

DO THE MIRACLES OF JESUS PROVE HIS DEITY?

www.thebiblejesus.com

WHO IS THIS MAN?

Let's start with a little quiz, shall we? Nothing like a quiz to get the brain ticking along! I am thinking of a particular man in the Bible, and I want to see if you can guess who he is, okay?

This man — is a human being empowered by God to perform mighty miracles.

This man — healed the sick.

This man — raised the dead.

This man — fed multitudes with limited rations.

This man — healed the leper.

This man — controlled the waters.

This man — was able to summon angels for his own protection.

This man — was able to extend his presence to far off places.

This man — was able to open blind eyes.

This man — was able to know the inner secrets and private discussions of others, what was in their hearts.

So, who is this man? If you guessed this man was **Jesus of Nazareth**, then think again. For in fact, this man was **Elisha**, a man empowered by God to perform mighty miracles (exactly twice as many in number as **Elijah**) ...

He controlled the waters by speaking the word of the LORD (2 Kgs. 19-22; 3: 17-20).

He raised the dead (2 Kgs. 4: 32-35).

He divided food to feed multitudes (2 Kgs. 4: 38-41).

He healed a leper by a word from a distance (2 Kgs. 5: 6-14).

He extended his power beyond his physical presence (2 Kgs. 5: 26).

He controlled angelic armies (2 Kgs. 6: 15-17).

He revealed the private and secret plans of Israel's enemies (2 Kgs. 6: 8ff).

The conclusion of our little quiz is an indisputable fact: The Bible nowhere holds up the miracles of any prophet, or ultimately of the Messiah himself, as proof of Deity. For whenever the NT writers appeal to the significance of Christ's miracles, they always do so by pointing back to the OT as predicting them to be the proof that Jesus is the prophesied Christ of God ... a man attested by God to you by miracles (Acts 2: 22).

In fact, the miracles God did through men in the OT are types and foreshadowings of the coming of the one who was to be greater than all the prophets, even those such as **Moses, Joshua, Elijah** and **Elisha**. Their mighty deeds and works of wonder all attested to their God-given calling and mission. Their miracles authenticated their claims to being Yahweh's *bone fide* spokesmen.

Years ago I picked up an old book in an op shop. (¹) Published in 1975 by William M. Taylor (Kregel Publications) the book was titled, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*. I had never heard of this evidently prolific writer but for some reason I took the book home and it sat on my shelf for years collecting dust.

Recently I was sitting quietly meditating when, for some reason, my eyes fell upon this book sitting so ‘unloved’ on my shelf. Instinctively I picked it up and began perusing. Its rubric text is: *Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know (Acts 2: 22).*

A RUBRIC TEXT

At the risk of sounding somewhat patronising, I don’t want to proceed without being absolutely clear as to what a rubric is. It’s not a word used much at all these days, and so I wish to take nothing for granted here. A rubric is a title, a heading, a direction, or the like, in a manuscript or book, which is written in red or otherwise distinguished from the rest of the text to outline the author’s substance to come.

If I may paraphrase that, a rubric is a kind of filter through which the author’s principal thesis is guided, and finally, to be assessed by.

In his INTRODUCTION — which is a defence for the reasonableness of miracles in the Christian testimony — William Taylor’s rubric, as already mentioned, is the apostle Peter’s own words as recorded in Acts 2: 22. He writes that, *In his sermon on the day of Pentecost Peter describes the Lord Jesus to his hearers, as “a man approved of God among them by miracles, and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.”*

This is the text which our author himself has placed in *italics* at the heading — his rubric — as he wishes to assess and to evaluate what the Bible makes of the source, the nature, the impact, and the meaning, of Jesus’ miracles. Logically and reasonably, it is also the text by which his readers are to evaluate Taylor’s own commentary on Jesus’ miracles throughout his book.

