Subject: Theology of the Miraculous (for embarrassed pentecostals everywhere!)
Posted by william on Mon, 12 Feb 2018 08:55:27 GMT
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I've been reading some of the old posts on the forum and it seems that there has been an unspoken lament (a few exceptions--Jman are you still around!<grin>) about the lack of visible, uncontested, plainly-evident, supernaturally miraculous phenomena in the present-day Church. To me this was kind of like the 'elephant in the room' that I found hard to reconcile with the NT pattern. So I decided to face this behemoth in my thoughts and the following post is the result. Don't be shy in picking it apart and offering a better, or at the very least a more cogent collection of thoughts on the subject!

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Secondly --Throughout all of this period we mustn't forget the many personal miracles. Besides those miracles that affected the whole world and latter those miracles that affected the whole corporate nation of Israel, there were the miracles that were personal in nature, like Elijah being fed by birds, the widow's son, and a whole slew of other significant events that came as a result of the prayers of the people of God. I can't make a big distinction here between the corporate and personal miracles of the Bible because of the fact that the 'small' miracles were recorded for us in the Scripture and thus inspired many others (in a corporate sense) even though the immediate

circumstances only affected those personally involved. But since our personal miraculous experiences aren't likely to be used to affect large portions of the population (i.e we aren't likely to be writing any more Scripture!<grin>) I believe that the distinction for our purposes is valid.

One such miracle is enough to illustrate this--the account of Jonah. It doesn't get more personal that this, yet a lot of people benefited from that miracle, i.e. the city of Nineveh, not to mention that Jesus used Jonah's example in a comparison with His own death, burial and resurrection.

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What has this to do with us?

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I think the last one was when Paul healed those in Malta. Acts 28:7-9

The NT letters to the Churches spoke of the gifts of healings, miracles, and other supernatural phenomena as being given to the people of God but even here we aren't told of what the gift of miracles entailed, only that it was given. As far as I know there isn't an example of a case of an actual miracle occurring (in the same vein as the larger OT variety) beyond Jesus' creation of wine from water, multiplication of food, walking on water, money in fish and of course the resurrection of the dead. Paul is credited with the resurrection of Eutychus in Acts 20:9-12 following after the example of Elijah but no parting of the sea or things like that.

We are told that the apostles did work miracles in Acts 5:12-16 but details of whether or not these miracles were something beyond healing and deliverance are not forthcoming.

Okay, I'm sure you all are wondering what the whole point of this is and whether or not I'm here trying to justify the lack of great miracles in our midst today in the 21st century. Well, here is my point:

We've all got notions about what the NT Church is supposed to look like and maybe I'm only doing this for myself but what I'd like to do is re-cap the evidence so that our expectations are in line with the Biblical pattern. If our expectation is that we should be seeing fire fall from heaven at our command then we are going to go around pretty frustrated at the lack of the miraculous and we possibly are candidates for deception in these end-times.

From the great miracles of the OT past to only personal victories like that of Jonah, (or Daniel in the lion's den) to almost 400 silent years between the testaments when seemingly nothing of the miraculous was happening. (Excepting those personal miracles that seem to follow believers and of course the miracle of the unfolding of Daniel's prophecy concerning the kingdoms of Greece and Rome and the typology of the antichrist... --maybe it wasn't so silent after all!)

Moving to the NT we have the non-miraculous ministry of John the Baptist kicking off the ministry

of Jesus who launched His Church with a plethora of miraculous healings/deliverances and a whole lot of personal miracles but none like those seen by God's hand in ancient times.

Next are the prophecies given to us in the book of Revelation.

Reading Revelation one gets the idea that God's mighty Hand is not shortened and the kind of miracles recorded early on will one day reappear on the scene. With the pattern we've been given and the prophecies that are to come we shouldn't worry too much that we aren't walking around right now as little Moses' doing great things-- Great miracles are going to happen again!

Is it any wonder that the world, almost exclusively, is caught up in uniformitarianism?

(Uniformitarianism, also known as the Doctrine of Uniformity, is the assumption that the same natural laws and processes that operate in the universe now have always operated in the universe in the past and apply everywhere. It refers to invariance in the principles underpinning science, such as the constancy of causality, or causation, throughout time, but it has also been used to describe invariance of physical laws through time and space. Though an unprovable postulate that cannot be verified using the scientific method, uniformitarianism has been a key first principle of virtually all fields of science.)

Is it not true that many Christians are just as convinced of this doctrine as the world (at least in the aspects that concern the miraculous)? Call them cessationists or whatever, they don't believe that God (or His Church) will do anything that could be construed as miraculous in the physical realm, personal miracles or otherwise. They don't necessarily deny that He did it in the past but for all practical purposes they are completely in agreement with the secular scientists on the topic of Divine intervention in the physical realm.

