

July 2013

Volume 24:07

# Discovery

*Scripture & Science for Kids*



# MIRACLES



# SIMON, THE Street Magician

## STREET MAGICIANS ARE ENTERTAINING, PLAIN AND SIMPLE. SOME WANDER THE STREETS OF CITIES

around the world doing all sorts of tricks and illusions, even pulling the heads off chickens and then putting them back on. When a magician does the trick, he appears to be pulling a chicken's head off, but his hands are just quick enough that he tucks the chicken's head under its wing and pulls out a hidden, fake chicken head. Using his fast hands and hidden props, the "magician" is able to perform any number of tricks. People are amazed by his "ability," which really is nothing more than the ability to fool people. Despite how cool his tricks look, a magician's "magic" is still just that—a trick. There is nothing special, magical, or miraculous about what he does.

There is a story of a similar man in Acts 8:9-24, who wandered the streets of Samaria, amazing people with his "magic." After the church in Jerusalem was scattered,



Philip, an evangelist, went north to the city of Samaria. He preached Jesus to the Samaritans, and used miracles to prove that he was preaching the truth. In that city, there was a man named Simon, whom the Bible calls a sorcerer or magician. The "magic" that Simon

used was illusions and tricks, so there was nothing special about it. The people of Samaria considered Simon to be a great man, and said of his magic, "This man is the great power of God" (Acts 8:10). However, when Philip came to Samaria, that all changed. Simon had been a man who could pull cheap tricks, enough to fool and amuse the people, but not enough to do them real good. Simon could not perform miracles. However, Philip had the miraculous power to heal the sick. He had **real** power from God.

People could tell the difference between what was real and what was fake, and soon even Simon the "sorcerer" became a Christian. The power of God to do miracles was not the same as the tricks of a magician. The power of God is real, and the power of a magician is fake (though perhaps entertaining and innocent if everyone understands that it is meant for innocent purposes). The next time you see a magician, remember that we serve a God Who is able to do far more than the tricks of men. Isn't He awesome?

# CONFIRMING and DEFENDING

## PAUL WAS A GREAT PREACHER AND MISSIONARY WHO TRAVELED

around the world spreading the Gospel. He spoke in Jewish synagogues and to other assemblies, and wrote letters to many churches. Several of these letters are in the New Testament. Paul was able to accomplish these things because he was sent by God, and the Holy Spirit guided him in his teaching. The miracles Paul performed are one proof of his divinely appointed apostleship.

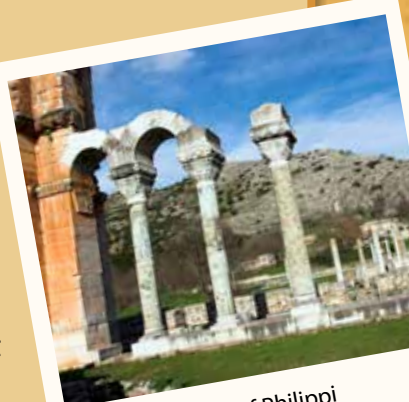
At the time Paul preached, the Gospel was new, and people were not so sure if they should believe Paul. They did not have the New Testament to check and make sure the things he said were true, so they needed a way to prove that he was not just making it up. The Holy Spirit gave Paul the ability to perform miracles so that those honest people could be sure Paul was telling the truth. When Paul was in the city of Ephesus, God "worked unusual miracles" (Acts 19:11-12). By touching the handkerchiefs and aprons of sick people, Paul healed them or cast evil spirits out of their bodies. The miracles of Paul, together with his preaching, resulted in the conversion of many

Ephesians. The Bible says that "the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed" because of God's work through Paul (Acts 19:20).

Not everyone was as willing to accept the

Gospel, even after Paul performed miracles. In the Greek city of Philippi, Paul and Silas cast an evil spirit out of a young girl. Some men were using the girl to make money, and they were angry when they could make no more money. Instead of obeying the Gospel like the Ephesians, these greedy men stirred up the crowd and had Paul and Silas arrested (Acts 16:16-24).

