

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

**Episode 399**

**Miracles Today**

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### **Episode Summary**

Do the sorts of miracles we read about in the book of Acts and the New Testament epistles happen today? Is there any reliable source material for documenting such miracles? Why does it seem miracles happen less in the modern world than earlier eras? Does the culture have something to do with it? Or are miracles today an unreasonable expectation? In this episode of the podcast we talk with the scholar who has devoted more time and attention to miracles than any other in this or the past century, Dr. Craig Keener. More specifically, the focus of our discussion is Dr. Keener's new book, *Miracles Today: The Supernatural Work of God in the Modern World* (Baker Academic, 2021).

### **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 399: Miracles Today, with Dr. Craig Keener. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you feeling?

**MH:** Pretty good. I'm kind of pumped for this interview, because this has been months in waiting for this book to come out. Our listeners will figure out why pretty soon. But not only is the subject matter intriguing, of course, it hits the sweet spot for us in biblical studies because Dr. Keener has a much larger work on the subject of miracles, and now he's condensing it and adding new material for sort of a more basic introduction to modern miracles. So not only is the subject matter intriguing, but it just hits that perfect spot of doing something really useful for the average believer—the average person in church who's interested in a topic—providing good resources, not only just a good read, but also something that you can have in your library or at home to reference for people who would just take a more negative or skeptical view of what God might be capable of doing... You know, it sounds even weird to say it that way, but what he might be capable of doing today. So this is something I've looked forward to for quite a while.

**TS:** And we *do* have a discount code for his book. So go to NakedBiblePodcast.com, go to the episode page, and get that discount code for Dr. Keener's new book.

**MH:** Yeah, and we should mention too that the proceeds from the book... Dr. Keener made a note of letting us know that the proceeds are not going to him. So he's not collecting royalties on the book. But if you buy the book, the profits are going to go to three different Christian charities: SIM Medical, Iris Global, and Compassion International. So what Dr. Keener is able to earn through this book is going to go directly to those ministries. So with that, I think we can just jump into it.

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Well, we're very glad to have Dr. Craig Keener with us today. I've been waiting a long time to do this particular interview. When I saw that his massive, two-volume work on miracles was essentially being repurposed into a one-volume book that we're going to discuss today, specifically for those of you who are already tuned in here... But we're going to talk about *Miracles Today: The Supernatural Work of God in the Modern World*, published by Baker, with Dr. Keener. As soon as I saw this "lighter version" was coming out, I really wanted to have Craig on the podcast. I mean, we've interviewed him before (little snippet interviews, at SBL and ETS). But this is the kind of resource that... Those who listen to this podcast already know that we gravitate toward these things: useful material—useful content—for the layperson, and really anybody who's interested in biblical studies, the pastor. This is the sweet spot, as we like to say. So Craig, I'm going to ask you to introduce yourself to the audience. Who is Craig Keener? Give us a little bit of a background as to who you are and what you do.

**CK:** Sure. I was converted from atheism a few decades ago, which probably gives me maybe *more* of an interest than some people in being able to answer objections to the faith. But also, I have a PhD in New Testament and Christian Origins from Duke University. I am a professor of biblical studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. And I just love teaching God's Word. It just excites me. I can't think of anything more fun than to learn about and talk about God's Word.

**MH:** Yeah, absolutely. What are some of the courses you teach?

**CK:** I teach Historical Jesus. I teach Matthew. I teach Mark. I teach Acts. I teach Revelation. Sometimes I teach Romans. So I get to teach a lot of fun things.

**MH:** Okay, I have to ask you this question. When you teach Acts, do you make people read all four volumes of your [laughter] Acts commentary?

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5:00

**CK:** No. Actually I teach... And it's a PhD seminar. So I teach the doctoral level course. But no, I give them my shorter version with Cambridge (the 700-page, one-volume one).

**MH:** Okay. For those of you who don't know, this multi-volume work on Acts is just... Well, how many pages is that? Like, isn't it, like 4,000 pages or something?

**CK:** Yeah, about 4,500. In manuscript pages it was a lot more. [MH laughs] But they used small print and got it all in.

**MH:** Right. It's not the onion skin paper, though, like you have in Bibles. [laughs] But it's a great set. I mean, especially... I used to work at Logos. And it's great for mining all that material. But once you land somewhere, there's so much in there that you just want to read through the whole section that you're in. Because I've used it a good bit and I really, really like it. But I had to ask you that question. [laughter] It's like, "Do I really want to sign up for this class?" [laughs]

**CK:** Yeah. That four volumes, it took like ten years of maybe 60 hours a week. It was... And that was on top of teaching and everything. But oh boy... By the time I was done, I think [laughs] "I need to have a couple of years to recover from the brain damage." [MH laughs] It was just... [laughs] I love Acts, but it was a bit too much screen time and all that.

**MH:** Yeah. Well, this one is going to be a lot shorter. And I've mentioned this work to other people. And we're going to talk about *Miracles Today: The Supernatural Work of God in the Modern World*. And then you have the longer, two-volume, essentially reference set on miracles. And I have both. But when I heard this one was coming out, I thought, again, this is just... We have to do an episode on this. Because I really do want to help you sell this book and get your name out to *our* audience in a more substantial way. But this really strikes me as an important work, especially... I'm going to put my cards on the table here. I think we have... I'm not in the Charismatic tradition. I know you are. So we're on... I don't even want to call it different sides. Because I'm in the "cautiously open" category. I'm not a cessationist either. So when I see something like this, I am prone, even as a non-Charismatic, to think that we have too many evangelical skeptics in our churches and in our institutions of higher learning. So I love when a scholar, especially somebody of your stature, pays attention to this sort of thing. It doesn't get much better than that. So I'm going to highly recommend this. And as we get into it, I'm just going to ask you just to start off here... What prompted it? What prompted the book? What was the initial aim of the book? How was it born in your mind to do this?

