

Christianity and Science: Are they mutually exclusive?

Physics: The study of what the physical universe is made of, and how it works.

The Scientific Method

1. Observation
2. Hypothesis
3. Test
4. Accept as Theory

Science never proves things as being true, it can only prove things false.

Views of how things work that have changed over the centuries

1. The heliocentric solar system
This one was contradictory to accepted church doctrine.
2. Why and how things burn
3. Law's that govern motion

Major points of Christianity

1. We are saved by grace alone
2. Jesus paid the price for our sins
3. The Bible is the Word of God
4. The Bible is inerrant

What are Miracles?

Jesus and the Blind Man: Mark 8:22-26

Two miracles are recorded in this narrative

1. Sight was restored
2. Sped up learning process

Why did Jesus Perform Miracles?: Mark 2:10 & John 2:11

Reveal Himself as God to help others believe

Did God ever use physical phenomena (natural things) to perform miracles?

Did God ever suspend natural laws to perform miracles? Joshua 10:12-14
The creator is larger and more powerful than the creation

Did God ever use angels to perform miracles? Acts 12:6

Conclusions:

We live in two worlds: a physical one and a spiritual.

Both of these were created by God.

Both of these are governed by God.

Faith can explain things that science cannot.

JORDAN STOPPED; JERICHO'S WALLS TUMBLE

Amos Nur in *New Scientist* (1991 July 6 pp. 39-42) attributed the stopping of the Jordan River (Joshua 3) and the falling of the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6) to earthquakes.

In 1927 an earthquake measuring 6.5 on the Richter scale had its epicentre under a plain 15 kilometres north of Jericho. Over thirty destructive quakes have hit the region since 117 BC. Josephus, for example, mentions the destruction of the town of Qumran (of Dead Sea scroll fame) in 31 BC with 10,000 dead.

Joshua chapter 3 records that the Jordan River stopped flowing and this enabled the Israelites to easily cross over into the Promised Land.

The 1927 quake caused a mud-slide which stopped the river. This also happened in 1906, 1834, 1546, 1534, 1267 and 1160.

Probably, therefore, a timely earthquake explains the "miracle" of the Jordan ceasing its flow for the Israelites. The Bible says the Israelites set up twelve stones to mark the location as a memorial. (Joshua 4) This could be future additional confirmation when archaeologists find them!

Nur suggests an earthquake leveled the Jericho of Joshua's time:

There is little doubt that the walls of Jericho have collapsed several times in its 10 000-year history. (p. 42)

However, Bible chronology puts the demise of the Jericho of Joshua's time to the mid 14th century BC. But in the 1950s the late British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon gave 1550 BC. The discrepancy was used by many critics as proof that the Biblical record is mythical.

Newer research indicates the error lies with Kenyon, not with the Bible. (Time, Score One for the Bible 1990 March 5 p. 55)

SUNDIAL SHADOW TURNS BACK

King Hezekiah of Judah was given a sign as proof that God would save Jerusalem from destruction by the Assyrians. The sign was:

I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps. So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined. (Isaiah 38:6-8)

Christian fundamentalists often claim God suspended the laws of physics and changed the motion and position of planet Earth.

Benjamin Scott F.R.A.S. gave a simpler explanation:

The going back of the shadow on the dial has repeatedly been noticed, even in the present [19th] century. It is dependent, not on astronomical, but on meteorological causes. The shadow is not invariably dependent upon the position of the sun, but upon the brightest point of light in the sky. If when the sun nears the western horizon a dark impenetrable cloud covers the orb, the shadow will be

cast by the bright silver lining of the cloud, which may be near the zenith, and the shadow will repeat nearly a quarter of the circle. In the present century an instance is recorded by the Canon of Metz Cathedral. In the case under consideration, the object was the satisfaction of Hezekiah that the promise made to him was from God. The prophet is accordingly directed to foretell, as a sign, a natural phenomenon which was about to occur.

(Quoted in *Bible Study Monthly* January/February 1995 which gave the author's name but not the reference)

LOAVES AND FISH

Jesus is said to have fed "five thousand men, besides women and children" with five loaves and two fish. (Matthew 14:13-21) On another occasion he fed 4,000 people with seven loaves. (Mark 8:1-9)

Most Fundamentalists see these accounts as implying a supernatural creation of matter in the form of extra food.

Other commentators see these reports as reports of Jesus' teachings on generosity and sharing being applied. Jesus, for example, taught:

Give to him who begs from you... Matthew 5:42

Give, and it will be given to you. Luke 6:38

It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35

Also Luke 19:8; Matthew 7:12

The two stories can therefore be interpreted as people sharing food they had brought with them and concealed on themselves.

Perhaps the disciples distributed the first loaves to individuals who already had ample food, thereby shaming them into sharing what they had. Children given food would show their joy more obviously than adults. The sharing and the joy would make further sharing contagious, spontaneous.

The miracle then, if this scenario is reasonable, is a "miracle" of sharing, a "miracle" of generosity.

CONCLUSION

Some "miracles" of the Bible can be explained as applications of psychology – such as the feeding of the five thousand.

Some other "miracles" can be explained as examples of precise timing. Control over nature in some of the "miracles" occurs, not in the sense of suspending the laws of nature but in the sense of knowing nature so well that the right actions by humans occur at just the right time to produce, or coincide with, desired results.

If any of these events are historically proven we'll need to ask, "Who knows nature so well as to arrange the precise integration of natural events with human actions to produce the desired consequences?"