but they are not so brilliant and conspicuous as to cause them to be published with such glory as accompanied the former miracles." Later in the same chapter he writes that in his own town of Hippo, in less than two years, the written reports of healings "amount to almost seventy at the hour at which I write."

Augustine was a careful thinker, and he made written records of cases, with names and places, so they could be checked. Many of the healings he describes are connected with prayer at a shrine holding relics of Stephen, the first martyr. The Bible gives no support for the teaching about relics that grew up around these stories, and I am not recommending it. But Augustine's report shows that the church in the 400s believed God was still answering prayer for healing.

Questions Worth Asking About Any Miracle Claim

Whatever view you hold, you will hear miracle claims. Here are some fair questions to ask, drawn from the way the Bible itself handles miracles.

1. **Can it be checked?** The Bible's miracles were public. The man born blind had parents and neighbors who knew him (Chapter 15). The lame man at the temple gate was known to the whole city (Chapter 19). Real healings can stand up to a doctor's report.
2. **Who gets the glory?** When God heals, people glorify God, not a preacher, a ministry, or a method.
3. **Is money involved?** Peter told Simon the sorcerer that the gift of God cannot be bought (Acts 8:20). Be very careful with anyone who ties healing to a donation.
4. **What happens when someone is not healed?** Paul was not healed of his thorn, and Timothy kept his stomach trouble. Any teaching that blames sick people for not having enough faith ignores those passages and wounds people who are already hurting.
5. **Does it point to Jesus as the Bible presents Him?** That is the test that matters most (Deuteronomy 13:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3).

A Word About Seeing and Believing

It is natural to want to see a miracle. But the Bible is honest that seeing doesn't always lead to believing. Pharaoh saw ten plagues. The leaders saw Lazarus walk out of the tomb and planned to kill him. Jesus said in one of His parables, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from ***the*** dead" (Luke 16:31). When people demanded a sign on command, Jesus refused and pointed them to the sign of Jonah, His own resurrection (Matthew 12:38-40).

And after Thomas saw the risen Jesus, Jesus said something to everyone who would come after: "Because you have seen Me, Thomas, you have believed. Blessed ***are*** those who have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29). That's us.

What it shows: You don't need to see a miracle today to have a solid faith. You already have the record of the greatest miracles in history, from eyewitnesses, and the greatest of them all, the empty tomb. Whatever you believe about the gifts, pray for the sick, trust God with the answer, and keep your eyes on the One the miracles were all about.

Study Questions

1. Before reading this chapter, which of the three views were you closest to? Did anything here change your thinking?
2. Why do you think honest believers who love the Bible come to different answers on this question?
3. Read James 5:14-16. What does it tell you to do when someone in your church is sick?
4. Which of the five questions about miracle claims do you think matters most? Why?
5. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” How does that verse encourage you?

Chapter 23: The Greatest Miracles Are Still Ahead

> *And the One sitting on the throne said, "Look, I make all things new." And He says to me, "Write, because these words are true and faithful."*
>
> Revelation 21:5 (SLB)

Every miracle in this book so far has already happened. This chapter is different. The Bible promises miracles still to come that will make the parting of the Red Sea look small. I have not given them numbers, because nobody has witnessed them yet. But God has put His word on the line, and every promise He made in the past came true. These will too.

I hold the pre-tribulation view of the end times, and I lay these events out in the order I believe the Bible gives them. Christians who love the Bible hold other views on the timing, and I respect them. All of us agree on the main things: Jesus is coming back, the dead will be raised, and God will make everything new.

The Rapture of the Church

Jesus made His disciples a promise the night before He died: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am, you also may be" (John 14:2-3).

Paul describes how it will happen.

> *because the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with **the** voice of an archangel and with **the** trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are living, who remain, will be caught away together with them in **the** clouds to meet the Lord in **the** air; and so we will always be with **the** Lord.* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

In one moment, every believer who has died will be raised, and every believer still alive will be changed. "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in an instant, in ***the*** blink of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Our bodies will be transformed to be like His resurrection body (Philippians 3:21).

The Greek word for "caught away" is harpazo, the same word used when the Spirit snatched Philip away in Acts 8:39 (Chapter 19). The Latin translation of the word gives us the English word "rapture."

I believe this happens before the seven years of tribulation, because "God did not appoint us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9), and because Jesus promised the faithful church, "I also will keep you from the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole inhabited world" (Revelation 3:10). Paul calls it "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).

The Two Witnesses

During the tribulation, God will send two witnesses to Jerusalem who will prophesy for 1,260 days, about three and a half years (Revelation 11:3). Their miracles will look very familiar to anyone who has read this book.

> *And if anyone desires to harm them, fire goes out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone desires to harm them, thus he must be killed. These have authority to shut heaven, so that no rain may fall in* ***the*** *days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague as often as they desire.* (Revelation 11:5-6)

Shutting the sky like Elijah. Turning water into blood like Moses. Many Bible teachers believe the two witnesses will be Moses and Elijah, the same two who appeared with Jesus on the mountain of the Transfiguration (Chapter 14). Others think they are Enoch and Elijah, the two men who never died. The Bible does not name them, so I won't either.

When their work is done, the beast will kill them, and the world will leave their bodies in the street and celebrate. Then God will do the most public miracle in history.

> *And after the three days and a half, a spirit of life from God entered upon them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who were watching them. And they heard a loud voice out of heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.* (Revelation 11:11-12)

The Second Coming of Christ

At the end of the tribulation, Jesus will return in power, this time not for His church but with it. "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30). Jesus' first coming was quiet, in a stable. His second will be seen by the whole world.

The angels at the ascension said He would come back "in the same manner" as He left (Acts 1:11). He left from the Mount of Olives in a cloud. Zechariah wrote, "And His feet will stand on that day on the Mount of Olives, which ***is*** before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split from its middle toward the east and toward the west ***into*** a very great valley" (Zechariah 14:4).

John saw it in a vision: "And I saw heaven opened, and look, a white horse, and the One sitting on it ***is*** called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war" (Revelation 19:11).

