

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Lecture 4

Credibility of Miracles

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 4, Credibility of Miracles.

In previous sessions, we've looked at some historical features of Luke and Acts.

These are important insofar as we're interested in historical information, which we should be at least somewhat looking at the book of Acts since it's a historical monograph. Keep in mind that when we're talking about historical information, there's a lot more that happened in history than what we can demonstrate historically and that texts themselves by historians are a form of evidence. So, the problem is that when we're looking for corroborating evidence, we don't always have it.

So as far as we can say in historical terms, Luke is a very good historian. As Christians, we may be inclined to say even, well, we are inclined to say even more than that. I mean, Acts is part of our canon.

We believe that God speaks to us through this as Christians. But what I was trying to do was to survey how we can approach this using historical methods available to us. But now I want to look at something characteristic of Luke's writing.

Luke is writing a two-volume work, and there actually was a genre of parallel works. Plutarch would write parallel biographies of say, Alexander and Caesar, a Greek conqueror and a Roman conqueror. The comparisons were not entirely well-deserved.

Caesar just had some good propaganda. But in any case, he often had parallel Greek and Roman biographies, and it was so popular that some people even wrote imitation works of his. In the Old Testament, you see Elijah, and then you see Elisha repeating many of Elijah's works.

You don't have two volumes for that. You also have Joshua repeating some of Moses' works, like the parting of the Jordan. It's not like the parting of the Yom Suph, the sea, but the parting of the Jordan nonetheless.

And sometimes there are literary parallels between them. But Greeks developed this to a great extent, and Luke is able to make use of that kind of technique. It's not that he leaves out anything that there's no parallel for, but Luke likes to emphasize parallels where he's got material that fits that.

So, it helps us to read Luke and Acts together. Now, obviously, on the level of authorship, there's very little question. Luke wrote both volumes.

But in terms of parallel lives, there are a lot of similarities between Luke's volume and the book of Acts. Obviously, the setting is quite different. Rural Galilee for much of the gospel and urban centers in the Eastern Mediterranean world for much of the second volume, starting with Jerusalem.

But it's two-volume work. And the examples of parallel lives that we have, Jesus is anointed, and that language is used especially for Jesus. Isaiah 61 and Luke 4, and then it's applied to Jesus again in his speech in Acts 10:38. But also, the church is empowered by the Spirit.

Joel 2 is quoted in Acts 2. You've got, toward the beginning of their public ministries, a programmatic statement from the Old Testament for Jesus, Isaiah 61, and for the church, Joel 2. You have Jesus' signs. Many of those are repeated with Peter's and Paul's signs, the healing of a paralyzed person, for example. You have three trials of Jesus.

This is in Luke's gospel and only in Luke's gospel. Three trials of Jesus, two before a governor, and one before a Herod. In that case, it's Herod Antipas.

Three trials of Paul toward the end of Acts. There are actually other trials on the way through, but three trials toward the end, two before governors, and one before a Herod. In this case, Herod Agrippa II.

Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing. Luke chapter 24. And of the four gospels, it's only in Luke.

Well, how does the first martyr in Acts respond? Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. Father, Jesus says, enter your hands. I commit my spirit.

Stephen, following the example of his Lord in Acts chapter seven, Lord, receive my spirit. So, you have these parallels. Now, some people will look at the parallels and say, okay, that must just be made up.

However, things like, enter your hands, I commit my spirit. Luke doesn't make a deal of this. Luke may not have even known this, but we have evidence that at that time of day, that was one of the prayers that Jewish people regularly prayed from a psalm that says, I commit myself to you.

So, that language would fit for Jesus. It fits Jesus' own historical context. And would a martyr want to follow the example of Jesus? Well, usually when we're persecuted, we try to follow Jesus' example today.

So, why not? But in any case, the fact that Luke emphasizes the connection is the point that I want to bring out. Length. Often writers created symmetry, books of roughly equal length, when you have multiple volumes.

In fact, they were often limited to certain lengths. That's why Josephus, when he gets to the end of one of the volumes in one of his works, he says, oops, I ran out of space. Talk to you again in the next volume.

You had to be careful. You only had so much space in the volume. Luke and Acts, if you count up the number of words in them and count up the number of words in Matthew's gospel, they're each roughly of the same length as each of the others.

Mark is roughly half that length. John is roughly two-thirds that length. We're dealing probably with standardized lengths of scrolls and those could be very expensive.

Again, Romans, it's just 16 chapters about the length of Mark. Romans, it's been estimated by some recent scholars that Romans would be something like \$2,000 in current US currency in terms of the price of the papyrus and the scribe and so on. Although the scribe there, Tertius, since Romans 16:22, was a volunteer most likely, but he's a believer for sure.

But in the case of the gospels, these are major literary undertakings for people who weren't part of the elite. So, they're probably using scrolls of standardized length. And Matthew, Luke, and Acts were each close to the maximum length for normal scrolls, between 32 and 35 feet long.

Acts was probably about 32 feet long. It was on the shorter end of that continuum. Some people think that the book of Acts is unfinished in certain places.

I'm not sure that that's the case, but that's what some have argued. It certainly tempted scribes in the Western text to expand the text of Acts. Although some people think Luke added that later, but I think probably it was later tradition.

