

Christian Evidences

Lesson 8:

Jesus Christ, the Son of God
(Part II)



Review

- Introduction
 - Apologetics
 - Why study Christian evidences
- Evidences for the Existence of God
 - Two means of revelation
 - General and special
 - Classical arguments
 - Cause and effect
 - Evidence of design demands a designer
 - The moral argument – within man a moral nature
 - Aesthetical – presence of beauty must be explained

Review

- Evidences for the Bible as God's Word
 - Inspiration
 - Unity and Doctrine
 - Accuracy, archaeology
 - Scientific foreknowledge, prophecy
- Evidences for Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God
 - Jesus' claims
 - External Evidence
 - Secular writers – Jesus was a historical person



Jesus Christ – Internal Evidence (the Gospel)

- First, are the gospel accounts trustworthy?
- Have already noticed evidences from:
 - Archaeology
 - Agreement of book and land
 - Fulfilled prophecy
 - Scientific foreknowledge
 - The unity of the Bible
 - The claims for inspiration
- Also, a great deal of manuscript evidence



Gospel Accounts – Manuscript Evidence

- Sir Frederick G. Kenyon
 - Formerly Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum
 - Compared the New Testament with ancient classical literature and drew the following conclusion:
 - “So far from the New Testament text being in an abnormally unsatisfactory state, it is **far better attested** than that of any work of ancient literature ... We are **far better equipped to observe the early stages of textual history** in the manuscript period in the case of the New Testament than of any other work of ancient literature.”

Gospel Accounts – Manuscript Evidence

- F.F. Bruce
 - Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in the University of Manchester
 - “The **evidence** for our New Testament writing is **ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors**, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt. It is a curious fact that **historians have often been much readier to trust the New Testament records** than have many theologians.”

Gospel Accounts – Manuscript Evidence

- Gospel accounts written by eye-witnesses
 - Should give additional weight to unbelievers.
- Lk. 1:1-4
 - *“... just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses ... it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account ...”*
- Jn. 19:35
 - *“... he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe ...”*
- 1 Jn. 1:1-4
 - *“... which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled ... we have seen, and bear witness ... that which we have seen and heard we declare to you ...”*
- 2 Pet. 1:16
 - *“... were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”*

Miracles

*“Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?” The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “... If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, **believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.**”*

Jn. 10:31-38

What is a miracle?

- How would you define a miracle?
- James Orr:
 - “... any deviation from or transcendence of the order of nature, due to the interposition of a supernatural cause”
- Ferrell Jenkins
 - ... can not be explained by reason or science ... an act of God different from or above the natural order.”
- Richard L. Purtill:
 - “... an event brought about by the power of God that is a temporary exception to the ordinary course of nature for the purpose of showing that God has acted in history.”

What is a miracle?

- Some claim any type of miracle is absolutely impossible
 - A person who believes that the Universe and all living things evolved through natural processes over billions of years cannot believe in miracles
 - Since a miracle is an event that has only a supernatural explanation, no such event could ever occur in a world where only natural forces operate
 - Once a person denies the greatest miracle of all – creation at the hand of God – then he or she is forced to deny that miracles of any kind can occur



What is a miracle?

- Others suggest that God did create the Universe, but that His activities stopped at creation
 - Suggest He no longer intervenes in this world through miracles
 - Does not consider that **natural laws do not apply** to God since **He is not a natural being**
 - Room illustration – God can act from outside the room without changing the room
- Josh McDowell:
 - “Some would contend that miracles cannot exist since they would be in violation of the laws of nature. This argument assumes that natural law is a closed system (i.e., that it cannot be acted on from the outside); therefore, a violation of natural law is impossible. However, within a theistic framework, **natural law is not a closed system**; therefore, a miracle is not necessarily a violation of natural law.”

What is a miracle?

- C.S. Lewis:
 - “If God annihilates or creates or deflects a unit of matter **He has created a new situation at that point.** Immediately all Nature domiciles this new situation, makes it at home in her realm, adapts all other events to it. It finds itself conforming to all the laws ... In calling them miracles we do not mean that they are contradictions or outrages; we mean that, **left to her own resources, she (nature) could never produce them.**”



What is a miracle?

