

I BELIEVE IN MIRACLES

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Power To Do The Will Of God

"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" (John 20:30-31).

Although there are many miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ reported in the course of the Gospels, this is not by any means all that He did. In various places in the Gospels a single verse will say that the people brought their diseased - the blind, the lame, the halt - to Him and He ministered to them. On occasion He would be with these people all afternoon and evening. So we have by no means a complete record of *all* the works of wonder which the Lord Jesus Christ did when He was here upon earth.

I was not born a Christian. I grew up in unbelief. When I first listened to the gospel, I paid no attention to the miracles. I had been in Sunday School, I had heard Bible reading, and I had read enough of the Bible myself to know there were miracles recorded in it. But in my own mind I discounted these miracles as enthusiastic exaggerations that were told in a naive, uncritical, childish fashion by people who wanted to make something big out of the Lord Jesus Christ. I felt that whoever had written the story, if they wanted to write it up that way, that was all right. I didn't have to believe it. And I didn't see that anyone else had to believe it either. I felt that if you were an intelligent person, if you knew that there was no Santa Claus, you ought to know better than to believe that Christ walked on the water. You might feel sure also that He didn't feed the five thousand. I just dismissed the miracles from my mind.

My next idea, when I began to realize the Scriptures expressed the promises of God (and that in these very miracles there were aspects of the promises of God), was to accept the miracles as symbolic. They told a story but still they were only myths or fables, intended to be illustrations only.

But as I kept on listening to the gospel and reading about it, I began to realize that the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ was deliberately set forth as real. Now that completely bewildered me. I didn't see how anybody in honesty could actually believe that. And then, as I looked more closely, because it was so startling, I found that it was the stubborn, intention of the gospel to teach just exactly that: Jesus Christ rose from the dead in the body. And I was given to understand that I must believe it if I wanted to be saved.

This led me in the course of time to understand why the miracles happened and the reason they were reported in the Scripture for our learning. All the promises of the gospel in Christ Jesus in the Bible are valid and true for you according to your faith. If you believe these things, they are operative in you. Believing them does not make them true; they are true whether you believe or not. But believing them makes them operative. The Lord Jesus said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." When He says "all things are possible to him that believeth," He doesn't mean all things that you can imagine. He doesn't mean all things that you could wish. But He does mean that all the marvelous things *promised in the will of God* are possible to him that believeth.

The miracles in the Bible convey a message of importance to our hearts. The Bible doesn't need to tell us of man's misery, his plight and difficulties, nor his predicament and the danger that he is in. We can see that on every side. What the Bible does is this: it brings us good news about this difficulty. There is

help for the needy.

This good news is developed in several different lines of thought. One basic idea which the Bible teaches is that there is another world. This world that you can see, hear, taste, smell, and touch is real. This is the world in which you live in your body. But there is another world, a world in which God exists.

We call this world *earth*. We call that other world *heaven*. We call this world *natural*. It's the world of nature. The other world we call *spiritual*. It's the world of spirit. We realize that in this world man is the deciding factor and man does as he can or wills. In that other world, God is the deciding factor and God is the One who does and who wills.

This world that we are living in now is a *finite* world. It goes just so far and then it stops. But the other world, the spiritual world, is *infinite*. There's no end to it. This world in which we live is marked by weakness. That other world is marked by power and Almighty God. In this world, death prevails. In the other world, life prevails.

This is what Jacob saw in his vision at Bethel. This vision is often referred to as Jacob's ladder. Jacob actually saw a series of ascending steps from earth to heaven. That put earth and heaven in the same picture with a connection between them. If you put earth and heaven in the same picture, it means that heaven is just as real as the earth is real. This does not make heaven and earth equal, but it makes them both real. And the connection between the two is extremely important.

The spiritual is real, with God Almighty having power over the things of the earth; and so this other world, the spiritual, is greater than the natural. The will of God is greater than the processes of nature which He created. We may feel as though nature is final and unalterable. But God made nature, and we'll have to concede, in a very logical way, that He must be bigger and greater than it is. That's what the Bible teaches, and the miracles show God as having the nature which He created.

In a very simple sense, let me suggest this to you. A boy finds a stone lying in a flat field, and he picks up this stone and walks over and throws it into a lake. That may not seem much to you, but if the boy hadn't done it that stone would never have been in the lake. By no natural process would this stone have fallen into the lake at this time.

When the boy threw the stone into the lake, the stone didn't float like a feather. It flew in the air like a stone. When it landed on the water, it didn't float like a chip of wood, it sank like a stone. The stone acted like a stone and the water acted, like water all the way through the event. But there was nothing about the stone and nothing about the water that ever would have gotten that stone into that lake. It was the boy who, in his mind thought up the idea and by spontaneous will, reached down, picked up the stone and threw it.

That's what a miracle is like. The stone is stone all the way through, and the lake is a lake all the way through, but the event takes place because the boy in his spontaneous, free-will action brings the two of them together.