But in any case, publication of the book of Acts. Well, normally ancient works were published, so to speak, after they were written. They might have two original copies.

There would be public readings at dinner parties. Well, the church also had their group dinner. The Lord's Supper was kind of a banquet in the early house churches.

So, some banquets, would have entertainment. And the entertainment could be dancing, be music. Usually, it was music, but it also could often be readings.

In this case, the early church, wouldn't be having entertainment, but they would be having readings. Readings from the scriptures that they had, which was the Old Testament, but also readings, as Justin Martyr says, from the memoirs of the apostles, which would include, well, he especially met the gospels apparently. Because of the feedback that writers would get during these readings, they often were able to revise them.

They sometimes would release them in various editions. And as people heard about these, the people that really liked them could have other copies made. Of course, you didn't have ways to mass produce them except for somebody who was, you know, you might have one person reading it in a room full of scribes, writing it down.

That was the closest they had to mass production. Usually, things were just copied from one scroll to another. Well, one of the possible purposes for Acts is legal, not necessarily for Paul's trial per se, but to record consistent legal precedents in favor of early Christians.

Every Roman court that's reported in the book of Acts, as well as in the Gospel of Luke, declares them not guilty. Some think that Acts was a court brief for Paul. That's probably exaggerated, but it was written probably for the same reason as Josephus' precedents for Judaism, to argue that Christianity should be legal and not be persecuted.

Legal ammunition for when you're in the circumstance like Luke 21:15, you're brought before governors and rulers for my name's sake. You don't have to think beforehand about what you'll say, but this will give you equipment in advance on which you can draw. And this paved the way for later Christian lawyers and philosophers, people like Tertullian and Justin, who were arguing against Christians having to be persecuted.

This leads us to talk about the apologetic purpose. It was done on different fronts. Roman law courts, Greek philosophers, rural Asian farmers, and Jewish objections.

The Jewish objections are actually relevant to the Roman law courts too, because it was important to show that the people who were bringing them before these Roman law courts were not the ones being consistent with their ancient tradition. It was actually Jesus' followers who were being consistent with the ancient tradition. That was an in-house Jewish debate.

One of the themes in the book of Acts is that nothing can stop it. The word hinder and unhindered appears just a few times in the book of Acts. What can hinder me

from being baptized? The African court official says in Acts chapter 8, or in Acts chapter 10, who can forbid that they receive baptism? But in Acts chapter 28, verse 31, it ends on this note that Paul continued to share the gospel openly and unhindered.

As long as you're just dealing with a normal Roman system and not after Nero had gone mad and everybody viewed him as being just totally abusive and tyrannical, they were able to do things openly and unhindered. So, the relationship to Judaism was also very important. Ancient religions were respected for their age and believers in Jesus were able to say, the Old Testament is our book and we are an authentic voice of Judaism too.

Or more precisely, they would say, we are the authentic voice of the law and the prophets. So, Luke naturally emphasizes the fulfillment of Old Testament motifs. He does it a bit differently than Matthew does, but both of them are emphasizing the fulfillment of God's promises.

And of course, Luke is also writing because he cares about history. Otherwise, he wouldn't choose this genre in which to write. The message of Luke Acts.

I'm going to mention just a few of the themes, not all of them, but just to some samples. Prayer was a huge issue in Luke-Acts. Luke 1, Luke 3, Luke 5, Luke 6, Luke 9, and so on.

Signs and wonders are a major feature for getting attention for the gospel. We can talk about that later. The spirit is mentioned over 70 times in Luke-Acts.

Obviously, Luke has a heavy emphasis on the spirit and also the spirit performing signs and wonders and the spirit moving people in prayer and so forth. Evangelism or witness appears nearly 30 times. Well, the term witness appears nearly 30 times.

Evangelism is more widespread than that. The marginalized. Of course, that's a major emphasis in Luke's gospel, emphasis on the poor, and so on.

You have that some in the book of Acts, but the main marginalized group that's being emphasized in the book of Acts is the Gentiles. So, in Luke's gospel, Jesus spends time with sinners who are morally marginalized and the Pharisees mock this. The Pharisees complain about this.

You come to the spirit that moves Peter in responding to the needs of Gentiles for the gospel. And in Acts chapter 11, around verse three, he's called on the carpet by his fellow believers. The problem with the Pharisees wasn't that they were Jewish.

The problem with the Pharisees wasn't even that they were Pharisees. The problem with the Pharisees was that sometimes as religious people, we get our ideas of the way things should be done and God doesn't always work within our boxes. So, in Acts, you have the people of the Jerusalem church, Jewish believers in Jesus who disapprove of what Peter does until he's able to convince them, well, look, God made me do this.

The spirit was poured out on these people. God wanted to reach these people. You have an emphasis on the marginalized.

You also have a heavy emphasis on cross-cultural communication. Mission is the central emphasis, I would say, of the book of Acts. And again, that's something that we'll talk about more soon.

Looking in particular, just some of the samples of the issue of prayer. Luke chapter one, verse 10, Zechariah is praying in the temple. When the spirit comes on Jesus in Luke 3:21, Luke is the only one to mention that at his baptism, Jesus was praying.

