

# DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU (PART 3)

## A Survey of Some Strange Old Testament Miracles

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### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In Part 1 of this study, we identified **7 components** of many miracles recorded in the Bible:
1. There is a crisis or need that requires supernatural help or intervention.
  2. The person/people involved seek(s) God; this often involves humbling oneself, prayer, fasting, or crying out to God.
  3. Faith, trust, and dependence on God are essential:
  4. God often responds with a simple command—He tells us to DO SOMETHING—not difficult or complicated, but often contrary to natural wisdom or understanding. This can sometimes seem crazy or strange to our earthly way of thinking and reasoning.
  5. Obedience to this command is the KEY to the miracle, and it requires total, childlike faith; questioning, doubting, analyzing, and second-guessing can derail the whole process.
  6. Miracles reveal the power and glory of God.
  7. Miracles increase our faith.
- B. In Part 3, we want to look at some Old Testament miracles that hinged on obedience to some very odd things God told the people to do.

### II. PEOPLE DO THE STRANGEST THINGS TO GET THEIR MIRACLE (OLD TESTAMENT)

- A. Abraham & Issac (Gen. 12-22) –
1. The whole story is crazy—God told Abraham he would become a father of nations, but he and Sarah waited 25 years until they were too old to have children!
  2. They almost missed their miracle with Ishmael (Gen. 16), but God was patient with them.
  3. Then, God miraculously gave them a son, Isaac, only to ask Abraham later to sacrifice him! But as we just read in

James, Abraham obeyed—his faith and his actions worked together, and God miraculously spared the life of Isaac.

4. **Gen. 22:1-3:** <sup>1</sup>*Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. <sup>2</sup>Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. **Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering** on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” <sup>3</sup>**Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.***

a) Carnal reasonings: “Lord, You gave me this child through a miracle and now You want me to sacrifice him? This must be the devil talking to me!”

b) Look at Abraham’s unquestioning faith and obedience: “Early the next morning Abraham got up!” WOW!

B. Passover in Egypt (Ex. 12) – to break the bondage of 400 years of slavery, Israel had to kill a lamb and paint the blood on their doorposts! [NOTE: God brought 9 other miraculous plagues in Egypt before the final plague, the death of every firstborn].

1. How foolish—blood on the door has never brought deliverance!

2. Carnal reasonings: “This is a waste of time—sacrificing a lamb is not going to get us out of Egypt!”

C. Israel passes through the Red Sea – the waters parted when Moses lifted up his wooden staff!

**Ex. 14:15-16, 21-22:** <sup>15</sup>*Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the Israelites to move on.*

<sup>16</sup>**Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water** so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground... <sup>21</sup>**Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided,** <sup>22</sup>*and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.*

1. God’s command was very simple: “Just raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea...”

2. Moses obeyed: “Then Moses stretched out his hand...”

- D. Healing of bitter water at Marah – God told Moses to throw a piece of wood into the water!

**Ex. 15:22-26:** <sup>22</sup>Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. <sup>23</sup>When they came to Marah, they **could not drink its water because it was bitter.** (That is why the place is called Marah.) <sup>24</sup>So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?” <sup>25</sup>Then **Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.** There the LORD made a decree and a law for them, and there **He tested them.** <sup>26</sup>He said, “**If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His eyes, if you pay attention to His commands and keep all His decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.**”

1. No one has ever put wood into bitter water to make it pure!
  2. Carnal reasonings: “What good is a piece of wood going to do in this bitter water?”
  3. NOTE: The Lord was testing them to see if they would listen carefully to His voice and obey Him.
- E. Manna in the wilderness – for 40 years, the Israelites ate bread that came down out of heaven (and they collected off the ground)!

**Ex. 16:2-4:** <sup>2</sup>In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. <sup>3</sup>The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “**I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow My instructions.**”

- F. Water from the Rock in the desert – God told Moses to strike the rock with his staff and water came out for 2 million people!

