**Miracles**

*“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 ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” Jn 20:30-31*

*“This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.” Jn 2:11*

In the New Testament, miracles are usually called “powers”, “wonders”, “signs”:

Powers – referring to the ability behind the act

Wonders – referring to the effect of it on the people who witnessed it

Signs – referring to the purpose (signs “signify” or point to something)

John says he cataloged only a few of the “signs” that Jesus did so that we might believe, and so that this believing might give us life through his name. Note carefully that we are NOT truly alive without believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. John does not waste ink, and he does not exaggerate for poetic effect. He is telling us that we need SPIRITUAL life – the only TRUE life! Think hard on that.

The signs John recorded were calculated to point us to spiritual reality. The first sign he records is the “water into wine” at the wedding in ch. 2. This sign “displayed his glory”. It is a sign of the spiritual realm, of its reality and its glory. It is the sign that Jesus came from that realm, is connected to it, and brings it to bear in this world. It is a sign that the spiritual realm reigns over the material. Material “things” derive from the realm of the spiritual – not the other way around!

Men are in denial about this. They think the spiritual doesn’t exist, or that it simply derives from the “natural” or material world. They are in denial about the reality of spiritual things, and the preeminence and glory of spiritual things. But the signs point us to it.

What is a miracle? “Supernatural”? Suspending of natural law? Violating the laws of nature? What does that mean? What we can’t explain? This assumes that “nature” is limited to what we can explain/understand by our “natural laws”. When we think of miracles, perhaps it is better to think “beyond the material”, or “beyond the physical”. They are testimony that allows us to reach beyond what we can see, touch, handle in our material world.

Once you allow that there is a spirit realm, that it is the reality that gives rise to the material, all bets are off about what is “natural”! Once we know that this physical realm is temporary and passing – dependent on the spiritual, then what is a miracle? **In Jesus’ eyes**, was the turning of water into wine a “miracle”? Was it a “suspension of natural law”? Did he say, “now I am going to violate the laws of nature”? Or did he regard it as a matter of course that his Father holds all – material and spiritual – in his hand. It was likely, to him, simply another example that his Father from the spiritual realm reigns over all things, sustains them, holds them in his hands.

C.S. Lewis suggested that a miracle was the working - in a condensed, rapid, visible, concrete way before our eyes - of things that the Father is always working day in and day out, as a matter of course. What is the greater miracle – to turn water into wine in a jar, or to design and create a tiny grape seed that has within it 500 million bases, which code for 25-30,000 genes that hold a vast library of information – and a filing/processing system to manage it. So that you can put this ‘dead’ seed in the dirt and it will grow into a living plant. So that this vine will grow and live for decades. Depending on the soil, fertilizer, water, light, temperature, etc., it will produce each year, hundreds or thousands of grapes, each capable of reproducing that vine thousands of times. The juice of these grapes will taste good, refresh, support nutrition, and under the right conditions in the presence of other tiny living creatures God made, it will be turned into wine.

For the one who designed this system, and millions more like them and unlike them, to work in perfection for flavors, colors, textures, structure, seeing, digesting, hearing, smelling, reproducing, running, breathing, thinking, talking, singing… What is it to turn water into wine? For the one who designs and creates a marvelously complex and glorious organism with the capacity to grow itself into maturity, fight off invading diseases, correct its own imbalances, and heal its own wounds, how hard is it to instantly restore function to a limb?

Our NT miracles served a purpose – to confirm the truth of spoken revelation about spiritual realities in Jesus Christ! So we can by faith lay hold on those realities and grow up in them to live richly and boldly in that spiritual realm – HERE and NOW. If the “age of miracles” passed – if the ability of men to work such signs of the spiritual realm lapsed after the apostolic age – if “God doesn’t work that way any more”, does that mean the spiritual realm is less real or less powerful? Does it mean that God “withdrew” and left us only with material things to deal with? I am afraid we look at it that way. We deny his glory and his testimony! We dull our senses and harden our hearts to spiritual realities! O Lord, have mercy on us!

Larry Walker, Dec 2011