**CK:** The first *Miracles* book was because... Well, I was working on that commentary on Acts, and there were so many skeptics about the miracles in the

book of Acts and, of course, in the Gospels. And so just as part of my clarifying that we have historical evidence for this kind of thing, people were saying, “Well, you never have eyewitnesses who claim these kinds of events.” And I’m like, “I know people who claim these kinds of events. In fact, I’ve had some of them myself where I’ve been an eyewitness.” So it started as a footnote in the Acts commentary and then grew to 1,100 pages. [MH laughs] Sometimes it’s hard for me to control myself, I get so excited.

**MH:** Right. [laughs]

**CK:** So this version is much shorter. It’s like 300 pages. And 70% of it is new. So I won’t be, like, punishing the people who already read the first one.

**MH:** Right. [laughs]

10:00

**CK:** And it’s more accessible, more readable. But if I trace it back further, during one of my doctoral classes with Duke’s last remaining Bultmannian professor... You know, he believed that miracles don’t happen. God doesn’t help visibly in history. And so I said, “Well, Bultmann says that these things never happen. He doesn’t give any evidence for it. He just says nobody in the modern world believes in this, and thereby excludes in the modern world all Orthodox Jews, Christians, traditional tribal religionists, basically 2/3 of the doctoral students sitting around the table. And the professor said, “Well, Bultmann had his presuppositions, but you have your presuppositions, too.” To which I responded, “That’s true. When I was an atheist, I didn’t believe these things could happen. As a Christian, I believe that they can. But if we want to take an academically neutral starting point and say maybe they happen; maybe they don’t, let’s look at the evidence.” And so I started giving eyewitness accounts of things that I had seen or experienced, and then added, “You know, I think your next logical step to challenge what I’m saying would be to challenge my credibility as an eyewitness.” And he just changed the subject at that point, I guess politely. [laughter] But yeah, I don’t understand how people can... You know, if there’s a traffic accident and you’re interviewing witnesses, and somebody comes along and says, “Well, I didn’t see anything because I wasn’t there. Therefore, I know it didn’t happen,” you know, we wouldn’t take that seriously.

**MH:** Right. [laughs]

**CK:** Why do you take it seriously with eyewitnesses of these kinds of things?

**MH:** Yeah, especially if you were personally affected by that thing that you didn’t see, you certainly know it happened.

**CK:** [laughs] Yes.

**MH:** You know? Yeah, that is a bit of an odd sort of standard to maintain. Now you mention, there are some things in your own life and your academic experience that prompted this attention. I don't want to ask you yet, because I am curious if any of the content of the book involves one of these episodes that you either witnessed or you had a close relationship to, maybe a friend or something like that. But we'll get to that. I think before we even jump into what you actually do in the book, we should start where you start, and that is to define "miracle." So in your book, how do you define this? Because it's a word that gets thrown around a lot in churches. And I think obviously it needs some care in defining. So what constitutes a miracle?

**CK:** Actually, that's a fundamental problem because there's no one consensus definition for it. So it's important to... I know sometimes when my wife and I are praying, she'll say, "Lord, we need somebody else to help with childcare for this ministry," so she'll pray, "God, I need a miracle." But that wouldn't be the way the book defines a miracle.

**MH:** Mm hmm.

**CK:** The book defines it more strictly. Not just an answer to prayer. Hume defined it as... Hume's definition was interesting. David Hume was an Enlightenment philosopher 1700s who said that... He defines miracles as "violations of natural law," and he defines natural law as "what can't be violated." [laughter] And therefore, defines them out of existence. You know? But...

**MH:** Is there a circle there? [laughs]

**CK:** A vicious circle. But through most of history, people defined miracles as special divine action that invited awe. And I think that's important. Because as Christians, we believe that God is at work in everything. So you've got *general* divine action all around us. So DNA... you can't get much more spectacular than that!

**MH:** Mm hmm.

**CK:** But for people who don't have that big picture, God does sometimes *special* divine action—sometimes things that are out of the ordinary, that aren't just the... They don't repeat themselves over and over again, like in nature. And so they're meant to get our attention in a special way.

**MH:** Well that... I mean, I think that's sufficiently *restrictive*, to weed out just, like your example, like an answer to prayer may or may not be... The answer may or may not conform to that definition. So it does have a more academic, not just *feel* to it, but it's more... I'm trying to characterize it here. It's more academically satisfying. [laughter] I don't know, that's maybe an awkward way to put it. But as

opposed to sort of just opening the floodgates to anything that looks impressive or is a surprise. You know, that's a bit too wide.

15:00

When it comes to the book specifically, what I'd like to do is just kind of work through the different parts of the book. The book is divided into parts, and within the parts we have some chapter breakdown. But when it comes to Part 2, you get into reporting miracles. And I think this is going to go back to your whole thing about, "Well, do we have eyewitnesses or not?" That sort of question. Is that the case? I mean, when you get into who reports miracles, are you looking only for eyewitnesses, or are you looking for something else? And then answer for us more generally, "Who does?" I mean, where do we find miracle reports? Is it only the pages of the New Testament or the book of Acts or the Bible or something like that? Where do we find these things, especially, as the subtitle of your book indicates, the modern world (*The Supernatural Work of God in the Modern World*)? So right away that takes us out of the biblical era and into the modern world. So how do these things work out? Because you're not specifically doing something biblical here, but yet this is a biblical topic. But you're focusing on modernity. So where did your pool of data come from? Who reports them?