This can be illustrated more impressively. Perhaps you have seen engineers cut a channel for a river. A river bed is formed by water running across a countryside. Floods of water finally wear away the soil until a trench is formed in which the water will run. It curves around, and around in various ways over the meadow and eventually finds its way down to the sea. That's natural. Man comes along and brings his machines, drag lines and power shovels. He scoops up the earth and opens a way so that the water of the river now runs straight from one point to another point and doesn't follow the old river bed. The river bed has actually been changed.

Can you see in what sense this changing of the river bed was actually a miracle? The water is water all

the way through. The river is going to act like a river all the time. The countryside is going to be countryside all the time. Nothing in the countryside and nothing in the water of that river ever would have put a straight ditch across that field. But man could engineer it, plan it and do it.

Now here's another interesting thing. When the man did it, he used huge machines. Every single aspect of the machines is a natural thing. If they are worked by steam, the steam pressing on the cylinder head is a natural pressure. The cylinder head works the way it does because of the way it's engineered and arranged, with all of its various levers and cogs and wheels. Everything is worked out in a natural way, so that the pressure of the steam moves the machinery around to where the big shovel is pushed down onto the soil. Everything that takes place in all that equipment is natural. But, it would never have been done if man hadn't engineered it, if man hadn't put it together and willed that it should be so.

Now I am trying to indicate to you something of what the nature of a miracle is. Almighty God reaches down, manipulating the processes of nature, and handling them as if He were in charge, which of course He really is. *He is the Lord*. The miracles of Christ are not anti-natural. They're not against nature. They are supernatural. They are above nature. They may contain elements that are beyond our knowledge, and yet they are within the framework of nature.

Let me bring to your attention the occasion of the storm at sea. The Lord Jesus Christ was in the boat when the storm arose and the disciples went down and woke Him, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we, perish?" He came up out of the hold of the ship, rebuked the wind and the sea, and immediately there was a great calm. The Gospel of Mark tells us that He said, "Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

Have not storms quieted down before? When a storm rages on the sea, it will blow itself out and it will quiet down. All the Lord Jesus did was to bring the quietness of the storm at that time, and He did it in a way that was beyond the natural. He controlled it. The disciples understood it. They said to each other, "What manner of man, is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

When the Lord Jesus was walking on the water, it was real water, and the water acted in a real way. Peter found it out. Peter stepped out of the boat when the Lord told him to do so, and he was able to walk on the water. When Peter saw the waves boisterous, he began to sink. Those waves were just natural, ordinary waves in a natural, ordinary lake. Peter was just a natural, ordinary man and yet he was able to walk on the water, because he was held up by the supernatural power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The miracle is always the bringing into action, in the natural world, of a power greater than nature, the power of God.

In the story of the feeding of the five thousand, when the day was far spent and the disciples wanted to offer the people food, all they could find was a lad who had a few loaves and few small fish. It has been said that the loaves were like oatmeal wafers, and the little fish may have been like sardines. In any case, it wouldn't be any more than a boy's lunch. Now the Lord Jesus multiplied this and fed five thousand people. When it was all over, He made them collect the fragments and they had twelve baskets full. Make no mistake about it, He simply multiplied the bread and the fish to feed those people.

Just pause a moment and think about that miracle. The Lord Jesus didn't make stones into bread. Did you notice that? He didn't make the fish out of sand, or wood. What He actually did was make bread into more bread, and fish into more fish.

What takes place in any wheat field you ever saw? Aren't you seeing wheat become wheat? And out in the ocean, or lake, or pond, where there are fish, aren't fish becoming more fish? Isn't it God who makes the wheat produce more wheat? And isn't it God that causes fish to produce more fish? This is God. In the miracle of feeding the five thousand He is taking bread and making more bread. He is simply

telescoping the process. He is able to eliminate the inbetween natural processes of time. This is neither fantastic nor grotesque. There is something about it that's amazingly intelligent.

In all the miracles that the Lord Jesus Christ performed, notice that He didn't make ears to see. He didn't make ears walk. He made ears to hear. He caused eyes to see. He caused feet to walk. There's nothing grotesque about what He did. He was actually exercising His control to restore the designed function. There is no convincing way to by-pass the miracles.

Let us consider briefly the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus was riding a colt in the presence of a big crowd of people. That was a real miracle. He was exercising His control over the nature of that animal. Of course, colts had been ridden before and, therefore, the question could be asked, what was remarkable about it? In this particular case there was a big, noisy crowd, yet the colt walked quietly through all the excitement. The Lord Jesus didn't make the colt fly. It did not become a flying horse, a Pegasus, as you have in the myths of the pagans. He was riding on a colt the way it would normally happen, for He was Lord even to controlling the nature of a colt.

When the lord Jesus cursed the fig tree, He didn't make that tree yield olives. He didn't cause the fig tree to start producing potatoes, or corn, or wheat. Fig trees had withered and died before, but the fact that this particular tree withered *at His will* is the thing that is of importance.