**Ex. 17:1-2, 4-6:** <sup>1</sup>The whole Israelite community... camped at Rephidim, but there was **no water** for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup>So they quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink...” <sup>4</sup>Then **Moses cried out to the LORD,** “What am I to

*do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.”*

*<sup>5</sup>The LORD answered Moses, “Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. <sup>6</sup>I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. **Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.**” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.*

1. What if Moses hadn't obeyed this strange command?
  2. Carnal reasonings: “Lord, what if I strike the rock and nothing happens? Then everyone will laugh at me!”
  3. “So Moses did this...” Just do what He says!
- G. Israelites who had been bitten by venomous snakes were healed by looking at a bronze snake – God told Moses to make a bronze snake and set it up on a pole:

**Num. 21:4-9:** *<sup>4</sup>They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; <sup>5</sup>they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!” <sup>6</sup>Then **the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.** <sup>7</sup>The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup>The LORD said to Moses, “**Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.**” <sup>9</sup>So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.*

1. Both Moses and the Israelites needed real faith, but they also had to *do something!*
2. Carnal reasonings: “Lord, we already have enough snakes—You want me to make another one? And looking at a snake is not going to cure anyone of snakebite!”
3. Jesus used this story to illustrate the Gospel—we've all been bitten by the serpent Satan and poisoned with the venom of sin, and our only hope of salvation is “looking at” (believing in) Jesus taking our punishment and judgment on the Cross of Calvary:

**John 3:14-16:** <sup>14</sup>*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,* <sup>15</sup>*that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.* <sup>16</sup>*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

H. Rahab the harlot was spared in Jericho (Josh. 2) – she had to hang a scarlet cord out of her window—she obeyed in faith and was “not killed with those who were disobedient (Heb. 11:31)!

1. What if Rahab hadn’t hung the scarlet cord?
2. Carnal reasonings: “This is the strangest thing I’ve ever heard! The Hebrews are just making fools of us—they’re not going to spare us because of some rope hanging out of the window!”

I. Conquest of Jericho – God told the Israelites to march around the city for 7 days, blow trumpets, and shout (how ridiculous!)—and it collapsed completely!

**Josh. 6:1-5:** <sup>1</sup>*Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.* <sup>2</sup>*Then the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.* <sup>3</sup>**March** *around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days.* <sup>4</sup>*Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, **march** around the city seven times, with the priests **blowing the trumpets.*** <sup>5</sup>*When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, **have all the people give a loud shout;** then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in.”*

1. What a strange way to conquer a fortified city!
  2. The people did exactly what God told them to do, and the results speak for themselves!
- J. Joshua told the sun and moon to stand still for an entire day (Josh. 10) – (I know enough about physics and astronomy to know that this was a miracle!)
- K. Gideon defeated the Midianites with 300 men who had no swords or weapons—only empty jars with torches inside and trumpets (Judges 7)!

- L. Elijah was fed and sustained during the three-and-a-half-year famine in Israel – God told him that ravens would bring him bread and meat every morning and every evening, and they did! And then God commanded a poor widow to feed Elijah:

**1 Ki. 17:8-16:** <sup>8</sup>*Then the word of the LORD came to him:* <sup>9</sup>*“Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.”* <sup>10</sup>*So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?”* <sup>11</sup>*As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”* <sup>12</sup>*“As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”* <sup>13</sup>*Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But **first make a small cake of bread for me** from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son.”* <sup>14</sup>*For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.’”* <sup>15</sup>***She went away and did as Elijah had told her.*** *So, there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family.* <sup>16</sup>*For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.*

1. How cruel and crazy—asking a poor widow to give up her last piece of bread! But she did it and God blessed her with a big miracle! (Giving is the key to miraculous provision!)
2. Jesus talked about this widow:

**Luke 4:25-26:** <sup>25</sup>*I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land.* <sup>26</sup>*Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.*

- M. Elijah calls down fire at Mt. Carmel – Elijah summoned the people from all over Israel and 850 of Jezebel’s false prophets for a contest:

**1 Ki. 18:23-24, 36-38:** <sup>23</sup>*“Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on*

*the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it.* <sup>24</sup>*Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. **The god who answers by fire—He is God.***” Then all the people said, “What you say is good.” ...<sup>36</sup>*At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and **have done all these things at Your command.*** <sup>37</sup>*Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You are turning their hearts back again.”* <sup>38</sup>***Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.***

1. What an insane thing to do—in front of King Ahab!
2. But this wasn’t Elijah’s idea—God told him to do all this, and because Elijah was obedient in every detail, God answered with fire!