- C. Stephen Evans:
 - “It is, however, somewhat **incorrect to call such special actions “breaks” or “interruptions” in the natural order.** Such terminology implies that God is not normally present in the natural order; but if God exists at all, then he must be regarded as responsible for the whole of that natural order. The **contrast, then, is not between “nature” and very unusual divine “interventions” into nature, but between God’s normal activity in upholding the natural order and some special activity on God’s part.** Thus, when God does a miracle, He does not suddenly enter a created order from which He is normally absent. Rather, **He acts in a special way in a natural order** which He continually upholds and in which He is constantly present.”

Purpose of Miracles

- Jn. 20:30-31
 - *“... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ ...”*
 - **Signs written so that one might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life.**
- Mt. 11:2-5
 - *“... Are You the Coming One? ... tell John the things which you hear and see ...”*
 - **Provide evidence that Jesus is the Christ.**
- Jn. 3:2
 - *“... a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”*
 - **Provide evidence that God is with Jesus.**

The Power Demonstrated in Jesus' Miracles

- 35 miracles of Jesus recorded
- Provide strong evidence He was the Christ, the Son of God
 - *“Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.” (Jn. 9:32-33)*
- Power over the human body
 - Could heal sickness and disease
 - Mt. 8:1-4 – *“... Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed ...”*
- Power over the spiritual world
 - Lk. 4:33-37 – *“a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon ... Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” ... it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed ...”*

The Power Demonstrated in Jesus' Miracles

- Power to forgive sins proven by healing a physical ailment
 - *Lk. 5:17-26 – “... men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed ... When He saw their faith, He said to him, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you’ ... Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’? ... ‘arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.”*
- Power to control the physical world
 - *Mk. 4:35-41 – “... a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling ... He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm ...”*
- Power over death
 - *Mt. 9:18-26 – “My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live ... He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose ...”*

New Testament Words for Miracles

- Signs (Greek, *semeion*)
 - Used when the appeal is to the understanding (Jn. 2:11)
- Wonders (Greek, *teras*)
 - Used when the appeal is to the imagination (Jn. 4:48)
- Miracles (Mighty Deeds). (Greek, *dunamis*).
 - Indicates the source as supernatural (Mk. 6:2)
- *Acts 2:22 - lists all three as attesting to Jesus*



Signs in the Gospel of John

- The word sign (*semeion*) used almost every time in John
 - The deed is an indication of some power or meaning behind it to which it is secondary in importance

Scripture

- John 2:1-11
- John 4:46-54
- John 5:1-9
- John 6:1-14
- John 6:5-21
- John 9:1-11
- John 11:1-53

The Sign

- Water to wine
- Nobleman's son
- Lame man
- Feeding 5000
- Walking on water
- Blind man
- Raising Lazarus

Signified Power Over

- Material substance, time, quantity
- Distance, physical infirmity
- Physical infirmity, time
- Material substance, quantity
- Nature
- Physical infirmity, darkness
- Death

The Reality of the Miracles was Not Questioned

- Reaction to the miracles of Jesus
 - Witnesses were astonished, marveled, amazed
 - Witnesses included those opposed to Christ
 - Pharisees: charged that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub the prince of demons (Mt. 12:24), but they did not deny the fact of the miracles
 - Chief priests: after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, “... *What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him ...*” (Jn. 11:47-48)
- Jesus’ fame for performing miracles even reached the ears of Herod
 - “... *he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.*” (Lk. 23:8)
- Secular historians (e.g. Josephus) referred to the miracles of Jesus. Spoke of “marvelous deeds” and “sorceries.”

The Reality of the Miracles was Not Questioned

- The greatest opponents of Christianity for four centuries did not question the reality of miracles
 - Richard Watson (1776) wrote:
 - “Three men of distinguished abilities rose up at different times and attacked Christianity with every objection which their malice could suggest, or their learning could devise: but neither Celsus in the second century, nor Porphyry in the third, nor the Emperor Julian himself in the fourth century, ever questioned the reality of the miracles related to the Gospels.”



The Miracles of Jesus – Strong Evidence

- Miracles are only impossible in a world with no God
- Jesus repeatedly performed miraculous deeds in order to prove to His followers (and to His enemies) that He was the Son of God!
- Still, many people during Christ's day refused to believe in Him as God's Son
- No different than today for many



“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

Mt. 11:21-24