

## Chapter 5. It's a Miracle?

**“If every trace of any single religion were wiped out and nothing were passed on, it would never be created exactly that way again. There might be some other nonsense in its place, but not that exact nonsense. If all of science were wiped out, it would still be true and someone would find a way to figure it all out again.”**

**~Penn Jillette**



Penn & Teller

Image courtesy of Destination360

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines a miracle as, "An extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.". Many Christians use the miracles of Christ as the bedrock for their belief systems, but upon closer inspection one can apply the simplest of explanations to rule out any form of true divine intervention. And even worse, some of his miracles are mentioned in more than one book of the bible, presumably by different authors, and the two stories don't match up. The miracles of the other 'prophets' are just as numerous and bear just as much substance. They're all miracles. . . if you ask the guy telling the story.

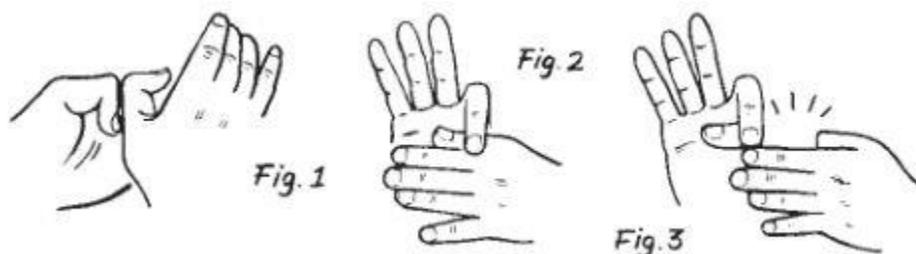
I saw a stage act in Vegas. . . well, ok, I didn't actually see the act, but I watched their show on Showtime and it. . . Ok, fine, I didn't watch their show on Showtime but I did see it on YouTube. . . Sigh, so, when trolling Facebook if one of my friends posted a clip of Penn and Teller's work I would watch (most of) the clip and let me tell you these guys are awesome! There's this little guy, he is absolutely hilarious and then there's the other guy who talks a lot and he's ok too. Anyway, the point to all this is I've seen better miracles on a Vegas stage than are listed for Jesus. The little guy can make rabbits come out of his hat and the big guy. . . Well, he pretty much just talks a lot, but a rabbit from an empty hat sounds like some fairly miraculous stuff to me.

And, here's the real clincher, I just happened to see it with my very own eyes. No one told me he did it. I didn't read it in a book. With my baby greens I saw a video recording of a man pulling a rabbit out of a hat from various camera angles. Do I believe he really pulled a real rabbit from that hat which I saw and believed to be empty? Hell yeah I do! I saw it with my own eyes!

But wait... what if I didn't see it with my own eyes? What if someone told me they saw it? Should I believe them and believe you can really pull rabbits out of empty hats? Ok, let's go one step further. Let's say this guy tells me his grandfather fifty years ago saw a man pull not one rabbit out of an empty hat but several thousand. Enough to feed five thousand men. The story is even more grandiose now so surely that must make it even more true, right? Ok, last step. Let's imagine that guy whose grandfather told him such a wonderful and true (because grandpa says so) story writes this drivel down, convinces his friends and starts spreading it around. Then someone stuffs away a copy in a cave and two thousand years later someone digs it up. Does that make it even more true? Did the little guy really pull a live rabbit out of an empty hat? Is it a magic trick gone extremely right or clear proof of divine intervention?

Imagine if these two magically inclined comedians, or comedy inclined magicians, however you like it, were somehow thrust back in time a couple thousand years and had a mindset bent on mischief... Who knows? We might have a holiday with an invisible rabbit showing up out of nowhere and leaving candy for all the little boys and girls. Well, not girls. They are unclean.

So, back to our prophets, the little guy goes into town first and spends a couple of days playing the blind beggar. The big guy goes along telling people how awesome he is, doing some fancy magic tricks and telling them how they need to follow him. He takes his followers into town and when they need a really big miracle he happens along the little guy and heals his blindness. Now the followers are drooling with fervency. These two con men skip along from town to town until tragedy strikes. Things get out of hand and the big guy ends up on the cross. Damn! What's the little guy to do? He decides to keep the game rolling, of course. A man's gotta eat! He sneaks the body out of the tomb, claims the tall man's divinity, opens a church and starts raking in the dough, or sheep, as it were. After decades of loyal followers relaying simple magic tricks as miracles and blowing them out of proportion to further their own claims and beliefs you have the beginning of a religion. The disappearing thumb trick evolves into the story of how the big guy removed his own arm to prove his divinity, etc.



