

**A Closer Look at Miracles****Acts 3:1—10**

All through the Gospels and into the book of Acts, we see many miracles performed. There were physical restorations such as the blind being made to see, the deaf being made to hear, the lame being made to walk, the dead being brought back to life, severed or missing body parts restored (Mark 22:50—51; Matthew 15:31), a withered hand restored and those with leprosy were made whole. There are also miracles of nature including water being turned into wine, catching a net full of fish, calming of the storm, cursing of a fig tree, Jesus and Peter walking on water, and a coin in the fish's mouth (Matthew 17:24—27). Other miracles include demons being cast out, people struck dead (Acts 5:1—10), feeding of the multitudes, instantaneous transportation (Acts 8:39) and delivery from prison (Acts 5:17—20; 12:1—11; 16:22—40). Adding to this are many other miracles performed that are not specifically mentioned such as Stephen performing many signs and wonders (Acts 6:8), many healed by Philip (Acts 8:6, 7, 13) and miracles performed by the disciples sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:17—20). There are many other signs that were given to Israel that are not even recorded (John 20:30).

These miracles, signs and wonders were all given to Israel so that they would believe that Jesus was the Christ. They were given so that Israel would believe (John 20:31). These miracles are closely associated with the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, which began with John the Baptist (Luke 16:16). He was sent by the Father, born six months before Jesus was born, with the mission to announce the coming of Israel's King and the setting up of the promised Millennial Kingdom (Malachi 3:1; John 1:6—8). Everything he did was done to point Israel to Jesus Christ as Messiah. This is why he said that he must decrease while Christ increases (John 3:30). It's interesting that John did not know who the Messiah was until His baptism, at which time He was identified by the Holy Spirit and by the Father (John 1:30—34).

**Purpose of miracles**

In general, miracles were performed for Israel's benefit to get their attention and then announce something important. In the New Testament, miracles were done to wake up the nation of Israel and announce the coming of the Kingdom. They were specifically done to point Israel to their Messiah, and give Jesus and His Disciples credibility. This is why Satan will use miracles to deceive Israel leading them to think he is their Messiah (Matthew 24:24). Satan understands the purpose of miracles and thus imitates the actions of God to lead people astray. Israel needs to see signs and miracles in order to believe (1 Corinthians 1:22).

As long as God is dealing with Israel, miracles, signs and wonders were manifested. This was because the Old Testament spelled out what Israel was to look for while waiting for the Messiah to appear. Isaiah 35:5—6 and Joel 2:28—31 spell out the things that will happen that will point Israel to Christ. When Christ came to earth, the religious leaders of Israel should have been able to identify Jesus as Messiah through the abundance of miracles, and connect Him to the person described in the Old Testament. According to Scripture, Jesus Christ was confirmed to be this Man by the miracles (Hebrews 2:3—4).

Once God had completely put Israel aside, these miracles, signs and wonders disappeared. We see three times in Acts that Paul pronounced that he was going to the Gentiles and no longer going to the Jew first (Romans 1:16; 2:9—10; Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:28). The Jew was given prominence with the preaching of the Kingdom, and even after they lost the opportunity to enter the

Kingdom, they were given prominence with the preaching of the Grace of God by Paul. God's grace and mercy are magnified with the understanding of how often He gave Israel the opportunity to be saved. They were given precedence in receiving the Gospel of the Kingdom and also when the Gospel of Grace began being preached by Paul (John 2:1—11).

### **Deeper meaning**

One interesting aspect of miracles is that there is often special significance behind the outward display. Many miracles are specifically placed in Scripture to present a picture of a biblical truth. For instance, When Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana, it is significant that He did this at the beginning of His public ministry to announce this special event, while getting Israel's attention. It was through this miracle that Jesus was glorified, and the Disciples believed on Him (verse 11).

This miracle is a picture of Israel going into the Kingdom with great joy, with the wine representing joy. Wine is a type of the Holy Spirit and both are associated with joy (Zechariah 10:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Acts 13:52). Just as Jesus produced abundant wine for the wedding feast, Israel will experience much joy in the Spirit as they enter the Millennial Kingdom and become wedded to their Messiah for all eternity.

Another example of the typology of a miracle is found in Acts 13 after Paul declares he is turning from the Jews and going to the Gentiles. Just as Jesus performed the miracle at the wedding feast to begin His public ministry, Paul performs a miracle before embarking on his first journey with Barnabas into Gentile territory. This miracle temporarily blinds the Jew, Elymas, for hindering the gospel, while showing Sergius Paulus, a Gentile, believing the gospel. Not only did Paul get their attention, but he also demonstrated the power behind his message and made a point of how Israel hindered the gospel while the Gentiles accepted it. Israel's blinding will be temporary.

### **Peter's first miracle**

Using the two miracles above as guides, we can see the Peter's first miracle was also significant and full of meaning. His first miracle, after the ascension of Jesus Christ, was used to get the attention of the people, and it also showed that he had God-given authority. What he was preaching was given to him by God, as was his ability to perform miracles.

The miracle of healing the lame man was also very significant. Israel is pictured as lame from birth. Israel was "birthed" out of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 4:22—23; Hosea 11:1). However, Israel quickly turned away from God and went their own way. They were lame, spiritually, almost as soon as they were "born."

However, Peter is giving Israel a glimmer of hope through what he is preaching. Israel can be made whole and go leaping and praising God into the imminent Kingdom. This will be made possible in the name (authority) of Jesus Christ. After leaping up, the formerly lame man went into the temple. The temple is the location that Jesus Christ and the Disciples will be ruling the world. I believe this is where the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place. This promise of complete restoration, and being permanently united with the Messiah, was a promise to all who wanted to become a part of the Little Flock of believing Israel.

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