MIRACLES OF JESUS IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS (9TH LESSON)

What is Miracle? biblical definition of a miracle would be something like this: “Miracle an event that involves the direct and powerful action of God, transcending the ordinary laws of nature”. Miracles are extraordinary occurrences that can only be attributed to the supernatural work of God and demonstrate His involvement in human history. God employs miracles in the Bible to reveal Himself, His character, and His purposes to humans through phenomena that are not otherwise explainable (Exodus 3:1–6). Miracles provide evidence of God’s presence and power in the world and demonstrate His authority on behalf of His servants. A miracle may be performed directly by God or through a human agent. Other words used to describe miracles in the Bible are signs and wonders (typically used together), powers, and mighty works. Miracles of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:10). They were evidences of God’s interventions.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a miracle is “a sign or wonder such as a healing, or control of nature, which can only be attributed to divine power. The miracles of Jesus were messianic signs of the presence of God’s kingdom” The Church requires that the miracles submitted for a person’s beatification and canonization be miracles of healing, meaning that after a thorough examination of the case by doctors approved by the Holy See, the cure, which must be spontaneous and lasting, did not occur through medical intervention and cannot be explained by medical science.

Creation-Incarnation-Resurrection: One of the greatest miracles is God’s creation of the world and everything in it (Gen 1:1—3:24). Equally astounding are the miracles of Jesus’ Incarnation and Resurrection. Miracles are the manifestations God’s power in our lives. They reveal His glory (John 11:4), Jesus’ glory (Jn 2:11) and His works (Jn 9:3).

Jeremiah 32:21 You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and great terror. Psalm 78:12 In the sight of their ancestors God did wonders, in the land of Egypt, the plain of Zoan. Psalm 105:5 Recall the wondrous deeds he has done, his wonders and words of judgment.

How were the miracles performed? By the power of God (Exo 8:19/ Acts 15:12), by the power of Christ (Matt 10:1), by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:28/ Rom 15:19) and in the name of Christ (Acts 3:16/ 4:30)

MIRACLES WROUGHT THROUGH SERVANTS OF GOD

Moses and Aaron
Rod turned into a serpent (Ex 4:3). Hand healed in Exodus 4:7.
Rod restored (Ex 4:4) Water turned into blood (Ex 4:9)
Hand made leprous (Ex 4:6) River turned into blood (Ex 7:20)
Frogs brought (Ex 8:6)
Frogs removed (Ex 8:13)  
Lice brought (Ex 8:17)  
Flies brought and removed (Ex 8:21-24)  
Boils and blains brought (Ex 9:10-11)  
Hail brought and removed (Ex 9:23-33)  
Locusts brought and removed (Ex 10:13-19)  
Darkness brought (Ex 10:22)  
The first-born destroyed (Ex 12:29)  
The red-sea divided (Ex 14:21-22)  
Egyptians overwhelmed (Ex 14:26-28)  
Water sweetened (Ex 15:25)  
Water from rock in Horeb (Exodus 17:6)  
Water from rock in Kadesh (Num 20:11)  
Healing by brazen serpent (Num 21:8-9)  

**Joshua**  
Waters of Jordan divided (Jos 3:10-17)  
Jordan restored to its course (Jos 4:18)  
Jericho taken (Jos 6:6-20)  
The sun and moon stayed (Jos 10:12-14)  

**Elijah:**  
Drought caused (1 Kgs 17:1) (James 5:17)  
Meal and oil multiplied (1 Kgs 17:14-16)  
A child restored to life (1 Kgs 17:22-23)  
Rain brought (1 Kgs 18:41-45/ James 5:18)  
Waters of Jordan divided (2 Kings 2:8) Taken to heaven (2 Kings 2:11)  

**Elisha:**  
Waters of Jordan divided (2 Kgs 2:14)  
Waters healed (2 Kgs 2:21-22)  
Oil multiplied (2 Kgs 4:1-7)  
Child restored to life (2 Kgs 4:32-35)  
Naaman healed (2 Kgs 5:10-14)  
Iron caused to swim (2 Kgs 6:6)  

Syrians smitten with blindness and restored to sight (2 Kgs 6:18-20)  
A man restored to life (2 Kgs 13:21)  

**The Seventy Disciples:**  
Various miracles (Luke 10:17) And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.  

**The Apostles:**  
And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles (Acts 2:43)  
And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people (Acts 5:12)  

