

What is the Evidence for Miracles?

OK, first explain what you mean by a miracle.

A miracle is a divine intervention into, or interruption of the regular course of the world that produces a purposeful but unusual event that would not have occurred otherwise.

How can you believe in miracles? Haven't scientists and philosophers like David Hume shown that miracles are impossible?

David Hume advanced a famous argument against miracles. It goes like this:

- 1) A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature
- 2) Firm and unalterable experience has established these laws.
- 3) A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence.
- 4) Therefore, a uniform experience amounts to a proof; there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact against the existence of any miracles.

The problem is Hume is begging the question when he defines miracles as impossible.

He presumes to know all experience is uniformly against miracles BEFORE he looks at the evidence. How can he know that all possible past and future experience will support his naturalism? The problem with Hume's maxim 'a wise man always proportions his belief to the evidence' is that Hume assumes any rare event can never have any validity, because it is not a common event. Hume isn't really 'weighing' the evidence, he just adds up the evidence and even if evidence exists for something, he automatically dismisses it, if it is not the norm. So, if there is evidence that a guy arose from the dead, Hume would argue that since the overwhelming evidence is people don't come back from the dead, we must assume that no one does. But that would be like saying that since most people don't win the lottery that no one does. Or that since the odds of being dealt a perfect bridge hand (which has happened) are unlikely, then it will never ever happen (the odds are 635,013,559,600 to 1). But the problem is, the evidence says people do win the lottery and have gotten a perfect bridge hand. General experience is just general experience, but it cannot speak for all the evidence and cannot dismiss out of hand evidence that doesn't fit the norm.

By **begging the question as Hume does** with miracles, he hinders the search for truth rather than helping it because he LEGISLATES the outcomes and meanings that can be found rather than LOOKING AT THE EVIDENCE. A wise man does not proportion their belief to mere probabilities, but to the facts. And science and history should be a search for facts, not confirming one's bias - which unfortunately Hume's logic does.

How to handle the argument: Just because miracles are rare doesn't mean they don't happen. Rare things happen. Just being rare doesn't mean that it didn't happen.

Other religions have miracles too. So that means they cancel each other out. How do you explain miracles in other religions?

Do other religions claim miracles? Yep, they do. Miracles generally don't prove that a specific religion is the right one though (I'll get to a big exception in a moment). Unless you know whose prayer God answered, and why God answered that prayer, you can't really determine who to give credit for the miracle. They just show that a miracle happened, and **if a miracle happened, that is evidence for God.**

The Bible talks about supernatural events occurring from people of other faiths. When Moses goes to Pharaoh and says to let his people go, he puts his staff down and it turns to a snake. And then the Egyptian's magicians do the same thing (Exodus 7:10-12). They even copy a few of the plagues God sends also (Exodus 7:20-22, Exodus 8:6-7). **However, when the plague of gnats hit, the Egyptian magicians can't replicate the feat and cry out "this is the finger of God." (See Exodus 8:18-19).**

But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. Since the gnats were on people and animals everywhere, the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." After that plague, the magicians can't replicate God's plagues. Now, were the magicians just doing sleight of hand or was it by supernatural abilities? Probably sleight of hand, but the text doesn't tell us the magicians' secrets, so we don't know. But we do know that there reached a point, where they couldn't match the miracles, God performed.

There are other examples in the Bible where supernatural events occur through non-Jewish or non-Christian people such as the witch of Endor, or instances of demon possessed

persons with super strength. Now those have demonic associations with them. But there is nothing that prohibits God from performing miracles for people of other faiths.

Miracles usually don't prove a religion – because you don't know whose prayer was answered or if God just intervened in nature on His own. One dramatic exception is the resurrection of Jesus Christ – he predicted 15 times before his death that he would die for our sins and then rise again. Predicting that miracle does have religious implications.

How to handle the argument: If a miracle happens in another religion its still a miracle – and that means there is a God. Generally, miracles don't PROVE one religion right or wrong – we just don't know why God did a miracle. Jesus predicted his resurrection at least 15 times before he died and rose again – in that case the miracle of the resurrection proves Jesus' claims of being God's son sent to save us.

So, if miracles can happen in other religions, what makes Jesus' miracles so special?

Do I think there is a difference in the miracles of Jesus than other people? Yes. Here's why:

1) Jesus claimed to be divine, and at least 15 times, in the gospels, predicted how he would die and that he would rise from the dead 3 days later. His resurrection therefore gives credibility to his claim of divinity. His other miracles over the forces of nature such as stopping storms and walking on water, along with the numerous other persons he healed also reinforces his claim of divinity. You don't really see that claim within other religions.