And we have this a number of other times. His disciples ask him, Luke 11, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples. They wait till he's finished.

They're very respectful about it. Luke chapter 18, verse one, people always ought to pray and not to faint. Luke 19:46, the house of prayer.

Luke 21:36, watch and pray. Luke 22, he calls the disciples to watch and pray. Acts 1:14, they're gathered together in prayer, waiting for the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:42, again, the disciples, all the believers are praying together. And Acts 3:1, it's during the hour of prayer, giving you a specific example of how they were going to pray together. And then God does a miracle.

Acts 6, they pray before they appoint successors. Acts 8, also in verses 22 and 24, they pray before the spirit is poured out. Acts 9:11, Saul, Paul is praying before he receives the spirit and the healing of his sight.

Acts 10, Acts 11, Acts 12, and so forth. Just a lot on prayer. It's a big theme in the book of Acts.

There's also a major focus on evangelizing the world. And this, I think, is the major emphasis in Acts. Spirit-empowered evangelism across cultural boundaries, Acts 1:8. Now I'm moving on to the question of miracles.

It's a big issue. If speeches take up one-quarter of the book of Acts, miracle stories and exorcism stories take up about one-fifth of the book of Acts. That's why I did some special research on this.

My two-volume book on miracles actually was meant to be just part of my Acts commentary. It was originally going to be a footnote in my Acts commentary, but after the chapter got to be about 200 pages, we realized it needed to be a separate book. And then when the book came out, by then it was 1,100 pages, and it would have been even more if I kept writing it instead of it being published because there's just so much you can say and so much material you can work with.

But in any case, because of that interest in the book of Acts, I started researching on miracles, including Jesus' miracles. Well, how reliable are the sources? Well, we have good reason to believe that because we're dealing with ancient biographies in the case of the Gospels or an ancient historical monograph in the case of Acts. The sources are reliable and we're dealing with sources that we have reason to believe are careful with the sources.

The way Luke edits the miracles, he takes over from Mark, for example. Luke isn't adding a whole lot of new information. He may say everybody glorified the Lord, even if Mark didn't say it.

But I mean, if people see a miracle, what are they going to do? Some people became hostile, but most people are going to give thanks to God if they believe in God. So, looking at Jesus' miracles, miracle stories constitute about one-third of Mark's Gospel and about 20% of the book of Acts. But in the West, we have a circular problem.

One of the reasons that Western scholars questioned the Gospels and Acts to begin with is that they include miracle reports. Well, what's wrong with miracle reports? Earlier Western scholars said that eyewitnesses never claim dramatic miracles such as those in the Gospels. Were they correct? Well, in many parts of the world people would say, that's absurd.

That's not correct. This is a Western problem. So, if you were from a part of the world where you say that's absurd, at least what I'll be giving you is if you run into some people who have been trained in the West to think the way Westerners think, you will have some good responses for them.

And if you're in the West, well, you may profit from this in particular. But David Friedrich Strauss in the 1800s argued that what we have in the Gospels, we have a lot of myth and legend because these things would arise over the course of multiple generations. No eyewitnesses would actually claim these kinds of miracles.

These stories had to grow up from nothing or just something very small. What most people don't know about Strauss is that Strauss had a friend by the name of Edward Morica. Morica had a diagnosed spinal problem on account of which he was unable to walk.

But after Morica had spent some time with Johann Christoph Blumhardt, a German Lutheran pastor known for prayer for the sick and for exorcism, Strauss' friend Morica was cured. The next letter Strauss gets from him, he's hiking in the mountains. And Strauss writes a letter to another mutual friend and says, oh, we've lost Morica. Morica has gone over to superstition now. Now, think of this. Strauss says that miracles must arise only from legendary accretions or many of the kinds of miracles we have in the Gospels would just be myth or legendary accretions. And yet, one of Strauss' own friend was healed. Strauss attributed it to purely psychosomatic causes despite the medical diagnosis. But Strauss did not say, well, this is merely a legend that took generations to evolve.

Are there credible eyewitness reports today? Let's look first at some of the medical sources. Dr. Rex Gardner wrote a book called Healing Miracles. And he's a physician himself.

He wrote about some of this also for the British Medical Journal. But one of his accounts is of a nine-year-old girl. She was deaf from auditory nerve damage.

As long as she didn't have her hearing aids, she couldn't hear anything but prayed for healing. She was instantly healed. The audiologist who had tested her just the day before she was healed said, that's impossible.

This is auditory nerve damage. It doesn't just go away. But she was instantly healed.

The audiologist said I have no explanation for this. This is just incredible because the next day tests showed that her hearing was normal. Eyewitnesses, some of whom I know, report the healing of deaf non-Christians in Jesus' name in Mozambique.

People will go into villages where there's no church and they'll preach about Jesus. They'll show the Jesus film. And sometimes they call people forward for prayer and they're healed.

And sometimes they're just preaching about Jesus. And before they are finished with their preaching, some people start getting healed. And I've talked with eyewitnesses of this.

It's been so dramatic, especially with healings of deafness, that one entire region that was classified as not Christian is now classified as predominantly Christian. It was

documented with some medical tests. The information was published in the Southern Medical Journal in the United States in September of 2010.

