

Word Study MIRACLES, WONDERS & SIGNS

(Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell)

Jesus, during His ministry on earth, performed many miracles. For example, He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, restored hearing to the deaf, turned water into wine, fed the multitudes, walked on water, calmed a stormy sea, cast out demons and raised the dead. We read in Peter's first gospel address: **"You men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know..."** (Acts 2:22). John, towards the conclusion of his gospel record, wrote: **"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name."** (20:30,31). The actual concluding words of his gospel are: **"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen."** (21:25). Nicodemus once said to the Master: **"...Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that you do, except God be with him."** (John 3:2b). John also records for us: **"And many of the people believed on Him, and said, When Christ comes, will He do more miracles than these which this man has done?"** (7:31). Not even Jesus' enemies could deny His miracles. We read: **"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we do? For this man does many miracles."** (John 11:47)

DEFINING TERMS

Miracles, wonders and signs are terms to describe the same thing. In the Greek, a miracle is *dunamis*, a wonder is *tera*, and a sign is *semeion*. The first describes a power or a mighty work; the second, the effect of a miracle or a mighty work upon the beholder; and the third, a sign or a token of Divine authority and power. J.W. McGarvey has written: *"...Peter does not mean three classes of actions, but he uses the three terms to describe the same phenomena. He means the miracles of Jesus, which were mighty works, or powers, because wrought by the immediate power of God; wonders, because they excited wonder in those who witnessed them; signs, because they signified God's approval of what Jesus taught in connection with them."* I wish to add here that the context of Acts 2: 22 is important. Alexander Brown in his book *Conversion to God* has an interesting point to make on the matter. *"Jesus was placed within the power of the Jews. He was not fenced off so that they could not approach Him and do with Him as they desired. Neither His miracles nor His extraordinary nature and character were made a means of shielding Him from anything the men of Israel chose to do with Him. He never rescued Himself from their hands by miracle, though an escape from their murderous intent on one occasion is sometimes unnecessarily assumed as a miracle (Luke 4:28-30). No, He was delivered to them, put within their power."*

STATEMENTS ON MIRACLES

Believing in miracles does not produce life. The design of miracles is not to save but to make credible the claims of Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God. It is Jesus that saves. Nevertheless, everyone must acknowledge the importance of miracles in the story of Jesus. I share with you some quotations from my notes on the subject. *"It is our contention that if an unbiased committee acting in advance had drawn up a list of the confirmatory acts required to establish the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, taking into consideration the persons and purposes related to his claims, the report would have to include the very type of deeds He performed."* "In general, Jesus performed two kinds of works – intellectual and physical – to excite wonder and to faith in Him as the Messiah." *"The person who controls, violates or suspends any of the laws of physical nature – curing disease by a word, healing the sick, restoring the maimed, raising the dead or dispossessing demons, gives evidence that he is sustained by the hand of Omnipotence."* "I have no problems with the miracles of Jesus. I would have problems with Jesus if it were not for His miracles. What He did to attest His Deity is exactly what I would expect of anyone who claimed to face a sceptical world as the Son of God." *"Miracles are not contradictory to the 'laws of nature' for this would make them contrary to the will of God. They are simply applications of Divine power upon a higher level or plane."* "No one today can deny a miracle. It's too late for that. All they can do now is to doubt the witnesses, or question the evidence."

So, brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us not be ashamed of the miracles, wonders and signs Jesus performed to prove His Divine mission. Let us not seek a way to explain them and let us never seek to explain them away. Let us simply accept them and glory in them.

FALSE MIRACLES

The false or fake miracles of Satan should be mentioned here. The great counterfeiter is ever at work to deceive people. He is out to defeat the purpose of God. He is never asleep on the job. We read: **"...even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."** (2 Thessalonians 2: 9,10). **"And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live"** (Revelation 13: 13,14). The phrase "lying wonders" should be especially highlighted. Satan has everything to do with lies. In fact, Jesus once said of him: that, **"he is a liar, and the father of it."** (John 8: 44b) But every miracle performed by Jesus was genuine. The Master has everything to do with truth. In fact, He is the Truth.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

The chief of all the miracles was the resurrection of the Messiah from the dead. This gives hope to all believers everywhere. How did Satan react to it? He concocted a story that was a lie. **"His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept."** (Matthew 28:13) The lie was the result of bribery and corruption. But Peter later declared: "This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." (Acts 2:32). I believe the witnesses with all my heart. But, above all, I believe in the risen Lord with all my heart. The result is that I am alive. How wonderful it is to "know Him and the power of His resurrection." (Philippians 3:16)