**Peter:**  
Lame man cured (Acts 3:7)  
The sick healed (Acts 5:15-16)  
Dorcas restored to life (Acts 9:40)  

**Stephen:**  
(Acts 6:8) And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.  

**Philip** did Various miracles (Acts 8:6-7)  

**Paul:**  
Lame man cured (Acts 14:10)  
An unclean spirit cast out (Acts 16:18)  
Special miracles (Acts 19:11-12).  
Eutychus restored to life (Acts 20:10-12)  
Viper’s bite made harmless (Acts 28:5)  
Father of Publius healed (Acts 28:8)  
Paul and Barnabas did various miracles (Acts 14:3).  

**Various functions of miracles:** The miracles recorded in the Bible served several functions. Some miracles validated God’s superiority over false gods (1 Kgs 18:20–40), while some miracles validated God’s message (Is 38:7–8). Some miracles brought punishment.
**Different Categories of Miracles**

**Miracles over nature:**
- The parting of the Red Sea (Ex 14)
- Jonah and the big fish (Jon 1:17)
- The virgin birth of Jesus (Matt 1:18–25)
- Daniel’s survival in the den of lions (Dan 6:21–22)
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s preservation in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:25)
- Jesus’ walking on water (Matt 14:25–27)
- Jesus’ calming of the storm (Matt 8:23–27)

**Miracles of healing:**
- Jesus’ healing of the nobleman’s son (John 4:46–47)
- A leper (Mark 1:40–45)
- A paralytic (Matthew 9:1–8)
- A woman with an issue of blood (Luke 8:43–48)

**Miracles over demonic forces:**
- Jesus’ casting out of many unclean spirits (Mark 1:23–28; Matthew 8:28–34)

**Miracles of provision:**
- God’s provision of manna (Exodus 16:4)
- Jesus’ turning of water into wine (John 2:7–9)
- Jesus’ feeding of the multitudes (Matthew 14:19–20; 15:36–37)

**Miracles of resurrection:**
- Elijah’s raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17–24)
- Elisha’s raising the Shunamite woman’s son (2 Kings 4:18–37)
- Jesus’ raising of the widow of Nain’s son (Luke 7:11–18), Jairus’s daughter (Luke 8:52–56), and Lazarus (John 11)
- Peter’s raising of Tabitha (Acts 9:36–43)
- Paul’s raising of Eutychus (Acts 20:7–12)
- Jesus’ resurrection (Luke 24:1–7)

**Jesus and Miracles:** Jesus was teaching, preaching and healing. These were the three main aspects of his ministry. Teaching shows his concern for understanding. Preaching shows his concern for commitment. Healing shows his concern for wholeness. Those who came to him for physical healing were also healed spiritually. His miracles of healing authenticated his teaching and preaching, proving that He was truly from God. Jesus performed plenty of miracles. All the miracles He did were to glorify God, help others, and prove that He was the Son of God. The Gospels record many of the miracles that Jesus performed. Of course, many of the things that Jesus did could not have been recorded in such short works. John in 20:30 and 21:25 freely admits, “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book... Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written”.

**Why he performed miracles?** He did miracles because they are part of his Messianic mission which we know from the writings of the prophet Isaiah 35:5–6, the prophet speaks of the day of salvation this way: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert”. In Jesus’ ministry, we see him doing all these miracles. From Matthew’s Gospel alone, we see Jesus: Healing the blind (Matthew 9:27–30), Healing the lame(Matthew
9:1–8), Cleansing a leper (Matthew 8:2–4), Healing the deaf (Matthew 9:32–33), Raising the dead (Matthew 9:18–19, 23–26) and Preaching good news to the poor (Matthew 9:35–36). In Jesus’ ministry, Isaiah’s prophecy of messianic healing was fulfilled in a powerful and compassionate way.