Naturally, some critics who were not pleased with this approach responded, especially on the internet, responded, well, that the testing conditions are not ideal in rural Mozambique. Now it may be different by the time that you're watching this, but certainly, at least at the time that these tests were undertaken, it's true. Testing conditions were not ideal in rural Mozambique.

But one of the authors of the study, a professor at Indiana University, published a book, *Testing Prayer*, published by Harvard University Press in 2012. She doesn't say, okay, these were miracles wrought by God, but she gives the evidence, some more of the evidence behind the study. And it's, well, I think it's quite convincing.

I think that if you don't start with an a priori bias that miracles can't happen, if you're open to the possibility that even that they might happen, which is kind of a neutral starting point, right? If you start even with that possibility, you would be convinced that people went from being deaf to hearing, from blind to seeing, when they were prayed for, because the testing was done both before and after. Lisa Larios was dying with a degenerative bone disease. Her parents hadn't even told her she was dying.

They took her to a meeting of a healing evangelist. And whatever you think of healing evangelists isn't really relevant in this case because the healing evangelist didn't actually have a chance to pray for her. But in this atmosphere where people were praying and talking about praying for healing, Lisa Larios suddenly jumped out of her wheelchair and ran around.

Well, you say maybe that was, she had, because of psychosomatic reasons, she just had a burst of adrenaline, but she wasn't physically capable of doing that before. She was tested afterward and the testing showed that not only was she healed from the disease, but even where her bones had degenerated, her bones had been healed. That is not something that naturally happens on its own.

Bruce Vanatta was crushed when a semi-truck fell on him and most of his small intestine was destroyed. After several surgeries, he had maybe a quarter of the small intestine left. And for part of his intestine that was necessary, the ileum, he had just 25 centimeters left.

It's normally 350 centimeters, so not even 10%. He dropped from 180 pounds to 125 pounds as he was slowly starving. But someone felt led to fly from their home in New York to Wisconsin and pray for Bruce and came to him in the hospital and they felt led to command his small intestine to grow in Jesus' name.

And Bruce felt something like an electric jolt through his body. The medical documentation, which is available, we have the medical documentation. Medical documentation, this is something like, you know, you hear about, well, people sometimes say, well, if God does miracles, why don't we ever have like an amputated limb growing back? Well, we don't have any of those reported in the Book of Acts or in the Gospels either, but this is something equivalent to an amputated limb growing back.

The small intestine is not its full length, but its full length is longer than it needs to be to function what it can normally do. It's now about half the normal length. It's fully functional.

It grew from 116 centimeters long to somewhere between 275 and 300 centimeters long, so far more than doubled. The small intestine can widen in an adult, but it can't grow longer. So, this was a miracle and there's no other medical explanation for it.

Instant healing of a broken back, Dr. Numbera from Nigeria provided that one. A number of other accounts from doctors, healing of deep gash wounds. Carl Cockerell, a member of an American Baptist church in Michigan, broke his ankle in Missouri and was put in a cast, and held in a hospital overnight, felt like the Lord appeared to him and healed him.

So, the doctor in Missouri said, okay, you can go back to Michigan if you want to. You can't drive yourself, but your wife can drive the car if you want to. But immediately you need to see your own doctor there.

Followed up, the doctor there, they did a new radiology report and the doctor looked at the new radiology report, which was taken eight days after the first one, and said, well, not only do you not have a broken ankle, this shows that you've never had a broken ankle. Another case, Joy Wannifred, who had a classic case of vertical heterophoria, so classic, in fact, that it was her picture that was used on the pamphlet advertising the condition. And yet, when a student at Taylor University was praying for her, she was instantly and completely healed after years of this condition.

She also had a dramatic spiritual encounter, and those are frequent in these things too, but I'm just trying to stay with the topic. She no longer needed glasses, unlike me. She now had 20-20 vision.

She was healed of all the other matters of vertical heterophoria. Now, when I give you the medical documentation, the medical documents, even though I have the original form with all the names in it, it's considered appropriate in the United States, and it's also a legal requirement, as I understand it, from privacy laws. I've omitted the physicians' names, but I do have the originals that have the information.

Another doctor from Cuba was sharing with me about severe burns that within half an hour of prayer, the hand became completely normal as if it hadn't been burned. The Catholic Church has kept careful medical documentation for many miracles that it reports, and in very many cases, these are very convincing. Eyewitness testimony is also important, even for people who are not doctors.

Eyewitness testimony is a form of evidence in sociology, anthropology, journalism, historiography, which is very relevant here, and in law. There are many things we couldn't do, we couldn't know if we couldn't use eyewitness evidence. And miracles being events within history, unique events within history, they're not something replicable.

You can't experiment on them and do them over again. The same as if somebody died, you can't kill them again to see how it was done. But you can depend to a great degree on eyewitnesses, and we do that ordinarily for other things, and we should do that also for events such as miracles.

And I'm going to give some examples from my interviews or published sources that I have good reason to believe are reliable. Now, when I'm doing this, keep in mind that the book is 1,100 pages long. I've gotten more material since then, so these are just samples.

The medical documentation was sampled. These examples are also samples. But one principle that I'm following is that a smaller number of eyewitnesses should count more heavily than a greater number of skeptical non-witnesses.