The Kingdom and the Healing of Creation

Jesus will then reign on the earth for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4). The prophets describe a world healed in ways we can barely picture. "And the wolf will sojourn with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat" (Isaiah 11:6). The same chapter of Isaiah that promised the blind would see and the lame would leap (Isaiah 35:5-6) ends with this: "And the ransomed of the LORD will return and

come ***to*** Zion with a shout of joy" (Isaiah 35:10). Every healing Jesus did in Galilee was a small preview of that day. Paul says "the creation itself also will be set free from the slavery of corruption" (Romans 8:21).

The Resurrection of All the Dead

Every person who has ever lived will be raised. Daniel saw it: "And many of those who sleep in the ground of dust will awake, these to everlasting life, and these to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence" (Daniel 12:2). Jesus said the same: "an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth" (John 5:28-29). Lazarus came out of one tomb when Jesus called his name. One day every tomb will open.

That is a serious thought. The resurrection is not good news for everyone. Jesus said some will rise "to a resurrection of life" and others "to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29). Which one you rise to depends on what you do with Jesus now. The last chapter of this book is about that.

All Things New

The last miracle in the Bible is the biggest one: a whole new creation.

> *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no longer.* (Revelation 21:1)

> *And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will not be any longer, nor mourning nor crying nor pain will be any longer, because the first things passed away." And the One sitting on the throne said, "Look, I make all things new." And He says to me, "Write, because these words are faithful and true.* (Revelation 21:4-5)

Think back over this book. The first miracle was creation itself. Then sin broke the world, and every miracle after that was God pushing back against the damage: healing bodies, feeding the hungry, calming storms, raising the dead. Every one of them was temporary. The people Jesus healed got sick again someday. Lazarus died again. But at the end, God will not just patch the world. He will make it new. No more healings will be needed, because nobody will ever be sick again.

What it shows: The God who parted the sea, fed the five thousand, and walked out of the tomb has promised to finish what He started. The miracles in the past are the down payment. The miracles ahead are the promise kept.

The Bible's last prayer is short: "Yes, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

Study Questions

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul wrote these words to comfort grieving believers. How do they comfort you?
2. The two witnesses do miracles like Moses and Elijah. Why do you think God would use those same kinds of signs again?
3. Jesus' first coming was humble and quiet. His second coming will be seen by the whole world. Why does the difference matter?

4. Every healing Jesus did was temporary, but the new creation will be permanent. How does that change the way you think about suffering now?

5. Can you honestly pray, “Come, Lord Jesus”? Why or why not?

Chapter 24: What the Miracles Mean for You

> *but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*
>
> John 20:31 (SLB)

We have walked from the flood to the empty tomb and on to the new creation. You have read about the sea parting, fire falling, lepers cleansed, storms calmed, and the dead walking out of their graves. So what do you do with all of it?

John answers that question for us. Near the end of his Gospel he says Jesus did many other signs he didn't write down, "but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). The miracles were never just for amazement. They were written down for you, so you would believe and have life.

The Miracles Point to a Person

After Jesus fed the five thousand, the crowd chased Him across the lake. Jesus told them the truth: "you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were satisfied" (John 6:26). They wanted more bread. They missed the point of the bread. Then He told them what the sign meant: "I am the bread of life. The ***one*** coming to Me will certainly not hunger, and the ***one*** believing in Me will certainly not thirst at any time" (John 6:35).

That is the pattern all through John's Gospel. Jesus fed the hungry and said, "I am the bread of life." He opened blind eyes and said, "I am the light of the world." He raised Lazarus and said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Every miracle is a sign, and every sign points to Him.

You can admire the miracles and still miss Jesus, just like that crowd. Many people did. Pharaoh saw the plagues. The council admitted the lame man was healed. The leaders knew Lazarus was alive. They saw and still would not come.

The Miracle You Need Most

Here is the hard part. Every person who has ever lived has a problem no doctor can fix. "For all sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sin is not just the bad things we do. It is a heart turned away from God. And it carries a price: "For the wages of sin ***is*** death, but the gift of God ***is*** eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Remember the paralyzed man let down through the roof (Chapter 15). His friends brought him for his legs. Jesus looked at him and dealt with his sins first. He knew what the man needed most. The healing of his legs was the proof that Jesus had the authority to forgive.

That's still the order. Jesus said, "Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are ill. I did not come to call ***the*** righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). The greatest miracle God can do in your life is not to fix your body or your bank account. It is to forgive you and give you a new heart.

What God Has Already Done

You can't earn this. Nobody in this book earned a miracle. The leper didn't. The widow at Nain didn't even ask. God acted out of mercy.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). On the cross, Jesus took the penalty for sin that we deserved. Three days later, God raised Him from the dead, proving that the payment was accepted and that death had lost. Chapter 18 laid out the evidence. The tomb is empty.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this ***is*** not from yourselves; the gift ***is*** of God, not from works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). A gift isn't paid for. It is received.

How to Receive It

Paul made it simple: "if you confess with your mouth Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him out of ***the*** dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). That's it. Turn from your sin, trust Jesus, and tell Him so.

If you have never done that, you can do it right now, wherever you are. There are no magic words, and you don't need a church building or a pastor in the room. God looks at the heart. If it helps, you can pray something like this:

Lord Jesus, I know I'm a sinner, and I can't save myself. I believe You died on the cross for my sins and that God raised You from the dead. I turn from my sin and put my trust in You. Forgive me, come into my life, and make me new. You are my Lord. Thank You for saving me. Amen.

If you prayed that and meant it, the Bible says you have passed from death to life (John 5:24). "Therefore if anyone ***is*** in Christ, ***he is*** a new creation; the old things have passed away; look, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). That is a miracle as real as any in this book, even if nobody else saw it happen.

Here is what to do next. Tell someone. The man freed from Legion went home and told everyone how much the Lord had done for him (Chapter 16). Find a church that teaches the Bible, and get baptized, just as the believers did in Acts. Start reading the Bible every day. The Gospel of John is a great place to begin, since it was written for exactly this.

If You Already Know Him

If you already belong to Jesus, the miracles are for you too.

They remind you who your God is. The God who parted the Red Sea is the same God you pray to tonight. He hasn't gotten weaker. When you face something too big for you, remember Gideon's three hundred

men, Elisha's servant seeing the hills full of horses and chariots of fire, and the disciples rowing against the wind until Jesus came walking on the water.

They remind you that God is good. Again and again, Jesus healed because He had compassion. He touched the leper. He wept at the tomb. He gave the widow her son back. That's His heart toward you.