**The list of Jesus’ miracles in the gospels**

**Miracles of Healing:**
- Lepers cleansed: Matt 8:1–4; Mark 1:41–45; Luke 5:12–14; 17:11–19
- People are healed from a distance: Matt 8:5–13; Luke 7:2–10; John 4:46–54
- Peter’s mother-in-law healed: Mark 1:29–31
- Paralyzed man healed: Matt 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26

**Various healings on the Sabbath:**
- Deaf and mute man healed: Mark 7:31–37

- The dead raised to life: Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:21–43; 8:40–56; John 11:1–45

**Other Miracles:**
- Walks on water: Matt 14:22–33 (Peter too); Mark 6:45–52; John 6:15–21
- Calms a storm: Matt 8:22–25; Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25
- Peter catches fish with money in its mouth (for the temple tax): Matt 17:24–27
- Turns water to wine: John 2:1–11
- Cursed tree withers: Matt 21:18–22; Mark 11:12–25

From the list above, we see that the vast majority of miracles recorded in the Gospels were miracles of healing. While those who received the healing were relieved of their physical ailments, the purpose of the miracle is more than alleviation of physical suffering. The miracle of healing always points to a greater truth, namely, that Jesus is the Son of God with authority. When He casts out demons, His authority over them is emphasized. When He heals on the Sabbath, His authority as Lord of the Sabbath is emphasized. Likewise, many of the miracles emphasize Jesus’ authority over nature.
Why miracles? The Messiah was expected to perform miracles and he indeed did miracles: Matthew 11:2-6 When John heard in prison of the works of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to him with this question, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.

Many people followed Jesus on account of his miracles: Matthew 4:23-25 He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people. His fame spread to all of Syria, and they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases and racked with pain, those who were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan followed him.

Miracles were instrumental to preach and propagate the gospel in the early church. Miracles in the early church attracted new believers. They confirmed the truth of the apostles’ teaching. Romans 15:18-19 For I will not dare to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to lead the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit [of God], so that from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum I have finished preaching the gospel of Christ. Christ’s miracles were significant, not just because of their power but because of their purpose - to help, to heal, and to point us to God. More than these Jesus’ miracles, His birth, death, resurrection, ascension and centuries of his work in believers around the world are the greatest miracles.

When Jesus healed people, why did He tell some of them to keep quiet about it and not tell anyone?

During His ministry, Jesus healed many who came to Him. Sometimes He warned them not to tell others about it although they often did anyway. Why was this? First and foremost, everything Jesus did in the NT was already foretold in the OT. We read in Isaiah 42: 1-2 “Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased. Upon him I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out, nor shout, nor make his voice heard in the street” These words took place in the person of Jesus who came as a servant, revealing a character of gentleness, calm and sereneness of his authority. His methods were quiet, not seeking any name and fame and popularity.

Secondly, He feared that people would only focus on His miracles and overlook His real reason for coming into the world – to save them from their sins. Thirdly, to our way of thinking, it would seem that Jesus would want everyone to know about the miracle. But Jesus knew that publicity over such miracles might hinder His mission and divert public attention from His message. Fourthly, the crowds were really making it difficult for Jesus and His apostles to get even normal rest. Jesus could hardly get away
for any rest. The fact that He could sleep on a boat during a raging storm might indicate
how tired He was at times. “Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him
along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great
windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He
was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do
You not care that we are perishing?”’ (Mark 4:36–38). We read in Mark 6:30-31 “Then
the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and
what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted
place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even
have time to eat”.

What is the requirement for miracles to happen?

**Faith is required in those who perform miracles.** Matthew 21:21 Jesus said to them in
reply, “Amen, I say to you, if you have faith and do not waver, not only will you do
what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up
and thrown into the sea,’ it will be done”

**Faith is required for those who expect miracles in their lives.** Matthew 9:28-30 When
he entered the house, the blind men approached him and Jesus said to them, “Do you
believe that I can do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they said to him. Then he touched their eyes and
said, “Let it be done for you according to your faith.” And their eyes were opened.

What is the difference between miracles and magic? Magic and miracles might mean
the same thing to some people, but there is actually a vast difference between the two
terms. It is proper to say that Jesus worked miracles, but it would be wrong to attribute
His works to magic. Basically, magic and miracles differ in their source: Magic has
either a human or demonic source, but Miracles are a supernatural work of God. A
major difference between magic and miracles is that magic draws upon power that is
not directly from God, and miracles are the result of God’s power intervening in the
world. Another difference between magic and miracles is that magic does not glorify
God, but miracles do (Mark 2:12).