Enter the Antichrist.(Rev 13) It is said that in the end times the Beast and false prophet will do GREAT SIGNS and WONDERS and that the world will wonder after him. In this age where miracles are almost exclusively in the domain of the personal believer. (e.g. like when my son had stopped breathing and was brought back by God, or when my daughter and her dog flipped--some said multiple times--in her car and she came out without a scratch... both explained away by those unable to believe in the miraculous but firmly acknowledged by me to be miracles of God.) What is going to happen to the uniformitarianists and the Christian cessationist when the Antichrist performs verifiable miracles (calling down fire from heaven, etc.)?

An undeniable miracle will affect both uniformitarianists and cessationists to their core.

This might also have a great impact on those sincere believers, not aware of the pattern just described, who may see it as the long-awaited restoration of the miraculous to the Church.

Is this the reason for Jesus' warning in Matt.24:24 concerning the great deception? He said that if

it were possible even the elect would be deceived!

If our theology concerning the miraculous wasn't conditioned by what we read in Scripture, if our theology didn't include the possibility that there would be silent years with only personal miracles at times, if our theology didn't acknowledge that there would be this great deception (complete with corporate miracles) at the end, would we not be more apt to be deceived when presented with these great antichrist miracles after a long period of silence? Would we not jump at the first sign of a miracle and conclude that God was back in business?

I don't know all of the answers here but it seems that unless we see the patterns from Scripture that shows us plainly that great signs and wonders are not always going to characterize the times in which we live, we might be gullible to anyone who came along with a miraculous sign. Jesus told us to beware of those things.

Who's to say that any one would be deceived if the Church hadn't had this whole period of inactivity in the overtly miraculous. If, since the days of the apostles, the Church had been calling down fire from heaven, why would anyone follow after the Beast? Why would Jesus need to warn anyone about being deceived if miracles were commonplace?

Why indeed? Moses had the magicians who counterfeited many of his miracles and guess what? all but two individuals fell short in the wilderness. The presence of overt (plainly seen and verifiable) miracles in our midst since the Church was established might be as much of an hindrance as it was for the Israelites.

I know I'm sounding more like a cessationist than a Charismatic here, but isn't it possible that the lack of these types of miracles in the Church today is actually God's Plan? (Especially when we have the Scriptural pattern shown in the OT and the continuous personal miracles that deepen our relationship with Him each and every day?)

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Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: Theology of the Miraculous (for embarrassed pentecostals everywhere!)
Posted by james on Mon, 12 Feb 2018 19:58:13 GMT
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Great post, William.

I have had these thoughts (though not as well defined as yours) for some time since the FA/HEF days. We're people of flesh and blood just like Israel, we forget at times, we lose focus, we sin, we repent and get back in step with God's will for our life and then repeat the cycle. We are as easily deceived as any Biblical characters; just look at the history of the pentecostal /charismatic movement over the last 100 years. Hey, and that's without 'big time' supernatural signs and wonders, that's just believing the words of men without using God given discernment and scripture to measure things by.

Visible or not miracles, the turning of a man's heart to Jesus is a huge miracle. Not that it's hard for God to turn our heart, but think about other things He has done and compare them. Turning water into wine is indeed a miracle but the water doesn't have a will to resist Him like people do. We're told He could make stones praise Him, it would probably be easier due to the hardness of mans heart in comparison to the hardness of rocks.

I heard this yesterday: "There a thousand ways for a person to be broken; but only one way to be made whole." That would be through faith in Jesus Christ by His Grace.

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Posted by Gary on Fri, 20 Dec 2019 13:28:58 GMT
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Just some thoughts to consider.

Blessings,
William

William,

I"m going to think about this one for sure. There is so many times the Lord told His disciples to reach out by faith.

We have to consider that God is God and nothing is impossible with Him and were His children. Jesus opened the door to the impossible and was constantly laboring about having faith in Him, for the impossible.

Just some thoughts!!

In Him,
Gary

Subject: Re: Theology of the Miraculous (for embarrassed pentecostals

everywhere!)
Posted by william on Fri, 20 Dec 2019 20:56:58 GMT
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Right, we should, and do, see Him doing the miraculous in our lives, but not one of us has parted the Mississippi river, or walked across it. The type of miracles that make people sit up and take notice (like emptying the local hospital!) are lacking. The people who saw my son raised up no doubt thought that they had something to do with it, but I knew that it was a miracle from God. That was the kind of distinction I was referring to in my note.

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: Theology of the Miraculous (for embarrassed pentecostals everywhere!)
Posted by Marilyn Crow on Fri, 20 Dec 2019 21:25:13 GMT
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Hi William,

I appreciated your comments and thoughts. Just some of my thoughts - I think that we in the West have not the great need as say those in less developed countries. There we would see mighty miracles. I`ve read about them. Also I have personally had healings and also of being watched over by God at very dangerous times.