Buddha is alleged to have done miracles many hundreds of years after his life, but he doesn't claim to be divine. Hindu monks claimed to have levitated, but they don't claim to be divinity.

2) Jesus' miracles have very early attestation. For example, the earliest witness of the resurrection that we have today is an early Christian creed in 1 Cor. 15 that historians, even atheistic ones, date to within a few years of the resurrection (**James J.D Dunn puts just months after the resurrection**). Knowing that this had to have circulated orally before that, you have an incredibly early record of the miracle that not only tells you that Jesus was crucified, buried, and rose the third day, it specifically names eyewitnesses of the resurrection. This dramatically differs from miracle claims of other religions. For example, **the earliest records of Buddha's miracles happen 200 - 300 years after the fact.**

Miracles of ancient people such as **Apollonius, who is said to have done miracles, don't have any records for them for 300 years after the fact.** Claims of Hindu monks levitating often come half a century or more after the fact.

3) **Jesus miracles have non-Christian and enemy attestation.** Josephus, the Jewish and Babylonian Talmud, Phlegon, and Celsus all suggest Jesus performed miracles. That would be an odd thing to do to claim that an enemy that you are trying to discredit had miraculous powers. For this reason, the consensus of historians, even atheistic ones who don't believe in miracles, is that both the disciples and the enemies of Jesus believed he performed miracles. I'm not claiming that atheistic historians say Jesus performed miracles, but that they recognize that it was generally accepted by friend and foe alike, in Jesus' day, that he performed miracles.

Phlegon

"Now Phlegon, in the thirteenth or fourteenth book, I think, of his Chronicles, not only **ascribed to Jesus a knowledge of future events . . . but also testified that the result corresponded to His predictions.**" (Origen Against Celsus, Book 2, Chapter 14)

"And with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place ... " (Origen Against Celsus, Book 2, Chapter 33)

Celsus

"[Jesus] hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and **having there acquired some miraculous powers**, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God." - This quote appears in Origen's work "Contra Celsum" (Against Celsus), specifically in Book 1, Chapter 28

Josephus

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man. **For he was a doer of startling deeds**, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and many of Greek origin. He was called the Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day." - The Testimonium Flavianum (Antiquities 18.3.3)

Jewish Talmud

"Jesus **practiced magic** and led Israel astray" (b. Sanhedrin 43a; cf. t. Shabbat 11.15; b. Shabbat 104b)

Tosefta Hullin

"It happened that Ben Dama, the son of Rabbi Ishmael's sister, was bitten by a snake. Jacob of Kefar Sama came to heal him in the name of Yeshua ben Pantera, but Rabbi Ishmael did not allow him. They said to him: 'Rabbi Ishmael, permit him, that he may live!' But he replied: 'It is better that he should die rather than that he should be healed in the name of Yeshua ben Pantera - Tosefta Hullin 2:22 -23

*Yeshua ben Pantera – was considered a derogatory term for Jesus.

The Toledot Yeshu

They therefore, brought to him a lame man, who had never walked. Yeshu spoke over the man the letters of the Ineffable Name, **and the leper was healed**. Thereupon, they worshipped him as the Messiah, Son of the Highest... Yeshu spoke up: "Madam, I am the Messiah and I revive the dead." **A dead body was brought in; he pronounced the letters of the Ineffable Name and the corpse came to life.**

4) **Jesus miracles have specificity.** When you read about miracles of Buddha, or Hindu miracles, or of Mohammad splitting the moon, the details are vague. You don't usually find eyewitness names mentioned, and you certainly don't find enemy names mentioned. For the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus you find an incredible list of witnesses identified: Malchus whose ear Peter severed and Jesus restored, Pilate – whom Origen referenced Pilate's certificate of death as evidence, Herod, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus – both members of Jewish Sanhedrin, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, Cleopas, James the brother of Jesus, Mattias, Simon the Cyrene, and his children Rufus and Alexander, plus all the apostles.

You don't find such a cross section of witnesses in other miracle claims of other religious leaders of the past - some witnesses are friendly, some not, some oppressed such as Simon the Cyrene, some political such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Plus mentioning so many women by name, is considered strong evidence of authenticity because the culture of the time did not value the testimony of women. It would have been embarrassing to mention that the first witnesses of the resurrection were women. This is a tremendous number of eyewitnesses listed. And this is just the evidence for the resurrection!!! Naming so many witnesses means that details of these events could be confirmed by the people of that time, since the stories were first circulated orally, and most were recorded in the gospels within 40 years.

