

Miracles: Proof of Christ's Claims

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. ~ John 10:37-38



Jesus feeding the multitude, by Domenico Mastroianni, 1876-1962

QURS IS AN AGE OF DISBELIEF. Many are skeptical that miracles can occur, choosing instead to put their faith into the material gains of science and technology. Yet our advances in technology and science have not really brought us closer to eternal truths. Most people still have difficulty knowing God and believing in him. We doubt the goodness and power of God and his care for us. We are, in many respects, “doubting Thomases” (see Jn 20:24-29) who demand our own evidence before we will believe.

Our resistance to belief, our failure in faith, is especially evident in our attitude toward miracles, those God has done in past ages and continues to perform for

us to this very day. It is easier to dismiss the testimony of witnesses of past events than to believe in miracles, those marvelous events that we can see, hear, or touch which involve suspension of some law of nature and so must be attributed to the direct action of God.

The direct action of God in human affairs is described in Sacred Scripture, which tells of God’s creation of everything from nothing, his interactions with Abraham’s family, his freeing of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt, and his care of his Chosen People over a span of a millennium and a half. Scripture also tells us of the climax of God’s action in history in the life and works of Jesus of Nazareth, God-made-man. Because of the miraculous works of love he performed during his brief sojourn on earth, Jesus deserves to be called “the wonder-worker.”

His own coming, God becoming a man through his conception in the virginal womb of Mary (see Lk 1:31-35), is an overwhelming event. At a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, Jesus, prompted by his solicitous mother, changed water into wine, thereby inaugurating his public ministry (see Jn 2:1-11). For the remainder of his life on earth, miracles were a daily reality in the sight of the people in Palestine and the surrounding territories.

The miracles of Jesus were countless (see Mt 8:16; Mt 9:35; Mk 6:56). They showed his almighty power: power over nature, over the human body, over demons, over death itself. On numerous occasions, Jesus showed his power over the forces and laws of nature. He enabled his apostles to make miraculous catches of fish (see Lk 5:4-7; Jn 21:3-11). He calmed the winds and the waves on the Sea of Galilee (see Mk 4:35-41). Thousands witnessed his multiplication of a handful of loaves and fishes to feed them all (see Jn 6:1-14). He astounded his disciples when he walked on the stormy waters of the sea (see Mt 14:22-33).

The People of Israel were well aware of the power and willingness of Jesus to heal their ills. He was

“Marvelous events that involve suspension of some law of nature must be attributed to the direct action of God.”

“He proved that he had extra-human power and authority.”



He that has seen me has seen the Father, by James Tissot, 1856-1902

boundless in his mercy towards the sick, the lame, and all afflicted in body and soul. He cured lepers (see Mk 1:40-45; Lk 17:11-19). The blind, deaf, and crippled received healing (see Mt 15:30-31; Mt 20:30-34; Mk 2:1-12; Jn 9:1-7). The woman who just touched the hem of his garment was instantly healed of a hemorrhage she had suffered for twelve years (see Mt 9:20-23), and the miraculous power of Jesus was transported to the servant of a Roman centurion who had come in faith from afar off to seek his help (see Mt 8:5-13). They were signs of God's presence and care for his creatures.

Time and time again, Jesus confronted and drove out demons (see Mt 9:32-33; Mk 9:17-30), some of which recognized and proclaimed him as the Son of God (see Mt 8:29; Mk 5:1-13). Jesus manifested his power over death, raising to life the daughter of Jairus (see Mk 5:22-24, 35-43), the son of the widow of Nain (see Lk 7:11-15), and his friend Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha (see Jn 11:1-45). The most remarkable example of Jesus' power over death was his own Resurrection (see Lk 24:1-9).

A careful reading of the Gospels reveals that Jesus was reluctant to give signs to those who expected them for sensational purposes (see Mt 16:1-4). Why, then did he work so many miracles during his life on earth? Since he came among us as a man who had a divine mission, he used his miracles not only for the good of the people he loved but also to prove that he had power beyond what was attributable to ordinary human beings. He thereby proved that he had extra-human power and authority (see Lk 4:36). By his

miracles he emphasized the importance and power of faith in his own person (see Mt 8:10; Mt 15:28). He also revealed that lack of faith was an obstacle to his miraculous power (see Mt 14:31; Mk 6:5-6).

Jesus worked his miracles as signs of the Kingdom of God; that what the Father had promised was now among them in his person as the Messiah (see Mt 12:28). He claimed God's power to forgive sins, backing up his claim by miracles that were possible only to the God-man (see Lk 5:20-25). His demonstrated power, confirmed by his own Resurrection from the dead, achieved the defeat of death itself, the consequence of sin (see 1 Cor 15:20-26).

Not only did Jesus work miracles, but he also empowered his disciples to work miracles. He had the power to bestow this supernatural ability on others (see Mt 10:1 and Mk 6:7-13). Many miracles were recorded in the early days of the Church after Jesus' Ascension into Heaven (see Mk 16:20; Acts 3:1-10; Acts 8:5-7; Acts 9:36-42). Nor did the age of miracles end with the deaths (most by martyrdom) of the apostles. The lives of saints record the working of many miracles during their lifetimes and even following their deaths. And the Mother of Jesus has been an active miracle-worker by and through her many appearances on earth. Her most notable appearances have been those of Guadalupe in Mexico, the Rue de Bac in Paris, France, Lourdes in southwestern France, and Fatima, Portugal.

It is important to note that the Catholic Church is extraordinarily skeptical about all claims of miracles and supernatural happenings. These are investigated with extreme thoroughness, often with the help of unbelieving scientists and other specialists, before they are accepted and approved by the Church.

It is well to keep in mind, however, that Jesus did not take away every earthly evil. His mission was to free us from the evils of sin, to liberate us from slavery to Satan and his deadly works. Although Jesus' final triumph was won through the cross, his being "lifted up" (see Jn 12:32) did not save everyone. In the face of marvelous miracles and a holy life, Jesus and his teachings were, and still are, often rejected (see Jn 12:37). As members of God's Church, we must continue to call on our Savior to be with us and, in unflinching faith, to do always whatever he tells us (see Jn 2:5) to reach an eternity with the Divine Wonder-Worker.

(CCC 156, 434, 447, 484, 496-497, 515, 547-550, 638-644, 2003)