And we would apply that to most other kinds of claims. For example, at least in my culture, if there's a traffic accident, the police officer will want to interview witnesses who were present at the accident. So, what happens if somebody comes up and says, that's not what happened.

I know that's not what happened. And the officer says, well, sir or ma'am, can you tell me what you saw happen? Well, I didn't see anything happen. I wasn't there.

That's why I knew it didn't happen. We would not take that very seriously. Why would we take it seriously if somebody says, well, I know miracles don't happen because I've never seen any.

When we have, as we'll find out, millions of people who do claim that they have seen some, shouldn't we start by at least exploring some of those claims? Some of those claims may not prove to be genuine miracles, but what if some do? If any claims do prove to be genuine miracles, then we have to take miracles very seriously. Now, I don't want you to misunderstand me. I'm not claiming that everyone prayed for gets healed.

You can see that I have male pattern balding. I have to wear glasses. And on a more serious note, my wife and I have experienced miscarriages.

It wasn't that we didn't pray. It wasn't that we didn't have faith. Not everybody who's prayed for gets healed all the time, but God sometimes does it and sometimes does it in dramatic ways.

Sometimes people have said, well, you don't have any credible witnesses. That was David Hume's argument. No credible witnesses were something to lose.

Wansuk and Julie Ma, I would think, should be regarded as credible. Wansuk is the director for Oxford Center for Mission Studies, where Julie also teaches. They both have PhDs.

And of course, Oxford Center for Mission Studies is at Oxford. I was talking about this at Oxford University at a conference one time and walked over to the Oxford Center for Mission Studies during a break and said, hey, Wansuk, I just shared your story. But in any case, they reported seeing a number of healings.

But one of the healings they reported seeing was one that you don't really have to be a doctor to recognize that this was something dramatic. A large goiter instantly disappeared while they were praying. They were witnesses.

There were others present who were witnesses. Another case, is Luther O'Connor. He's an assistant professor of United Methodist Studies at United Theological Seminary.

He prayed for a woman in the Philippines and she had an unbendable metal implant in her leg. She'd not been able to bend her leg. You can see the scar where it was put in.

Well, he prayed for her and she felt heat in her leg. And suddenly she was astonished and she squatted down, which normally you would think she wouldn't have been able to have done. She squatted down and then you see that she was completely healed.

If you can show that she was able to bend her leg. Now, I don't have the medical results here. I can't tell you whether the metal implant disappeared, but if it was still there, it was now a bendable metal implant because she was able to bend her leg.

I asked Danny McCain, because we worked together in Nigeria for three summers, but he had been there for decades doing ministry there. I assumed he was going to give me some eyewitness reports from Nigeria. He's a Wesleyan minister.

Just trying to show you that this is reported in a wide range of different kinds of Christian circles. Well, Danny said, now I can give you an account from something that I witnessed in the United States when I was a boy. My baby brother fell into a tub with scalding hot water.

He was burned so badly with this very hot water that had been put there. Danny went into details about how this was done back then, but he was scalded so badly that as the doctors were trying to take his clothes off, his skin was tearing. So, they were praying for his baby brother.

And while they were praying, he suddenly noticed that his baby brother had stopped crying. And he looked up and he saw that his baby brother's skin, which had been scalded all over, very, very severely burned, now was bright and pink, completely new. Danny says I remember it as if it were yesterday.

And of course, there were many other witnesses present for this. My brother Chris and I witnessed something when I was still a young Christian and my brother Chris was also a young Christian. Chris has gone on to do a PhD in physics, which was what I had been interested in doing at the time.

But we witnessed this. We were both new believers fairly much. We were helping at a nursing home Bible study and there was a woman there named Barbara.

And every week Barbara was saying, I wish I could walk. I wish I could walk. Well, one day the leader of the Bible study, Don, said, I'm tired of this.

And he walked over to Barbara. He grabbed her by the hand. He said, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

I was horrified. If faith can be said to be a bias, I can't be accused of it in this case. I could tell by the expression on her face, she was horrified too.

If this was psychosomatic, it wasn't because she had any faith. It was because Don did. And that's not how psychosomatic is supposed to work.

But in any case, I thought she was going to fall flat. From the expression on her face, I thought she thought she was going to fall flat, but he walked her around the room. And from then on, Barbara could walk.

Healed blindness. I'm just going to give some different categories of this now. I found some 350 reports of cured blindness.

Some of them I wouldn't know how to evaluate them, but some of them very trustworthy. Again, some of them from Dr. Rex Gardner. But I'm going to focus on some accounts that haven't been published in other places, accounts of people that I know directly who witnessed this.

In 2004, Flint McLaughlin, who is director of transforming business institute at Cambridge University, prayed for a blind man in Northern India with clouded eyes. And the man was instantly healed. It was not only Flint who was there but some other eyewitnesses who have since shared with me their accounts of this.

This is the field where the man ran in circles, praising God. And this is where he was telling his story. I believe this may have been an orphanage or something, but wherever it was, he was telling a story and he began to weep.

