

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Session 4, Credibility of Miracles 6-Min. Video Overview

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Alright, let's jump right in. We're going to talk about the work of Dr. Craig Keener, a scholar who spent, get this, two decades digging into something most academics just won't touch — modern-day miracles. You know, whenever we pick up an ancient text, right, especially something like the Book of Acts, it's just packed with these incredible miracle stories.

And for most of us in the modern world, our first instinct is to kind of file those away as myths. You know, nice stories, maybe they teach a lesson, but not actual history. But here's where Dr. Keener's work really throws a wrench in the gears.

He basically asks, okay, but what if these claims aren't from 2,000 years ago? What if they're happening right now? And not just stories, but claims with, like, medical records and super credible eyewitnesses. So yeah, let's dig into what he found. So first up, let's talk about why so many people are skeptical in the first place.

For a lot of historians, when they look at a text like the Book of Acts, the crazy number of miracles is actually a huge red flag. It just seems too fantastic to be true, and that makes them doubt the whole thing. This isn't a new idea, by the way.

Back in the 1800s, this really influential scholar, David Friedrich Strauss, kind of cemented this way of thinking. His whole argument was, look, real eyewitnesses just don't see this kind of dramatic, supernatural stuff. So these stories have to be myths that just grew and got more elaborate over generations.

Okay, but this is where it gets really interesting. Kind of wild, actually. Keener points out this huge irony.

While Strauss is writing all this, his own close friend, a guy named Edward Morakay, gets healed. He had this diagnosed spinal issue. They pray for him, and boom, he's fine.

And Strauss' reaction? He didn't go, huh, maybe I should rethink my theory? Nope. He just called it superstition and moved on. And that attitude, that immediate dismissal, is exactly what Keener's first pile of evidence goes up against.

We're talking about actual, medically documented cases. So check this out. There's this case from a physician, Dr. Rex Gardner.

It's about a 9-year-old girl, deaf. And not just a little hard of hearing. We're talking permanent auditory nerve damage.

Someone prays for her and, just like that, she can hear. The audiologist who had tested her the literal day before confirms it, her hearing is now totally normal. The doctor's conclusion? Impossible.

I have no explanation for this. And this isn't just, you know, one random story. Keener highlights a study, published in a peer-reviewed medical journal, by the way, that found so many documented healings of blindness and deafness in Mozambique that an entire region was reclassified from not-Christian to predominantly Christian because of it.

I mean, that's a massive impact. But maybe the most mind-bending medical case Keener brings up is this guy, Bruce Fenetta. He was in this horrific accident; a semi-truck fell on him, and his small intestine was basically obliterated.

So, the doctors managed to save just a tiny piece of it. To get specific, of the part that absorbs nutrients, the ileum, he had only 25 centimeters left. Now, for perspective, you're supposed to have around 350.

With so little, he just couldn't absorb food. He was literally slowly starving. And then, someone prayed for his intestine to grow back.

And medical scans showed it did. It measured almost 300 centimeters. Now, here's the thing.

An adult's intestine can't do that. It just doesn't grow in length. Keener basically says this is the biological equivalent of an arm or a leg just regrowing.

Okay, so beyond the medical files, Keener moves on to another kind of evidence. And it's one that's considered absolutely essential in other fields, like history, or even in a courtroom. Credible eyewitnesses.

Now, I know what you might be thinking. Oh, those are just stories. And skeptics say that all the time.

But Keener's whole point is that, wait a second. Eyewitness testimony is how we know almost everything about the past. It's used in journalism, in law, in anthropology.

So, if we trusted in those areas, why is it suddenly off limits here? And we're not talking about fuzzy, I think I saw something kinds of claims. He brings up people like Dr. Wansuk Ma, who's the director of the Oxford Center for Mission Studies. I mean, this guy and his wife both have PhDs.

They, along with a bunch of other people, saw a huge goiter on someone's neck just disappear right in front of their eyes while they were praying. A totally visible instantaneous change. Or how about this one? A seminary professor in the Philippines is with a woman who can't bend her leg.

Why? Because she has a solid metal implant in it. It's physically unbendable. He prays for her, and right after, she just squats all the way down to the floor.

Her leg, with the implant, is suddenly flexible. All right, now we get to what is by far the most extreme, the most controversial claim that Keener looks into. We're talking about events that challenge the one thing we all think is final.

Yeah, raising the dead. Keener found way more reports of people being resuscitated long after a doctor had officially pronounced them dead than he would ever guess. And look, of course a misdiagnosis could happen.

But he argues the sheer number of these stories, and the specific circumstances around them, make it really hard to just write them all off as mistakes. Let's look at the case of Jeff Markin. He gets to the hospital, and the cardiologist on duty, Dr. Chauncey Crandall, declares him dead.

No heartbeat. For 40 minutes, he's flatlined. A nurse is actually getting the body ready for the morgue.

His fingers are turning black from lack of oxygen. But then the doctor gets this weird feeling he should go back and pray. So he does.

Then he asks for the defibrillator one last time. They shock him, and bam, a perfect, normal heartbeat just pops up on the monitor. But here's the real kicker.

After being without oxygen to your brain for 40 minutes, even if you could somehow be brought back, you'd have massive, catastrophic brain damage. I mean, that's just medical fact. But two days later, Jeff Markin was awake, he was talking, and he had zero brain damage.

His mind was totally fine. So, okay. After wading through hundreds and hundreds of cases just like these, medical reports, eyewitness accounts from every corner of the world, what's the big takeaway? What's the point of all this research? Well, it really boils down to a pretty simple idea about evidence.

Think about it. If there was a car crash, whose opinion would you trust? The five people who actually saw it happen? Or a million people who were miles away and just have a theory about it? We'd obviously trust the eyewitnesses. And Keener's question is just, why don't we apply that same logic here? And look, the point of all this isn't to say that miracles are common, or that if you just pray for something, it'll happen.

That's not the argument at all. The argument is that there's a really significant amount of credible modern evidence that suggests these things do happen. And that evidence flies directly in the face of the purely philosophical assumption that they're impossible.

And that really leaves us with one last, pretty challenging question to think about for ourselves. Is our modern skepticism a conclusion we came to because there's just no evidence out there? Or is it more like a filter we have? A filter that just automatically dismisses the evidence before we even have a chance to really look at it? Kind of like it did for David Strauss all those years ago. Something to chew on, for sure.