The Nature of Miracles

Zanesville, OH | February 17, 2019 | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** John 9:1-41

**Intro**:

* Miracles tend to garner a lot of attention because of the greatness of the deeds done and the extent to which they transcend and reverse the laws of nature. There are many miracles recorded in the OT but those we know the most are the miracles Jesus did in the NT. Jesus did things in His day that the likes of no man could fathom or even remotely imagine doing. What exactly are miracles and what was the point of all of them?

1. **Impossible to Comprehend and Explain**
   1. What exactly is a miracle? Here are a couple of key definitions:
      1. *“The Biblical idea of miracle as an extraordinary work of God, generally transcending the ordinary powers of nature…* *is illustrated by the terms used to describe miracles in the Old Testament and New Testament”* (ISBE).
      2. *“A surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency”* (Dictionary.com).
   2. These definitions fit well with the deeds we observe done by God and agents of God in the bible. Miracles may be described often by the use of other words including, **wonders** (Ex. 15:11; Acts 2:22), **works** (Matt. 11:2; Jn. 5:20), **powers** (Matt. 13:54; Lk. 8:46) and **signs** (Jn. 2:23; 6:2). While the idea is generally the same, each word stresses a particular aspect about the nature of a miracle.
   3. These wonders, signs, powers etc. are the direct work of God and as such we cannot fully comprehend them nor explain them (Jn. 9:8-12). The people in the narrative of John 9 are bewildered and shocked in reference to the miracle that has taken place.
   4. They deemed it impossible that this blind man would ever see again and as such they claim it’s another man and not the one they knew. The blind man however kept saying it indeed was him, but they still didn’t believe. As a result, his parents are brought in to confirm if he’s their son (Jn. 9:18-21).
   5. There is a clear sense of perplexity abundant in this chapter and it is not a coincidence. The common folk serve as clear illustrations that the nature of miracles is such that we can neither fully comprehend them nor explain them (Jn. 9:26, 32).
   6. To press the nature, science and laws of the miracle itself would be a foolish mistake leading to all kinds of fanciful and far out interpretations that miss the point entirely. One who is obsessed with understanding how it works, and why it works and to what extent it works (ins and outs) will woefully miss the true emphasis of the miracles Jesus did. What is the true emphasis? What was the purpose of the miracles?
2. **Miracles are Signs Pointing to Something Greater**
   1. John 9 begins with Jesus being the focal point of the story as He heals this blind man who was born that way. Throughout the rest of the narrative, the common folk, religious leaders and the blind man take up the spotlight.
   2. Notice that the conversations revolve around the person who healed the blind man (Jn. 9:11-12, 15-17, 24-33). Jesus seems to go away after healing the blind man and it is not until later, He comes back (Jn. 9:34-35).
   3. While Jesus has been away, the conversations have all been about Him and what He has done. It may seem like He is a secondary character after v. 7 but the whole story is about Him!
   4. We mentioned earlier that miracles may be described in terms of different words. John’s gospel is unique in comparison to the synoptics for several reasons. One of them is that he only records 7 miracles and he always describes them as signs (Notice Jn. 9:16)!
   5. Why use the word sign to describe a miracle? John’s desire was that everyone look beyond the sign to the One who was greater. Signs may be symbols or illustrations which point to something they lend credibility to. The thing or subject the sign points to is the greater meaning and emphasis.
   6. Likewise, the miracles Jesus did were signs that lone credibility to His ministry, His nature and His overarching purpose! **They served as signs guiding us to God!** Jesus didn’t do miracles to garner attention to himself. He didn’t do it for entertainment or because He was bored and had nothing else to do. He did it so we could see the spiritual message God wants us to know and understand.
   7. John 9 is more than just a blind man being able to see again. It’s more than just a back and forth about how it happened. John 9 is about a man who did not know Jesus and through the miracle, he has grown and seen the message Jesus intended.
   8. Notice his progression in this story:
      1. He first states that the man Jesus healed him (Jn. 9:11)
      2. He then calls refers to him as a prophet (Jn. 9:17)
      3. He says that Jesus is clearly from God (Jn. 9:33)
      4. Finally, he believes and worships Jesus as the Son of God (Jn. 9:35-38)
   9. The miracle has served its purpose in this blind man since he is able to see and understand the message Jesus wanted him and everyone else to see. He saw what the sign was pointing to: **Salvation can only come through Jesus Christ!**
   10. The miracles of the Bible and the miracles of Jesus were truly amazing and astonishing works that no one else could do except God alone! They pointed to Jesus! But more than that, they pointed to Jesus who came to save us!
   11. Notice several dominant themes that stress salvation in this chapter:
       1. Who sinned…works of God displayed in Him (Jn. 9:3)
       2. Work the works of God while it’s day… (Jn. 9:4)
       3. Jesus is the Light of the World (Jn. 1:4-5, 9; 9:5; 1 Jn. 1:7)
       4. Jesus as Creator; blind man new creation (Gen. 2:7; Isa. 45:9; Jn. 9:6, 30)
       5. Jesus came to open our hearts (Jn. 9:39)
   12. The bible has always stressed the need for God and salvation. The miracles Jesus did in no way changed that fact but only reinforced it. We need to look at these signs and acknowledge what they pointed to and what they can do for us (Jn. 20:30-31).

**Conclusion:**

1. Miracles are impossible to fully comprehend and explain.
2. Miracles served as signs pointing us to God and Salvation.
3. Will we reject the message of the sign as the religious leaders did?
4. Will we heed the message and believe and worship Jesus?