

yet will I not forget thee” (Isa. 49:15). A baby’s cry is impossible to ignore (even someone else’s baby in the supermarket!). The breast-feeding mother feels the tingling of the ‘let-down reflex’ at the sound of her baby’s cry and becomes distracted and upset if she tries to ignore it. She is moved with compassion, like the father of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:20); note Tyndale’s beautiful translation, “He was with mild heartedness astirred!”. It is impossible for our Father to forsake His children, even though they forget Him. If they cry to Him, He will run to meet them.

Jesus also spoke of the feelings that every mother has implanted in her memory: “A woman

when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world” (Jno. 16:21).

Having experienced this with my daughter only recently when our first grandchild was born, I know exactly the relief, the sense of fulfilment, pleasure and joy, I will feel when God’s first-born returns to the earth. My joy will be full, and all the anxiety and anguish of this life will be a distant memory.

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Putting the miracle back into Creation

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IN GENESIS 1 the “lights in the firmament”, the sun, moon and stars, are said to be “signs” (v. 14). A fundamental reason why God provides signs is to cause people to believe that He is the living and all-powerful God. For example, God used signs to try to convince Pharaoh to let His people leave Egypt: “and the LORD [Yahweh] shewed *signs* and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes” (Deut. 6:22). The Lord Jesus, when he spoke to the nobleman, also talked about the role of signs and wonders in relation to belief: “Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe” (Jno. 4:48).

The Hebrew for ‘signs’ in Genesis is translated ‘miracles’ on a couple of occasions in the AV (Num. 14:22; Deut. 11:3). The Greek word for ‘sign’ is often translated ‘miracle’. In John 6:2 we read: “And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his *miracles* which he did on them that were diseased”. The signs or miracles which the Lord Jesus performed were beyond the power of other men to perform. It was evi-

dence that the Lord Jesus had the power of God, the Holy Spirit.

Miracles vary in type. For example, some lead to an end which could not be achieved by natural means, such as the raising of the dead. Other miracles lead to things which could be achieved by natural means, given enough time and resources. The production of bread is one example of this.

In Isaiah 55 some of the stages in the production of bread, and food in general, are mentioned: “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater . . .” (v. 10). The first stage in the process is rain and snow. The last stage is “bread to the eater”. In between are the various stages of growth which take place as the seed grows in the earth.

God is able, however, miraculously to bypass these stages. This is shown by the way manna was produced: “Then said the LORD [Yahweh] unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven

for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My law, or no" (Ex. 16:4). Here the bread is directly rained upon the earth. There are no stages of growth in between. Hence the bread is able to be produced overnight, albeit requiring collection and final preparation by man (Num. 11:8).

Miracles and the power of God

When we read the records of the miracles in the Scriptures, are we convinced that they were a demonstration of the power of God? Some people in the world do not believe that they happened. Others believe that they happened but that they can be explained by natural causes. Such explanations inevitably involve changing or denying the Scriptural record in some way. An event such as the feeding of the five thousand could be explained by natural causes if, for example, we assume that the initial numbers of loaves and fishes as stated in the record are just symbolic. We could then assert that, to begin with, there were really many more loaves and fishes present. We could also explain the event by natural causes if we allow much more time for people to go away and return with supplies of food. Of course, as believers in the inspired Word of God, we see any such reasoning as wrong and unnecessary. We cannot explain how the five thousand were fed except by saying that it was achieved through the power of God. The normal sequence of stages of production have clearly been bypassed. If we are pressed for an explanation we rightly say, "It was a miracle".

There are things in the record of Creation in Genesis that defy our understanding. We can no more explain them than we can explain how more than five thousand people were fed from a few loaves and fishes. We can, and often do, wrestle with the text to allow of some natural explanation. But why do not we adopt the same approach as we use for the miracles in the Gospels?

A significant difference between Creation and the feeding of the five thousand is that in the latter case all the evidence which could be seen and handled has long gone. We all would claim to believe in the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. But if we were living in the days of Christ and one of the five thousand showed us a piece of bread, claiming that it had been miraculously produced, would we believe it? Thanks to human nature, we would probably find it very

difficult to believe. This would be ironic in view of the evidence we could see, but the human temptation would be to deny the miracle and invoke a natural explanation.