The disappearing thumb trick  
Image courtesy of hubpages.com

Often, theists will use ancient historians to try to prove the existence of Jesus. Ok fine. I'll concede it is possible Jesus was a real person. However, none of the historians they cite actually lived at the time of Jesus. Most of them weren't even born until 30-200 years after Jesus died. And although these historians do speak of Christians and of the execution of Christ, a story propagated by Christians, that mere fact alone does not grant him Godhood nor does it prove the existence of God or Jesus. All it proves is that there were Christians around causing trouble and claiming they followed a man named Christ, who they claim was executed by the Romans at the behest of the Jews. It should be noted that despite being meticulous record keepers the Romans made no note of these events and none of the secular accounts mention anything about miracles performed by Jesus. One would think there would be all manner of secular writings considering in the book of John it reads:

***"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." John 21:25***

Yet we have nothing. Zilch, zero, squat! But of course John would make this claim.



David Koresh mug shot photo

I can find historical documents that prove the existence of David Koresh and that he had a large group of followers who believed he could perform miracles. In fact a brief internet search will show that decades after his death, there are still people out there called Koreshians who believe he is the messiah. However, simply stating something doesn't make it true and if David Koresh were truly God, it would have been a perfect opportunity for him to walk out through the flames unharmed on national television and quash all doubts. Did it happen? Nope. Dead as a doornail. So do you think in a thousand years we'll have Koreshians blowing themselves up in malls? Why not?



Joseph Smith Jr

Joseph Smith Jr of Mormon fame was shot in a jail cell, tried to jump out the window to escape and died in the fall. Dozens of people there and no one sees anything supernatural. A single 'believer' on-site claims after the fact to have seen Smith be resurrected or some crap. Given a hundred years for his followers to spread his nonsensical word and now millions believe he sits at the left hand of god. He and Jesus hanging out up there with God, watching little kids starve. Hell, the guy couldn't even take a couple of bullets and a twenty foot drop to the ground so I'm hard pressed to believe he's any type of messiah. Neo from the Matrix could use his mind to stop bullets and could fly. Joseph Smith Jr performed a similar 'miracle' except he used his internal organs to stop the bullets and his flying skills were somewhat lacking.

Muhammad was a real work of art. He performed more miracles than you can shake a stick at. After fifteen to sixteen hundred years his followers have spread into the billions and the tales of his miracles are great. Split the moon in two pieces and put it back together or so his followers claim. In fifteen hundred years the Koreshians will probably believe their Messiah healed the blind and did all kinds of things his followers of today will make up to try to convince themselves and their children of his divinity. Then the children will tell the stories to their children, adding even more grandiose coloring to the lies and then those children, none of whom were actually alive at the time, will write down the books of Koresh and before long they will have themselves a bible and a messiah worth killing for.

And they are always, 'coming back'. With the exception of Muhammad, who even his followers believe him to be dead and never to return, most of these so called seers claim they are coming back. Joseph Smith Jr will someday return. Jesus will someday return. David Koresh will someday return. Blah blah blah. Return now! Brother it's been two thousand years since Jesus died. . . dude ain't coming back!

The miracle of Jesus rising from the dead was fake, a hoax. His followers pulled his body from his grave and then they gave him a proper burial, no doubt. It was a follower who claimed the body of Jesus from Pontius Pilate and allegedly offered up his own tomb for Jesus to be buried in. There's no guarantee his body ever got there beyond the claim of the hoaxers. Then they propagated the lie of Jesus' resurrection, complete with a tale of men shining like lightning outside his tomb telling passersby he had risen from the grave. Well, it depends on which story you read. Some claim Mary and/or Mary Magdalene found the empty tomb.

Why would his followers do such a thing? First of all to avoid the shame of being wrong, especially if they had claimed all along he would be resurrected. I suspect Jesus and his followers probably didn't make such a claim and it was added later. I say this primarily because if such claims had been made I think it extremely unlikely the Romans or Hebrews would have left the tomb unattended. After all the commotion I would imagine quite a few interested parties would have stuck around to see if he would fulfill the prophecy. One would think the Jews would be extremely keen to learn if they had just crucified their would-be messiah and Pontius Pilate would be very interested to discover if his old Pagan gods were real or if the God of the Jews was real.