The miracles which the Lord Jesus Christ did showed His power to control nature. He was handling something He had made, and He could control it because He was Almighty God.

Power To Restore And To Heal

"And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him" (Mark 1:32-34).

Mark records something that the lord Jesus Christ did again and again, working miracles in which He restored health and normal operation to people who were sick and crippled.

The Bible is not responsible for the trouble that man is in. If the Bible was never heard, man would still have his troubles. If not one word was ever said about Jesus Christ, there would still be blind, crippled, sick and distressed people. Men would die just as they do now. The Bible doesn't increase these things. It's living in this world that makes trouble, and there is need for adjustment.

Living in this world you have to get along with people, and you always have to adjust yourself to the situation that you are in. Living in this world is such that when all goes well you have pleasure. When you are hungry, you want food. If you have food, then you eat it and you have a certain satisfaction. It is a pleasure and a delight. If you are thirsty, the drinking of a cool glass of water can be a real pleasure.

When you meet people, there is a possibility of making friends, and friendship is wonderful. When things are going well in this world there is happiness. Gladness, pleasure, delight, joy and satisfaction all come right out of the situation in which you are. But in exactly the same way if things go wrong the opposite occurs; there is pain, ache, thirst, hostility, malice, envy, jealousy, hurt and misery. The Bible tells us that "in the world you shall have tribulation."

Now take the matter of work. Work in itself is not evil. If you stop to think about it, the happiest time you've had is very likely when you completed a piece of work and had the satisfaction of looking at it, seeing something that you had done. It actually can be great joy. But when a person must work under

a handicap (when you work and you can't get things finished) then work becomes drudgery. Work in this world is confronted by all kinds of hindrances. Gardens are wonderful, but weeds are awful. It's nice to be out working in the fields, but it's hard to work when there are mosquitos and flies and pests.

It's a wonderful thing to have health. What is more pleasing than to see children running and playing in the fullness of health? Perhaps you were healthy and buoyant and exuberant for a long period of time and then you became sick. You know that sickness and disease are awful. Stomach trouble is terrible. Headaches are awful. Toothaches are unpleasant.

In addition to disease there are accidents. People can be injured. A person can lose an arm, a leg, a hand, or an eye. A realistic look at life round about us will show that trouble is common. "Yet man, is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Pain is an ordinary experience. Distress is to be found all around us, and death occurs to every man. Not only is this true in the world outside, but there is much pain and sorrow and distress because of blemishes inside ourselves. Things aren't always right.

It is this background of reality and human affairs, with all of its trouble and misery and distress, that make the miracles of Christ so meaningful. You will find that the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ are remarkably in keeping with the design of man as God created him. The Lord Jesus becomes active in this world to restore and to put back into normal operation what God had actually planned. In view of all the misery and hurt and suffering of mankind, it is a challenge and promising thing to see that Christ Jesus did so much to deliver man, from this troubles, to restore man to health and strength, to heal man so that he might be able to live normally, in a benign and benevolent way.

I want to draw your attention to these miracles of Christ in the way in which they operated. For instance, He performed certain miracles to help people have their normal functions restored. Eyes are necessary, of course, for vision. What a distressing thing it is to be blind. The Lord Jesus performed certain miracles such as opening the eyes of the blind. He didn't give the blind person a third eye, but he made the eyes that had become blind to see again.

I know there are many people who think that this should be the work of Christ today. But you must let the Bible speak to you. What the Lord Jesus Christ worked out and demonstrated in the physical world while He was here is spiritually and eternally true.

There are far more important things than restoring health and vision to my physical body. I am going to leave this body behind me anyway. It's not as important that *this body be restored, as that I be brought into the fullness of life that is in Christ Jesus.*

But let me point out other miracles that He performed of this same nature. There were people who were deaf and couldn't hear. Others were dumb and couldn't speak. The Lord Jesus was able to unstop their ears, enabling them to hear. He could loosen their tongues, so that they were able to speak.

On one occasion a man with a withered hand was brought before Him. The Lord Jesus said, "Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other." The hand resumed its normal function.

The lame man at the pool of Bethesda was so crippled he hadn't been able to get himself down into the pool. The Lord Jesus Christ came to him and asked him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The man said, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming another steppeth down before me." The Lord Jesus Christ replied, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." He didn't make the man fly. He made him walk. That was his normal function. This is very important.

Let us now look at the healing that He did. Disease threatens to bring us to an untimely death. It not only causes pain and suffering, but it shortens the normal functions of life.

When you think about the leper who came to the Lord Jesus Christ, you see a man that had within

himself something he couldn't get rid of. There was something inside him that was eating his body, but he knew that the Lord could help him. He said to the Lord, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The record tells us that the Lord Jesus looked on him with compassion and said, "I will; be thou clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Here again you have a man set free to be normal.