When we look at the sun, moon and stars we see a sign. A miraculous sign? We tend to play down this aspect, but perhaps the difficulties we have in reconciling Genesis with what we see is a measure of our reluctance to believe in the miraculous. It would be wrong to invoke the miraculous when something was obviously not a miracle. But to deny that a miracle has taken place when it has is equally wrong.

Where a natural explanation can be invoked to explain a phenomenon, the scientific approach advocates the adoption of that explanation. This is a reasonable approach providing it does not contradict the Word of God. The drive to avoid miraculous explanations, however, can not only lead to reasonable natural explanations being used when there is no need, it can also lead to belief in irrational explanations such as evolution. Either way, the scientist needs time for these processes, reasonable or otherwise, to work. The denial of the miraculous leads to an increase in proposed time-scales.

Cosmology and the miraculous

Perhaps we do not always like to admit this, but evolution has affected, or infected, other scientific disciplines in a profound way. Take, for example, the case of astronomy and its later offshoot, the field of cosmology. As far back as the first half of the twentieth century, astronomers were openly admitting that their theories of the development of the universe were being influenced by evolution. Consider these words by the astronomer Sir Arthur Eddington: "Naturally it is the policy of the evolutionist to grab as much time as possible in order to give his processes a longer opportunity to accomplish something. So when there is no strong evidence one way or another, the longer time-scale [of the expansion of the universe] gets the preference".¹

This is a candid admission from a scientist who was highly respected and influential (he played an important part in the acceptance by mainstream science of Einstein's theory of relativity). It should be noted that his idea of even a 'short' time-scale was, at the time he was writing, 50 million years, but the critical point is the

1. Eddington, A. (1940), *The Expanding Universe*, Harmondsworth, Pelican Books, p. 65.

evidence this passage provides of the influential role of evolution. When assessing non-biological processes as portrayed by scientists, we should not assume that they are shorn of any evolutionary influence. Not all natural explanations may be as reasonable as we think. This is all the more reason for increasing our faith with regard to the miraculous.

Just before he raised Lazarus from the dead the Lord Jesus said to Martha: "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" (Jno. 11:40). In Psalm 19 David said: "The heavens declare the glory of God" (v. 1). Perhaps there is more to this statement than we have realised. When we look at the stars in the night sky we should not push the immediacy of the evidence of the miraculous

into the background. We should have the same wonder as the faithful who witnessed the miraculous raising of Lazarus.

Linked closely to believing in the miraculous is the act of believing in the Word of God. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham says to the rich man: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Lk. 16:31). Believing in Moses is a test as to whether or not we will believe that a miracle has taken place. So, if we are not prepared to believe what Moses wrote concerning Creation we will not be persuaded by the miraculous wonder of Creation. Next time we are challenged about the veracity of the Creation record let us not be ashamed simply to say, "It was a miracle".



Prophecy, History and Archaeology

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Around the Sea of Galilee

1. Introduction

Tony Benson

THE SEA OF Galilee must be one of the most well-known lakes in the world because of its associations with the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Scripture the name 'Galilee' occurs most often in relation to the area rather than the lake, however, the lake sometimes being known by other names.

In the Old Testament the word occurs only six times, always in relation to the territory, not the lake. The name is derived from the Hebrew *galal*, meaning 'to roll', and seems to carry the idea of a ring or circuit.¹ In the Old Testament Galilee first appears in connection with the tribal inheritance of Naphtali, which was situated to the west and north of the lake (Josh. 20:7), and continues to be associated with Naphtali later on at the time when the Assyrians were beginning to conquer the land (2 Kgs. 15:29). In Isaiah 9:1 the area is referred to as "Galilee of the nations", where it is associated again with Naphtali, and also with Zebulun, further west from the lake. By that time the northern kingdom had been

brought to an end by the Assyrians, with many of its inhabitants having gone into exile and been replaced by Gentiles, hence the name given to it by Isaiah.

It is not clear exactly what constituted the territory of Galilee in Old Testament times, but by the time of Christ it was the name given to one of the three divisions of the land, the others being Judea and Samaria. In the return from Babylon few Jews settled in Galilee, and it was not until the Maccabees brought independence to Israel for a few years, about 150 years before the birth of Christ, that Galilee was settled by many Jews. By the time of Christ it was well populated, though with quite a number of Gentiles as well as Jews, and this fact is evident from the Gospels, which record how crowds of people

1. A plural form of the word, '*gelilah*', occurs five times in such phrases as "borders of the Philistines", and seems to indicate a defined territory.