Explaining his rubric text Taylor says, *We understand a miracle to be — a work out of the usual sequence of secondary causes and effects, which cannot be accounted for by the ordinary operation of these causes, and which is produced by the agency of God through the instrumentality of one who claims to be his representative, and in attestation of the message which as such he brings.*

¹ For my overseas readers that’s an Opportunity Shop where used goods are offered to the public at give-away prices. They were for the less fortunate members of society needing a helping hand to get needed clothes, shoes, etc. They are places run primarily by churches and community groups where charities do enormous good for everybody.

In his INTRODUCTION Taylor answers the usual objections a doubting public raises against the possibility of supernatural miracles. He addresses the objections sceptics like David Hume raise. Hume claimed that miracles are a violation of the laws of nature, are not observed by people (or least people who report them are either deceived or deceivers), and so are unscientific falsehoods.

William Taylor does a great job in debunking the logical fallacies in Hume's proposition. He shows that far from being unverifiable and scientifically impossible, that our universal experience, in fact, confirms them — When a boy throws a stone up into the air there is a counter-action of the force of gravity, so far as the stone for the time is concerned; but there is no violation of the law of gravitation, for the simple explanation is, that another force generated in the will, and exerted by the muscular energy of the boy, has come into operation and performed its work, while the force of gravity is really as operative as it ever was. In like manner a miracle does not violate nature; but is the result of a new force coming in, to produce a new effect.

In other words, once we allow for the existence of independent intelligent beings in our world, then natural laws may be superseded by the exercise of that 'free will'. Every time you see a plane or a bird flying, you are seeing natural laws suspended by invoking higher laws. We see this worked out in the realm of chemistry, mechanics and physics. These are 'miracles' ! Allow for the Being of an Almighty Creator then *ipso facto* you logically cannot deny the possibility of Him exercising His will and intervening in His world by invoking the higher laws of His Sovereignty.

Having read his introduction, I was anticipating some great Biblical exegesis on our Lord's miracles, which were produced by the agency of God through the instrumentality of one who claims to be his representative, and in attestation of the message which as such he brings. What did I find?

MIRACLE NUMBER ONE

First up, of course, is *The Beginning of Miracles At Cana of Galilee* — turning the water into wine. (Now, I do apologise for an irrelevant distraction, but it's impossible for me to proceed without first of all telling the oft-repeated joke of my dear old uncle who says that, Jesus' first miracle was turning water into top quality wine but, for thousands of years since, the Baptists have been trying to turn the wine back into water!) Sorry.

Anyway, after quite enjoying his insights into this first miracle which Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee, I was suddenly jolted out of my comfort zone by this statement;

The changing of the water into wine was thus one of the earliest out-flashings of the glory of the Godhead, through the incarnation of the Word, which John brings before his readers, in support of the assertion which it is the purpose of his gospel to prove.

Whaaat? (²) This first miracle by Jesus is proof that he is one member of the Godhead of Father, Son & Holy Spirit? This miracle is the earliest out-flashing of Jesus' innate Deity!?

If the thesis is that this miracle by Jesus proves he is God, then let's apply the same principle to a similar miracle — **Moses'** mission to **Pharaoh** was signalled by the changing of a whole river and all wells and other storages of water into blood! Or, think of the miraculous multiplying of the flour and oil which **Elijah** had done for the destitute widow and her son (1 Kgs. 17:16). Or, we might add the miraculous supply of oil for another widow by **Elisha** (2 Kgs. 4). Would we be as equally entitled to say that these miracles were an out-flashing of the [innate] glory of the Godhead through **Moses, Elijah** or **Elisha**?

Surely we would be entitled to say these miracles by the word of the prophets (at God's direction) were evident miracles and signs that the prophets were **men approved of God in the midst of Israel which God did by them** — not that any was *God incarnate!*

Put simply: **Taylor's** commentary does not pass the filter of his own **Acts 2: 22** rubric! He is adding what the text does not say. Of course, to be fair to him, **Taylor** appeals to the trinitarian doctrine of the incarnation of the Word. By this he means, of course, that Jesus is himself "God in the flesh" or "the God-man" or "God the Son" who has always been co-existent, co-eternal, co-equal, co-essential with the Father — all descriptive terms not found in the Bible at all.

