

FEATURE: Science and Miracles

VOICE: Can a logical, analytical person believe in miracles?

PROF.: Several scientists – including a Nobel Prize-winning scientist – share their answers to this important question.

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

VOICE: Professor, I have a problem. A friend and I have been reading the Bible together. We read stories claiming that the waters of a sea stood up like walls and provided a dry path long enough for an entire nation to walk through it. The Bible also says Jesus turned water into wine, walked on water, and came back alive from the dead.

My friend said these actions are scientifically impossible, so the Bible must be wrong. What do you say?

PROF.: Tell your friend he's half right. Miracles don't fit into the laws of science. But let's talk about the other half of what he said. Can something be possible – if it isn't scientifically possible?

VOICE: “Can something be possible – if it isn't scientifically possible?” I'll have to think about that a moment.

PROF.: Good. We will probably think more clearly if we sharpen our mental tools. Let's check a few definitions.

One dictionary defines science as, quote, “knowledge of facts and laws arranged in an orderly system.” End quote. Another says science is “ordered and systematic knowledge *of natural phenomena* gained by observation, experiment and induction.”

VOICE: “Ordered and systematic knowledge *of natural phenomena* gained by observation, experiment and induction.” Yes, that sounds right.

PROF.: A Nobel laureate, the late American geneticist Dr. George Beadle [BEE-dul], adds another point: “Science studies the natural, the predictable, the repeatable, the verifiable.”

VOICE: That's why we often call biology, chemistry and physics the “natural sciences.”

PROF.: Dr. Beadle concluded, “A supernatural event is by definition beyond the ken¹ of science.”

VOICE: So science can't prove or disprove a miracle.

1 Range of knowledge.

PROF.: Exactly!

VOICE: While you were reading those, I was looking up “miracle.” One dictionary says a miracle is “a wonderful² happening that is contrary to, or independent of, the known laws of nature.” Another adds, “a marvel, a wonder, a supernatural event.”

PROF.: Comparing those definitions, we notice that scientific knowledge comes by observation and experiment. Humans can't experiment with miracles, although humans have reported observing them.

Natural science works with things that occur predictably every day. But a miracle is usually unexpected, and a one-time event.

VOICE: Scientific principles apply when nature does something spontaneously – such as an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. Repeatable scientific principles are also working when a person applies electrical current to electrodes and performs an electrolysis³ experiment.

PROF.: By contrast, a miracle is beyond the ability of man or nature. If miracles occur, God is the only being who can produce a genuine miracle.

VOICE: Are you saying that things that are humanly impossible – are possible?

PROF.: Your answer will depend on “where you're coming from.”⁴ If human beings are the highest form of life, then what's humanly impossible is impossible. What man can't do, can't be done by any being.

But if God exists, that changes everything. If there's a Being with wisdom and power greater than man's wisdom and power, he can do things you and I can't do.

What's humanly impossible is divinely possible.

VOICE: You and I do things every day that ants and monkeys will never be able to do – because we have abilities those animals don't have.

PROF.: So logically, if God is a higher order of being than we are, he would be able to do things beyond the ability of us humans.

VOICE: The humanly impossible would be possible with God.

PROF.: The Bible quotes God as saying, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” That's found in the Bible book of Isaiah, chapter 55, verse 9.

2 Unusual, awesome or mysterious.

3 Passing electricity through water, to separate it into hydrogen and oxygen.

4 The assumptions with which you begin.

VOICE: But one thing puzzles me. The Bible claims that God created the universe and established its natural laws. But then Christians say God breaks his own laws by working miracles.

If that's true, doesn't that mean the Maker of natural laws is also their breaker? After creating order when he made the universe, wouldn't God create disorder and chaos if he performed a miracle?

PROF.: No. Let me illustrate what I mean.

Objects fall to the earth unless they are lighter than air. The law of gravity keeps heavy objects from floating or rising above ground level.

