



Miracles



Meaning of miracle

- An event that is contrary to nature?
- Gospel of John uses word semeion translated as "sign"
- Synoptic gospels use word dunamis translated as mighty word or deed of power
 - Sign has a negative connotation in synoptics



Attestation of Miracles

- See p. 206 in Tatum
- Which sources emphasize Jesus' miracles?
- Which source is not represented?



Historical Context of Miracle

- Old Testament accounts of healings, raising from dead, especially associated with Elijah & Elisha, e.g., 1 Kings 17
- Greco-Roman stories of healers, sorcerers, kings who did healings, etc.
- Jewish tales of Rabbis, like Hanina ben Dosa and Honi the Circle Drawer, Apollonius
- see pp. 309 & 437 in Five Gospels



Types of Miracles in Gospels

- Healings
- Exorcisms
- "Nature Miracles"



Comparison of Gospel Accounts of Jesus' Healing Miracles to Other Stories

- Jesus seemed to try to avoid self-glorification (note criterion of dissimilarity)
- Jesus' miracles presented as response to perceived human need rather than as "proofs" of Jesus' status
- Jesus' method is simple, direct touch rather than magical incantation and use of devices
- Jesus' miracles emphasize importance of trusting faith on part of those seeking healing



Jesus' View of His Miracles

- Mark 3:19-27
- Matt. 11:2-6
- Common perspective is that miracles are related to kingdom of God (God's imperial rule)



Historical Conclusions:

- Naturalism - either miracles did not occur or there is a natural explanation, e.g., cathartic reaction to hysterical condition, or feeding of 5000 is story about sharing (no multiplication of loaves mentioned)
- Supernaturalism - God created laws of nature and can suspend or alter them when they suit God's purpose
- Mythological - miracles are symbolic stories that have deeper meanings, e.g., healing means we should accept others who are outcast
- Bultmann's existential approach is similar
- Historical (Third Quest) -historically, Jesus was viewed as an exorcist and healer like others in his day, but we cannot determine exactly what happened from our modern scientific view. Nature miracles remain a problem.
- Another approach...



Differing World Views

- Ancient World View
 - God and nature are continuous
- Modern (Newtonian) World View
 - Transcendent God made nature as a closed system
 - God is outside the world
- Or...

GOD
WORLD

WORLD



Emerging World View

GOD