**CK:** I wanted to use the more recent evidence, where it's more immune to the criticism, "Well, that happened a long time ago. We can't verify that," or something like that. So independent eyewitnesses (especially multiple independent eyewitnesses) count for good evidence in anthropology, sociology, law, journalism, and of course historiography, which is usually what I'm working in. So I went around collecting that data. And I also looked at surveys that had been done in recent years, like again, going back to David Hume. He said that, "Well, you know, you never any credible eyewitnesses for this." [laughs] But, I mean, he could get away with that back then, in the 1700s, by restricting what he meant by "credible" in certain ways that we wouldn't even accept today. Some of them were rather ethnocentric and so on—racist—biases. But also today, Hume (I don't think) would have even used that argument himself, because there are surveys that show that there are hundreds of millions of people around the world who claim to have witnessed what they consider to be miracles. And when you start sorting through what these are, on average, most of them are things that we *would* consider to be miraculous. So we have hundreds of millions of Christians claiming this. And sometimes people think (at least in the West) that this is just Pentecostals and Charismatics, but that's not true. It was over one third of the people who *don't* claim to be Pentecostal or Charismatic but do claim to be Christian who claim to have witnessed these things. But it's not just people who start with Christian premises. So, for example, within the China Christian Council around the year 2000, there was a source that reported that about half of all conversions to Christianity in the previous 20 years (so maybe millions of people) were due to what they called "faith healing experiences." And some of the house church estimates in China for that period were even higher. Dr. Bal Krishna Sharma from Nepal told me that about 80% of converts to Christianity in Nepal

are due to healings and exorcisms. And I've talked with students (my students from the different seminaries where I've taught, here at Asbury, when I was on study leave working on this book at TEDS, just talking with students from different parts of the world), and how many of the students from India were converted to faith in Christ (first generation Christians) because of miracles they experienced or visions that they had, or so on. I don't really deal with visions in the book. But it's just a lot of that...

**MH:** It sounds suspiciously biblical. [laughter]

**CK:** Yeah.

**MH:** No, really. Because these are the contexts in which you're going to see what the New Testament describes. Because there's a spiritual warfare element. It's confronting the claims of other gods or other would-be gods, whatever those truth claims might be, meaning something has to separate the men from the boys, so to speak. [CK laughs] And this is what you get. So to me that feels entirely consistent with what you'd expect.

**CK:** Yeah.

**MH:** Are you familiar with, in the course of your research... I did not look in your bibliography, but I have a book by Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*.

**CK:** No, I haven't seen that one.

20:00

**MH:** It's 2006, so it's fairly recent. It's a Yale University Press title. But she does the same thing. She calls out lots and lots of examples of people in the Enlightenment period, right when this is supposed to be dying off or being stamped out. [CK laughs] But numerous reports that occurred to just ordinary people, that somebody happened to record and write down. And she collects these things. And then she also has an eye to gathering the commentary on those things that came from different intellectuals and philosophers and scientists of the day (the "elite culture," as she likes to refer to it). But again, it creates this conundrum [laughs] for the professional skeptic, that this stuff doesn't happen and nobody took it seriously. Well, that actually isn't the case, even in the Enlightenment period, right where you would expect the most hostility. There were just some things that the elite culture of the day could not explain.

**CK:** I just wrote that down so that I can check that one out.

**MH:** Yeah, it's very, very interesting. It's a really interesting resource. So let's narrow this to the West a little bit. Do you have any good data sources for either American Christianity or Christianity in the West? Because we all... You actually

discuss this in the book about why we sort of don't tend to run into as many miraculous things over here in Western civilization in general. But are there good data pools for this? Are there good resources, other than your book, that you were able to draw on?

**CK:** Yes. Yeah, there's a number of things. Now there have been surveys here in the U.S. that suggest that 34% of Americans claim to have witnessed these things. Now nobody would... Well, I don't think anybody would say that every claim is an authentic claim, especially to the way we're defining miracles. But I mean, we've got lots and lots of people. We've got a big data pool. And some of these have been published in medical journals. More of them have come out since my first book. But one of them was of a woman. Again, this couple was kind of the way that you just described yourself. They didn't believe that miracles had ceased, but on the other hand they said they'd never seen one. So they weren't Charismatic. They weren't Pentecostal, by any means. But they were... The wife had been blind for 12 years, and the husband just suddenly prayed for her. She was instantly healed. And this was a few decades ago, but all the medical documentation is there. And so this was published in a medical journal.

Another young man (I think he was 15 or 18 or so) had grown up with gastroparesis since he was a young boy, I think since he was a baby. And he had the feeding tubes and all these things. Well, somebody prayed for him, and they prayed for, like, an hour, and he was completely healed. He went and ate a normal meal. And the doctors were kind of amazed and said, "Well, if this continues for a while, we're going to take out all these tubes. And sure enough, it did. And that is also a medical journal article. The person who prayed for him (Bruce Van Natta) was an auto mechanic. He was working under a diesel truck. (This was before he prayed for him. This is just the backstory of the one who prayed for him.) He was working under a diesel truck when the axle gave way and came down and crushed his abdomen. It was considered extraordinary that he survived because of all the blood loss. But his small intestine was so destroyed that they had to remove most of it. And he was slowly starving to death because he couldn't digest food. He had dropped from 180 to 125 pounds, when a friend of his felt led to come pray for him. And when he prayed for him, Bruce felt something like an electric jolt through his body. But after that he was able to eat and digest food. And his doctor gave the report that his small intestine had more than doubled in length. It was now workable. And the small intestine in an adult can grow wider but it can't grow longer.

**MH:** Hmm.

25:00

**CK:** So this was like... People talk about, "Does an amputated appendage ever grow back?" Well, [laughs] this is kind of like that. And so he was the one who ended up praying for the young man who had gastroparesis. So there was, like, a



chain of these different things that God did. And there are a number of other cases too.