They remind you that the story isn't over. The miracles in Chapter 23 are coming. Every tear you cry now will be wiped away, and every grave will open.

And they remind you to keep your eyes on Jesus, not on the miracles. When many disciples walked away from Jesus after His hard teaching, He asked the Twelve if they wanted to leave too. Peter answered for all of us: "Lord, to whom will we go? You have words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

A Last Word

This book set out to put every miracle of the Bible in one place, with who saw it and what history adds. My hope is that you finish it more amazed at God than when you started.

The Bible's miracles are not fairy tales. They happened to real people in real places, many of which you can visit today. Some of their enemies admitted them. Some of the witnesses died rather than deny them. And they all point to one Man, who is still alive.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, the only begotten, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Study Questions

1. John says the miracles were written "so that you may believe." Which miracle in this book has helped your faith the most? Why?
2. The crowd wanted more bread, not Jesus. In what ways can people today want what God gives more than they want God Himself?
3. Why do you think Jesus forgave the paralyzed man's sins before healing his legs?
4. Have you received the gift of eternal life? If so, who could you tell about it this week? If not, what is holding you back?
5. Which of the four reminders for believers in this chapter do you need most right now?

Appendix A: Master List of Miracles

This list gathers every numbered miracle in the book, in the order it appears. The fourth column names who God used, or "God directly" when no person was involved. The last column names any outside source the book brings in for that miracle. Remember that the count reflects where I drew the line in Before You Begin. Other careful Bible teachers may count a few differently.

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
1	Enoch Walks With God and Is Taken	Genesis 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:5	God directly	-
2	The Flood	Genesis 6:9 to 8:22; Matthew 24:37-39; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5	God directly; Noah built the ark at God's command	Josephus, Antiquities 1.3.5-6, Ancient flood stories
3	The Languages Confused at Babel	Genesis 11:1-9	God directly	Josephus, Antiquities 1.4.3
4	The Men of Sodom Struck Blind	Genesis 19:1-11	Two angels	-
5	Fire and Brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah	Genesis 19:12-29; Deuteronomy 29:23; Luke 17:28-30; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7	God directly	Josephus, The Jewish War 4.8.4, Tall el-Hammam
6	Lot's Wife Becomes a Pillar of Salt	Genesis 19:17, 26; Luke 17:32	God directly	Josephus, Antiquities 1.11.4
7	God Closes and Opens the Wombs in Abimelech's House	Genesis 20:1-18	God directly, in answer to Abraham's prayer	-
8	Sarah Gives Birth at Ninety	Genesis 17:15-19; 18:9-15; 21:1-7; Romans 4:19-21; Hebrews 11:11	God directly	-
9	God Opens Hagar's Eyes to a Well	Genesis 21:14-21	The Angel of God	-
10	The Angel Stops Abraham and a Ram Is Provided	Genesis 22:1-19; Hebrews 11:17-19	The Angel of the LORD, speaking from heaven	-
11	Barren Wombs Opened for Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel	Genesis 25:21; 29:31; 30:22-24	God directly, in answer to prayer	-
12	Jacob Wrestles With God	Genesis 32:22-32; Hosea 12:3-4	God, appearing as a Man	-
13	The Burning Bush	Exodus 3:1-6; Acts 7:30-34	The Angel of the LORD; God spoke from the bush	-
14	Moses' Staff Becomes a Snake	Exodus 4:1-5, 30-31	God, through Moses and Aaron	-
15	Moses' Hand Turns Leprous and Is Healed	Exodus 4:6-8	God, through Moses	-

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
16	Nile Water Turns to Blood on the Ground	Exodus 4:9, 30	God, through Moses and Aaron	-
17	Aaron's Staff Swallows the Magicians' Staffs	Exodus 7:8-13	God, through Aaron	-
18	The First Plague: Water to Blood	Exodus 7:14-25; Psalm 78:44; 105:29	God, through Moses and Aaron	The Ipuwer Papyrus
19	The Second Plague: Frogs	Exodus 8:1-15	God, through Moses and Aaron	-
20	The Third Plague: Gnats	Exodus 8:16-19	God, through Aaron	-
21	The Fourth Plague: Swarms of Flies	Exodus 8:20-32	God directly, announced by Moses	-
22	The Fifth Plague: Livestock Die	Exodus 9:1-7	God directly	-
23	The Sixth Plague: Boils	Exodus 9:8-12	God, through Moses	-
24	The Seventh Plague: Hail and Fire	Exodus 9:13-35	God, through Moses	-
25	The Eighth Plague: Locusts	Exodus 10:1-20	God, through Moses, with an east wind	-
26	The Ninth Plague: Darkness	Exodus 10:21-29	God, through Moses	-
27	The Tenth Plague: Death of the Firstborn and the Passover	Exodus 11:1 to 12:36; Psalm 78:51; Hebrews 11:28	God directly	-
28	The Pillar of Cloud and Fire	Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19-20; 40:34-38; Numbers 9:15-23; Nehemiah 9:12, 19	God directly	-
29	The Red Sea Parts	Exodus 14:1-22; Psalm 106:9; Acts 7:36; 1 Corinthians 10:1-2; Hebrews 11:29	God, through Moses, with a strong east wind	-
30	Pharaoh's Army Drowned	Exodus 14:23-31; 15:1-21; Psalm 136:15; Hebrews 11:29	God, through Moses	Josephus, Antiquities 2.16.5
31	The Bitter Water at Marah Made Sweet	Exodus 15:22-26	God, through Moses	-
32	Quail in the Evening	Exodus 16:1-13	God directly	-
33	Manna From Heaven for Forty Years	Exodus 16:13-36; Numbers 11:7-9; Deuteronomy 8:3; Joshua 5:12; Psalm 78:24-25; John 6:31-35	God directly	Josephus, Antiquities 3.1.6
34	Water From the Rock at Horeb	Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 78:15-16; 1 Corinthians 10:4	God, through Moses	-
35	Victory Over Amalek While Moses' Hands Are Raised	Exodus 17:8-16	God, while Moses held up the staff of God	-