A woman who had had an issue of blood for twelve years came to Jesus to be healed. She had gone to doctor after doctor. The Scriptures tell us that she spent everything she had on the physicians and nothing had helped. Luke, who himself was a doctor, tells us that she could not be helped. Under these circumstances she came to the Lord Jesus saying from the bottom of her heart, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole." She pressed into the crowd and touched His garment, and immediately she felt that the issue of blood was dried up. The Lord Jesus turned around and said, "Who touched my clothes?" His disciples said, "'Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, who touched me?' He said in effect, "Ah, but there was one who touched me in a special way." Then the woman came and kneeling at His feet confessed that she was the one who had done it. This is a case of healing a disease.

A centurion came saying, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and grievously tormented." The Lord Jesus said, "I will come and heal him." The centurion stopped Him and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go and he goeth; and to another, Come and he cometh [I order them about. You can order the disease around. Just say it]." The Lord Jesus said, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." Again the Lord Jesus exercised His power to restore a person to normal health and strength.

There is another very important kind of miracle to which I want to refer. This is the matter of delivering people from demons. In our culture, generally speaking, few people can believe there are such things as demons. There are many smart people who tell us that this is not at all to be considered, with the result that many, many people who read these passages really have trouble believing them. But let us look at the Scriptures and see what we actually find out.

When the Lord Jesus came through the country of the Gadarenes, a man possessed with demons came out from among the tombs. He cried out to Him, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." The Lord Jesus Christ commanded the spirit to be quiet. He delivered the man. This is a plain story. It is a marvelous thing to think that if you should be controlled by forces and powers outside yourself, you could be set free by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One more such incident of healing is illustrated in the case of the father who came to Jesus with his afflicted son. The boy was possessed with a demon that would every now and again overtake him with a seizure. At such times the boy would fall to the ground. Sometimes he fell into the fire or into the water. Thus, the seizure was doubly dangerous. First the father had brought his son, to the disciples that they might heal him. They tried but they failed. Afterwards they came and asked the Lord why they could not heal the lad. He told them it was because of their unbelief.

What I want you to notice about this miracle is that when the man brought his son to the Lord Jesus, he explained that he had brought him to the disciples first. They had tried to heal him but they couldn't. The father pleaded with Jesus to help his son. The Lord Jesus said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The man cried out, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." And the Lord Jesus Christ delivered the child. Focus your attention on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ can deliver from the power of Satan. He did then and He can now.

Another class of actions whereby the Lord Jesus demonstrated His power to restore us into our normal liberty before God is shown in His power to deliver people from death. You may be more or less impressed as you read through the Gospels to find that in every case where the record tells of Jesus facing a dead body, He brought it back to life.

When walking through the streets one day, He saw the funeral procession of the son of a widow. She was following the litter on which her son's body was being carried to the grave. The Lord Jesus stopped the procession, went over and told the young man to rise . . . and the young man arose, to the utter and overwhelming amazement of everybody.

On another occasion one of the rulers of the people came to the Lord Jesus and told Him that his daughter was lying at home sick. The man suggested that if the Lord Jesus would just speak the word his daughter would get well. The Lord Jesus said He would go down to see her. As they were going to the ruler's house, some of his servants came and met him and told him that it was too late. There was no use to bother the Master now; the girl had died. But the Lord Jesus said, "Be not afraid, only believe." And Jesus continued on to the ruler's house. He put everybody out of the house except His own disciples, and then He took the young girl by the hand and raised her from the dead.

Another such instance, even more clearly put forth, is the raising of Lazarus. Mary and Martha had sent word to the Lord Jesus, "Behold he whom thou lovest is sick." When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days. The Lord Jesus came down to the place where Lazarus was buried and asked the people in the home where they had put him. They took Him out to show Him where Lazarus was. When He came to the cave in which they had put the body, He said, "Take ye away the stone." They had put a stone over the entrance to the cave. When they had removed the stone, He called out, "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus came forth still bound in his grave clothes.

There is no way to avoid these examples of resurrection. You are meant to believe them. All of these various types of resurrection show the power of God, over death, but they are not examples of our resurrection. All these people were raised to resume life the way it had been before. He restored people to their normal functions. The works were done for the benefit of human beings. This power of the Lord Jesus was not exercised to make Him great or to look big in the eyes of other people. It was done for the sake of helping people.

You will notice, as it was done, that good common sense was consistent with it. There was nothing sensational. All of the things that happened were related to the practical needs of everyday life and everyday satisfactions. Remember, He made these possible in the first place. Therefore, we see that in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ He demonstrated power over nature to restore man to his normal function. He healed man from disease and set him free from outside influences . . . that he might be able to serve God as God intended that he should.

Power To Raise The Dead

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9).