**MH:** Yeah. And I'm sure you get into these in your book, and the variety of them. But those are good examples, especially if they're medically documented. Because, you know, we live in a technological society. We live in the modern world. And that's the first place we're going to go. My audience obviously knows, I have cancer right now. And I know people who have been healed of what I have, just outright. So there are actually people that are in my own little sort of circle of friends here that I could point to and say, "Well, this person over here has this medically documented. It was there one day and it's gone the next," in response to, in this case (the case I'm thinking of specifically), his own prayers, but it had been a condition he had been dealing with for almost a year and a half. But it was just gone. You know? It was like it was never there. And to go into the doctors and report all that, and have it documented. The point is, these things *do* happen. They really do. The world is a lot stranger than we think, or than some people want us to think.

**CK:** Yeah.

**MH:** Let's ask another question in a bit of a different way. Do you think we're wrong in wanting proof? [laughs]

**CK:** No.

**MH:** You know? Because the flip side of this coin is that we somehow violate God's power or authority if we... Like the example you just gave. "Well, if you ate this meal. If this continues for a few weeks, we're going to take out the feeding tubes." Is it somehow wrong to have a Christian say, "Well, yeah, let's keep them in there and see what happens"? I mean, is seeking validation somehow a misstep—a lack of faith? What do you think in that regard?

**CK:** No. I mean, Proverbs warns against being gullible. And there are plenty of claims out there that are false. I mean, we can think about the... Well, actually in... Going back to David Hume, he talked about... He wanted to give an example of a claim that should've been respectable in the culture. So he goes back to Blaise Pascal's niece who was in France. She had a running eye sore. It was organic. It emitted a foul odor. And everybody knew about it. She was instantly and publicly healed in the sight of many witnesses. The Queen Mother of France sent her own physician to check it out. Hume's response to this is, "Well, we know *this* didn't happen, so why would we believe anything else?" [laughter] But he does that because she was touched with what she believed was a holy thorn from Jesus' crown of thorns. Now there were so many fake relics floating around at that time, neither I nor most people would believe it actually was a thorn from Jesus' crown of thorns. But be that as it may, it was a contact

point for her faith, that she was being touched by God. And she was healed. So we don't want to be gullible. We don't want to be fooled by fake things. And yet, when the real thing happens, as I believe happened in her case, we want to pay attention. And getting the documentation is one way to do that. Now it's easier said than done. I have some reports that are from the doctors themselves. They were the ones healed sometimes, and so they have easy access to the documentation. But then in other cases, sometimes people don't know where to get it, how to get it. If it's too long ago, there was a time when people didn't keep the documentation. And if it's too recent, people say, "Meh, that's too recent. Maybe they'll relapse." So we can't get it in every case. But we can get it in enough cases to show, "Yes, these things do happen."

30:00

**MH:** Yeah, I always think of a situation like, in the Gospels, when Jesus will heal somebody and then he'll tell the person, "Hey, go show the priest. This conforms to Torah, and this is the procedure we do." And I'm not obviously going to say that we would have the same agenda there or the same reasons for documenting this sort of thing as Jesus might have had, but nevertheless, there you have this step. And it does serve in the Gospel accounts to put the onus on his opponents. [laughs] You know?

**CK:** Yeah.

**MH:** "You're denying who I am. Well, check this out." There is an element of that, at least in my head. I don't know if you feel differently.

**CK:** No, I agree. And I think that testimony is very important. And this is part of our testimony, especially here in the West. What we *don't* want to do (and this is, I think, where people get this idea, but it needs to be read in context) is when people came to Jesus and said, "Show us a sign from heaven." Well, he had been doing signs all over the place. [MH laughs] His followers knew it because they were following him around. The people who weren't willing to pay attention to what he was doing... Basically they wanted it on their own terms. God is not obligated to jump through our hoops.

**MH:** Mm hmm.

**CK:** And so he has given us evidence. He's given us evidence in the world all around us. He has also given evidence with cases of special divine action, like these. And it's our responsibility, then, to be open to the evidence and to look where he is giving it and not to say, "God, you have to do it the way I say or I'm not going to believe you." [laughs] That's kind of arrogant.

**MH:** Sure. Now you have... Part 3 is entitled "Videos and Doctors' Reports." So we've traversed into the doctors' reports area here. What's up with the video? Do

healings ever get captured on video? Were you able to tap into that as a resource?

**CK:** Yeah. I thought of that particular category because one time I was giving a lecture on this and a science professor at Wheaton asked a reasonable question, “How come they’re never caught on video?” Well, it happens that they are. [laughs] Now, I don’t trust everything that’s online. I mean, people can fake videos too. But one clear example where it’s not fake is Delia Knox. She was in a wheelchair for 22 years because of an automobile accident. She couldn’t feel her legs. And so she had prayed. Different times she had prayed. But one day after 22 years, she was praying for somebody else and all of a sudden she felt her legs. And so she wheeled herself up to the front, where others could pray for her. And then she said, “I want to walk.” And her muscles were still atrophied, so they needed to help her up and to hold her up at the beginning. But she was moving her hips under her own power for the first time in 22 years. And so this was posted online because the church service was posted online. And skeptics were saying, “Oh, you call that walking?” It was the first time she had moved her hips in 22 years. But then she had time to work on her atrophied muscles, and so a month later, you’ve got another video of her visiting her home church, where I’ve interviewed some people, and she just walks in under her own power now. And how did critics respond to that? Well, one of the critics said, “Oh, she must have just faked her paralysis for 22 years.” [laughter] Like, who in their right mind would fake...?