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
36	God Descends on Mount Sinai	Exodus 19:16-25; 20:18-21; Deuteronomy 4:10-13; 5:22-26; Hebrews 12:18-21	God directly	-
37	Moses' Face Shines	Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18	God, after speaking with Moses	-
38	Fire From the LORD Consumes the First Offerings	Leviticus 9:22-24	God directly	-
39	Fire Consumes Nadab and Abihu	Leviticus 10:1-7; Numbers 3:4	God directly	-
40	Fire at Taberah	Numbers 11:1-3	God directly	-
41	Quail and a Plague at Kibroth Hattaavah	Numbers 11:4-34; Psalm 78:26-31	God directly, by a wind	-
42	Miriam Struck With Leprosy and Healed	Numbers 12:1-16; Deuteronomy 24:9	God directly; healed after Moses prayed	-
43	The Earth Swallows Korah, Dathan, and Abiram	Numbers 16:1-34; 26:9-11; Deuteronomy 11:6; Psalm 106:17	God directly	-
44	Fire Consumes the Two Hundred Fifty	Numbers 16:35-40	God directly	-
45	Aaron Stops the Plague	Numbers 16:41-50	God, through Aaron's offering of incense	-
46	Aaron's Rod Buds, Blossoms, and Bears Almonds	Numbers 17:1-13; Hebrews 9:4	God directly	-
47	Water From the Rock at Meribah	Numbers 20:1-13; Psalm 106:32-33	God, through Moses	-
48	The Bronze Serpent	Numbers 21:4-9; 2 Kings 18:4; John 3:14-15	God, through Moses	-
49	Balaam's Donkey Speaks	Numbers 22:21-35; 2 Peter 2:16; Jude 11	The Angel of the LORD; God opened the donkey's mouth	-
50	Clothes and Sandals That Did Not Wear Out	Deuteronomy 8:4; 29:5; Nehemiah 9:21	God directly	-
51	The Jordan River Stops Flowing	Joshua 3:1 to 4:24; Psalm 114:3-5	God, as the priests carrying the ark stepped into the river	Josephus, Antiquities 5.1.3, Landslides near Adam
52	The Walls of Jericho Fall	Joshua 5:13 to 6:27; Hebrews 11:30	God, as Israel marched, blew trumpets, and shouted	Josephus, Antiquities 5.1.6, The digs at Jericho
53	Great Hailstones at Beth Horon	Joshua 10:1-11	God directly	-
54	The Sun and Moon Stand Still	Joshua 10:12-14; Habakkuk 3:11	God, in answer to Joshua's prayer	Josephus, Antiquities 5.1.17
55	Fire From the Rock Consumes Gideon's Offering	Judges 6:11-24	The Angel of the LORD	-

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
56	Gideon's Fleece Wet, Then Dry	Judges 6:36-40	God directly	-
57	The Midianites Turn Their Swords on Each Other	Judges 7:1-25	God, as Gideon's three hundred blew trumpets and broke jars	-
58	The Angel Goes Up in the Flame, and a Barren Woman Bears Samson	Judges 13:1-25	The Angel of the LORD	-
59	Samson Tears Apart a Lion	Judges 14:5-6	God, as the Spirit of the LORD rushed on Samson	-
60	Samson's Ropes Melt and He Strikes Down a Thousand	Judges 15:9-17	God, as the Spirit of the LORD rushed on Samson	-
61	God Splits the Rock and Gives Samson Water	Judges 15:18-19	God directly, in answer to Samson's prayer	-
62	Samson Carries Off the Gates of Gaza	Judges 16:1-3	God, through Samson's strength	-
63	Samson Brings Down the Temple of Dagon	Judges 16:21-31	God, in answer to Samson's last prayer	Philistine temples
64	Hannah Bears Samuel	1 Samuel 1:1-28; 2:21	God directly, in answer to prayer	-
65	Dagon Falls Before the Ark	1 Samuel 4:1 to 5:5	God directly	-
66	Tumors and Death Among the Philistines	1 Samuel 5:6-12	God directly	-
67	The Cows Carry the Ark Straight to Beth Shemesh	1 Samuel 6:1-16	God directly	-
68	The Men of Beth Shemesh Struck	1 Samuel 6:19-21	God directly	-
69	Thunder Routs the Philistines at Mizpah	1 Samuel 7:3-14	God directly, while Samuel offered a sacrifice and prayed	-
70	Thunder and Rain at Wheat Harvest	1 Samuel 12:16-19	God, in answer to Samuel's prayer	-
71	An Earthquake Panics the Philistine Camp	1 Samuel 14:1-23	God directly	-
72	The Spirit Comes on Saul's Messengers and on Saul	1 Samuel 19:18-24	The Spirit of God	-
73	The Sound of Marching in the Balsam Trees	2 Samuel 5:22-25; 1 Chronicles 14:13-17	God directly	-
74	Uzzah Struck Down Beside the Ark	2 Samuel 6:1-11; 1 Chronicles 13:5-14; 15:13	God directly	-

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
75	The Angel, the Plague, and Fire From Heaven on David's Altar	2 Samuel 24:1-25; 1 Chronicles 21:1 to 22:1; 2 Chronicles 3:1	The angel of the LORD; God answered with fire	-
76	The Glory Cloud Fills the Temple	1 Kings 8:1-11; 2 Chronicles 5:2-14	God directly	-
77	Fire From Heaven at the Temple Dedication	2 Chronicles 7:1-3	God directly	-
78	Jeroboam's Hand Withers and the Altar Splits	1 Kings 12:25 to 13:6	God, through an unnamed man of God from Judah	The altar at Dan
79	The Lion Stands Over the Disobedient Prophet	1 Kings 13:7-32	God directly	-
80	Elijah Shuts the Sky	1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41-45; Luke 4:25; James 5:17-18	God, in answer to Elijah's prayer	Menander of Ephesus, quoted in Josephus, Antiquities 8.13.2
81	Ravens Feed Elijah	1 Kings 17:2-7	God directly	-
82	The Widow's Flour and Oil Do Not Run Out	1 Kings 17:8-16; Luke 4:25-26	God, through Elijah's word	-
83	Elijah Raises the Widow's Son	1 Kings 17:17-24; Hebrews 11:35	God, in answer to Elijah's prayer	-
84	Fire Falls on Mount Carmel	1 Kings 18:17-40	God, in answer to Elijah's prayer	Josephus, Antiquities 8.13.5
85	The Drought Ends at Elijah's Prayer	1 Kings 18:41-46; James 5:18	God, in answer to Elijah's prayer	-
86	Elijah Outruns Ahab's Chariot	1 Kings 18:46	God, as "the hand of the LORD" came on Elijah	-
87	An Angel Feeds Elijah for a Forty Day Journey	1 Kings 19:1-8	The angel of the LORD	-
88	Wind, Earthquake, Fire, and a Gentle Whisper at Horeb	1 Kings 19:9-18	God directly	-
89	The Wall Falls at Aphek	1 Kings 20:26-30	God, as He had promised through a prophet	-
90	Fire Falls on Two Companies of Soldiers	2 Kings 1:1-17; Luke 9:54-55	God, at Elijah's word	-
91	Elijah Parts the Jordan	2 Kings 2:1-8	God, through Elijah's cloak	-
92	Elijah Taken Up in a Whirlwind	2 Kings 2:9-18; Malachi 4:5; Matthew 17:3	God directly, with a chariot and horses of fire	Josephus, Antiquities 9.2.2
93	Elisha Parts the Jordan	2 Kings 2:13-15	God, through Elisha with Elijah's cloak	-
94	The Spring at Jericho Healed	2 Kings 2:19-22	God, through Elisha	Josephus, The Jewish War 4.8.3, The spring at Tell es-Sultan
95	Bears Come Out on the Mocking Youths	2 Kings 2:23-25	God, after Elisha's curse in the name of the LORD	-

