

# Characteristics of New Testament Miracles

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In the religious world today there are many who claim to have performed, received, and witnessed "Miracles". Most often they have been performed in church services and "healing services" where such "miracles" are both accepted and anticipated. Many churches and their members depend upon these "modern day miracles" to confirm and prove their faith and to confirm that God is working in their daily lives. However, many of these groups teach and believe very different and even conflicting doctrines. All claim to have God working and speaking through them, but this simply cannot be the case! Is God the author of confusion? Absolutely NOT! (1 Corinthians 14:33). All of God's true followers MUST "speak the same thing", 1 Corinthians 1:10. They must all be one in doctrine and message!, John 17:20,21.

The following study and clear Bible passages will mean very little to those who DON'T believe and respect the Bible more than their own experiences and desires. However, for those who truly believe and respect the Word of God, and who seek its perfect guidance in all things pertaining to life and truth, the following study should help to educate and encourage, and answer many critically important questions.

For the purpose of this study we are specifically interested in what the Bible calls a "sign" or "wonder" or "miraculous gift". We are NOT addressing the broader subject of God answering prayer or His working in our daily lives. By definition, the word "miracle" describes the supernatural intervening in the natural world. Certainly, whenever we pray and ask God for anything at all, we are asking Him, a supernatural Being to "get involved" and supersede and take some sort of action in our natural lives. This, by definition, is a "miracle". With this understanding, we believe that God is constantly performing "miracles". However, this is NOT the New Testament or Bible use of the word "miracle". Throughout the Scriptures there are specific words such as "signs", "wonders" and "miracles" which, in their context, refer to a more spontaneous, amazing and otherwise unexplainable yet undeniable event.

So what ARE the characteristics of true New Testament miracles, signs and wonders? What kinds of miracles were done in New Testament Bible times? On whom were they performed? Did they always require faith? Were they always favorable or healing? Could every Christian perform miracles? How were the "gifts" given or passed on to others? Why were they performed? What was their purpose? Are they performed in modern times? Was there a specific "time of miracles". What does the Bible say on the matter?

A number of important passages are listed here for your prayerful consideration. It is important to understand just what God wants us to learn from these passages. The points made by the passages listed should be quite obvious. However, a few very specific questions are asked which refer back to the verses listed. The answers to all the following questions can be easily found within the verses themselves. Take the time to compare the Bible's answers to how you or others may have otherwise answered. It is very important that your answers to these questions come right out of the Bible alone! Please write your answers in the spaces provided. If your experiences or understanding clearly contradict the Bible, which will you respect and believe? Mere thoughts and opinions won't tell us what God has said!

When considering the Characteristics of New Testament miracles and comparing them to "modern day miracles" we must make legitimate comparisons in several key areas. These areas of comparison should include the type of miracles, the setting or situations, the results, the reactions, and more. Consider the following:

The usual setting or location for 'modern day miracles' is in a church 'healing service' or religious bible study group or prayer service. However....

1. John 2:1ff; John 5:1ff; John 11:32-45; Luke 7:11-16
  - a. From John 2, what kind of event did Jesus perform his first miracle? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. Was it in a public or a closed religious event? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. From John 11:32-45 What kind of an event did Jesus perform this miracle at? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. Have you ever seen a verifiable modern day miracle where a person was raised from the dead after being buried for three days? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - e. From Luke 7:11-16 At what kind of an event did Jesus perform this miracle? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - f. Have you ever seen a verifiable event where a funeral procession was stopped by a "faith healer" and the person was raised from the dead? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - g. Would you say the Bible shows that Jesus usually performed his miracles in private religious settings? or in public and often in front of non-believers and open for examination by unbelievers? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - h. So what does that say about so-called "healing services" done only at a church or other more religiously supportive and private setting? \_\_\_\_\_.

So-called 'modern miracles' often are short in their duration and not permanent or long lasting. However...

2. Matthew 12:13

- a. Is there any record of this man's restored hand later withering up again? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Are you aware that many of today's "modern miracles" are NOT always permanent or lasting in their effect. Like a person "healed" of arthritis or cancer, only latter to have the condition return.
- c. Were N.T. miracles permanent with lasting effects over a long period of time; not just a couple of days or weeks in effect? \_\_\_\_\_.