These words tell us so very clearly the absolute importance and necessity of believing in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is important that you believe in the resurrection of Christ Jesus because your own salvation involves your being raised from the dead. That is really what it means to be saved. In making a study of the miracles of Christ the greatest miracle of them all is the resurrection of

the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, make note of the fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was different from any other resurrection that has been reported. For example, the widow's son was raised from the dead by Elisha in the Old Testament. The ruler's daughter was brought back to life by Jesus of Nazareth. And then, you remember, He raised Lazarus from the dead. In the Book of the Acts, after the Lord Jesus Christ was gone into heaven, the resurrection of Dorcas is reported under the ministry of Peter. And there were others. But each of these people were no different after, they were raised from the dead than they had been before they died. In other words, each one of them died again. They were brought back to life, but it was life in this world that they were brought back to.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was not like that. He was not brought back to life with the same kind of body as He had had previously. It was His own body but made of different stuff. The resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Christ could act differently than the body He had while He was here as Jesus of Nazareth, living the life which you read about in the Gospels. When He was raised from the dead, things happened that never happened before. He appeared and disappeared at will. He came into a room when the doors were closed.

When you think about the Ascension, the way in which He took that body out of this world up through the clouds, you are not to think that His body was the kind of a body that you and I have here. Our bodies need oxygen to breathe, water to drink and food to eat. The resurrection body is not that kind of a body.

And now I want you to see that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth required the direct application of the almighty power of God, because in His case there wasn't anyone there to act as intercessor. In the case of the widow's son the prophet Elisha was there, and he raised the boy. In the case of the ruler's daughter, Jesus of Nazareth went in, took her by the hand, and called to her, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." And she got up. When He met the funeral procession carrying the widow's son to be buried, He stopped the procession and raised the young man from the bier. The Lord Jesus in each instance was there in person.

So also it was with Lazarus. After they took away the stone from before the cave, the Lord Jesus standing there cried out, "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus came forth. When Dorcas was raised from the dead by the ministry of Peter, Peter actually took her by the hand and called her back to life. But in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, no human being, no person was there. This was only the almighty power of God.

We have learned that God is the Creator. We understand that the God of the Bible is almighty and that He is able to do whatever He wills to do. This is revealed to us in the Scriptures so that we might be able to believe that God could work miracles. The miracles help us believe that He could raise the dead and that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is true. Time after time events occur which are actually cases of the natural processes being overruled by the will of the living God.

So far as believing in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned, believing doesn't make it true. It doesn't make it real. It is true and real whether you believe it or not. If you lined up a thousand men in a row and not one of them believed it, that doesn't change the fact one bit. But believing in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ does commit us - you and me and anyone else who will believe - to His will, to His promise, and to His Word. When we thus commit ourselves to Him and really believe that it was so, then the resurrection can become operative in us and for us.

This kind of believing requires an inner spiritual strength. A person just can't believe out of nothing. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The word *hearing* is more than just hearing

the Word and hearing the letter spoken. It means *understanding*. Faith cometh through understanding. Hearing is understanding. Understanding the ways of God and the will of God comes by the Word of God as you come to understand the Scriptures. The miracles are in the Bible to prepare us so that we will be able to believe that God could and would raise the dead.

Perhaps I may be permitted here to refer again to my own, personal experience in coming to faith. As a young man I could believe that it would be a good thing to live so that "whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them" - The Golden Rule. That I could understand. I could understand an argument to the effect that you should be gracious to people and return good for evil. I could debate something with you as to whether it would be good or whether it would be bad so far as ethics and morals and virtue are concerned. But when it came to believing that the body of Jesus Christ was raised from the dead I frankly could not believe it.

The reason I could not believe it was because I was so much impressed with natural law. I had read in school about natural law and I had the feeling that the universe operated according to the law. I was brought up in a public school such as you have in North America, and I took the scientific view as it is taught in the schools. Things happen according to nature's laws, and thus the world moves along with machinelike uniformity. I just couldn't seem to come to the point where I could believe anything that seemed to upset or change this system. And yet the call was there that I should believe it. I knew that some people did.

One day when I was working in the wheat field all alone I asked myself, "Why can't you believe it? What's the matter with it? Why is it so incredible?" And then I'd answer myself, "Look at what you are supposed to believe. You're supposed to believe that a body that has been dead for three days actually comes alive, stays alive, and then it is taken out of this world alive." I'd shake my head, and, then I'd ask myself again, "Is that really what it says?" Yes, that's really what it says. I read it and that's just exactly what it said. Then I would say to myself, "It isn't true." That was exactly how I felt. Then I'd ask myself, "How do you know it isn't true?" "Well," I said, "it just can't be."

While I was thinking this over, I asked, myself, "Why can't it be? Why is it so incredible?" Suddenly it dawned, on me that I really couldn't be sure it hadn't happened. I wasn't there. It was just because I based it on the idea that these things don't happen. Where did I get that idea? I had been told everything happens according to natural laws. Everything always happens the same way. History repeats itself. Nobody else ever heard of it, and so on. But while I was turning it over in my mind the thought came to me that the life I was now living would one day depart from the flesh. Now what was really involved in the resurrection was that this life should live again. I asked myself, "Where did this life come from? Where did I come from in the first place?" If God created me once out of nothing, it didn't seem so impossible that He should bring me back again after He once had me.

And so I decided that creation is a bigger miracle than resurrection. If God wanted to create me and later raise me up from the dead, who was going to stop Him? Suddenly I realized that that is what Christians claim . . . that God wants to raise the dead and now I found that I could believe!