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
96	Water Fills the Valley and Looks Like Blood to Moab	2 Kings 3:1-27	God, through Elisha's word	The Mesha Stele
97	The Widow's Oil Fills Every Jar	2 Kings 4:1-7	God, through Elisha	-
98	A Son Promised to the Shunammite Woman	2 Kings 4:8-17	God, as promised through Elisha	-
99	Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son	2 Kings 4:18-37; 8:1-6; Hebrews 11:35	God, in answer to Elisha's prayer	-
100	Death in the Pot Made Harmless	2 Kings 4:38-41	God, through Elisha	-
101	A Hundred Men Fed With Twenty Loaves	2 Kings 4:42-44	God, through Elisha's word	-
102	Naaman the Syrian Healed of Leprosy	2 Kings 5:1-19; Luke 4:27	God, through Elisha's word	-
103	Gehazi Struck With Naaman's Leprosy	2 Kings 5:20-27	God, through Elisha's word	-
104	The Axe Head Floats	2 Kings 6:1-7	God, through Elisha	-
105	Elisha Tells the King of Israel Aram's Secret Plans	2 Kings 6:8-12	God, revealing the plans to Elisha	-
106	The Servant Sees the Mountain Full of Chariots of Fire	2 Kings 6:13-17	God, in answer to Elisha's prayer	-
107	The Aramean Army Blinded, Led to Samaria, and Fed	2 Kings 6:18-23	God, in answer to Elisha's prayer	-
108	The Siege of Samaria Lifted by the Sound of an Army	2 Kings 6:24 to 7:20	God directly	-
109	A Dead Man Revives at the Touch of Elisha's Bones	2 Kings 13:20-21	God directly	-
110	The LORD Sets Ambushes Against Judah's Enemies	2 Chronicles 20:1-30	God directly, while Judah's singers praised Him	-
111	King Uzziah Struck With Leprosy in the Temple	2 Chronicles 26:16-23; 2 Kings 15:5	God directly	Josephus, Antiquities 9.10.4, The Uzziah burial plaque
112	The Storm on the Sea and the Sudden Calm	Jonah 1:1-16	God directly	-
113	Jonah Swallowed by a Great Fish and Brought Back Alive	Jonah 1:17 to 2:10; Matthew 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-30	God directly	Josephus, Antiquities 9.10.2
114	The Plant, the Worm, and the East Wind	Jonah 4:1-11	God directly	-

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
115	The Angel of the LORD Strikes the Assyrian Army	2 Kings 19:1-37; 2 Chronicles 32:20-22; Isaiah 36:1 to 37:38	The angel of the LORD	Sennacherib's own records, The Lachish reliefs, Herodotus, Histories 2.141, Berosus, quoted in Josephus, Antiquities 10.1.4-5, The death of Sennacherib
116	Hezekiah Healed and Given Fifteen More Years	2 Kings 20:1-7; Isaiah 38:1-22; 2 Chronicles 32:24	God, in answer to Hezekiah's prayer, through Isaiah	-
117	The Shadow Goes Back Ten Steps	2 Kings 20:8-11; Isaiah 38:7-8, 21-22; 2 Chronicles 32:24, 31	God, in answer to Isaiah's prayer	Josephus, Antiquities 10.2.1
118	Daniel Tells the King His Dream and Its Meaning	Daniel 2:1-49	God, revealing the dream to Daniel	-
119	Three Men Walk in the Fiery Furnace With a Fourth	Daniel 3:1-30; Hebrews 11:34	God, who sent His angel	Josephus, Antiquities 10.10.5
120	Nebuchadnezzar Driven Out Like an Animal and Restored	Daniel 4:1-37	God directly	Babylonian records of Nebuchadnezzar
121	The Handwriting on the Wall	Daniel 5:1-31	God directly	Belshazzar in the Babylonian records
122	Daniel Delivered From the Lions' Den	Daniel 6:1-28; Hebrews 11:33	God, who sent His angel	Josephus, Antiquities 10.11.6
123	Gabriel Appears to Zechariah, Who Is Struck Mute	Luke 1:5-23, 57-66	The angel Gabriel	-
124	Elizabeth Conceives in Her Old Age	Luke 1:24-25, 36-45, 57-58	God directly	-
125	The Virgin Conception of Jesus	Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-7; Isaiah 7:14; Galatians 4:4	God the Holy Spirit	Celsus, quoted in Origen, Against Celsus 1.28
126	Angels Announce the Birth to the Shepherds	Luke 2:8-20	An angel of the Lord, joined by a multitude of the heavenly army	-
127	The Star Leads the Magi to the Child	Matthew 2:1-12; Numbers 24:17	God directly	-
128	Heaven Opens, the Spirit Descends, and the Father Speaks at Jesus' Baptism	Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34	God the Father and God the Holy Spirit	-
129	Water Turned Into Wine	John 2:1-11	Jesus	-
130	The First Great Catch of Fish	Luke 5:1-11	Jesus	The Galilee boat
131	Jesus Calms the Storm	Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25	Jesus	-