Most modern "miracles" are not and even cannot be performed in the presence of enemies or nonbelievers. However...

3. Matthew 12:2-14; Luke 6:6-11

- a. Who did Jesus perform these miracles in front of? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Were these Pharisees supporters or enemies of Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. So were Jesus miracles often performed in the presence of His enemies or unbelievers? \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. Are you aware that when a "modern day miracle worker" fails, they often say it is because "there was an unbeliever in their midst"? \_\_\_\_\_.
- e. Then, is it credible to claim that a true miracle can be prevented merely by the presence of an unbeliever? \_\_\_\_\_.
- f. Then what does that say about such claims made after a failure? \_\_\_\_\_.

Most modern "miracles" are concerning physical ailments and not over all aspects of nature. However...

4. Matthew 14:32

- a. What kind of NT miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Was the calming of the sea immediate or over a period of time? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Have you ever witnessed a verified modern miracle like this? \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Matthew 12:10-13

- a. What kind of NT miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Was the restoration of a withered limb immediate over a period of time? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Have you ever witnessed a verified modern miracle like this? \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Matthew 21:19

- a. What kind of NT miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. How long did it take for the tree to wither? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Have you ever witnessed a verified modern miracle like this? \_\_\_\_\_.

7. Matthew 15:36-38

- a. What kind of NT miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Was there actually more food left over than there was to start before the miracle? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Have you ever witnessed a verified modern miracle like this? \_\_\_\_\_.

8. John 2:1-11

- a. What kind of NT miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Considering that a "firkin" is approximately 20 to 30 gallons, how much wine did Jesus make from 6 water bots filled with 2 or 3 firkins each? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. What was the quality of the miracle (wine)? \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. Have you ever witnessed a verified modern miracle like this? \_\_\_\_\_.

9. Luke 22:51

- a. What kind of NT miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Have you been a witness to any verified case of a severed limb or appendage being instantly and miraculously reattached? \_\_\_\_\_.

10. Acts 3:1-9

- a. What kind of NT miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Did the man healed here struggle to his feet and stumble around? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. What did the man healed here do? What were his actions? \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. Have you been a witness to a verified case of anything similar? \_\_\_\_\_.

Today's so-called "miracles" are usually performed in "healing services" with much fanfare and sensationalism, music blaring, people falling down and rolling around, etc.. However.....

11. Mark 5:43

- a. What kind of NT miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Was it done with a large fanfare, music or special preparation? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Did Jesus tell the witnesses to shout it from the rooftops? \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. How did Jesus tell these people to react to this miracle? \_\_\_\_\_.

12. Mark 7:32-36

- a. What kind of NT miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Did Jesus seek to have the multitude witness this miracle? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. What did Jesus tell these people to do in response to this miracle? \_\_\_\_\_.

13. Mark 9:1-9

- a. What kind of NT miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Was Jesus seen speaking with heavenly beings who were once alive? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. From v.9, what did Jesus tell these people to do in response to this miracle? \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. Did Jesus tell them to post it on a marquis or billboard? \_\_\_\_\_.
- e. Would you then conclude that N.T. miracles were done without sensationalism and fanfare? \_\_\_\_\_.

Today's modern workers of "miracles" are often made rich as a result. However....

14. Acts 3:1-8; Philippians 4:12

- a. Were the apostles or "miracle workers" ever made rich as a result of their gifts? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Do modern "miracle workers" often financially benefit from their so-called miracles? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Is this practice consistent with NT practices and teaching? \_\_\_\_\_.

Modern "workers of miracles" often have a publically successful reputation by the community. However....

15. Acts 26:24; Acts 28:22

- a. Did the Apostle Paul, who did many miracles, have a good reputation? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. What was Paul accused of being? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Can you see that the miracle worker was never of successful reputation by his enemies, certainly not like today!  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Today's "miracles" often involve healing one ear deafness, backaches, sinus conditions, etc.. However...

16. The New Testament miracles were never silly or absurd!

- a. Are there any Bible records of healing backaches, sinus conditions, unseen cancer, flying around the room, etc.?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Do today's modern "healers" heal people of such things as headaches, backaches and such? \_\_\_\_\_.