I don`t think we can judge in regards to the Lord`s work in His whole Body across the world for we do not have access to seeing or hearing about it all.

As a young person I did attend Oral Roberts healing services here in Australia and did see mighty miracles of the lame walking etc.

regards, Marilyn.

Subject: Re: Theology of the Miraculous (for embarrassed pentecostals everywhere!)
Posted by Gary on Fri, 20 Dec 2019 21:26:46 GMT
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William,

Don't know if you ever read the book: Like a Mighty Wind, by Mel Tari, (I think that's how his name is spelled), was written in the seventies, there was huge miracles taking place in Indonesia. I remember one account of a man who was outside preaching to a large crowd, a lion came out of the woods and the man cursed it, then a bolt of lighting came down out of heaven and killed the lion. The man went over and stood on the lion and continued preaching about Jesus. I heard this man preach one night in Terre Haute, Indiana, and he had a powerful anointing on him, the presence of Jesus was very real.

I know that's not your average church service on Sunday, but the book tells of huge manifestations during the revival. Many were coming to Christ. I can think of a number of books where visible miracles took place before huge crowds of people, in other countries as well besides India. I heard a Jewish brother a while back who told us about a huge revival taking place in Israel with the Jews and Palestinians coming to Christ with miracles taking place.

Its mainly in third world countries where we can find testimony after testimony of God's power with signs following.

I have wondered where is the power of God in America as well. But you know what happens when someone has a miracle ministry, they generally have people following them to the ends of the earth and they (the people), put the preacher on pedestals. I think this is why Evan Roberts stepped down from the ministry when the whole country came to Christ.

I think the problem lies in the fact; we live in a country that has everything. Most Americans live the good life so to speak. I'm not trying to take away the fact that God has been merciful to this country and blessed it, while millions around the world live in extreme poverty.

What then makes us different when so many around the world are suffering? Is it because of past Christian influence and revivals that the Lord has given us in this country? For one thing, in India I have read, they have over 9 million gods, in that country we can see there is great poverty.

God can work in a country where people live a life of depression and want, who follow false gods, miserable with no future. When people in these countries see the miracles they come to Christ and know that God is doing the work and are not as quick to follow a man.

What you shared was good but I think its on our part is where the problem exists.

In other words what was Jesus talking about concerning greater works? Sometimes telling His disciples where was their faith in several situations, He even called them perverse and faithless. There are other times when the Lord admonished His disciples, like when Jesus said you can ask and have a tree uprooted and cast into the see. Most Christians doubt what the Lord tells us in His Word using their carnal reasoning to figure it out. Without the power of God with signs

following we are helpless to reach the masses.

Jesus said; without me you can do nothing.

I just wanted to remind us that we can't lose sight of what the Lord told us even if we do not see anything taking place. I can look up and give a lot of scripture concerning what were called to.

Why is it not happening now? I think its our priorities as Christians we've fallen short of what the Lord wants for us. I think God will move when the church rises up in His great name. I'm not pointing the finger at anyone or any group in this land, I have my own sins and attitudes to deal with and its a handful.

We receive answers to prayer and have been blessed, I just think brother there is more out there for us in the Lord. I hope you understand where I'm coming from?

In Him,
Gary

Subject: Re: Theology of the Miraculous (for embarrassed pentecostals everywhere!)
Posted by william on Fri, 20 Dec 2019 22:03:23 GMT
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Yes, yes I do.

I was thinking about this the other day (about our lamentable situation!) and realized that we can moan and groan about it but what's keeping us from going out there and performing these types of

miracles? I'm sure you've got a hospital in Terre Haute or at least in nearby Indianapolis that needs to see these greater-works so why not? I've got one even closer so I'm not throwing condemnation around!

My point is that I don't think my faith is ready for it yet, or, to ease the burden off of my shoulders, God's timing isn't right for it! Whichever it is <grin> I'm going to have to --wait-- for it. Another thing to think about is that we've all heard about the "Mighty Wind" stuff but so far it hasn't produced much here and when you think about it, what makes us so sure that when it starts happening down the road from us we are suddenly going to "do likewise"? Surely there's something missing, I just don't know what.

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: Theology of the Miraculous (for embarrassed pentecostals everywhere!)
Posted by Gary on Fri, 20 Dec 2019 22:51:16 GMT
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Blessings,
William

Brother,

I agree 100%, we live near Bloomington, a college town of 90000 people, we have two hospitals and they are building a big mega hospital, they've been working on it for several years now.

I'm not there either, the last several months when I see people around town I see a lot of crippled, maimed, etc., people going about their business. I can only walk on by for now.

I firmly believe God is in sovereign control. I do have confidence in what you share here, God will finish the work, He has begun in all of us. As we seek Him, He will never leave us or forsake us.

In Him,
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