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
132	Five Thousand Fed With Five Loaves and Two Fish	Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15	Jesus	-
133	Jesus Walks on the Water	Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21	Jesus	-
134	Peter Walks on the Water, and the Boat Reaches Shore at Once	Matthew 14:28-33; John 6:21	Jesus	-
135	Four Thousand Fed With Seven Loaves	Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10, 19-21	Jesus	-
136	The Transfiguration	Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1:16-18	God the Father, revealing the glory of the Son	-
137	A Coin in the Fish's Mouth	Matthew 17:24-27	Jesus	-
138	The Fig Tree Withers	Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-25	Jesus	-
139	The Royal Official's Son Healed From a Distance	John 4:46-54	Jesus	-
140	Peter's Mother-in-Law Healed of a Fever	Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39	Jesus	The house of Peter at Capernaum
141	A Leper Cleansed by Jesus' Touch	Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16	Jesus	-
142	A Paralyzed Man Let Down Through the Roof	Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26	Jesus	-
143	The Man at the Pool of Bethesda	John 5:1-15	Jesus	John 5:3b-4, the angel stirring the water, The pool of Bethesda
144	A Withered Hand Restored on the Sabbath	Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11	Jesus	-
145	The Centurion's Servant Healed From a Distance	Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10	Jesus	-
146	A Woman Healed of Twelve Years of Bleeding	Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48	Jesus	-
147	Two Blind Men Receive Their Sight	Matthew 9:27-31	Jesus	-
148	A Deaf Man With a Speech Problem Healed	Mark 7:31-37	Jesus	-
149	A Blind Man at Bethsaida Healed in Two Stages	Mark 8:22-26	Jesus	-

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
150	A Man Born Blind Healed at the Pool of Siloam	John 9:1-41	Jesus	The Pool of Siloam
151	A Woman Bent Over for Eighteen Years Is Straightened	Luke 13:10-17	Jesus	-
152	A Man With Dropsy Healed at a Pharisee's House	Luke 14:1-6	Jesus	-
153	Ten Lepers Cleansed, and One Comes Back	Luke 17:11-19	Jesus	-
154	Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight at Jericho	Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43	Jesus	-
155	Malchus' Ear Healed in Gethsemane	Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10-11	Jesus	Celsus, quoted in Origen, Against Celsus 1.28, Josephus, Antiquities 8.2.5
156	An Unclean Spirit Cast Out in the Synagogue at Capernaum	Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37	Jesus	-
157	Legion Cast Out of the Man in the Tombs	Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39	Jesus	Kursi, on the eastern shore
158	A Mute Man Speaks When the Demon Is Cast Out	Matthew 9:32-34	Jesus	-
159	A Blind and Mute Man Set Free	Matthew 12:22-30; Luke 11:14-23	Jesus	-
160	The Syrophoenician Woman's Daughter Freed From a Distance	Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30	Jesus	-
161	A Boy Freed From a Spirit That Threw Him Into Fire and Water	Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43	Jesus	-
162	Seven Demons Cast Out of Mary Magdalene	Mark 16:9; Luke 8:1-3	Jesus	Magdala
163	Jairus' Daughter Raised	Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56	Jesus	-
164	The Widow's Son Raised at Nain	Luke 7:11-17	Jesus	Nain
165	Lazarus Raised After Four Days in the Tomb	John 11:1-46; 12:9-11, 17-18	Jesus	Bethany and the tomb of Lazarus, Quadratus, quoted in Eusebius, Church History 4.3.2
166	The Arresting Party Falls to the Ground at "I Am He"	John 18:1-11	Jesus	-

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
167	Darkness Over the Land for Three Hours	Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44-45	God directly	Phlegon, cited in Origen, Against Celsus 2.33, Thallus, cited by Julius Africanus
168	The Veil of the Temple Torn From Top to Bottom	Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45	God directly	-
169	The Earth Shakes and the Rocks Split	Matthew 27:51, 54	God directly	-
170	Saints Raised and Seen in Jerusalem	Matthew 27:52-53	God directly	-
171	Jesus Rises From the Dead	Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18; Acts 2:24, 32; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8	Jesus, raised by the Father through the Spirit (John 10:18; Acts 2:24; Romans 8:11)	-
172	An Angel Rolls Away the Stone, and the Guards Fall Like Dead Men	Matthew 28:2-4; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-7; John 20:11-13	An angel of the Lord (Luke and John mention two)	-
173	Jesus Appears Alive to His Followers Over Forty Days	Luke 24:13-49; John 20:19-29; 21:1-23; Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:5-8	Jesus	-
174	The Second Great Catch: 153 Fish	John 21:1-14	Jesus	-
175	Jesus Ascends Into Heaven	Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11	God the Father, receiving the Son	The ending of Mark, Mark 16:9-20, Tacitus, Annals 15.44, Josephus, Antiquities 20.9.1
176	The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost	Acts 2:1-41	The Holy Spirit	-
177	A Man Lame From Birth Healed at the Temple Gate	Acts 3:1-4:22	Peter and John, in the name of Jesus	-
178	The Meeting Place Is Shaken	Acts 4:23-31	God directly	-
179	Ananias and Sapphira Fall Dead	Acts 5:1-11	God directly, with Peter declaring the judgment	-
180	Many Healed in Jerusalem, Even by Peter's Shadow	Acts 5:12-16	God, through the apostles	-
181	The Apostles Freed From Prison by an Angel	Acts 5:17-26	An angel of the Lord	-
182	Signs Through Philip in Samaria	Acts 8:4-13	God, through Philip	-
183	Philip Carried Away by the Spirit	Acts 8:26-40	The Spirit of the Lord	-
184	Saul Meets the Risen Jesus on the Road to Damascus	Acts 9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18; 1 Corinthians 15:8	Jesus	-