The same holds true for Jesus other miracles, where you see the places, personal stories, and names of people mentioned - such as Lazarus in Bethany, whose sisters were Mary and Martha. Jairus daughter's miracle, or Bartimaeus are additional examples. References to miracles in the past are generally very vague without many

details within other religions.

Here is a list of Jesus miracles:

Miracles of Jesus in Chronological Order

Early Ministry (Galilee)

- Turning water into wine at Cana — John 2:1-11
- Healing the royal official's son — John 4:46-54
- First miraculous catch of fish — Luke 5:1-11
- Healing a man with an unclean spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum — Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37
- Healing Peter's mother-in-law — Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39
- Healing many at evening (Capernaum) — Matthew 8:16-17; Mark 1:32-34; Luke 4:40-41
- Cleansing a leper — Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16
- Healing a paralytic lowered through the roof — Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26
- Healing a man with a withered hand — Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11

Continued Galilean Ministry

- Healing the centurion's servant — Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
- Raising the widow of Nain's son — Luke 7:11-17
- Calming the storm — Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25
- Healing the Gerasene (Gadarene) demoniac(s) — Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39
- Healing the woman with a hemorrhage — Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48
- Raising Jairus's daughter — Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:21-24, 35-43; Luke 8:40-42, 49-56
- Healing two blind men — Matthew 9:27-31
- Healing a mute demoniac — Matthew 9:32-34

Third Galilean Circuit

- Feeding the 5,000 — Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14
- Walking on water — Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21
- Healing the Syrophenician (Canaanite) woman's daughter — Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30
- Healing a deaf and mute man — Mark 7:31-37
- Feeding the 4,000 — Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10

- Healing a blind man at Bethsaida — Mark 8:22-26
- Healing a boy with an unclean spirit (after the Transfiguration) — Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43
- The coin in the fish's mouth (temple tax) — Matthew 17:24-27

Judean/Later Ministry

- Healing a man born blind (Siloam) — John 9:1-41
- Healing a woman crippled for 18 years — Luke 13:10-17
- Healing a man with dropsy — Luke 14:1-6
- Cleansing ten lepers — Luke 17:11-19
- Raising Lazarus — John 11:1-44
- Final Journey to Jerusalem / Passion Week

How to handle the argument: Jesus miracles are very different than other miracle accounts in ancient history outside of the bible:

- 1) Jesus claimed divinity – others didn't
- 2) Jesus miracles have very early attestation – others don't
- 3) Even Jesus' enemies said he did miracles – no one said he didn't
- 4) Jesus miracles differ in that there is a lot of detail – names, places, circumstances, etc.

How come there aren't any examples of God making an amputated limb grow back?

There are:

The Miracle of Calanda, attributed to Miguel Juan Pellicer, is one of the most extraordinary miracles recognized by the Catholic Church. It involves the miraculous restoration of a leg that had been amputated over two years prior. This event occurred in 1640 in the small town of Calanda, Spain, and was rigorously investigated, leading to official recognition by the Church.

Background: Miguel Juan Pellicer

Miguel Juan Pellicer was born in Calanda, Aragon, Spain, in 1617. In **1637**, while working as a farmhand in Castellón, he suffered a severe injury when a cart carrying heavy grain crushed his right leg below the knee. The injury was devastating, and after several unsuccessful treatments, he traveled to the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace in Zaragoza.

After months of gangrene and extreme pain, the leg was deemed beyond saving. The hospital doctors, including the main surgeon Juan de Estanga, amputated his leg just below the knee. The severed limb was then buried in the hospital's cemetery, as was customary.

Pellicer's Life After the Amputation

After the amputation, Pellicer remained in Zaragoza and begged for alms near the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar. Eventually, unable to work, he returned to his parents' home in Calanda in March 1640. He obtained a begging license, which required a physical exam to ensure he had only one leg. He continued living there with his family, sometimes using a wooden peg leg and crutches to move around.

The Miracle: Restoration of the Leg

On the night of March 29, 1640, Miguel went to sleep in his parents' house, resting in a small bed in a room shared with his parents. His parents and a soldier lodging with them, Juan Lorenzo Garcés, were present that night. According to testimonies:

Miguel went to bed as usual, placing his wooden leg nearby, he prayed for his leg to be healed, and dreamed of it being healed.