**MH:** Well, that inspires awe in me, so I guess that’s a miracle, too. [laughter]

**CK:** Yeah.

**MH:** That’s pretty desperate. Gosh. Well, you have another... In Part 4... Well, let’s stay in Part 3. You have “Back From Virtual Brain Death” and “Vignettes of Brain Recovery.” What’s that about?

**CK:** Those are about people who actually... In many of those cases, the people were considered dead by usual means.

**MH:** So modern standards.

**CK:** Yeah, we talk about what’s the definition of miracles. There’s also a question around definitions of death, so to speak. But their heart was stopped for, like, ten minutes, or sometimes 20 minutes, or sometimes hours. And so these are the cases where it’s more disputable whether they were actually clinically dead or not. So...

**MH:** Is this like waking up in the morgue, that kind of thing? Or in a hallway?

35:00

**CK:** Yes. Yeah. Some of those. One chapter I devote to a case that made a lot of the news a couple decades ago, and that was of a young man who was in a traffic accident. The scans showed that his... The white part of the brain was the part that was alive. The black part was dead. The scans showed that it was basically all black. And so they were telling the family, "You need to take him off life support. There's nothing more that can be done." And his brother, who was blind (so this is not claiming that God heals everything) was, like, "No, Mom. We can't take him off. I feel like God is going to do something." And his mom was, like, "We need to listen to the doctors. They know what they're doing." And it's true. The doctors that have experience with this, a lot of people are praying for a miracle and they don't see one. And so in any case, the mom said, "Okay. I'll give you one more day." And so he went to his brother's side and was praying and then he said to his brother, "If you can hear me, squeeze my hand." He squeezed his hand. And he said, "Nurse! Nurse!" And she said, "No, that's just an involuntary motion. He said, "Put your hand there. Squeeze it! Show her that you're alive!" And he squeezed that. And she said, "Ah! I'm going to go get the doctor!" [laughs] And he recovered fully. That wasn't instantaneous, but that's one of the cases that's in the book.

**MH:** Wow. What about other things that come to mind? You have a whole part on the blind being able to see again, the lame walking. You even have leprosy in here. And of course, the deaf hear. In Part 4, give us a few examples of cases that you were able to document in these areas.

**CK:** Sure. I mentioned earlier the medical journal article about the blind person being healed. And there's another case. I mean, both of these were after 12 years. But that's just... There are a number of other cases, too. But just thinking of another with 12 years, Andrea Anderson, in Canada, had been blind for 12 years. Some of the cases I have where people were blind, it was due to macular degeneration and so on, and then they were healed. In her case it was related to her diabetes. Well, she was at a church service and a man who was preaching just felt led. He commanded her to be healed in Jesus' name. And suddenly she could see. Actually, this one was captured on video too. And so he tested her in front of everybody, "How many fingers am I holding up?" and so on. But that was on video. I've interviewed her and her pastor tells me he still keeps her old white cane in his office. This one was public. Everybody in the church knew she was blind. And everybody in the church knew after that she could see. And speaking of things being atrophied, her brain wasn't used to processing all these images. So she would go into a grocery store and she would just be overwhelmed with all the colors. [laughs] Because it took her a while before her brain was used to seeing again. But anyway, that's another case of that.

There's also Greg Spencer. We have all the medical documentation in his case. He didn't have a choice but to get the medical documentation (he was one of the ones who was blind from macular degeneration) because he was already on

Disability. And the Social Security Administration said, “No. Macular degeneration doesn’t un-degenerate.” [MH laughs] “We’re going to investigate you for fraud for faking being blind.” So he had all the medical documentation and they looked at it and they wrote him and they said, “Well, you’ve experienced a remarkable return of your visual acuity. You’re no longer qualified for Disability.” Which I guess means he had to go back to work. You know, there’s a downside to everything. [laughter]

40:00

Oh, and the other ones. Now with leprosy... Of course, biblical leprosy has a much wider definition. I mean, primarily what we speak of as leprosy today is Hansen’s disease. But for that chapter I tried to focus on visible things, where you could see the change. So I did have a couple cases of leprosy from India where people were there when the leper was healed, and actually you could see the visible change in that. In fact, one of those actually... And this is from a former student of mine who’s now doing his PhD work. But he’s from India and he spent time in this one area teaching the Bible. Because a friend of his there, before he was a Christian, he was a shaman. But he had been cast out of his village because he had Hansen’s disease. And a couple women came by and prayed for him one day, and that night in a dream an angel touched him. He was completely healed of leprosy. He went back into the village. The entire village was converted. And by the time my friend went there to minister with this guy, half the region had become Christian, and raisings of the dead and all sorts of things were reported there. And this was the way people were coming to faith, just like we see in the Gospels and Acts and the cutting edge of evangelism.

In terms of deafness healed, there are, oh boy, lots of examples of that. There was a girl who was nine years old. She was deaf without her hearing aid, but she was praying that God would heal her. Suddenly she could hear. She ran downstairs and told her parents. They were, like, “How can this be?” But they tested her. Surely, she could. They called the audiologist. He said, “No. She has auditory nerve damage. This just doesn’t go away.” But sure enough, she was tested again. The audiologist says, “I have no way to explain this, but she can hear! The auditory nerve damage is completely gone.” And that one was actually published in a book by a medical doctor who was giving case studies of miracles.