No.	Miracle	Where to read it	Who God used	Outside witness
185	Aeneas Healed at Lydda	Acts 9:32-35	Peter, in the name of Jesus	-
186	Tabitha Raised From the Dead at Joppa	Acts 9:36-43	Peter, through prayer	-
187	The Holy Spirit Falls on Cornelius and His Household	Acts 10:1-48; 11:15-18	The Holy Spirit	-
188	Peter Freed From Prison by an Angel	Acts 12:1-19	An angel of the Lord	-
189	Herod Agrippa I Struck Down	Acts 12:20-23	An angel of the Lord	Josephus, Antiquities 19.8.2
190	Elymas the Sorcerer Struck Blind	Acts 13:4-12	God, through Paul	Sergius Paulus
191	A Man Lame From Birth Walks at Lystra	Acts 14:8-18	God, through Paul	Lystra and the visit of the gods
192	A Spirit of Divination Cast Out of a Slave Girl at Philippi	Acts 16:16-18	God, through Paul, in the name of Jesus	-
193	An Earthquake Opens the Philippian Jail	Acts 16:19-34	God directly	-
194	Extraordinary Miracles at Ephesus	Acts 19:11-20	God, through Paul	Ephesus and magic
195	Eutychus Raised After Falling From a Window	Acts 20:7-12	God, through Paul	-
196	Paul Unharmed by a Viper on Malta	Acts 28:1-6	God directly	-
197	Publius' Father and the Sick of Malta Healed	Acts 28:7-10	God, through Paul's prayer	Justin Martyr, First Apology 26, Augustine, The City of God 22.8

Appendix B: The Miracles of Jesus in the Four Gospels

This table lists the miracles Jesus did during His ministry and after His resurrection, with where each one appears in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. A blank means that Gospel does not record it. Some miracles appear in only one Gospel, and a few appear in all four.

No.	Miracle	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
129	Water Turned Into Wine	-	-	-	2:1-11
130	The First Great Catch of Fish	-	-	5:1-11	-
131	Jesus Calms the Storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	-
132	Five Thousand Fed With Five Loaves and Two Fish	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-15
133	Jesus Walks on the Water	14:22-33	6:45-52	-	6:16-21
134	Peter Walks on the Water, and the Boat Reaches Shore at Once	14:28-33	-	-	6:21
135	Four Thousand Fed With Seven Loaves	15:32-39	8:1-10, 19-21	-	-
137	A Coin in the Fish's Mouth	17:24-27	-	-	-
138	The Fig Tree Withers	21:18-22	11:12-14, 20-25	-	-
139	The Royal Official's Son Healed From a Distance	-	-	-	4:46-54
140	Peter's Mother-in-Law Healed of a Fever	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39	-
141	A Leper Cleansed by Jesus' Touch	8:2-4	1:40-45	5:12-16	-
142	A Paralyzed Man Let Down Through the Roof	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	-
143	The Man at the Pool of Bethesda	-	-	-	5:1-15
144	A Withered Hand Restored on the Sabbath	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	-
145	The Centurion's Servant Healed From a Distance	8:5-13	-	7:1-10	-
146	A Woman Healed of Twelve Years of Bleeding	9:20-22	5:25-34	8:43-48	-
147	Two Blind Men Receive Their Sight	9:27-31	-	-	-
148	A Deaf Man With a Speech Problem Healed	-	7:31-37	-	-
149	A Blind Man at Bethsaida Healed in Two Stages	-	8:22-26	-	-
150	A Man Born Blind Healed at the Pool of Siloam	-	-	-	9:1-41
151	A Woman Bent Over for Eighteen Years Is Straightened	-	-	13:10-17	-
152	A Man With Dropsy Healed at a Pharisee's House	-	-	14:1-6	-

No.	Miracle	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
153	Ten Lepers Cleansed, and One Comes Back	-	-	17:11-19	-
154	Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight at Jericho	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	-
155	Malchus' Ear Healed in Gethsemane	-	-	22:49-51	18:10-11
156	An Unclean Spirit Cast Out in the Synagogue at Capernaum	-	1:21-28	4:31-37	-
157	Legion Cast Out of the Man in the Tombs	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	-
158	A Mute Man Speaks When the Demon Is Cast Out	9:32-34	-	-	-
159	A Blind and Mute Man Set Free	12:22-30	-	11:14-23	-
160	The Syrophoenician Woman's Daughter Freed From a Distance	15:21-28	7:24-30	-	-
161	A Boy Freed From a Spirit That Threw Him Into Fire and Water	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-43	-
162	Seven Demons Cast Out of Mary Magdalene	-	16:9	8:1-3	-
163	Jairus' Daughter Raised	9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56	-
164	The Widow's Son Raised at Nain	-	-	7:11-17	-
165	Lazarus Raised After Four Days in the Tomb	-	-	-	11:1-46, 12:9-11, 17-18
166	The Arresting Party Falls to the Ground at "I Am He"	-	-	-	18:1-11
171	Jesus Rises From the Dead	28:1-10	16:1-8	24:1-12	20:1-18
173	Jesus Appears Alive to His Followers Over Forty Days	-	-	24:13-49	20:19-29, 21:1-23
174	The Second Great Catch: 153 Fish	-	-	-	21:1-14

Appendix C: Outside Sources at a Glance

Every box in this book that brings in a source from outside the Bible carries one of three labels. **Text confirmed** means I checked the quoted words against a published translation of the original. **Disputed** means the source exists, but scholars seriously question part of it, its date, or what it refers to. **Background** means the box gives historical or archaeological setting, not a direct witness to the miracle itself.

The main ancient writers quoted in this book are these:

- **Flavius Josephus** (about A.D. 37 to 100), a Jewish priest and historian who wrote *Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Jewish War*.
- **Tacitus** (about A.D. 56 to 120), a Roman senator and historian who wrote the *Annals*.
- **Herodotus** (about 484 to 425 B.C.), a Greek historian, sometimes called the father of history.
- **Quadratus** (wrote about A.D. 125), an early Christian who wrote a defense of the faith to the emperor Hadrian, quoted by Eusebius.
- **Justin Martyr** (about A.D. 100 to 165), a Christian teacher from Samaria, executed in Rome for his faith.
- **Celsus** (wrote about A.D. 175), a pagan philosopher who attacked Christianity. His book is lost, but Origen quoted it at length in *Against Celsus* (about A.D. 248).
- **Eusebius** (about A.D. 260 to 339), bishop of Caesarea and the first great historian of the church.
- **Augustine** (A.D. 354 to 430), bishop of Hippo in North Africa, author of *The City of God*.