And one of the Americans who was there said, why are you weeping? He said because I've always heard children, but I've never before seen their faces. And so here are a couple of the Americans with him. Dr. Bunga Shibaku Kato, a friend of mine, we worked together on ethnic reconciliation issues.

Well, that's what we were working on. He's the president of Shalom University in Bunya, Congo DRC. But because I was writing this book on miracles at this point, I asked him, well, have you ever seen anything? He said, oh yeah.

Years ago, when I was much younger, I and some of my friends were out doing evangelism in a village and they brought to us a woman in her sixties or so who was blind and asked us if we would pray for her. Said nothing else has helped her. Medical help hasn't worked.

The shamans and traditional healers haven't helped. Can you do anything? They said we've never tried this before. This wasn't part of their church tradition, but we came that God's name might be glorified.

So, let's just pray and see what he might do. They prayed for about two minutes and she began shouting, I can see, I can see, and dancing around. She remained sighted for the rest of her life.

One of my students, a Baptist from Cameroon, did his doctor of ministry degree at a seminary where I used to teach. Paul Mokake, he prayed for somebody with blind eyes and the blind eyes were open. Well, he had a number of different miracle stories.

So, this wasn't one he brought to my attention, but one of my other students, an African American student named Yolanda, happened to be visiting Cameroon,

happened to witness this. She told us about it. So, I asked Paul and he said, yeah, that happened.

We have accounts from Gabriel Woldu in Ethiopia, a number of other accounts. I'm going on to an account though from Greg Spencer. Greg Spencer was going blind because of macular degeneration.

Macular degeneration is not something that normally reverses itself. So, he was going blind. He already at this point was legally blind and had been put on disability and had received some training for how to function as someone who was blind.

He went to a retreat where he was praying for the healing of his mind. He wasn't praying for the healing of his sight, but God gave him an extra benefit. God not only healed his mind, but when he opened his eyes, he realized he could see.

He was tested. They agreed that he could see, but the Social Security Administration, had told him, well, you don't have to work. You're on disability.

This is something in the United States where we take care of people who need to be taken care of. He realized he could see, but they were not readily persuaded because they said, no, this must have been fraud. You must have just been pretending not to be able to see because macular degeneration does not go away.

But after a year of study, after consulting all the doctors, they finally issued a report and they said, well, he's experienced a remarkable return of his visual acuity and therefore he's no longer going to receive disability. He needs to go back to work. I'm going to give some other accounts of something that is not normally considered psychosomatic.

Usually, the healing of blindness is not psychosomatic. It's only very rare that a person might be psychosomatically blind, especially in cases of cataracts or macular degeneration. And we have accounts of people being healed in those kinds of circumstances.

Raisings of the dead, normally people are not considered to be psychosomatically dead. Now a person can be misdiagnosed as dead. Sometimes it's wrongly assumed that somebody's dead, but we don't assume that that happens on a very common basis because if it did, well, then we would have been burying a lot of people prematurely.

So, you know, I don't know how often it happens, but you wouldn't expect it unless we're burying lots and lots of people prematurely. You wouldn't expect it to happen, say, more than, you know, one person in 10 would know somebody that it happened to or that witnessed it happening. And yet when I began asking around I didn't know

this before because I hadn't asked, but when I began asking around between my wife and me, we knew at least 10 people and those are people we knew fairly well.

We could expand it beyond that, but we knew about 10 people who had witnessed or experienced such resuscitations. Now, what are the odds if you say one chance in 10 that we would know somebody, then, which I think is pretty generous because probably the odds are lower than that unless we really are burying a lot of people prematurely. If the odds are one chance in 10, then for us to know about 10 people, the odds would be something like one in 10 billion, one in 10 to the 10th power.

You know, there's no way to precisely calculate the odds, but what I'm trying to point out is this is probably not just a coincidence that in circles where people pray that sometimes these kinds of things happen. They seem to cluster in circles where people pray. And I just happened to be the one writing this book.

So that makes it even more improbable is a coincidence. We have a number of these reports throughout history. We have this report in the Church Fathers.

A number of times Irenaeus talks about this one part of the church he's condemning people he says are schismatic and have false doctrine. He says, but there's this other part of the church that's part of the true church and they have reported a number of raisings. So God is clearly at work in the true church.

John Wesley, there's an experience that appears to be a raising in his journal. So this is like firsthand recorded when it happened, on December 25th, 1742. He prayed for Mr. Myrick who appeared to be dead and he revived.

We have reports from doctors. One of these is from Dr. Chauncey Crandall, who's a cardiologist in West Palm Beach. A man named Jeff Markin there checked himself into the hospital.

He had been dead for 40 minutes by the time Dr. Crandall was called. This is dead meaning flatlined. He had no heartbeat.

They had been trying to revive him, trying to revive him, but he had no heartbeat and there was nothing they could do. So, Dr. Crandall was called in to certify the obvious as a cardiologist and he certified it. He was going back to his rounds in another part of the hospital when he felt like the Holy Spirit prompted him to go back and pray for this man to have another chance.

Now, this is obviously very rare. People normally do not get another chance, but he went back and one of his colleagues walked in with him and he prayed for the man and said, God, if you want this man to have another chance to know you, I pray that you'll raise him from the dead. The nurse was glaring at him like he was crazy.