Taylor's explanation of Jesus' first miracle ignores Jesus' own testimony throughout the **Gospel of John** on this question ... "the very works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me" (Jn. 5: 36) ... "my works are not mine, but my Father's". Jesus' works were the proof that **God the Father set His seal** on the claims of Jesus to be the long-awaited Messiah (**John 6: 27-29**). Nowhere does the NT hold up Jesus' miracles as being proof of his alleged Deity. *Nowhere!*

² The writer of this Gospel, *contra Taylor*, states unequivocally that his purpose in writing about all the miracles and signs performed by Jesus was that **these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name** (Jn. 20: 30-31). Nothing whatsoever about coming to faith in the Godhead. It's all written to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, God's agent (to use **Taylor's** word) or accredited Messenger who points to God the Father as the source of his words and works.

It is the consistent witness of both Jesus himself and of his eyewitnesses (the apostles) that his' miracles were performed by God his Father through him to witness to his Messianic credentials.

Not once did Jesus say, "My miracles prove that I am God in the flesh." Not once did Jesus say, "My miracles prove that I am the eternal Word incarnate". To say he does miracles **"in my Father's name"** is the Jewish way of saying that the miracles are proof that God is doing them through His human agent. Jesus is working in alignment with his Father's enabling and authority.

Isaiah had prophesied that when the Messiah arrived in Israel that, **the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute shall sing ... (Is. 35: 5-6).**

Now, as he was languishing in prison, **John the Baptist** sent a question to Jesus; **"Are you the (promised) Messiah, or should we look for another?"** Jesus replied, **"Go and report to John the things which you see and hear: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them (Matt. 11: 4-6).** Jesus' miracles were proving his Messianic credentials and authority, not his Deity!

The **apostle Peter** spoke the same message to the Gentile household in **Acts 10: 38** as he had previously preached in **Acts 2: 22 ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.**

That said, we do not deny that the sheer number and nature of the miracles performed through Christ by his Father's empowerment, were of a quality not seen in the Land of Israel, or anywhere before in human history. This stands to reason because he was greater than any of the prophets, whether Moses, Joshua, Elijah, or Elisha. Jesus was the uniquely begotten Son of God, higher in status and rank than all the kings, priests, prophets before him. They spoke in **various portions**, but he spoke **in these last days** as God's final word (**Heb. 1:1**).

However, just a few verses on from **Acts 2: 22** *the very same words and works are ascribed to the apostles ...* **And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles (v.43)!** Or later in **Acts 19: 11** where **God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul!**

We therefore, defy any Biblical scholar to give Biblical evidence that Jesus' miracle of turning the water into wine flowed out from his Deity, rather than that he was announcing his unique mission as God's Messiah to Israel and the world.

MIRACLE NUMBER TWO

In chapter two, we are treated to [The Healing of the Nobleman's Son, John 4: 43f.](#)

Again, sad to say, [Taylor's](#) commentary is a curious mix of good exegesis tainted by a good dose of unfounded speculation. When Jesus told the nobleman that his sick child would live and that he may now return to his home without any other evidence apart from Jesus' pronouncement that it was so, [Taylor](#) says,

[He would have them know that in his wondrous personality, the Omnipotence and the Omnipresence of Deity, indeed Deity itself, was united to humanity, that by the exercise of his divine will he could work wonders anywhere, and that by virtue of his omnipresence, he was equally near to any emergency of necessity ... \(p56\).](#)

Whaaat? This second miracle by Jesus is now a proof of Jesus' Omnipotence and Omnipresence!?

Again, let's apply this principle to another similar miracle. **Elisha** wouldn't even come out of his house to speak directly to the leper **Naaman**. He sent his servant out to tell the foreigner, ["Go and dip seven times in the Jordan river and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean"](#) (2 Kgs. 5: 10f).

You know the story of how **Naaman** galloped off in a furious huff of wounded pride. But his attendant prevailed upon him simply to humbly obey the word of the prophet, and when he came up from the waters of the Jordan the seventh time, his skin was as clean and pure as a little child.