Some "modern miracle workers" say that they are not able to heal someone because of a "lack of faith", or because of an unbeliever being "in our midst". However...The miracles didn't always require the faith of the person or thing effected...

17. Matthew 9:18,19,23-25; Luke 7:12-15; John 11:11-44

- a. Specifically, what kind of miracle was performed in these cases? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. How much "faith" does a dead corpse have? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Then is faith of the one receiving the miracle always required? \_\_\_\_\_.

18. Mark 4:39; Matthew 8:26,27

- a. Specifically, what kind of miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. How much "faith" did the wind and the sea have? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Then is faith of the one receiving the miracle always required? \_\_\_\_\_.

19. Matthew 21:19

- a. Specifically, what kind of miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. How much "faith" did a fig tree have? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Then is faith of the one receiving the miracle always required? \_\_\_\_\_.

20. Acts 5:1-11

- a. Specifically, what kind of miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. How much "faith" did Ananias and Sapphira have? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Wasn't their problem actually a lack of faith? \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. Did their lack of faith prevent this miracle from occurring. \_\_\_\_\_.

21. Acts 13:6-11

- a. Specifically, what kind of miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. How much "faith" did the false teacher have? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Wasn't his problem actually a lack of faith? \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. Did the lack of his faith prevent his being blinded. \_\_\_\_\_.

22. John 2:6-10

- a. Specifically, what kind of miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. How much "faith" did the water have? \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Was there any record of faith from the water jugs or those getting them? \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. Did a lack of faith prevent Jesus turning water into the finest wine? \_\_\_\_\_.

23. Matthew 17:16-21

- a. Were the apostles not able to perform a miracle here? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. Why could they not cast out the demon in this case? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- c. So if a lack of faith was a problem, who lacked the faith? the recipient or the healer? \_\_\_\_\_ .

In and during religious events where “miracles” are performed in modern times, they are usually the “main event” and the reason why people are coming together “to see or experience God’s power”. However...

24. Acts 13:6-12

- a. From verse 11 what kind of miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. From verse 12 what was preeminent in the witness’s mind after this miracle ? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- c. From verse 12 what was the deputy amazed by? the miracle or the doctrine (teaching)? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- d. Thus they formed an essential part of the narrative, yet without undue prominence; there was usually another lesson to be learned.

And now we get into the stated Bible purpose of New Testament miracles. Consider the following:

25. Mark 16:17-20

- a. When it says that “these signs will accompany those who believe”, v.17, does it say that every single Christian would be able to perform these signs? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. Who are the “those who believe” in this context? Are they the 11 apostles (verse 14)? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- c. Is there any room or language for failure for the signs promised in verses 17 and 18? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- d. According to verse 20, what WAS the purpose of those miracles promised to the apostles? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- e. Specifically was the stated purpose of miracles to “confirm that the Word” was from the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_ .

26. 1 Corinthians 14:22, 23

- a. What were “tongues” or “languages” for? Who were they to be a sign for? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. From v.23 what would an unbeliever think of tongue speaking without knowing the speakers and recognizing the miraculous event of people speaking a language they had never studied? \_\_\_\_\_ . (Also see “Bible Tongues”, by Kent Field).

27. Hebrews 2:3,4

- a. According to verse 3, who confirmed the Word of Jesus to the Hebrew Christians? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. And from v.4 what did the Lord use to bear witness to and confirm His Apostles word? \_\_\_\_\_ .

28. 1 Corinthians 12:12

- a. Does this verse discuss specific types of signs or miracles? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. What were these miracles or signs called specifically in this verse? \_\_\_\_\_ .

29. Acts 14:1-4

- a. According to verse 3, what was the purpose of the signs and wonders done? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. And from v.4 was it the whole church or specifically the Apostles that these signs were being done through? \_\_\_\_\_ .

30. Acts 2:22, 43; 5:12

- a. From v.22, what was God doing when He performed miracles through Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. From verse 43, though there were more than 3,000 Christians present, specifically, who were performing the signs and wonders? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- c. From Acts 5:12 by whose hands were many signs and wonders taking place among the believers? \_\_\_\_\_ .