There’s another one published in Southern Medical Journal in September of 2010, where they went and did a study, again, on the cutting edge of evangelism in Mozambique, where there were, like, so many people being healed of deafness and blindness. And they’d go into a village, they’d show the Jesus film, and they’d preach. People started getting healed. And then the next day they’d start a church there, because these were completely unchurched villages. They hadn’t heard the gospel before. And they saw that Jesus could do these things. And these were people from their own community that they knew were blind or deaf who were healed. And so there was a study published in Southern Medical Journal. Naturally critics on the internet objected because they said, “Well,

testing conditions aren't ideal in rural Mozambique," which is true. And so Candy Gunther Brown, a professor at Indiana University, one of the authors of the study, published a book called *Testing Prayer* with Harvard University Press, in 2012. And in there she has a chapter on this study. And it's pretty clear. I mean, people went from blindness to seeing and from deafness to hearing. It was pretty amazing. And as far as the disabled walking, I mean, we could go on for a long time with these kind of things. If I can give just one of those...

**MH:** Sure.

**CK:** ... Barbara Cummiskey Snyder (back then she was Barbara Cummiskey) was dying. She had a really advanced, severe case of Multiple Sclerosis and the doctors said she won't be back to the hospital again. She'd spent half of the past 15 years in the hospital. But they said, you know, they had established a "don't resuscitate" order. She had a breathing machine because she couldn't operate her diaphragm on her own. She suddenly heard a voice saying, "My child, rise up and walk." Now she couldn't move her muscles under her own power, but suddenly she jumped out of bed. Her feet were flat on the floor. She noticed she could see that. She noticed that her hands were uncurled. Then she noticed she was seeing these things. (I neglected to mention she had also grown blind.) And in her case, she wasn't even atrophied. I mean, her muscles weren't even atrophied. She ran out, greeted her father. Danced around outside. Now, I have the reports from all three of her doctors. Two of them published on this. Two of them I interviewed. And they're all very clear that there's no natural explanation for this. This has got to be something where God just stepped in and did something dramatic. You know, this was 1981. She had no recurrence. So for 40 years... She just recently passed away from Covid, very sadly. But for 40 years she remained healthy. No recurrence of any of this.

**MH:** Wow. How many... I don't know if you ever counted. [laughs] I imagine you probably counted. But just in rough numbers, in your book, how many of these instances (regardless of what the problem was—what the sickness or disease or medical condition was)... How many of these miraculous reversals do you have in your book? I mean, how many cases do you, if you... For readers of the book, I think it'd just be helpful to know, how many of these you're actually going to run into, just in your book.

45:00

**CK:** I actually didn't count. [laughter] I would say, either... Probably in the first book, there were hundreds. Probably in this one, it's at least safe to say there are scores of them.

**MH:** Okay, scores. Alright. So maybe something pushing a hundred. And the other one, obviously, in that two-volume work, it's massive, so you're going to get a lot more. I mean, I think that's important. This isn't just two or three. And the documentation... Again, I'm on the side, as you are, that it is important. Because

it's not so much that you're trying to win a debate. But you're trying to weed out what might be misunderstood or fallacious, or God forbid, something even fake. You're trying to weed all that out to get to the authentic instances of this. And when it gets published in a medical journal, that just doesn't happen by accident.

**CK:** [laughs] Yeah.

**MH:** I mean, the editors of these journals know who their audience is, and their audience is largely going to be skeptical medical professionals. So they're going to be very cautious and careful with including an episode like you just heard described in a medical journal. Because the reputation of their journal is at stake. And that's very significant in the medical community, to have your journal respected as opposed to something that people feel they could dismiss. So that's really important.

Now you mentioned people being raised from the dead. And this is... I think it's pretty obvious that this is the most either disputed or controversial kind of miracle, I think precisely because it's the most dramatic or the most seemingly impossible. How much space do you have in your book devoted to that? I know you have a section. Let me just take a quick look here at it. You have Part 5. So you have a whole part with several chapters in that part, "The Dead are Raised." So is this still happening? Can you give us some best cases of this sort of thing?

**CK:** Sure. Yeah. One reason people can sometimes dismiss some things as merely psychosomatic (not to say that psychosomatic doesn't need to be cured too, but it's really hard to define somebody as psychosomatically dead).... [MH laughs]

**MH:** Right. How would you know? [laughter]

**CK:** Yeah. Also I should add this, regarding doctors. There was a survey done of physicians, and over half of them said that they had witnessed things they considered to be miraculous. And this was in the context of questions about, "Do you believe in miracles the way they happened in the Bible?" And of course, the people that don't believe in any possibility of this would never define anything that way. But there are a number of doctors who... And there are actually collections of articles by doctors who report these things.

But in terms of raisings from the dead, one that really got my attention... Now this was in a place where they didn't have medical documentation because they didn't have medical help available, which is one reason why people needed the miracles more. I mean, God doesn't do them just to entertain us. But this was Antoinette Malombé Moussounga. She shared with me how her daughter, Therese, when she was two years old, was bitten by a snake. She found her not breathing. No medical help available, so she strapped her to her back and ran to

a nearby village, where a family friend was doing ministry. He prayed for Therese. She started breathing again. The next day she was fine. I asked Antoinette Malombé how long this was. She said, "About three hours," that she wasn't breathing. Now this is not by any means the most dramatic case that I have. But it really impressed me because Antoinette Malombé was my mother-in-law, and Terese is my sister-in-law, who has a Master's degree. I mean, she has no brain damage. After six minutes with no oxygen, irreparable brain damage starts in. Anyway, that one got my attention, because it's from within my own family.

