

Hebrews 9:24-28      The Great Miracle  
November 7, 2021

In many ways the bible presents the grand miracle of life, given by God, and confirmed in Christ for all who believe. Now, a miracle is a powerful thing, often translating a word that actually sounds like the English word, “dynamite,” from which it is derived. It sounds a little destructive because we blow things up with dynamite, but just means that one is “able to do something,” to have power. It also means having the power to build something. A miracle is a mighty deed.

There is no mightier a deed than to make life happen. The Bible has many ways of expressing it, some expressions have been turned into doctrines. The doctrines confront us with the miracle:

- 1 - The doctrine of Creation, not just the miracle of life coming from inanimate existence, but the material of life coming from nothing at all
- 2 - The doctrine of the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation and the Trinity, the miracle of the divine becoming human
- 3 - The doctrine of the Atonement and the Forgiveness of Sin, the miracle of reconciliation
- 4 - The doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead, the miracle of life coming forth from death
- 5 - The doctrine of the End of the Age, the miracle of the consummation of all things

These doctrines are not meant to be exercises in intellectual gymnastics or riddle solving. They are expressions of the miracle.

The Bible also speaks the miracle in the stories it tells, especially the stories found in the gospels:

- 1 - The Cleansing of the Leper
- 2 - The Healing of the Man Born Blind
- 3 - The Healing of the Paralytic who was lowered through the roof by his friends
- 4 - The Feeding of the Multitude
- 5 - The Calming of the Storm
- 6 - The Raising of Lazarus; any of the others.

The traditions of Israel have been interpreted in light of the Great Miracle. The text from Hebrews read today in our presence, is such an interpretation, presenting the miracle, expressing the traditions of Israel in the same way the doctrines and the gospel stories do.

The old agrarian religious tradition of giving sacrifices and grain offerings has been turned from a regular seasonal activity into a once-and-for-all-time event; and not one the people have done to appease God’s anger, but one *God* has done to assure the triumph of life and mercy and love.

Listening to this reading, however, it is understandable that for some, it is not meaningful, or is hard to buy because people don’t ordinarily speak the way the bible does. Many will say they have never experienced the miracle in the bible’s various expressions.

I realize that I am at church, that I speak in a room full of believers who are more likely to accept these expressions as true without thinking rather than over-

thinking them and failing to get them. But some of you at some point may have had a little trouble accepting the miracle (as I have called it). Perhaps recalling those troubles could be a helpful exercise and a way of spiritual renewal.

Or perhaps, even though this is a room full of believers, there could be some who are presently experiencing secret doubts that would probably not be expressed here. And that is okay, sometimes it is our secret doubts that compel us to re-examine, re-search, and once again get in touch with the faith that runs deep beneath the surface of our lives.

Listen to the way this reading sounds:

“For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that is only a copy of true one . . . Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again . . . so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people, and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”

Though these are familiar religious images for us who've been regular in worship and in reading the Bible, they may not be as familiar outside the life of faith. We live in a so-called scientific age and these are not a scientific set of expressions.

Perhaps we might look at these doctrines and stories, as stops on life's journey where people are confronted with the great miracle. One may not be able to apprehend it in a doctrine or the stories, but find it in

others, or relate it so some experience, such as the birth of a child or the beauty of a sunset or the flowering of a romance.

One might have a hard time buying the calming of a storm or miraculous feeding, but even the scientists claim there was a time before any living thing existed, and then, without explanation, the first single-celled organism appeared and began to divide, and after all this time . . . the majesty of earth teaming with life.

Explaining life solely in scientific terms is a bit like trying to explain a car in terms of the workings of the internal combustion engine or a transmission. By comparison the doctrines and stories of our faith are like explaining a car in terms of the journey one can take; the Pacific Coast Highway, Gettysburg, Yellowstone National Park. The two are not so much in conflict as they are simply in different places of meaning.

I bring this up just to say that even the scientists can't escape the great miracle. My suggestion is that one ought not try, but find the place where it captures your imagination and sweeps you up in the journey. Once that has happened, life will never be boring again, no hardship or trial will triumph over the spirit of life in each of us, no moral demand like humility, gratitude, respect, sacrifice and service, or honesty will ever be burdensome. Sooner or later we become able to understand meaning of those final words; “And he will return, . . . to bring salvation to those who wait.” And that is a great miracle. Amen.

[Back](#)

[Home](#)