Paul's miracles defended the truth against its enemies. Many false teachers challenged Paul's preaching, and miracles helped people to distinguish false teachers from true apostles. Paul's first miracle served this purpose. While Paul was preaching on the island of Cyprus, a "sorcerer" named Elymas tried to convince the proconsul of the island to ignore him and Barnabas. By the Holy Spirit, Paul struck him with blindness. When the proconsul saw this miracle, he knew Paul's teaching was from God (Acts 13:8-12). Paul also used his miracles to prove to the Corinthians that he was a true apostle of God, because only by the power of God could someone perform such amazing signs (1 Corinthians 12:12). Even today, the miracles Paul performed 2,000 years ago show us that God told him what to preach, so we, too, can trust the letters he wrote. They are the words of God.



Ruins of the City of Philippi



Ruins of the City of Paphos on the Island of Cyprus





# HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

## SOME PEOPLE THINK THAT

**ALL BELIEVERS CAN EXPERIENCE HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM, ENABLING THEM TO SPEAK IN TONGUES OR PERFORM MIRACLES. THEY SAY CHRISTIANS ARE "SPIRIT-FILLED."**

Yet the Bible refers to Holy Spirit baptism happening only twice. The very first reference to Holy Spirit baptism in the New Testament was by John the Baptizer: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He who is coming after me...will **baptize** you **with the Holy Spirit**" (Matthew 3:11). John was referring to Jesus. Just before Jesus ascended, He told the apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they would be "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). He said the "power" would be from the Holy Spirit, making them able to tell the world what Jesus taught them (Acts 1:4-5,8). Jesus said: "for John truly baptized with water; but **you** [apostles] shall be **baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now" (Acts 1:5). The apostles received this promise of Holy Spirit baptism in Acts 2, empowering them to speak in tongues and teach the people.

The only other time the New Testament says anyone was baptized in the Holy Spirit was the Gentiles in Acts 10. Peter said: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them [the Gentiles], as upon **us** [apostles] at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If therefore God gave them [the Gentiles] the same gift as He gave **us** [apostles]..." (Acts 11:15-17). To understand Holy Spirit baptism, just remember these three verses: Matthew 3:11, Acts 1:5, and Acts 11:16.

The first to receive Holy Spirit baptism were the **Jewish** apostles on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The second to receive Holy Spirit baptism were the **Gentile** members of the household of Cornelius in Acts 10. So "all flesh" in Joel 2:28 refers to the outpouring on **Jews** in Acts 2 and on **Gentiles** in Acts 10. Holy Spirit baptism, then, filled two special purposes: (1) to prepare the apostles for their apostolic (not Christian) roles; and (2) to show that the Gentiles were to be allowed to become Christians. Holy Spirit baptism does not happen today.

# The Lame Man is HEALED

## AS PETER AND JOHN WENT TO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY, THEY CAME ACROSS A POOR MAN WHO COULD

not walk. He had been crippled from birth, and was now over 40 years old (Acts 4:22). The man apparently made his living by begging at the temple gate (a good place for begging, as it was the "front door" to the temple). He asked Peter and John for some money. The lame man was so accustomed to begging that he did not even bother to look up at the apostles.

Peter and John did not have any money, but they had something much more valuable to give to the crippled beggar—the healing power of Jesus. Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). The lame man's legs instantly became strong enough to support him! He leaped up and walked into the temple with Peter and John. He jumped for joy and praised God.

Just as we marvel at the amazing miraculous power given to Peter by Jesus, the people in the temple area on that day were shocked to see the familiar crippled man bounding across the temple court. They all wanted to hear what the apostles had to say. Peter saw that he had the attention of a large group of listeners, so he spoke seriously to the crowd.

First, he gave God credit for the miracle (verses 12-13). It is not always easy for us to give God thanks and glory for His blessings. Often, we are tempted to take