A leper healed from a distance! Will we draw the same conclusion that the prophet of Yahweh by [his wondrous personality, the Omnipotence and the Omnipresence of Deity, indeed Deity itself, was united to humanity, that by the exercise of his divine will he could work wonders anywhere, and that by virtue of his omnipresence, he was equally near to any emergency of necessity ... ?](#)

You would think such commentary arbitrary, unfounded, highly ingenious, purely speculative, far-fetched, and arising out of a fertile imagination, would you not?

MIRACLE THREE

One of Jesus' best known and loved miracles is [The Stilling of the Tempest](#). What a graphic picture when our Lord, after a most demanding preaching and ministry schedule, totally exhausted, collapsed into a deep sleep in the stern of the boat. Oblivious to the raging winds and waves about to swamp the boat, he found himself being urgently roused by the panic-stricken yelling of the disciples, ["Master, don't you care that we are perishing"](#) (Mk. 4: 38)?

[Taylor's](#) next sentence is a 'clanger': [Then, with the composure of Deity, he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still ...](#)

And what lessons does our commentator wish us to draw? In the first place, let us take note that we have here an incidental confirmation of the great truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is both really human and truly divine. He was asleep — there is his humanity; for of God it is said, “Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” He commanded the winds into silence, and the waves into peace — there is Deity; for to God alone can it be said, “Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.” Thus side by side in this narrative we find the manifestation of each of the two natures that are united in his wondrous personality. (p206).

Oh dear! Where do we read anything like this in the text? Nevertheless, I have often heard it said that this miracle is one of the greatest proofs of Christ’s Deity, for only Yahweh can command the winds and the waves!

So, we must ask, is it a true proposition that Jesus must be God, for to God alone can it be said, “Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them”? Or, is God able to give such authority to His Messiah, His right hand man? Let the Bible answer; yes indeed, let Yahweh Himself answer ...

And My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him, and in My Name his horn will be exalted. **And I will also set his hand on the sea, and his right hand on the rivers.** He will cry to me, ‘Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.’ I also shall make him My first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth. My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him ... (Ps. 89: 24-28).

Why was our Lord Jesus able to still the tempest and to rule the wind and the waves? Bible Answer: Because Yahweh his God gave him the authority to do so! **God set his hand on the sea!** And as the Psalmist explains, this was all to prove that Jesus was the empowered bearer of God’s New Covenant, David’s greater Son!

Either Jesus stilled the storm because he was God the Creator, or the winds and the waves obeyed him because God had given to him His very own power and authority to do so. Our Bible answer then is this: **Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him in your midst.** Which of these two explanations passes “the rubric test” of **Acts 2:22**?

So much for the mythological God-man who can at the same time be fully asleep oblivious to all his surroundings, as well as be fully awake and never able to slumber all at the same time!

My family remembers well the evening when one of our number was physically ill, and medicated. We looked over as he was slumped in the armchair. One eye was fully shut, and the other eye fully open. At first we thought he was pretending to be half asleep, listening but not listening to us; looking, but not looking at us.

It took us not a little while at trying various ‘tests’ to finally realise that he was indeed completely unconscious to all our fun. It was the weirdest thing. He was looking right at us out of one eye, but he was completely asleep.

However, it confirms what we all instinctively know. It’s impossible to be both wide awake and deeply asleep at the same time. Scripture confirms that God never sleeps. Scripture confirms Jesus slept and needed waking. Therefore, he cannot be both God and man at the same time.

We may close with William Taylor’s rubric: Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know (Acts 2: 22).

Such a pity Mr Taylor strayed so far from his own rubric text. Such a pity so many to this very day claim Jesus’ mighty miracles are proof of his Deity. The unambiguous testimony of Scripture is that the miracles of Jesus authenticate his claims to being the promised Messiah. Again and again, the Scriptural testimony is that since his resurrection Jesus is the glorified man at His right hand, exercising all the authority his God has empowered him to have (Matt. 28:18).

The author of the Gospel of John tells us precisely why he recorded the miracles of Jesus; And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30-31).

It is **not** stated that the miracles, the wonders, the signs performed by our Lord are written that we may believe he **is** God.