But Dr. Crandall turned to his colleague and said, shock him with a paddle one more time. They hadn't taken all the apparatus off of him yet. Oh, the nurse was starting to get the body ready for the morgue.

And the other doctor was like, we all agreed that he's dead. I mean, you could look at his hands, Dr. Crandall told me. His fingers were already black from cyanosis, but he shocked him with a paddle one time and something remarkable happened, something that normally doesn't happen even after a person has been flatlined for a minute.

Immediately, the man had a normal heartbeat and the nurse began screaming, Dr. Crandall, Dr. Crandall, what have you done? Six minutes with no oxygen, a person should have irreparable brain damage at best, if they can be revived at all. But this was a Saturday and on Monday, Dr. Crandall returned to the hospital. He went in to visit the man and they were talking.

The man didn't have brain damage and recovered. And this is a picture of Dr. Crandall participating in Jeff Markin's baptism. He did have another chance and he did come to know the Lord.

Dr. Sean George, is a doctor in Australia. He died in the presence of fellow doctors. He was having a heart attack.

He checked himself in and they spent 55 minutes trying to revive him. He was their colleague. He was precious to them.

But finally, his organs were failing. There was nothing they could do. They said to his wife, who was with him, you need to go in and say your goodbye and then we'll take him off life support because there's no hope.

She knelt down and she prayed that God would restore him. Immediately, his heart started beating. One of his colleagues later said that's the worst thing I could imagine happening because his heart starts beating.

Sooner or later, he's going to have to be taken off life support because at this point, his brain is a vegetable. I mean, there's no way that he's going to be restored. Well, it did take a while for his restoration to be complete, but he had no brain damage and he's practicing medicine again.

For those who say that these things would never happen in the United States, Dr. Deborah Watson, was my colleague in New Testament, one of my colleagues in New Testament at a seminary where I used to teach. Debbie grew up in the home of a Baptist minister. Her father was a Baptist minister.

Her little sister, when she was a baby, was in a bassinet that was perched very high. Somehow it moved and her baby sister fell over from very high. She landed on a concrete floor on the back of her head.

They ran to her, no sound, no movement. The father picked her up. It felt like the back of her skull was crushed.

They took her to the doctor, frantically praying all the way. The doctor took her aside to work on her and then came out after a few minutes and said, where did you say you felt that her skull was crushed? He put his hand back under the back of her neck and the back of her head. There was nothing wrong.

She was fine from then on. The picture that I showed is a picture of them when they were together as a family on Thanksgiving. She's now in her 40s, at least last I checked.

We have a number of claims of raisings from India. In one dissertation talking about the beginning of a people movement, of people turning to faith in Christ among the Nishi tribal people, back when there were very few Christians, or few if any, Christians among the Nishi tribal people, there was a government official whose son was dying and sacrifices to different gods had failed. No medical help had worked.

The pharmacist suggested, why don't you try praying to Jesus, the Christian God? It's said that he raised someone named Lazarus from the dead. So, the official went back, and as far as they could tell, his son was now dead. He said, Jesus, you, the Christian God who raised Lazarus from the dead, I will follow you if you raise my son.

Now, I'm not pretending that this is something that will always work, that this always happens, but that's what he said in that case. His son was raised. He became a believer.

It began a people movement among the Nishi tribal people, and this is what the spreading of the gospel among this people group has been attributed to, and this is in recent times. Two Western sociologists, were both Christians, they're not Pentecostals, but they were studying global Pentecostalism. They interviewed local people in one community, including a Hindu village elder, where it was reported that a woman had returned to life after being pronounced dead with no breathing or pulse.

In another case, an Indian pastor prayed for a girl who was dead with worms coming out of her nose. Probably the death was not a misdiagnosis in that case. Probably she was rather severely dead.

She came back to life. She reported her afterlife experience. Local newspapers covered the story, so it was well-known in the local community.

A pastor in Mumbai shared with me an account that happened at a retreat center. This was a retreat center not just for Christians, it was for everyone, and they were having a church retreat there, but there were other families there. They found a Hindu boy, Vikram, lying at the bottom of a pool.

And so, one of them, a nurse, and another, an intercessor, took the boy off to try to take him to a hospital, while the rest of the group stayed behind and prayed for him. Well, they got to the hospital. The first doctor said this child is dead.

There's nothing I can do. I can't deal with this. They took him to another doctor and that doctor tried his best valiantly to revive the boy, but nothing could be done.

So, an hour and a half later, they're coming back and they bring Vikram back to where the others are praying and Vikram is now alive. And in fact, these pictures that you saw and are now seeing of Vikram, were after he was revived. Sometimes in the case of cold-water drowning, you can have a person survive quite some time after the drowning, but even then it takes a while for the person to be revived and to fully recover.

He was fully recovered and the water was not cold. It wasn't a cold-water drowning, no ice in it, or anything like that. He said that he heard the name Jesus and then was delivered.

His parents who were Hindu know that he had never heard this name before. And here are some pictures of Vikram and his family joining the Christians in their worship service. There's a sister that I interviewed in the Philippines.

She was diagnosed with liver cancer in 1983, but unable to afford treatment. I think she had maybe one aspirin the whole time. The next year she was taken to the hospital simply to finish dying.