50:00

But we have accounts from the West also. Sean George, consultant physician at Kalgoorlie Hospital in Australia, died of a heart attack, and they spent an hour and a half basically to trying to revive him. They shocked him 13 times with a defibrillator and gave him a thousand chest compressions, something like that. And I have the exact figures in the book; it's just I don't remember the precise numbers. But finally they said, "Well, there's obviously nothing we can do. I mean, all his systems have shut down. He'd be a vegetable just sustained by life support if we just kept him on the machine." His wife arrived, who was also a doctor (Sherry Jacob). She fell down beside the bed and prayed. And suddenly the heart monitor sprang to life. And they were, like, "Oh boy. Well, we better do what we're supposed to do as doctors. But this is the worst thing that could happen, because she's going to have to decide when to take him off of the ventilator." But three days later he awoke, completely well. He read his own chart. He's back in medical practice. He has all of this documentation publicly online on his website. And he's a doctor. He knew where to get it. He's got the defibrillator logs posted there. His colleagues, some of whom were Muslim or Hindu, agree that this is a miracle—what happened.

And another account from Chauncy Crandall, a cardiologist in West Palm Beach. He was called in to certify in the E.R. the death of a patient. He signed the death certificate because they had been working for 40 minutes to revive the guy. He had been flatlined for, like, 40 minutes... defibrillator, nothing had worked. So he sadly signed it. He was going out. But he felt led to go back and pray for this man to have a second chance to know the Lord. Obviously, this is not... This doesn't happen very often, obviously. But anyway, he went back in and he prayed for the man to have a second chance to know the Lord. The nurse was glaring at him, like, "Dr. Crandall, you've lost your mind." They shocked him with the defibrillator one more time, and suddenly, he's got a normal heartbeat. And the nurse starts screaming, "Dr. Crandall, what have you done?!" [laughter] And the guy, Jeff Markin, he had no brain damage. I mean, the guy was not just dead. He was obviously dead. His face and hands had turned black from cyanosis. But he did have a second chance to know the Lord. And he did come to know the Lord. And today, Jeff Markin and Chauncy Crandall go around and tell their story together.



**MH:** Yeah, I mean, that's pretty dramatic, especially the one, I agree, that's within your own family. I mean, it's a little hard to look people in the eye [laughs] and say, "Well, what you think happened to you really didn't."

**CK:** Not to doubt one's mother-in-law, but we did also confirm it with the guy who prayed for her. So yeah.

**MH:** Wow. You have a chapter here on "Nature Miracles." What do you mean by "nature miracles"? And then you asked the question, "Do nature miracles still happen?" So say a little bit about that.

**CK:** Yeah. And actually, your question is a good one. "What do you mean by 'nature miracles?'" Because our bodies are kind of part of nature, too. But these are usually considered to be things that are beyond the human body. So, like, when Jesus walked on the water, Jesus stilling storms, and so forth, and multiplying food. I talked with the former Anglican bishop of the Horn of Africa, who also has a PhD. He's teaching at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, PA. He shared with me an example of multiplied food when he was in ministry in the Horn of Africa. And there are just so many accounts that could be given. Stilling of storms... One of my... Well, not technically my PhD student, but one of our PhD students here was auditing one of my classes. He's a Hebrew Bible, Old Testament, PhD student. He now has his PhD. He shared a case of when he was... He's from the U.S., but he was in Fiji at the time. And they were on a boat and they were caught in a terrible storm on the outskirts of a cyclone. And the captain's chair broke, and everybody was starting to panic. And the captain called forward a teenager in the back who was wearing a Christian T-shirt and ordered her to get down and pray. So she prayed and the storm stopped. And I guess the moral of the story is, if you wear a Christian T-shirt, be ready for somebody to call on you to pray. [MH laughs]

55:00 But I witnessed something like this myself when I was a young professor. I had just started teaching. I was teaching at a seminary that was attached to a college. And the college... Some students were Christian and some students weren't. And so we were going to do an outreach. We'd scheduled it for a certain day. The rain was just pouring down that day. And it had been pouring down. The weather forecast said it was going to pour down all day. And a sophomore biology major led us in a prayer for the rain to stop so we could do our outreach on this campus. And suddenly the rain stopped. And in a few minutes, the sun came out. And the sun shone the rest of the day. No more rain. So I mean, yeah, God does things like this today.

**MH:** Wow. Well, one more question. And this sort of loops us back to the beginning. Why is it (or at least it seems)... And I'm sort of taking it as a given. Why is it that we don't see as much of this in the West? Or do you think that is a misperception?

**CK:** I think there may be an element of misperception in that God often does things and because of our skepticism, we just almost ignore it. “These are anomalies. These are one-offs.” And so they don’t get talked about as much, unless you ask somebody point blank, “Have you ever seen anything like this?” And then they may tell you. But on the other hand, I think it’s not just a misperception. God does things more where they’re needed. Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread, but that didn’t mean people weren’t supposed to go out and work for it. And after Jesus feeds the 5,000 and the 4,000, he says, “Gather up the fragments that remain. You won’t need a miracle for your next meal.” So he doesn’t do it just for our entertainment. He does it where it’s really needed. God has provided us medical technology. That’s a gift and we should praise God for that gift. And also, God does the dramatic things... It’s not like God doesn’t answer prayer elsewhere. But God tends to do things more dramatically (not exclusively) on the cutting edge of evangelism. Some people have estimated that somewhere around 70% of Christian growth around the world today is due to signs and wonders—so these things that get people’s attention for the gospel.

**MH:** From my perspective, that is actually the kind of thing that I look for when someone shares a story or when I read something about it. Because to me, like I said, this sounds suspiciously biblical. [CK laughs] Because it makes all the sense in the world to me to have first century book of Acts conditions where God would choose to act in the same way. You know, you have a dearth of the gospel. Maybe they’ve never heard it at all. You know, it needs validation in response to false gods, false teaching, whatnot. And you know, it’s an act of spiritual warfare. It’s a confrontation, at the heart of it. And you know, that mimics what’s going on in the first century really well. So why would we not expect God to do the same sorts of things for the same reasons?