Around 10 PM, his mother entered the room and noticed a strange scent, like flowers or perfume. When she checked on Miguel, she was shocked to see two legs under the blanket. She woke him up, and he was equally astonished to find that his right leg had been miraculously restored. The entire family, as well as the soldier Juan Lorenzo Garcés, witnessed the event. When word spread, people from the village, including the local parish priest, Father Gaspar de Gracia, rushed to see Miguel's leg. The news quickly reached the Archbishop of Zaragoza, who ordered an official investigation.

Official Investigation and Witness Testimonies

In April 1640, Church authorities launched a canonical inquiry in Zaragoza. The case was thoroughly examined, with 24 witnesses testifying under oath, though over 100 volunteered to be official witnesses of the miracle.

Key testimonies included:

1. **Dr. Juan de Estanga** – The surgeon who amputated Miguel's leg in Zaragoza **personally confirmed that he had removed the limb** and that there was no possibility of natural regrowth.

2. **Hospital staff in Zaragoza** – Multiple hospital employees testified that they had attended the amputation and confirmed that Miguel had lived as an amputee for over two years.

3. **Juan Lorenzo Garcés** – The soldier staying at Miguel's home swore that he had seen **Miguel legless before sleeping** and witnessed the miraculously restored limb in the morning.

4. **Father Gaspar de Gracia** – The local priest attested that Miguel had been missing a leg and that it had inexplicably returned overnight.

5. **Villagers of Calanda** – Many residents had seen Miguel begging with only one leg for years and were shocked to see him with both legs intact.

Following the investigation, on April 27, 1641, the Archbishop of Zaragoza, Pedro Apaolaza Ramírez, issued an official decree recognizing the Miracle of Calanda as an authentic divine intervention (miracle)

Legacy of the Miracle

The Miracle of Calanda remains one of the best-documented miracles in history, with over 1,000 pages of testimony and evidence, with eyewitness accounts, sworn testimonies, and physical evidence. Unlike other miracles that may involve visions or healings, this case involved the complete restoration of an amputated limb, something deemed impossible by medical science.

Conclusion

The Miracle of Calanda stands as one of the most extraordinary and well-documented miracles in Catholic history. It was confirmed by multiple **independent witnesses**, including medical professionals, clergy, and villagers, making it one of the strongest cases for divine intervention ever recorded.

Are there any examples of modern miracles that have strong medical documentation?

Vittorio Micheli

In 1962, Italian soldier Vittorio Micheli was diagnosed with osteosarcoma (bone cancer) that had destroyed part of his pelvis, to the point X-rays showed the hip joint essentially gone. Doctors considered his case terminal and inoperable. During a pilgrimage to Lourdes

in 1963, he reported a sudden, dramatic pain relief while bathing in the shrine's water; within weeks, X-rays showed his pelvic bone structure regenerating. The case was studied for over a decade before the Lourdes Medical Bureau and the International Medical Committee formally declared the cure medically inexplicable. Micheli lived for decades afterward — CBS's 60 Minutes located and interviewed him as recently as 2022, confirming the cure had remained permanent for nearly 60 years, which is itself significant, since spontaneous, lasting remission from advanced bone cancer without treatment is exceptionally rare in the medical literature even setting aside any religious framing.

Delizia Cirolli

In 1976, ten-year-old Sicilian girl Delizia Cirolli was diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma, a bone cancer, in her right knee; doctors recommended amputation, which her family declined, choosing a pilgrimage to Lourdes instead. Her tumor and symptoms resolved immediately afterward. Because she hadn't undergone the standard treatment doctors had recommended, her case offered an unusually clean before/after medical record for investigators to examine — the diagnostic imaging and biopsy records from before the trip could be directly compared against her fully recovered condition afterward, without any confounding medical intervention to account for. The Lourdes Medical Bureau's review, drawing on this documentation, was part of what led to her cure's later official recognition.

Barbara Cummiskey Snyder

Barbara Snyder, formerly known as Barbara Cummiskey, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) as a teenager. Over the years, her condition deteriorated severely, leading to numerous hospitalizations and surgeries. By her early thirties, she was confined to hospice care, **nearly completely blind**, unable to breathe without assistance due to a paralyzed diaphragm, and reliant on a feeding tube. Her muscles had atrophied, and her limbs were severely contracted. **Prior to the miracle, she had not been able to walk for 7 years. She was sent home and expected to die within the week.** (See [christianitytoday.com](https://www.christianitytoday.com/1983/12/one-who-took-up-herbed-and-walked/) (<https://www.christianitytoday.com/1983/12/one-who-took-up-herbed-and-walked/>)