31. John 20:30,31

- a. What is the stated purpose of John recording the miracles of Jesus for us to read? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. Did John state here that we are expected to be able to believe on the basis of the written Word, rather than on our own experiences? \_\_\_\_\_ .

32. Romans 15:18,19

- a. Was the emphasis by the Apostle Paul for his ministry placed upon his doing miracles or upon speaking and preaching the Word? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. What did Paul offer as proof that he was speaking from God? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- c. Thus these signs showed beyond any doubt to the worst skeptic that the supernatural was at work confirming the Word. Isn’t that what is being clearly stated in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_ .

33. Did Moses ever do a miracle to confirm or prove the words of Abraham? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a. No! Abraham was surrounded by his own signs and wonders from God. Correct? \_\_\_\_\_ .

34. Did Jesus ever do a miracle to confirm the words of Moses? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- No, Moses performed his own signs and wonders to confirm he was speaking from God. Correct? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - Jesus performed miracles to prove that He was from God! (John 14:11). Correct? \_\_\_\_\_ .
35. Did the Apostles ever do a miracle to confirm Jesus' Word? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- No, Jesus' Word was confirmed by His own miracles! (John 20:30,31;21:25). Correct? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - The Apostles performed their own signs and wonders that confirmed their Word. (Mk.16:20). Correct? \_\_\_\_ .
36. Galatians 3:15
- Does this verse teach that a Word once confirmed, is always confirmed? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - When a covenant is confirmed or ratified can anyone add to it? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - Was the New Covenant (Testament) confirmed by the signs from God? \_\_\_\_\_ .

Many modern day "miracle workers" are financially comfortable and even rich by most standards and their lives don't often match their claims to holiness. But consider the following:

37. Acts 8:9,17-24
- From verse 9, what was Simon called? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - What did Simon use to impress people in his area? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From verse 18, what did Simon try to do in order to do miracles? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From verse 19, what did Simon think he could do? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From verses 20-24, what was Simon's spiritual result of his intent? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - Are you aware of situations or ministries where "spiritual gifts" are offered in response to pleas for contributions?  
\_\_\_\_\_ .
  - The clear point IS, the miracles fit into and were consistent with the lives of Christ and His apostles; they didn't live unholy lives otherwise, as today. Nor could they be bought with money!
38. Mark 16:17,18
- Are the words "might", "maybe", "possibly" or "could" used in the promise of New Testament miracles?  
\_\_\_\_\_ .
  - Does the language used here by Jesus leave any room for failure or the need for embarrassing explanations?  
\_\_\_\_\_ .
  - Are the emphatic words "will" or "shall" used by Jesus in his promise of true miracles? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From verse 19, what did Simon think he could do? \_\_\_\_\_ .
39. Luke 5:23-26; Acts 3:6-8; Mark 4:39
- From Luke 5:25, how long did it take for this miracle to take effect? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From Acts 3:7 how long did this miracle take to been experienced? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From Mark 4:39 How long did it take for Jesus to calm the wind and sea? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From passages like these, are New Testament miracles immediate in nature or do they take days, weeks and months to occur? \_\_\_\_\_ .
40. Acts 5:1-11; 13:8-12
- From Acts 5:5,6,10, what kind of miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From Acts 13:11, What kind of miracle was performed here? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From these verses would you say that miracles were always favorable or positive? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - Are you aware of ANY modern day workers of miracles who strike people blind or dead? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - Hence New Testament miracles were NOT always favorable.
41. Acts 6:6-8; 8:17,18; 19:6
- From Acts 6:8, did Stephen perform great wonders and miracles? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From Acts 6:6, did the Apostles lay their "hands upon" Stephen and the other deacons BEFORE they did any miracles? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From Acts 8:18, how were miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit given to others? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - From Acts 19:6, After what point did the Holy Spirit "fall upon" some people and cause them to speak in languages they had never studied? What preceded this event? \_\_\_\_\_ .

OK then, decision time! If it doesn't match the characteristics of New Testament miracles, then they're not New Testament miracles!!! Right? So what are you witnessing today??? Consider the following passages.....

2 Thessalonians 2:9-11 ; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 ; 2 Peter 2:1-3 ; Ezekiel 13:6-9; 22:28