But an airplane is heavier than air – even when empty. Add tons of fuel, passengers and baggage, and it becomes *much* heavier than air. If the law of gravity is the only influence on that plane, it would never get off the ground.

But the airport announcer says a flight is now loading at Gate 3. The pilot plans to take his heavier-than-air craft several kilometers into to air – and stay at that altitude several hours.

VOICE: I think you're implying that natural laws continue to operate while God does a miracle – just as gravity continues to operate while a plane takes off.

PROF.: Yes. Under certain conditions another force overrides gravity. If a plane's wings and body are shaped certain ways, and if its engines move it fast enough – the airplane rises high above the ground.

Aeronautical engineers use the principles of nature to make the law of gravity powerless to hold a multi-ton jumbo-jet to the ground.

Similarly, God can intervene and do something that overcomes the ordinary course of nature.

VOICE: You asked earlier if something can be true – if it's not scientifically true.

PROF.: I've been laying a foundation so a yes-or-no answer would make sense to you. Let me lay one more brick.

Nobel Prize-winning physicist Dr. George Beadle wrote, quote, “A supernatural event is by definition beyond the ken⁵ of science.” End quote. Miracles are not repeatable by a scientific experimenter or observer.

5 Understanding, sight.

- VOICE: So, of course – some facts are true, without being “scientifically true.”
For example, *historical* facts aren't verifiable by science. We can't put Alexander the Great into a laboratory apparatus. We can't prove by scientific means that Aristotle or Christopher Columbus ever lived.
- PROF.: Good point! If miracles fit into any area of human knowledge, they fit into history.
History professor Dr. John Warwick Montgomery [WOR-wick mont-GUM-er-ee] wrote, quote, “The evidence that biblical miracles . . . really happened, is as powerful historically as the evidence for Caesar crossing the Rubicon [river] or Napoleon losing the Battle of Waterloo.”
- VOICE: We believe historical events if credible witnesses report that they occurred. But miracles need more evidence than most events.
- PROF.: Why do you say that?
- VOICE: Because most historical events are quite routine. Every battle has a winner and a loser. Historians merely have to report names and a few details.
But when you claim that someone walked on water and returned to life from the dead, those claims need some extra verification.
- PROF.: That's why God arranged to have miracles witnessed so widely. For example, more than 500 people saw Jesus alive again after he had been put to death.
In fact, Jesus went beyond just *showing* himself resurrected to life. He offered to let people *feel* the spear-wound the Roman soldiers had put in his hands, and the nail-wounds that he had received from having been nailed to the cross.
- VOICE: People who saw Jesus Christ under those conditions would have no doubt that he was alive again.
- PROF.: One of the men who had observed Jesus for several years was his follower Peter. Some people wondered whether he had imagined the miraculous things he claimed he had seen Jesus do. The Apostle Peter replied, “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (2 Peter 1:16).
- VOICE: In fact, wasn't Peter so sure of everything he had seen Jesus do, that he chose to be killed because instead of denying what he knew was true?
- PROF.: Yes, he and all of Christ's closest followers, the disciples, were martyred because they refused to lie. They refused to say Jesus had not proven by his miraculous works that he really was God visiting Earth in a human body.

VOICE: Maybe it's a good thing that miracles aren't repeatable by scientific means.

PROF.: What do you mean?

VOICE: I'm glad no man can reproduce a worldwide flood or extend one day to almost two days long. (Joshua chapter 10). If humans could do those things, we could be in deep trouble.

PROF.: (CHUCKLES) I see what you mean.

I can think of another reason to be glad God has done miracles that no man can duplicate – and that he's arranged to have them verified by so many witnesses. That makes it easier for a reasonable, analytical person to believe that God exists.

VOICE: If we say that miracles are impossible, we're saying that God does not exist.

PROF.: But if we recognize that God exists, with infinite power and wisdom, it's not hard to believe that God can work miracles far beyond anything man can explain.

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