At this point let me underscore a most important matter. I've mentioned it before. The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth not only involved the body that was dead being brought back to life, but the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth involved His life in a new body. This is the important truth in the whole Bible. We become something new and different in the resurrection. There is something creative that takes place. When we are raised from the dead, we are not going to be the same kind of person we were here; therefore, we do not need to anticipate throughout all eternity that we will live forever in this same dying condition.

Paul discusses this fact in 1 Corinthians 15:42-54. The Apostle says there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body. He goes on to say that the body dies in the natural and is raised a spiritual body - a real body but spiritual in its composition.

If you are chemically minded, the spiritual body is not made of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, iron, sulphur and such elements. Those things are ashes to ashes and dust to dust. They're going to stay in this world. John refers to this when he writes in 1 John, Chapter 3, "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: . . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*"

The wonderful truth in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is that we who have been born again are different than we were before. When, we are born spiritually, we are born differently than when we were born physically. When we were born physically of our parents we were born of the flesh. When we are born again of the spirit, we are born of God, and this doesn't involve worldly elements.

The fact that the body of Jesus Christ was different was manifested in the things that happened. He appeared in a locked room. He disappeared at will. He ascended into heaven in full view of about a hundred and twenty people. None of these actions ever occurred before the resurrection. This means that the bodies of all those who die in Him believing people, when they are raised from the dead, will be made of different stuff.

We read in the Bible, especially in the Book of Revelation, the things that are going to happen when, we are raised from the dead and are living in the newness of life, even in heaven itself. There will be no pain, no separation, no death there. Your body will be a different kind of body.

This means a great deal, particularly to those who are thinking of some loved ones who have died. Perhaps in this past year someone of your family has gone on. You may remember them as you saw them in those closing days. When you see them in their resurrection bodies, they will not have that emaciated, pain-twisted body that they might have had when you last saw them. They won't be maimed or deformed or wrinkled or crippled. A man could be living in this world and have only one arm. When, he is raised from the dead he won't be limited to one arm. Someone might be living in this world and by some circumstance he has become blind. When he is raised from the dead, he won't be blind, because the body will be different.

The resurrection of the believer in spirit, soul and body is the new life we have in Christ Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:17 states, "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*"

When you think of the resurrection from the dead, it will be our own bodies, but they will be made of different stuff. They will be bodies that are not limited like these bodies are. We will have the kind of bodies that can be anywhere and everywhere at will. They will never hurt or tire.

In Romans 6:4-6 we read, "That like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life [not another chance at it but a different circumstance]. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man [the flesh] is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed [the sinful body will be done away with], that henceforth we should not serve sin [we won't serve sin any more]." This human, natural body of mine is subject to sin, is attracted by sin, is drawn, to sin, but the body that is raised from the dead will not be attracted by sin. It will be a body that is completely obedient to the will of Almighty God.

In Galatians 1:4 we read that the Lord Jesus "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from

this present evil world." It is in the flesh that we have contact with this present evil world. Because the lord Jesus died in our place - and we believe it - our new life is not of the flesh and is not subject to this present evil world. That's the sense in which we are no longer under the law, but we are under grace.

The resurrection is the greatest of all the miracles. Because Christ Jesus was raised from the dead, you and I can expect to be raised from the dead different than we ever were before.

Power To Direct In The Spirit

"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." (Hebrews 2:4).

Here is a reference to the ministry that went on after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. When anyone attempts to describe the public image of Jesus of Nazareth (what the people commonly think about Him and how He is publicized as the Man of Nazareth), His words are often quoted, but not many of His works are talked about. That's because the works that are reported of Him in the Gospels are all miraculous.

If you were to go slowly through the Gospels and notice every single thing that the Lord Jesus Christ is reported to have done, I'll make the claim that each of His acts is a supernatural work. This is of the Holy Spirit and this is what the Holy Spirit shows us about Him. Yet we often refer to the commonplace situations in which He acted.

We think of the way in which He dealt with the woman at the well, with the Pharisees and others, because they are within our frame of human reference. Of all the things that are recorded in the Gospels regarding the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ, probably the only exception from this is the moment of transfiguration. For that brief time, the curtains were pulled aside and we were given a glimpse into the real, eternal, spiritual nature of Jesus of Nazareth. But apart from that, as Jesus of Nazareth moved about in His human form, people could watch Him in a very normal way. They could see what He did and they could hear what He said. While they didn't all believe the reports they heard, still, in general, they had the impression that this was the Man of Nazareth. Any number of people - then and now - make a great point of the fact that He became a human being, and that He was actually seen in human form.

Now I want to draw your attention to the events which occurred after His resurrection. The Book of the Acts was written after His resurrection. The Book of Revelation was also written after His resurrection. In reading through the last chapters of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and into the Book of the Acts, you will be amazed to see that one event after another is definitely out of this world.