A good example of a magician’s self-promotion is found in Samaria. “A man
named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria.
He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him
their attention and exclaimed, ‘This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.’ They
followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery” (Acts 8:9–
11). Note that Simon was boastful about his “power” and went by a blasphemous title.
Simon had the ability to amaze the crowds with his magic, but it was not the power of
God. Simon’s performances were all about himself and enriching his own life. Later,
Simon the magician sees a true miracle performed by Peter and John, and he offers to
buy from them the “secret” to their trick (verses 18–19). Peter immediately rebukes
Simon; in Simon’s sinful heart, he had equated the power of the Holy Spirit with his
own sorcery (verses 20–23).
Another good comparison of miracles and magic is found in the book of Exodus. The workers of magic in Egypt are called “sorcerers” and “magicians” (Ex 7:11, 22); however, Moses and Aaron are never identified by those terms. The works that God did through Moses were true miracles, whereas the tricks of Pharaoh’s magicians were meant to deceive and harden the king’s heart. Early in the story, there is a showdown in Pharaoh’s court: “Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs” (Ex 7:10–12). The fact that the Egyptian snakes were eaten by Aaron’s snake shows that the power of God is greater than whatever power the pagan magicians were tapping into. Later, these same Egyptian sorcerers duplicated the changing of water into blood (Ex 7:22) and the mass production of frogs (Ex 8:7). However, the sorcerers were powerless to mimic the other plagues. When it came to the gnats, the magicians’ abilities fell short. As they reported to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God” (Ex 8:19).

**Miracles VS Magic:** Miracles and magic sometimes look the same, but their goals are different. Magic and illusion distract the eye from reality, while miracles draw the eye to reality. Miracles reveal; magic hides. Miracles are an expression of creative power; magic uses what already exists. Miracles are a gift; magic is a studied skill. Miracles do not glorify men; magic seeks to be noticed and bring glory to the magician. Jesus was not a magician. He was the Son of God, known for His many miracles (John 7:31). Jesus told His enemies, “Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. 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 in the Father” (John 10:37–38).

**Why do so many people seek after signs and wonders?** There are always people looking for miracles in their life. We see those elements in many Christian denominations and sects calling people to experience miracles. We, Catholics go to Marian shrines and other Saints’ sanctuaries expecting miracles in our lives and in the lives of our near and dear ones. In general, people seek after signs and wonders because they want God’s interventions in their helpless, confusing, and trying moments. Some others seek after signs and wonders because they do not believe the signs and wonders which have already been performed. The Pharisees of Matt 12 were just such a lot. Jesus had been performing miracles for quite some time when a group of scribes and Pharisees came to Him with an insolent demand to see another sign. In response, Jesus condemned them as “wicked and adulterous” (Matt 12:38-39). They were “wicked” in that they refused to believe the signs and wonders Christ had already performed. “In spite of his wonders, they did not believe” (Psalm 78:32). Their hearts were hardened towards the truth, even after numerous public miracles. Nothing would make them believe.

Some rationals seek after signs and wonders because they seek an occasion to excuse their unbelief. There were people in Jesus’ day who “tested” Him by seeking a sign (Matt 16:1; Luke 11:16). Some people seek after signs and wonders because they are just curious, looking for something sensational (John 6:2 / Luke 23:8). How does Jesus see
people looking for signs and wonders? After Jesus fed the multitudes, a large crowd followed Him to the other side of Galilee. Jesus saw their true motivation, however, and rebuked it: “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill” (John 6:26). The crowd’s desire was not to know Christ or even to see more miracles; it was simply to fill their stomachs again.

“For those who believe, no proof is necessary. For those who don't believe, no proof is possible.” (Stuart Chase) Many of us desire miracles from God. We want God to perform miracles to “prove” Himself to us. We may even be tempted to say “If only God would perform a miracle, sign, or wonder, then I would believe!” This idea, though, is contradicted by Scripture. When God performed amazing and powerful miracles for the Israelites, did that cause them to obey Him? No, the Israelites constantly disobeyed and rebelled against God even though they saw all the miracles. The same people who saw God part the Red Sea later doubted whether God was able to conquer the inhabitants of the Promised Land.

