

10 Misconceptions of the Christian Faith

#4 Biblical Miracles and Jesus' Resurrection Are Counterfeit

If miracles don't exist, then Christianity shouldn't either. The Christian faith is grounded in the idea that God is at work in his world, sometimes in extraordinary ways. But some modern Westerners dispute the existence of miracles altogether. Is there good reason for thoughtful people to assume that miracles don't happen?

The Limitation of Science. Due to the entrance of the scientific method and advances in technology and discovery, some moderns take a skeptical stance toward supernatural events. Undoubtedly, Christians are thankful for the progress we've experienced because of science; however, science, by definition, cannot prove the existence or non-existence of the supernatural. Science can only test for natural causes. For all its effectiveness in determining these natural causes, science simply cannot speak to the issue of miracles. It takes a leap of faith for those tethered to the scientific method to claim that science disproves the existence of supernatural realities. This claim stems not from scientific evidence but reveals a philosophical presupposition that denies the existence of the supernatural. The question of miracles, then, becomes one of presuppositions. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "If you begin by ruling out the supernatural, you will perceive no miracles." But if it is possible that God is real, then it is natural to believe that he can and does act in ordinary and extraordinary ways.

Miracles in General. A Christian perspective envisions an inextricable interconnection between the natural and the supernatural. The whole of creation is a product of God, and so there is nothing that exists apart from his work. Indeed, God made an ordered universe, which is why we can observe and explain the mechanics of natural processes. Still, natural order exists dependently on God, not independently of him. There is nothing that stands outside of his control, so that even the laws of nature are subject to his control. Whether he chooses to work in concert with his orderly laws or circumvent their normal processes, he is free to do as he pleases. Therefore, miracles are no problem at all for those who accept the biblical portrait of God, who is both transcendent and imminent, inapproachably holy and yet personally involved in his creation.

The Resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is crucial to the Christian faith. The early Christian leader Paul recognized this fact by writing: "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised."¹ These are not the words of someone who thought the resurrection of Jesus was a myth or a scam, or glibly hoped that it was true. He staked his life on the conviction that this Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead to live again forever as Lord, verifying his claims to be Messiah and God in flesh.

There is ample reason to believe in the resurrection of Christ, and no satisfactory explanation can account for the rise of Christianity without it. First, all witnesses agree that Jesus' tomb was empty. No one, pro-Jesus or anti-Jesus, produced his body. Second, it was clear that Jesus was resurrected, not resuscitated. He was verified as dead yet became fully alive again, raised to new, incorruptible, and eternal life. His disciples saw him, talked with him, touched him, and even shared meals with him after he was raised. Third, one account reports that he appeared to more than 500 people at one time, making some of his appearances very public in nature. Fourth, the gospels testify that women were the first eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection. If the church wanted to make up a story about Jesus' resurrection, they would not have chosen women as the primary eyewitness, for unfortunately, in that era, a woman's testimony carried less credibility than a man's. Fifth, early Christians testified about Jesus' resurrection

in Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified and buried. Their fellow citizens could have rebutted the disciples' claim by producing the body of Jesus.

It is not logical to think that the disciples stole the body from the tomb. Not only would it have been nearly impossible to distract the Roman guards, break the seal of the tomb, and move the stone, this hypothesis doesn't explain the radical change in the disciples. Once Jesus was arrested, the disciples scattered. They were distraught that their leader had been arrested and crucified like a common criminal. Not only were they disappointed at what had happened, they sought to distance themselves from him lest they suffer a similar punishment. What could account for this dramatic turnaround in the disciples that they became willing to suffer and die to spread the news of Jesus' resurrection? They also did not go to promulgate this news in some far off land, but they proclaimed it in Jerusalem, the very city where Jesus was crucified. Yet despite this fact, thousands in Jerusalem came to believe the report. No evidence could be mustered to deny Jesus' resurrection, and on the other hand, a multitude of witnesses gave testimony to it.

What about you? The biblical authors claimed to record historical events, not myth or legend. They related eyewitness accounts of God's deeds in their midst. Some skeptics, however, try to undermine the biblical authors by reconstructing their motivation for writing. They turn the biblical authors into manipulating bigots who fabricated history instead of interested eyewitnesses who recorded it. This kind of reconstruction unfairly represents their writings. By all historical standards, their writings should receive as fair a hearing as any other literature.

Have you read them for yourself and studied the evidence for the resurrection on your own? If Jesus was raised from the dead, then there is no other logical response but to worship him and believe all that he said about himself: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"ⁱⁱ Indeed, that is a question worth pondering this Easter season.

If you would like to know more about the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, you can visit www.leaderu.com and search 'resurrection of Jesus.'

www.tennentmedia.com

ⁱ 1 Corinthians 15:14-15.

ⁱⁱ John 11:25-26.