N. Elisha helps a poor widow pay off her debts—but she had to do something unusual:

**2 Ki. 4:1-7:** <sup>1</sup>*The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.”* <sup>2</sup>*Elisha replied to her, “How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?”* “Your servant has nothing there at all,” she said, “except a little oil.” <sup>3</sup>*Elisha said, “**Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few.*** <sup>4</sup>*Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. **Pour oil into all the jars,** and as each is filled, put it to one side.”* <sup>5</sup>*She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring.* <sup>6</sup>*When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another one.” But he replied, “There is not a jar left.” Then the oil stopped flowing.* <sup>7</sup>*She went and told the man of God, and he said, “**Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.**”*

1. What if either the widow or her sons had said, “This is stupid—empty jars aren’t going to pay our bills!”

2. Yes, this was a crazy idea, but because they trusted and obeyed without questioning or arguing, they experienced a great miracle!
- O. Naaman healed of leprosy – Naaman travelled from Syria to Israel because he heard a prophet in Israel could cure him:

**2 Ki. 5:9-14:** <sup>9</sup>So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. <sup>10</sup>Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, **"Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."** <sup>11</sup>But Naaman went away angry and said, **"I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy."** <sup>12</sup>Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? **Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?"** So, he turned and went off in a rage. <sup>13</sup>Naaman's servants went to him and said, **"My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'"** <sup>14</sup>So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

1. Naaman was proud and wise in his own eyes, and almost missed his miracle because he was leaning on his own carnal wisdom and understanding ("I thought..." v.11).
2. But his servants reminded him that Elisha hadn't told him to do some great thing—just go wash in the Jordan seven times. How simple!
3. It wasn't the purity of the river that was going to cure him—it was obedience in faith.
4. When he finally stopped analyzing and *did* what the prophet commanded, Naaman was miraculously healed!
5. Jesus confirmed the story:

**Luke 4:27:** *And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.*

P. Jehoshaphat defeated his enemies with praise!

**2 Chron. 20:1-6, 14-17, 20-22:** <sup>1</sup>After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to make war on Jehoshaphat. <sup>2</sup>Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi). <sup>3</sup>Alarmed, **Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.** <sup>4</sup>The people of Judah came together **to seek help from the LORD**; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. <sup>5</sup>Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard <sup>6</sup>and **prayed...**

<sup>14</sup>Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. <sup>15</sup>He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s.’ <sup>16</sup>**Tomorrow march down against them.** They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. <sup>17</sup>**You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.’”**

<sup>20</sup>Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! **Have faith in the LORD** your God and you will be upheld; **have faith in His prophets and you will be successful.**” <sup>21</sup>After consulting the people, **Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise Him** for the splendor of his holiness **as they went out at the head of the army**, saying: “Give thanks to the LORD, for His love endures forever.” <sup>22</sup>**As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes** against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and **they were defeated.**

1. Sending the singers out in front of the army sounds like a suicide mission! (The singers on the front line of battle needed the most faith!)

2. The king's advice in v.20 is important to note: "Have faith in the Lord... **[and] in His prophets** and you will be successful."
  - a) In a number of the miracles we have already looked at, God gave instructions directly to the people involved.
  - b) But in others, God's word came *through* anointed prophets like Elijah, Elisha, and, in this story, through Jahaziel; trusting and obeying the prophet's words was critical for the people's success.
  - c) **1 Thess. 2:13:** *And we also thank God continually because, when **you received the word of God, which you heard from us**, you accepted it **not as the word of men**, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*
  - d) **Heb. 13:17:** ***Obey your leaders** and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. **Obey them** so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Q. God told Ezekiel to prophesy to dry, dead bones and they came to life!

**Ezek. 37:1-10:** <sup>1</sup>*The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He asked me, "Son of man, **can these bones live?**" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, **You alone know.**" <sup>4</sup>Then He said to me, "**Prophesy to these bones** and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! <sup>5</sup>This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. <sup>6</sup>I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'" <sup>7</sup>**So I prophesied as I was commanded.** And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup>Then He said to me, "**Prophesy to the breath;** prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come*

*from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live. ”” <sup>10</sup>**So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.***

### **III. CONCLUSION**

- A. At the heart of many Old Testament miracles, we’ve seen how God gave simple but very strange and bizarre commands to test the people to see if they would trust and obey Him: sacrifice your son, strike the rock and water will come out, make a bronze image of a snake and put it on a pole, prophesy to dead bones, and many more!
- B. In each situation, all the people had to do was: Do whatever He tells you!
- C. Next week, in Part 4, we are going to look at 15 miracles in the New Testament—walking on water, feeding 5,000, finding coins in fish’s mouths, miraculous healings, and much more!