Jesus performed countless miracles, yet the vast majority of people did not believe in Him. If God performed miracles today as He did in the past, the result would be the same. People would be amazed and would believe in God for a short time. That faith would be shallow and would disappear the moment something unexpected or frightening occurred. A faith based on miracles is not a mature faith. We have all the miracles recorded in the OT and NT, 2000 years of history of the church and the witness of thousands. They are enough and more proofs. God performed the greatest “God miracle” of all time in coming to earth as the Man Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins (Romans 5:8) so that we could be saved (John 3:16). With all these evidences, if there are people refusing to believe in God, they are either proud or stubborn.

Does a lack of a miracle indicate that we didn’t have enough faith? No. Sometimes Jesus heals people on the basis of their faith (Mark 5:34), sometimes he heals people despite them having no faith (Luke 7:11-21, Matthew 12:9-13), and sometimes extremely faithful people are not healed and continue in their suffering. Paul the Apostle experienced that God, in his sovereignty, allows brokenness to remain in our lives. After praying three times that he would be healed from his “thorn in the flesh,” Paul writes: “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). Sometimes he will say “yes” and sometimes he will say “later.” When he says “yes” our response is easy: celebrate and praise the Lord! The answer “later” is usually frustrating as it often feels like a “no.” We should honestly express the emotions this creates in us to God through lament and prayer. Psalm 13 is an example of this. In the midst of this frustration we must trust that we serve a God who is both smarter than us and who “works all things together for good” (Romans 8:28).

Beware of fake evangelical groups and leaders: Jesus is critical of the Pharisees and of Herod when they demand signs, miracles and wonders (Mark 8:11-13, Matt 12:38-42,
This should serve us as a warning to us and ours who run after evangelical groups who claim to exhibit miracles in the midst of the crowd. Religious and/or powerful people when they expect and demand signs from God. Jesus and Moses also both warn about false teachers who perform “signs and wonders” (Deut 13:1-3, Matthew 7:15-23, Matthew 24:24). How they voice their concern here shows us that healthy doctrine is of more eternal importance to God than a healthy body. Furthermore, “Jesus retains a skeptical assessment of faith induced by signs (John 2:23–25; 4:48)”. Many in Acts see signs and wonders and remain unconverted, showing that the obstacle to conversion is a hard heart, not lack of proof (Acts 4:13-22). So if our is purely based or nurtured exclusively on signs, “rather than on the reality to which they point” is immature and at grave risk. Mature faith rejoices in what signs it perceives, but does not depend on them. The desire for miracles may cause us to ignore the more subtle miracles God is working everyday. It is dangerous to rely on miracle alone although miracles can help us believe. What we need is to believe in the miracle of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. God has given us the miracle of eternal life through our faith in Jesus. In this sense, miracles are no longer necessary. Yet, God still performs miracles. At the same time, we should not necessarily expect miracles to occur today just as they did in Bible times. God and Jesus’ miracles in the Bible cover every aspect of life.

**God does miracles in our life:** The more we think about God what He has done, the more we can appreciate the miracles that He has done for us individually - Birth, Education, Opportunities, Success in career, personality development, loving families and friends, spiritual guides, health and healing above all our faith. Yes God still does great miracles in our life. If we step forward in faith and believe, then we will begin to see the miracles that God can do with our life. What we need to do is to sow our seeds of Good News on the best ground we can find in the best way we can and let us leave the convincing to the Holy Spirit.

**Conclusion:** God still performs miracles today, but he does so differently. In the Biblical times, Jesus and the apostles were teaching and forming the Jews and the Gentiles to accept Jesus as their Messiah and so they needed miracles in order to make them accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Our context is different. We know who we are and whose we are. We are children of God who sent His only Begotten Son to redeem us and we have been baptized in his name and we are the body and He is our Head. Hence we don’t need miracles to accept him as our Lord. However, in our needs and frailties, we expect miracles to happen in our life. Jesus does miracles in our life by the Holy Spirit through our prayer as God wills. These miracles occur less often than they did in the time of Jesus and the Apostles, because the work of authenticating the apostolic faith found in the Scriptures has already been accomplished. We now have the truth of Jesus recorded in Scripture. We now have the writings of the apostles recorded in Scripture. Jesus and His apostles, as recorded in Scripture, are the cornerstone and foundation of our faith (Ephesians 2:20). In this sense, miracles are no longer necessary, as the message of Jesus and His apostles has already been attested to and accurately recorded in the Scriptures. Yes, God still performs miracles. At the same time, we should not necessarily expect miracles to occur today just as they did in Bible times.