Secondly, for the same reason the Romans and Jews would have stuck around and watched for his resurrection, his followers would have wanted to further the idea of Jesus fulfilling prophecy and his brand of Judaism (we now call it Christianity) becoming dominant. And lastly because people seldom give up power and control once they have it. In reality, I suspect the greatest hoax of all time was probably pulled off by a very few people when they convinced the rest of Jesus' followers that he'd been resurrected. Perhaps the twelve disciples are actually the twelve deceivers or the twelve dupes. He didn't even look like himself. So much so that he had to convince some of his followers it was really him. Some Christians I've spoken with, attribute this change in appearance to the effects of being resurrected, but there are many people resurrected throughout the bible and not a single other seems to have any identity crisis and everyone knows who they are. The only person resurrected in the bible who didn't look the same way post-resurrectus was Christ. And these aren't secular claims made by people trying to disprove the divinity of Jesus, these are his own followers words written in his own bible.

If Jesus survived the actual crucifixion with the help of a roman soldier working on the inside and Joseph of Arimathea whisking him away to safety he would surely have been badly swollen and bruised from the event. This would explain why people would have had a difficult time recognizing him. The problem with this is that it removes divinity and we're left with the atheist mandate that there is no God. If he had been resurrected with the glory and power of almighty God he should have been healed from head to toe and easily recognizable. Properly paid off roman soldiers could have placed the spikes just under his hands and feet rather than through them so he could grab onto and stand upon them, and the final death blow by the Roman spear actually being a mere cut on the side to speed the end of the charade. However, the sleight of hand tricks with the spikes during crucifixion are one thing, but the very public lashing he took at the hands of the Romans would have been something he probably couldn't have faked. I would think if he survived the crucifixion the only reason he stayed around for such a short time afterwards was that he caught an infection or otherwise succumbed to the wounds sustained during the beatings. A story ending with him rising up into heaven to meet god is so much better than him getting gangrene in his legs and dying a slow and horrible death. If he was the real messiah, he should have publicly risen up from the dead and united all of Israel under his rule and protection and should have cast out the invading Romans. Did that happen? No. It's no wonder the Jews don't consider him the true messiah. If you do all the frilly stuff on the side which claim you're the chosen one, but don't actually do what the messiah was supposed to do then what are you? Oh, well, the claim is made that although he didn't unite the tribes of Israel in life, he's going to do it in the afterlife, and therefore fulfill the prophecy. Sounds to me like people making stuff up as they go along.

**“When I was 14 a chaplain at school gave me a reading list. I read everything and I went back to him with a question: How can you really believe in this stuff?” ~A.C. Grayling**

If someone played his part in his stead after his death and burial, it's not a far fetched idea that this could be the reason his followers had a hard time recognizing him. One of the followers may have stepped in as a replacement. It would not surprise me to learn about the accounts of his appearance being outright fabrications as the people he was 'appearing' to, were his loyal followers, i.e. fellow hoaxers.

Here's something else to consider. In the book of Mark it tells of Jesus' arrest at Gethsemane and in this tale, it says on the night before he was arrested, Jesus stepped away from the main party to 'pray' while three disciples, Peter, James and John, all sat watch. Jesus is such an awe inspiring messiah these guys can't even stay awake long enough for him to pray. Three times he steps away to pray and three times he comes back and they are all sleeping and he, the almighty son of god, chastises them and yet each time he returns they are asleep. I propose they had no idea Jesus was going to be arrested that night and any claim of such was added after the fact. There are some who believe Jesus was up on Gethsemane enjoying the pleasures of a young male disciple when the soldiers came.

***“A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.” Mark 14:51-52***

'Was following Jesus,' who had just come alone from the garden at Gethsemane where he was 'praying'. The assertion that Jesus was having gay sex the night most believers think he was pleading with God not to put him through the crucifixion will probably not sit well with many but it makes more logical sense that he was out there getting his gay play on rather than he is the risen God and was having a heart to heart with the almighty. I don't know how true it is but it makes you wonder two things. One is, why would a mostly naked young man be following Jesus around in the dark and the other is... why would the author of Mark bother to mention it? I would be more likely to believe Judas intentionally identified the wrong person to the Roman soldiers and the person slipping away in his underwear was in fact Jesus.

There was a reason groups like the council of Nicea decided to remove certain books from the main cannon of the bible. Perhaps there's a little less 'miracle' and a lot more 'pay no attention to the man behind the curtain' going on than you've been led to believe.

Wouldn't want the Tin Man to find his brain now, would we?