

## MIRACLES—OR MAGIC?

Presented by

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Who doesn't like magic? Whether it's watching a famous magician like David Copperfield make the Statue of Liberty "disappear," or seeing a clown pull a rabbit out of a hat at a circus, magic is fun. And, believe it or not, magic has been around for many years. Exodus 7 tells us about a time when Moses and his brother Aaron told Egypt's king to release God's people from slavery. To prove to the king that he and Moses were speaking for God, Aaron threw his shepherd's staff on the ground and it turned into a snake. The king's sorcerers then used magic to make their staffs turn into snakes, too. But God caused Aaron's rod to swallow the magicians' rods to prove that He was more powerful than any magician!

The New Testament also speaks of magic and sorcery. Two of Christ's disciples, Barnabas and Paul, encountered a man by the name of Elymas, a sorcerer who was turning people away from faith in Christ. While he could do magic tricks, he could not perform real miracles. Acts 13 tells us that Paul used a real miracle to cause Elymas to go blind for a while in order to teach him a lesson.

So what is the difference between **miracles** and **magic**? First, magic can be used just for fun. Miracles were never used "just for fun." Instead, they were signs to help people understand that the person who did the miracle was speaking on God's behalf. Exodus chapters 3 and 4 tell us about this.

Second, magic can be used to trick people. Miracles were never used to trick anyone. Instead, they were used to teach important spiritual lessons. For example, in 1 Kings 18 Elijah asked God to perform a miracle on Mount Carmel to show that Baal was a false god. God honored Elijah's request and sent fire to destroy an altar, which was something that Baal could not do because he was not real. When the people saw the miracle, they knew that God really did exist. In John 9 Jesus healed a blind man so people would know that Jesus was God's Son. Anytime that someone performed a miracle, it allowed the people who saw it to know that God was behind it. That way they were more willing to obey Him.

Third, magic isn't real. When a magician makes a woman "disappear," she doesn't **really** disappear. The magician simply made it **look like** she disappeared. But she's still around somewhere (like in a box or under a stage). Miracles, however, were real. When Moses stretched his rod across the Red Sea and caused the waters to part so that God's people could walk across on dry land, it was no trick. God did exactly what Exodus 13 says He did. When Pharaoh's army followed the Israelites into the Red Sea and the waters came back together to destroy the army, the soldiers and horses actually died. It was no trick. Magic is not for real. But miracles from God were real.

Fourth, magic is intended to entertain us and to show us the magician's talent. That is not true of miracles. Their purpose was never to entertain people or to show how talented a person was. On one occasion in Mark 6, the Bible even says that Jesus refused to do many miracles in a certain place because He knew

that even a miracle would not cause the people around Him to believe. Jesus wasn't interested in entertaining those people or in showing them how "talented" He was. Instead, He wanted to show them the way to heaven. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." How did people know that Jesus was God's Son? One of the ways they knew that was because of the miracles that Christ performed. He healed the sick. He caused the lame to walk. He made it possible for blind people to see again. And He even raised the dead. Jesus performed miracles to teach people that He was Who He said He was.

We need to remember these important lessons so that we do not end up like some of the people of Christ's day who refused to believe in Him as God's Son. What happened to those people? Jesus answered that question in John 8:24 when He said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." Today, if we refuse to believe in Jesus as God's Son, we can be lost, too. But God does not want **anyone** to be lost. In Ezekiel 33:11, God said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." In 2 Peter 3:9, the apostle Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, but is patient with us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

God does not work miracles any more. He does not need to. He gave us the Bible to show us that He exists and that Jesus is His Son. The Bible also tells us what we need to do to be saved from our sins. To be saved, we must believe that Jesus as the Son of God. We must repent of our sins. We must confess Christ as our Lord. And we must be baptized to wash away all of our sins. God's miracles in the New Testament were very real. But so is His offer to save us. We need to be careful not to reject God's offer of salvation. If we do, we will miss getting to spend eternity in heaven with God. Then no miracle of any kind will be able to save us.