I am going to list some of these for you. Almighty God wants you to know that the power of the Lord Jesus Christ is available to you and it is a power that is out of this world. It's stronger than anything in this world. God can overrule the affairs of this world. So let us think of the things that happened after the resurrection. On the very morning of the resurrection, we read that the disciples went to the grave. They saw angels at the grave. Now, please note that in everything that you read in the Gospels relating to the earthly career of Jesus of Nazareth, no mention is made of angels making contact with the disciples. True, there were angels heralding His birth; and an angel spoke to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. That same angel spoke to Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus. Joseph, who was the husband of Mary, was warned by an angel in a dream concerning Herod. But in the actual ministry and career of the Lord Jesus Christ there is no report of any angel messenger ever coming to the disciples.

And yet at the time of His resurrection, when the disciples came to the tomb that morning, there were two men in white apparel sitting at the edge of the grave.

Let's go on from there and look at the appearances of our Lord in the upper room. When He appeared in the upper room, the disciples were there and the doors were shut. They were shut because of fear of the Jews. The disciples were in hiding. And suddenly He appeared in their midst. Nothing like that ever happened during the earthly career of the Lord Jesus Christ. After He talked with them a bit, suddenly He disappeared from their view. This is important for us to know, for God is showing us something. There is another world, and the power of that other world is greater than this world. In Jesus Christ, we have contact with a world outside of this one.

In the Book of Acts we are told, "he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs." This is part of the report about the Lord Jesus Christ during the space of forty days when He appeared and disappeared at will. One time He appeared by the sea when the men were out fishing in the morning. When they came to the shore the Lord Jesus was standing there and called to them asking if they had any fish. They said they hadn't caught anything. He told them to cast their net on the other side of the ship, which they did, and they took in so many fish they could hardly bring them to shore. There were a hundred and fifty three altogether. The Lord Jesus had a fire with fish broiling and He said, "Come and dine." Everything about that whole story has in it an atmosphere that is different. This is the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ doing this kind of thing.

Now let's consider the big thing that happened. At the end of forty days, He called His disciples together, led them out of Jerusalem, took them up to a hill top and there in plain view of them all was parted from them. "He was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." That wasn't one man's idea. The number of disciples was about a hundred and twenty.

Let me ask you something. Why did He do that? Did He need to go up that way? Couldn't He have gone to heaven some other way? Did He need to do it in front of these people? Had He not gone up to heaven very inconspicuously on the day He was raised from the dead? When Mary Magdalene met Him in the garden, she had wanted to hold Him, but He said, "Touch me not; . . . I ascend unto my Father, and your Father." Then why did He do it like this in front of all those disciples? Didn't He do it to teach?

Let us imagine that we are there on the hill top. Forty days have elapsed since the resurrection. It is broad daylight. There are clouds in the sky. He is there talking; and while we watch, He is being lifted up. He is being taken up into the heavens. And while we look, a cloud receives Him out of our sight. Don't miss it. That's for you. You are to understand that this world is not everything. There is another world and the living Lord Jesus Christ was taken into it.

While the disciples were standing, looking up into the heavens, two angels came. Now that never happened in the days of the Lord Jesus here upon earth. That never happened during the time He was walking around as Jesus of Nazareth. These angels came and asked, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Then they were told to tarry in Jerusalem until they would be indued with power from on high.

They went back to Jerusalem and waited for Him. They spent ten days in an upper room in prayer. The disciples were together with the brothers of Jesus and with Mary, His mother. Then came the day of Pentecost. It was now fifty days from the time that He had been raised from the dead. While they were sitting together, the Holy Spirit was sent by the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. There was a "sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind." And "tongues like as of fire sat upon each of them" and they

all began speaking with other tongues. Nothing like this ever happened in the days when Jesus of Nazareth was walking around in this world. This is written for us to understand that the living Lord Jesus Christ in heaven sent His Holy Spirit into this world to be in your heart and in my heart. We are to have Him.

Later, when Peter and John went to worship, they came to a lame man at the gate of the temple. Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Afterwards when the people confronted Peter, they asked him by what power he had made the man whole. Peter told them that the living Lord Jesus Christ had done this very thing. "And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong." The authorities then forbade them to preach at all in His name, and Peter and John went back to the disciples and told them how the authorities had forbidden them to tell the story of the risen, Lord Jesus Christ. And what happened? They lifted up their voices to God in prayer. They reminded Almighty God how the nations had gathered themselves together against Christ and had put the Lord Jesus to death. Now these same authorities had ruled that these men were not to preach. They asked Almighty God to give them strength and courage that they might with boldness preach the word. Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and the place was shaken where they were.

Chapter five in the Book of the Acts tells the story of the first people that lied in the early church. They were Ananias and Sapphira. This is a case of people who acted as hypocrites. Both Ananias and Sapphira died when they were confronted with judgment. Some people will say offhand that Peter put them to death. Oh, no. Peter didn't put them to death. Peter showed them the truth. And when they were shown the truth, the actual language is that "they gave up the ghost." Nobody took their lives away from them. They themselves just simply collapsed because of the enormity of what had happened.