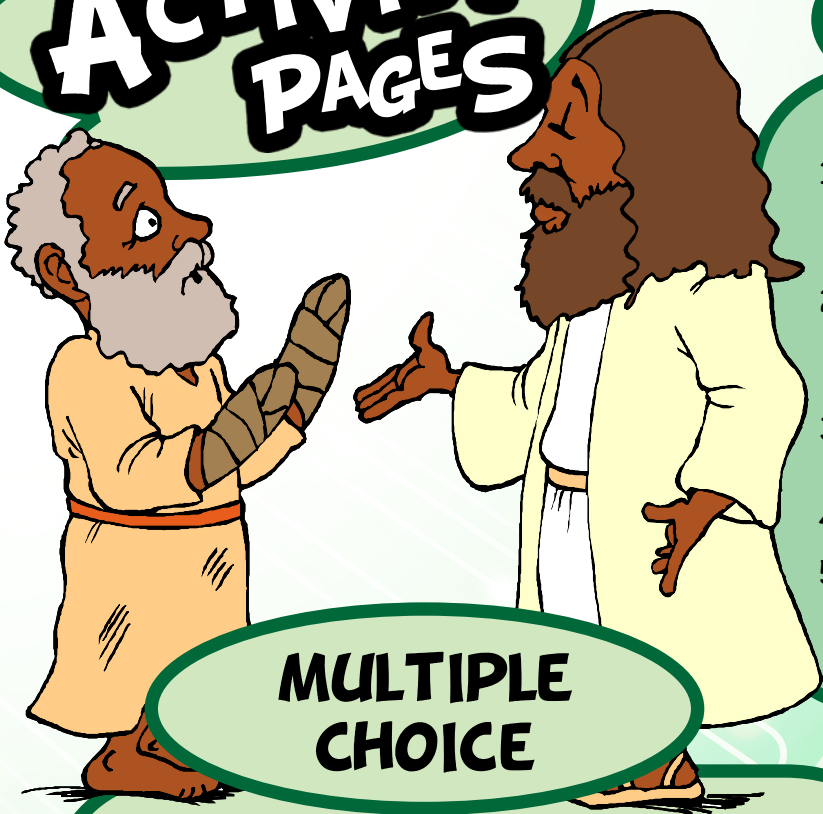
all the credit for the good things we do, and act as if we did it all by ourselves. Many people live as if God does not exist nor bless us. Paul called such people fools (Romans 1:21-22).

Second, Peter taught the crowd about Jesus (verses 14-26). How many times has God given us opportunities to tell people about Christ and the church, only to see us ignore or refuse the offer? We can make ourselves aware of chances to share the Gospel by remembering that each person we meet has an immortal soul. Like Peter and John, we should use every chance we get to help others go to heaven.





# ACTIVITY PAGES



## FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. In the Greek city of \_\_\_\_\_, Paul and Silas cast an evil spirit out of a young girl.
2. "The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed" because of God's work through Paul (Acts 19:20).
3. \_\_\_\_\_ baptism occurred in Acts 2:1-4.
4. Simon and Elymas were \_\_\_\_\_.
5. When Paul was in the city of \_\_\_\_\_, God "worked unusual miracles" (Acts 19:11-12).

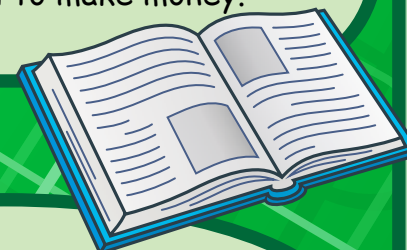
## MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Miracles are
  - A. Supernatural
  - B. Normal, everyday occurrences
  - C. Magic tricks
2. The name of the "sorcerer" who was converted to Christ (Acts 8)
  - A. Elymas
  - B. Socrates
  - C. Simon
3. In the Bible, miracles
  - A. Were used for entertainment purposes
  - B. Verified the teaching of God's messengers
  - C. Simply made people feel good
4. By the power of God, Paul struck this sorcerer with blindness.
  - A. Simon
  - B. Eutyclus
  - C. Elymas
5. In Acts 3, Peter healed a
  - A. Crippled man
  - B. Blind woman
  - C. Child with a fever



## TRUE OR FALSE

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Magicians perform tricks that seem to be real.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ God has chosen to still work miracles today like He did in the first century.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ We need more than the Bible to believe in Jesus.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ We should all sit around and wait for Holy Spirit baptism.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The miracles that God worked through the apostles and others in the first century played a vital role in showing people the truthfulness of the message preached.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Miracles that we read about in the Bible are different than the so-called miracles that people say happen today.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Paul and Silas cast an evil spirit out of a little girl.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Many false teachers challenged Paul's teaching.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ We can trust Paul's letters, because they are from God.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Some men were using the demon possessed girl to make money.



## ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER

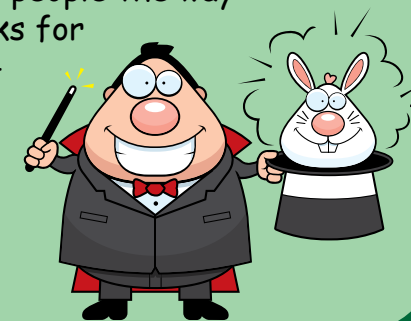
1. Explain why there was a need for miracles in the first century.
2. Explain why we do not need such miracles today.

