

One of the Important issues regarding miracles involves their relationship to natural laws or the laws of nature. To some, miracles have been, not an aid to faith, but an obstacle, since they are so contrary to the usual patterns of occurrence as to appear very unlikely or even incredible. Thus, the question of how these events are to be thought of in relationship to natural law is of great importance. There are at least three views of the relationship between miracles and natural laws.

The first conception is that miracles are actually the manifestations of little known or virtually unknown natural laws. If we fully knew and understood nature, we would be able to understand and even predict these events.

A second conception is that miracles break the laws of nature. In the case of the axhead that floated, for example (2 Kings 6:6), this theory suggests that for a brief period of time, in that cubic foot or so of water, the law of gravity was suspended. It simply did not apply. In effect, God turned off the law of gravity until the axhead was retrieved, or he changed the density of the axhead or of the water.

A third conception is the idea that when miracles occur, natural forces are countered by supernatural force. In this view, the laws of nature are not suspended. They continue to operate, supernatural force is introduced, negating the effect of the natural law. In the case of the axhead, for instance, the law of gravity continued to function in the vicinity of the axhead, but the unseen hand of God was underneath it, bearing it up, just as if a human hand were lifting it.

Lewis and Demarest, in Volume 2, p. 104, of their *Integrative Theology* say:

In removing the tragic effects of sin and defeating demonic hordes God may choose to act in supernatural or miraculous ways. A miracle or a supernatural act, (1) is an extraordinary phenomenon transcending natural law, a "mighty act," so extraordinary that it (2) elicits awe as a "wonder" and (3) serves as a "sign" indicating that either God or Satan are acting in extraordinary ways for either good or evil purposes.

Too many definitions of miracles attribute all supernatural events to God. We must challenge that very influential and disastrous presupposition. Many assume that if a person seems to be supernaturally healed the healing must be a miracle of God, and the healer is therefore confirmed as a servant of God. Because such mighty acts may be performed by false Christs, false prophets, and false apostles, the occurrence of a miracle does not guarantee that every wonder worker is of God (Matt. 24:24; 1 John 4:1-3; Rev. 13:13). Only if a miracle worker's character and his concepts of God, Christ, and salvation are sound is he to be regarded truly of God. We need to be alert to counterfeit miracles (2 Thess. 3:9).

B. Biblical Background to the Doctrine

(In the interests of space, the following 107 passages are summarized, not quoted)