Her abdomen had swelled. She was pronounced dead and sent to the morgue. An hour and 45 minutes later in the morgue, a Baptist minister was praying there with one of her friends.

And I said, what was the Baptist minister praying for? Was she praying that you would be revived or what? She said, I don't think that's what she was praying for, but I really don't know what she was praying for. I was dead. So, some people report a post-mortem experience.

In this case, my friend said, I didn't experience anything. It was like I was asleep and then I woke up. But in today's case, she returned to life.

Her abdomen was no longer swollen. She no longer had the cancer. And the doctor who had told her she was going to die initially didn't believe it was she. And when she discovered it was she, the doctor was converted.

The next account I received was from one of my neighbors. My neighbor is from Indonesia. And the account that he gave me was from a close friend of his. I'm going to show some pictures of this, but please close your eyes during this if you are not good at handling the sight of blood. The original scene was actually bloodier, but the body had been moved.

As you can see, Dominguez had his neck cut in a way that normally a person could not survive. And the people transporting his body were transporting his body as if they weren't expecting him to be alive. Now, these are pictures that were taken from the news.

He did need medical intervention, but the doctors initially thought he was dead, but he had had a vision of heaven. The Lord sent him back into the body. And so, when the doctors realized he was alive, they sewed his neck back.

They did a great job with that. He still has the scar to show it, but he's alive. I was giving some of these accounts at a scholars conference because scholars in the West often don't believe in these things.

And we come to the miracle stories in the gospels or acts and treat them as if they're problematic. So, I was suggesting that maybe if we listened more to some accounts from the majority world, we might learn some things about at least a different way of looking at this. When I finished, one of the people who had a question or comment was Professor Ayodeji Adewuya, Ayo we call him. [You can see Ayo and his excellent teaching on 2 Corinthians at Biblicalelearning.org]

He stood up in the back and he said, well, actually, he's a professor in the U.S. now, but he's from Nigeria. He said, when my son was born in 1981, he was pronounced dead at birth. We prayed for him for half an hour. Originally, I had written down 20 minutes. He said, no, no, it's 30 minutes. But they prayed for him for half an hour and his son came back to life. His son had no brain damage and his son has now finished his Master of Science degree at the University of London.

Another friend is one that I worked with for three summers in Nigeria. And he's a research officer for a ministry there. He had done a lot of ministry in different parts of the country and a lot of research in different parts of the country. So, I thought, well, now I'm working on this book of miracles, let me just ask Leo. So, I just was

asking around from some African friends, do you have any accounts? Leo, do you have any accounts? And Leo said, well, not very many.

So, he sent me just seven pages of reports of miracles that he knew of directly. And one of them was in a village in northern Nigeria where he was doing research. His host's neighbors handed him their dead child, at least as far as anybody could tell, the child was dead. And he took the child aside and prayed for a few hours, he said, and then finally handed the child back to the parents alive.

Another example, is somebody I knew from the same ministry. Now in his case, I didn't even think to ask him, but some other people I knew mentioned, oh, you should ask him because this happened to him.

Timothy Olanoday. I'd seen the scar that he had, but I'd never asked him what it was about. And we hadn't been talking about miracles, so I'd never asked him, have you seen any miracles? But some other people informed me, so I wrote to him and he told me about it.

In 1985, he was in a serious car accident. And there were two people, one from each vehicle, who was pronounced dead. The other person with him in his vehicle lost his legs, but he was pronounced dead.

The police found no pulse or heartbeat. They took him to the hospital. From the hospital, he was sent to the mortuary.

Around 3 a.m. in the mortuary, they found him moving and sent him back to the hospital. He had been in this state for about eight hours. Now the doctors assumed that he would have severe brain damage.

He did need medical help. He was in the hospital for three weeks before he was released, but he was alive, and didn't have permanent brain damage. And the surgeon, who was also a medical school professor there, said there was no other way to explain this except as a miracle.

And Timothy is now a leader in the Nigerian missions movement. And I taught for three summers and know him very well. He's also an Anglican priest at this point.

Now, you know, you could say, well, maybe if you just pray for everybody who dies, once in a while you're going to have somebody come back to life. So sometimes I asked people, I asked Leo, did you ever pray for anybody else to be raised? He said, in his case, yes, once. I prayed for my best friend who died and he did not come back to life.

But one out of two isn't too bad. I mean, when the gospel was at stake in a village, that time the person came back. I asked Chauncey Crandall, the cardiologist.

He said, yes, once before that, my own son died of leukemia. And it was devastating. I prayed he didn't come back.

But I determined that I was going to trust God no matter what, because God is worthy of our trust, whether he does something that we ask for or not. And that's why I was ready when I felt the spirit led me to pray for somebody else. In that case, it was the spirit directly leading him to do it.

Now, in the next session, I'm going to give you some more accounts. These accounts are accounts that I know from within my own family, my relatives, and my wife's family, especially. I could give you one from my side, but it's like something my brother knows rather than something is direct.

So, just all this to say, this is probably more than coincidence that these are circles where for the gospel's sake or with the spirit's direct leading, God did raise somebody up. We'll talk more about that in the next session.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 4, Credibility of Miracles.