Dear Digger Doug,  
What is the difference between miracles and magic?



Dear Reader,

First, magic can be used just for fun. Miracles were not just "for fun." They were visible signs that a person was acting or speaking on God's behalf (read Exodus 3:12-4:14). Second, magic can be used to deceive. Miracles, on the other hand, were never used for deception. Rather, they were used to teach important spiritual lessons (like when Elijah asked God to perform a miracle on Mount Carmel to show that Baal was a false god—1 Kings 18:20-40). Miracles also were used to help people (like when Jesus healed a blind man—John 9:1-41). Third, magic isn't "real." When a magician makes a woman "disappear," she doesn't really disappear into thin air. But miracles were real—very real! When Moses stretched his rod across the Red Sea and caused the waters to part so the Israelites could walk across on dry land, it was no trick. Moses (through God's power) really did what the Bible says he did (read Exodus 13:14-22). When Pharaoh's army followed the Israelites, and Moses caused the waters to come back together to destroy the Egyptians, the soldiers and horses really died (read Exodus 13:26-28). Fourth, magic is intended to entertain us and show us the magician's talent. That is not true of miracles. Their purpose never was to entertain an audience or to demonstrate how talented a person was. They were performed in order to show people the way to heaven. Thanks for your great question. Remember, Bible miracles were not "magic."





APOLOGETICS PRESS, INC.  
 230 Landmark Drive  
 Montgomery, AL 36117  
 (800) 234-8558 (Orders)  
 (334) 272-8558  
 www.DiscoveryMagazine.com  
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Nonprofit Organization  
 U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
 Montgomery, AL  
 Permit No. 513

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

# MIRACLES Have Ceased

**MANY PEOPLE TODAY BELIEVE THAT GOD IS STILL WORKING MIRACLES LIKE HE DID IN THE FIRST CENTURY.** Many people say that they can speak in tongues or heal the sick, or that they know people who can. But the Bible does not teach this idea. A miracle in the Bible was a **supernatural** act. It was an event that was beyond the usual course of nature—like restoring sight to a man blind from birth, or raising a dead person (like Lazarus) from the grave. The Bible teaches that miracles happened in Bible times for a very specific purpose: **to confirm the Word** (Mark 16:20; Acts 8:6; Hebrews 2:3-4). How did miracles “confirm the Word”?

When an inspired speaker stepped forward to declare God’s Word, God confirmed His Word by having the speaker perform a miracle to show that he was from God. The miracle showed the hearers that God was behind the speaker’s remarks. Miracles **authenticated** the spoken word as God’s Word. Miracles **verified** the teaching of God’s messengers, in contrast to the many false teachers (read John 3:2).

Paul stated that miracles would cease and be done away when the “perfect” (or completed Word of God) had been revealed (1 Corinthians 13:8-10; James 1:25). Those things that were incomplete and partial (miraculous gifts) would be replaced by the total and complete (the fully revealed Word of God). Once God revealed all of the information that He wished to make available to people, the need for miracles to confirm the oral Word came to an end. Now, people can sit down with a New Testament, the written Word of God, and, with honest and diligent study, conclude that it is God’s Word. We have absolutely no need for miracles. Since there are no apostles living today, and since Holy Spirit baptism was unique to the apostles (Acts 2) and the first Gentile converts (Acts 10), there is no Holy Spirit baptism today. Likewise, there is no miraculous healing today. All those on whom the apostles had laid their hands are also dead (Acts 8:18). Once the last apostle died, the ability to perform miracles could not be passed on to others.

The Bible teaches that miracles are no longer necessary since we have everything we need to function in this life, to be pleasing to God, and to survive spiritually (Read 2 Peter 1:3).



## ANSWERS

**TRUE OR FALSE:** 1. F; 2. F; 3. F; 4. F; 5. T; 6. T; 7. T; 8. T; 9. T; 10. T.  
**MULTIPLE CHOICE:** 1. A (Supernatural); 2. C (Simon); 3. B (Verified the teaching of God’s messengers); 4. C (Blymas); 5. A (Crippled man).  
**FILL IN THE BLANKS:** 1. Philippi; 2. Word; 3. Holy Spirit; 4. Magicians; 5. Ephesus.  
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