Source	Label	Chapter
Josephus, Antiquities 18.3.3	Disputed	3
Tacitus, Annals 15.44	Text confirmed	3
Quadratus, quoted in Eusebius, Church History 4.3.2	Text confirmed	3
Josephus, Antiquities 1.3.5-6	Text confirmed	4
Ancient flood stories	Background	4
Josephus, Antiquities 1.4.3	Text confirmed	4
Josephus, The Jewish War 4.8.4	Text confirmed	4
Tall el-Hammam	Disputed	4
Josephus, Antiquities 1.11.4	Text confirmed	4
The Ipuwer Papyrus	Disputed	5
Josephus, Antiquities 2.16.5	Text confirmed	6
Josephus, Antiquities 3.1.6	Text confirmed	6
Josephus, Antiquities 5.1.3	Text confirmed	7
Landslides near Adam	Background	7
Josephus, Antiquities 5.1.6	Text confirmed	7
The digs at Jericho	Disputed	7
Josephus, Antiquities 5.1.17	Text confirmed	7
Philistine temples	Background	7
The altar at Dan	Background	9

Source	Label	Chapter
Menander of Ephesus, quoted in Josephus, Antiquities 8.13.2	Text confirmed	9
Josephus, Antiquities 8.13.5	Text confirmed	9
Josephus, Antiquities 9.2.2	Text confirmed	9
Josephus, The Jewish War 4.8.3	Text confirmed	10
The spring at Tell es-Sultan	Background	10
The Mesha Stele	Background	10
Josephus, Antiquities 9.10.4	Text confirmed	11
The Uzziah burial plaque	Background	11
Josephus, Antiquities 9.10.2	Text confirmed	11
Sennacherib's own records	Background	11
The Lachish reliefs	Background	11
Herodotus, Histories 2.141	Text confirmed	11
Berosus, quoted in Josephus, Antiquities 10.1.4-5	Disputed	11
The death of Sennacherib	Background	11
Josephus, Antiquities 10.2.1	Text confirmed	11
Josephus, Antiquities 10.10.5	Text confirmed	12
Babylonian records of Nebuchadnezzar	Background	12
Belshazzar in the Babylonian records	Background	12
Josephus, Antiquities 10.11.6	Text confirmed	12
Celsus, quoted in Origen, Against Celsus 1.28	Text confirmed	13
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Appendix D: Words to Know

Apostle. One sent with a message. In the New Testament, the Twelve and Paul, who were eyewitnesses chosen by Jesus Himself.

Centurion. A Roman army officer in charge of about a hundred soldiers.

Cessationism. The view that the sign gifts, such as healing and tongues, ended with the apostles (Chapter 22).

Continuationism. The view that all the gifts of the Spirit continue today (Chapter 22).

Decapolis. A group of ten mostly Gentile cities east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River.

Dunamis. Greek for power, or a mighty work. Often translated “miracles.”

Ergon. Greek for a work. Jesus often called His miracles His works.

Harpazo. Greek for snatch away or catch up. Used of Philip in Acts 8:39 and of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

Leprosy. In the Bible, a name for several serious skin diseases that made a person ceremonially unclean and forced them to live apart.

Magi. Wise men or astrologers from the east, probably from Persia or Babylon.

Miracle. An event in which God acts directly, beyond the normal course of nature, in a way people can see, as a sign that points to Him (Chapter 1).

Mopheth. Hebrew for a wonder or portent, often paired with oth.

Oth. Hebrew for a sign, something that points beyond itself.

Pele. Hebrew for a wonder, something too marvelous to explain.

Pre-tribulation. The view that Jesus will take His church to Himself in the Rapture before the seven years of tribulation begin.

Proconsul. The Roman governor of a province that was under the Senate rather than the emperor, such as Cyprus.

Providence. God’s ongoing care and control of everything, usually working through ordinary events rather than miracles.

Rapture. The moment when Jesus calls His church up to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Sabbath. The seventh day of the week, Saturday, set apart for rest under the Law of Moses.

Sanhedrin. The Jewish ruling council in Jerusalem, led by the high priest.

Semeion. Greek for a sign. John's favorite word for Jesus' miracles.

SLB. Steadfast Literal Bible, the translation quoted throughout this book.

Teras. Greek for a wonder. In the New Testament it always appears together with semeion.

Testimonium Flavianum. The passage about Jesus in Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.3, parts of which are disputed (Chapter 3).

Tribulation. The seven-year period of judgment on the earth before Christ returns to reign.

Appendix E: Sources and Credits

All Scripture quotations are from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). Words the translators supplied to make the English read smoothly are printed in bold italics.

Quotations from ancient writers come from these public domain translations:

- Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, *The Wars of the Jews*, and *Against Apion*, translated by William Whiston (1737).
- Tacitus, *Annals*, translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb (1876).
- Herodotus, *Histories*, translated by G. C. Macaulay (1890).
- Origen, *Against Celsus*, translated by Frederick Crombie, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, volume 4.
- Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, volume 1.
- Eusebius, *Church History*, translated by Arthur Cushman McGiffert, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, volume 1.
- Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by Marcus Dods (1871).
- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748).

Where the book refers to modern writers, such as C. S. Lewis, it describes their ideas in my own words rather than quoting them. Archaeological details labeled Background come from standard published reports of the excavations named.

About This Book

By His Mighty Hand gathers every miracle in the Bible into one book, from Enoch to the new creation. For each one it gives the Bible references, who God used, and who saw it happen.

It walks through the Old Testament in order, from Noah and Moses to Elijah, Elisha, and Daniel, then through every miracle of Jesus, His death and resurrection, and the signs that followed the apostles in the book of Acts. Along the way it brings in what history and archaeology add, from Josephus and Tacitus to the Pool of Siloam, and it labels each outside source honestly as confirmed, disputed, or background.

The book also answers the hard questions. What is a miracle? Can miracles really happen? How do you tell the real from the counterfeit? Does God still do miracles today? It lays out the main views fairly where good Christians disagree, looks ahead to the miracles still to come, and closes with what all of it means for you.

Every chapter ends with study questions for personal reading or small groups. The back of the book has a master list of miracles, a table of Jesus' miracles in the four Gospels, a guide to the outside sources, a glossary, and a Scripture index.

All Scripture quotations come from the Steadfast Literal Bible, which is free to read at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb.

Scripture Index

This index lists every Bible passage that is named with its book somewhere in the text, with the pages where it appears.

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