**CK:** Yes.

**MH:** So that feels entirely reasonable to me, to look for that. So I’m automatically inclined... I mean, I wouldn’t be one that would say, “Unless you have those conditions, then it’s not a real miracle.” I mean, that’s absurd too. But just in terms of the sheer volume, we’ll say, or purpose or context—like you said, the cutting edge of evangelism... To me, that makes a lot of sense. Because it mimes the first century. It mimes what we have in Scripture. Nobody’s doing miracles in the book of Acts for entertainment.

**CK:** Right.

**MH:** Or to build their own kingdoms, build their own audience, get likes on Facebook or something. You know? It just... Nobody’s doing that to build their own reputations. It’s all very focused. It’s ministry-focused. It’s evangelism-focused. So why would we not expect to see that? And the flip side of that is I think that is a good way to judge the validity of other things. Because when all

you see come out of something that was supposedly a miracle is, “Well, lots of more money flowed into our ministry,” or, “I could finally afford that Bentley that my...” Well, look. “Silver and gold have we none.” You know?

**CK:** Yes.

**MH:** That is not a first century context. So I tend to be very suspicious of that on the other side as well.

**CK:** And right in the... I mean, Simon the sorcerer, when you said, “We don’t have anybody in the book of Acts doing miracles just to make themselves look good and get likes...”

**MH:** He might be the exception.

1:00:00

**CK:** ...Simon the sorcerer was trying to get likes on Facebook, I guess. You know, Acts 8:9-11. And then also with Elymas bar Jesus, and the seven sons of Sceva in chapter 19. So chapters 8 and 13. And then, of course, Pharaoh’s magicians in Exodus 7 and 8.

**MH:** Yeah, they’re power struggles.

**CK:** Yeah.

**MH:** So I think we ought to look for God to do these sorts of things in those contexts, to basically answer the question, “Who is God?”

**CK:** Yes.

**MH:** You know, and, “Whose gospel is the real gospel?”

**CK:** Yes.

**MH:** Yeah, I think it’s entirely consistent. Well, you know, I have to let you go. But this has been really fascinating. And again, I really hope... I know the book is very new. I don’t even know if you’ve had anybody review already. Have you at all? Has it gotten reviewed in journals yet or anything like that?

**CK:** Oh, no. It just came out... Its official release was ten days ago.

**MH:** Well, that’s good. We’re right on the cusp of it going live. So I’m hoping that there will be a lot of people in this audience that will get it. This is going to be not only a good read, but it’ll be a good resource. Because you’re going to have these profiles all in one place, in one volume. You’re going to have the footnotes. You’re going to have the resources that Dr. Keener used to gather his data and

the various studies he referred to. You're going to have that information. So this would be an important part of yes, an apologetics or theological library. But also, this is just going to be a good read. I mean, it's going to be an encouraging thing. So I would hope that we'd have lots of people in this audience buy the book. I think it would be a great investment for all of you to make. So Craig, thanks for being here with us on the podcast.

**CK:** Thanks so much, Mike. It's a real privilege to be with you.

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**TS:** Alright, Mike. Another great interview. I remember when you and I were at SBL and ETS at the book show, or whatever, his two-volume *Miracles* was there. And...

**MH:** You did some curls with them? [laughter]

**TS:** Yeah, they're pretty thick. But I think Fern bought them. She was there with us. And I remember, we interviewed him at that show. And that was my first exposure to him. But seeing the two big volume documentation on *Miracles*... I haven't read it. I always wanted to go back and do it. So I'm very excited about this more condensed summary version, if you will—Cliff Notes version. I'm assuming that's what it is.

**MH:** Yeah. Well, a lot of it is, and a lot of it, like he said, was new, too. But yeah, I mean, it's a stair-step to the bigger one. So if people can get their feet wet on this one, I think that will help the other one. The other one's just great for this massive reference work that it is. But it's still readable, too. But it's so long—it's so large. It's a good idea to condense things.

**TS:** Isn't it like the gold standard?

**MH:** Oh, yeah. There's nothing like it in biblical studies. Nothing even approaches it on this topic. So yeah. If you're going to have a resource dedicated to this topic, that's the two-volume set to have.

**TS:** Yeah. And don't forget, on his new book, you can get a discount code at NakedBiblePodcast.com. So go do that. Well, Mike, next episode, my friend, is our 400<sup>th</sup>. The big 4-0-0. So we're going to do...

**MH:** So we're going to answer 400 questions? [laughter]

**TS:** I kid you not, we probably have that much. So we're going to have to do some editing to figure out what we're going to whittle down. We're probably

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shooting for three parts, to be honest. I mean, we've got a year's worth of Revelation questions. So we're going to do our best to answer them. And we may take three episodes to do that. I'm going to ask people on Facebook. I'll put a post on the podcast page. And also email me at [TreyStricklin@gmail.com](mailto:TreyStricklin@gmail.com). But I would like just some one-liner quotes. We'll give you a shout-out. If you want to say anything about the podcast for the last seven years, what it's meant to you, some positive feedback... Or just a comment or two about the show. Send it to me. Post it on Facebook. And I would love to read those and give you a shoutout. I think we're going to cut it off now, so if you didn't get your question in, it's a little too late. [laughs] Because we got so much. I'm curating those as we speak. Again, please send me your comments. We'd love to hear your feedback.

**MH:** Yeah. And we will not post any comment that asks for more on the book of Revelation.

**TS:** [laughs] We're done.

**MH:** We'll just cut that one off. [laughter]

**TS:** Absolutely. Alright, Mike. Well, again, congratulations on 399. And next time it's 400. Tear drop that we didn't get to do it on our conference. That would've been a fun celebration. But we'll get 'em next time.

**MH:** Yep.

**TS:** And with that, we want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.