

# “What is a Biblical Definition of Miracle?”

## **What is a biblical definition of ‘miracle’?**

The term “miracle” has lost much of its luster in our day. And it isn’t because we see miracles taking place so often that we no longer are sensitive to their meaning. It’s because our speech has evolved in such a way that today, if I got to work on time this morning, “It was a miracle that I made it, seeing that there was so much traffic on the freeway.”

A biblical model and definition, on the other hand, for a miracle is another thing all together. Not everything hard to believe can be quantified as a miracle according to scriptural standards. Miracles are those acts that only God can perform; usually superceding natural laws. *Baker’s Dictionary of the Bible* defines a miracle as “an event in the external world brought about by the immediate agency or the simple volition of God.” It goes on to add that a miracle occurs to show that the power behind it is not limited to the laws of matter or mind as it interrupts fixed natural laws. So the term supernatural applies quite accurately.

It’s very interesting that a common word used for miracle in the New Testament can also be translated “sign.” A miracle is a sign that God uses to point to Himself; the same way we follow signs to find a museum or an airport.

An interesting question may arise. Does something have to break a natural law for it to be a miracle? C.S. Lewis defines a “miracle” in his work by the same name as an interference with nature by a supernatural power. Obviously, to interfere with natural law may not necessarily mean to break the natural law. In fact, nature and “supernature” become interlocked after a miracle occurs and nature carries on according to the

change wrought by that event. A science example: the law of inertia (Newton's first law of motion) states that an object will remain in rest until an external force is applied. Nature can only move from event to event through supernatural intervention.

Deists believe that it was only at creation that the supernatural and the natural related. But we Christian theists believe that God has intervened in nature by its inception, sustained it by His preserving power, and will redeem it through the final act of intervention. The creation and incarnation of Christ are the perfect examples of supernatural inertia (another way of referring to a miracle), not to mention their conclusion as well, in His second coming. God is still in the business of working miracles. And we wait eagerly for that greatest miracle of them all—the redemption of all creation.

Thanks for your question.

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## **“Are the Prophecies in the Book of Daniel a Pack of Lies?”**

In researching the book of Daniel on the internet, I found a Web site written by a man named Bernard D. Muller in which he mythologizes Daniel and Revelation. I was just flabbergasted that he would pretty much say Daniel's prophecies are a pack of lies. He says the book was actually written after all those

things came to pass and that's how it seems so accurate. He completely discombobulated the 70 weeks' prophecy. Take a look at the web page and let me know what you think.

Thanks for the concern and the link to Muller's page. His criticisms of Daniel are not new. Porphyry had similar things to say in the third century. It's funny that the biggest reason for such criticism is that Daniel was just too accurate. Muller is trying to be an "objective" historian. Therefore, the presupposition that God knows the past, present, and future and is willing to reveal parts of it to humanity is outlandish to him.

It ought to be noted that Muller's criticisms of historic Jewish and Christian views on Daniel are quite one-sided. This is based on his biases and presuppositions, not on common sense and honest hermeneutics.

The authorship and time period of Daniel is clearly a subject of debate for Muller. There really isn't a problem with the 6th century dating of Daniel. Charles Ryrie has addressed some of the same points Muller sees as problems. Daniel would have known some of the Persian language, being from that period. And some Greek would have been common since there were Greek mercenaries employed in both Assyria and Babylonia. Daniel's Aramaic is consistent with what would have been common in the 6th century Near East. If the book had been written in the 2nd century B.C. then there would have obviously been much more Greek used than what is found. The *Nabonidus Chronicle* has shed some light on the existence of both Belshazzar and Darius the Mede. Daniel's inclusion in the Dead Sea Scrolls dates it at least before the Maccabees (seeing as how there were copies found at Qumran). So again, the 6th century date is not as problematic as Muller would have you believe.

I'm not sure how much of his treatise you want me to comment on, but I'll just go through a bit of it, to help you. To address each point he makes would be a long drawn-out

endeavor. Early on, it is obvious that Muller wants to deconstruct Daniel, making himself the most authoritative reader of the text. That's fine, but then he has no business making statements about what the writer (or writers, in his opinion) was aiming to do (such as "dropping the name Cyrus"). It is presumptuous, to say the least, that whoever is responsible for the book of Daniel is out to pull the wool over the reader's eyes by pretending to be someone he isn't. Also, Muller points out over and over that something has no validity if it is not backed up with secular sources. Has it never occurred to him that something could still be truthful, in spite of its exclusion from other sources? Besides, there are no exterior sources that contradict the traditional reading of Daniel. The only true problems that arise are the biases of the respective reader. If one doesn't want to believe something, one doesn't have to have legitimate criticisms. Muller's painstaking analysis of Daniel can be deceiving. Lots of work and details do not a scholarly treatise make! There is a vacancy of even the attempt to be objective. There is also a biting sentiment of sarcasm and bitterness prevalent.

The historical redaction found in Muller's work is related to the same type of criticisms of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (Graf-Wellhausen theory). They are not attempts to explain the origin of an ancient book. Yet they do overflow with naturalistic presuppositions. Yes, even smart people can have biases! I pray that God may keep us all humble enough to be aware of our own biases and yet to find Truth where He resides (at the right hand of the Father).

Forgive me for not being able to speak to all that Muller lays out on his Web page. I hope that this will at least comfort you and give you a groundwork to begin with. God rewards those who seek Him.

Proverbs 2:3-5

Kris Samons

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