There were other people who lied in the days when our Lord Jesus Christ was here on earth and none of them dropped dead. What I mean to say to you is that after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ we enter into a living experience and things happen that never did happen before. The reason I am saying this is that we might be encouraged to believe that God now does things greater than anything that we could ask or think.

Following the incident of Ananias and Sapphira, the Bible records that Peter and the Apostles who were with him were put into prison. Then an amazing thing happened. During the night the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and took Peter and the Apostles out to the market place and told them to preach, which they did. The next day when the soldiers came to get them from prison in order to bring them to court, the prisoners weren't there. When they found them, they were in the temple preaching. When the chief priests heard of this "they doubted of them whereunto this would grow." It made a terrific impact upon the people of that day and time. And doesn't its message come also to you and to me?

This isn't something hidden. This was done openly and plainly for you and for me to get the idea into our dull, thick minds and hearts that God is a living God. The power of God is able to overrule so far as this world is concerned. God can do more than we can ask or think. The Lord Jesus Christ is alive and we can have dealings with Him today.

Consider the life of Stephen who was one of the first deacons. After he had been preaching, he was persecuted and then brought into court. After he had delivered his defense (his testimony about how it was that he believed), he said, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." He had a vision of the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God. The people plugged their ears. They said that Stephen wasn't fit to live, and they began to stone him to put him to death. Stephen actually saw Christ Jesus in glory.

Nothing like that had ever happened before. When you read the Gospels, you don't find people looking up into heaven. The Lord Jesus looked up to heaven and talked with His Father, but the disciples didn't do that during those days. Nothing like that happened at that time.

After the incident of Stephen's death, the Christians were scattered. And in the eighth chapter of the Book of the Acts you read how Philip was led to talk to the Ethiopian. The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." As you read in, the Gospels, you won't find anything like that happening to Peter, James Bartholomew, or any of the other disciples. In the Gospels it was the Lord Jesus who told them what to do. To have the Holy Spirit directing Phillip and then telling him what to say, *that is new*.

Let us now recall the experience of Saul (Paul) on the Damascus road. He was going to Damascus for the purpose of arresting Christians. Suddenly, about noonday, he saw a light, brighter than the light of the midday sun, and he heard a voice which said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul fell down and called out, "Who art thou, Lord?" And he heard the words of reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Saul was stricken blind, and people had to lead him by the hand. A certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias, was told of God to go and baptize him. Ananias was afraid to go for he said, "I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem." And God said, "He is a chosen vessel [I am going to use him]."

There was no mistake about that Damascus road experience. It is told three times in the Book of the Acts. He saw the Lord Jesus as one born out of due time. Saul was going along the road to Damascus like any other traveler, when he was given an insight into spiritual reality. He actually saw Jesus of Nazareth. This whole account of what happened to Saul is beyond anything that happened in the Gospels before the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember also Peter's vision from the housetop. He saw a sheet let down from heaven, he heard a voice, and then he had his instructions about going to the house of Cornelius. Nothing like the events told us in the tenth chapter of the Book of the Acts will be found in the Gospels. Apart from the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, and until His resurrection - all the time the Lord Jesus was here upon earth - you won't find anything like this.

In chapter 12 of the Book of the Acts, Peter's amazing prison experience is recorded. It looked as though he was going to be put to death, but in the night the angel came and opened the door. Peter couldn't believe it. He thought he was having a dream. It wasn't until he was out on the street that he came to himself and realized that he actually had been delivered from prison.

That's in the Bible, written in black and white for you to read. No one has ever been able to question this as a record of an incident that actually occurred. I know there are people who don't want to believe it, but as far as I am concerned I have no interest in their unbelief. All I want to notice is what was written for us to understand. We are to understand that since the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, marvelous and wonderful things can happen.

After this you will read in chapter 13 how Elymas the sorcerer was struck blind by the word of Paul. In chapter 16, we have the story of Paul and Silas in prison. At midnight they were singing praises to God, and an earthquake came and shook the prison. The result was the conversion of the Philippian jailor. This is followed by the opening of the whole country of Macedonia to the gospel. When Paul was being taken as a prisoner to Rome, a terrible storm arose at sea. In the night, the Lord stood by him. The next day Paul predicted what would happen, and he told the captain of the ship what to do. The captain followed his instructions and the lives of everybody were spared. When they were thrown up on the island, a deadly serpent bit Paul while he was out gathering wood. The story goes on to say that he

shook the serpent off into the fire and was unhurt.

All these things happened after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I have listed them for you in this way, because I am sorry for myself and for you. We Christian people have allowed ourselves to be without this truth, without this power of the living God. And as we contemplate just the small insight we have of the power of God - as revealed to us in the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ and as seen in the lives of men and women who allow themselves to be directed by the Spirit - perhaps we, too, will sink at the Master's feet and say in adoration with the Apostle Thomas, *"My Lord and my God."*