She asked for prayer and a local radio station asked people to pray for her. On June 7, 1981, as friends read letters from those praying for her, **Barbara reportedly heard a distinct male voice saying, "Get up, My child, and walk."** In an astonishing turn, she removed her breathing tube and stood up, her vision restored, and her previously atrophied muscles functioning normally. This sudden and complete recovery left her doctors, including those from the Mayo Clinic who had diagnosed her, astounded. Her Mayo Clinic trained doctors all called it a miracle, as there was no naturalistic explanation. (See

godreports.com (<https://www.godreports.com/2019/02/dyingm-s-patient-on-hospice-healed-by-jesus/>)

Gemma di Giorgi

Gemma di Giorgi, born on December 25, 1939, in Ribera, Sicily, was diagnosed as blind shortly after birth due to the absence of pupils in her eyes. Despite consulting several specialists, her condition was deemed incurable.

In 1947, at the age of seven, Gemma's grandmother decided to seek the intercession of Padre Pio, a priest renowned for his piety and reported miracles. (See padrepiodevotions.org)

During their journey to San Giovanni Rotondo to meet Padre Pio, Gemma began to perceive vague shapes and light. Upon arrival, they attended a service where Padre Pio was present. During the service, without prior knowledge of their presence, Padre Pio called Gemma by name, and made the sign of the cross over her eyes. **Following this blessing, Gemma's could see, allowing her to lead a normal life despite still lacking pupils**—a condition that, medically, should have rendered her blind. (see padrepiodevotions.org)

Many doctors have examined her and concluded that it should be physically impossible for her to see because she does not have any pupils. Yet, she sees. This extraordinary case has been documented and discussed extensively.

Delia Knox

Delia Knox, a gospel singer, **was paralyzed from the waist down** after a car accident involving a drunk driver on Christmas Day in 1987. Despite her condition, she continued her music ministry, though life was challenging as she navigated daily activities in a wheelchair.

Over the years, Delia attended numerous healing services without experiencing recovery, leading to feelings of discouragement. However, on August 27, 2010, during a revival meeting in Mobile, Alabama, led by Evangelist Nathan Morris, Delia experienced a significant change. As Morris prayed, she felt sensations in her legs for the first time in over two decades. With assistance, she stood up and gradually began to walk, marking the beginning of her healing journey.

In the weeks following, Delia's mobility improved, and she walked unaided, even wearing high heels. About 1 month after the miracle she returned to the church where her healing occurred and lead praise and worship from the stage, walking back and forth, and singing

the exact same song that played while she was taking her first steps after being prayed for. Her husband, Bishop Levy Knox, remarked that this event profoundly changed their lives.

For more detailed accounts of Delia Knox's healing, you can refer to the following sources:

- https://secure.cbn.com/700club/features/amazing/rwr59_delia_knox.aspx?mobile=false&q=700club/features/amazing/Rwr59_delia_knox.aspx
- <https://mannaxpress.com/paralytic-woman-healed-after-22-years-in-a-wheelchair/>
- <https://www.changed-lives.org.uk/stories.php?id=35>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ME3IWqGF8YE>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcVDpXtEkaw>

Duane Miller

He lost his voice for about three years due to nerve damage caused by a severe flu virus, which affected the myelin sheath of his vocal folds and left the nerve tissue beyond repair. Despite seeing over 200 doctors and 63 specialists, his voice remained severely impaired, described as the worst case of laryngitis, and he was unable to preach normally.

The healing happened suddenly during a Sunday school class while he was teaching on the topic of healing (Psalm 103:1-5). An audio recording from that day captures the moment his voice gradually strengthens as he speaks, transitioning from the weak, raspy sound he had lived with to a full, clear voice. **Doctors confirmed after the event that there was no medical explanation for how the scar tissue and nerve damage had disappeared: “I can’t find any evidence that you ever had a voice problem,” said one physician.**

Nearly 200 people witnessed the miracle in person. The healing was emotionally significant and unexpectedly instantaneous.

Listen to the Miracle Happen:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgtuAeDQ8CA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1ASnL5fIAM>

Additionally, Duane Miller wrote a book entitled *Out of the Silence* recounting his experience in detail.

Additional Resources:

Craig Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (2 Volumes, 2011)

This is a comprehensive, meticulously researched defense of the biblical miracle accounts including historical, cultural, and contemporary miracle testimonies. Keener draws on

multidisciplinary evidence to argue that many miracle reports—even beyond the Bible—are credible divine acts.

Craig Keener, *Miracles Today*.

C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*.

The Case for Miracles: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for the Supernatural by Lee Strobel

Miracles: A Preliminary Study by N.T. Wright