

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Resurrection and the Floating Axe-head

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Many have a problem accepting the miracles in the Bible as literally true. They will consider the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days (*Genesis 1:1-2:3*) or Joshua ordering the sun to stand still (*Joshua 10:12-14*) as myths. If so, how do they view the resurrection of Christ? Is it a myth? It is also a miracle.

Some will accept the resurrection of Jesus Christ as being literally true, but such accounts of Elisha making a lost axe head swim to the surface of the water as mere “bragging stories” and “astonishing tales.” When asked why one should view the miracles differently, one may respond with logical difficulty. The “axe story” seems to not be as important as the resurrection and therefore a “minor miracle” to some. Others might respond with the resurrection being God’s way in time, allowing us to investigate a “supernal dimension” to assure us of what lies ahead of us in eternity.

Such thinking is faulty, for whether we classify miracles as minor or major, they are still miracles – events that transcend natural laws. Regardless of being major or minor, both literally occur in time, or they

have never occurred. God has revealed the purpose of His miracles and left it not up to us to determine its meaning. Nor, if we see no purpose, can we just chalk it up on the side of “minor” and view it as another “astonishing tale?”

The resurrection of Christ is recorded in the Bible as a bodily resurrection. It is the “*firstfruits*” of our bodily resurrection, or a promise that we will also be raised bodily (*I Corinthians 15:20-23*). It girds us presently with a living hope, freeing us from the fear of death (*I Peter 1:3, Hebrews 2:14-15*).

God tells us the purpose of miracles in the New Testament as well. They are given to “confirm the word” as the apostles went about preaching the word (*Mark 16:20*). Only God could be behind such acts that instantaneously transcend natural laws. Therefore, the message from these men must be of God. Jesus’ miracles were recorded for us or written down to confirm that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, and we can trust in Him for eternal life (*John 20:30-31*). Trying to determine categories, was His miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead and then His miraculously walking on

the water just a minor miracle and an astonishing story respectively (*John 11:43-44, Matthew 14:26*)?

The floating axe-head may seem minor to some, but it also fits in the larger context of confirmation. Elisha had earlier parted the waters with the mantle of Elijah, confirming to the sons of the prophets that God’s spirit which was upon Elijah was not upon Elisha (*2 Kings 2:13-15*). Following this confirming sign, Elisha worked miracles on behalf of the sons of the prophets. Floating an axe-head to the water’s surface was just one of the confirming acts. Miraculously increasing the oil that a widow of one of the sons of the prophets had; commanding meal to be added to poisoned pottage and making the lost axe-head swim to the top of the water all occur confirming Elisha as God’s spokesman to the sons of the prophets (*2 Kings 4:1-7; 4:38-41; 6:1-7*).

Jesus pointed to the sign of Jonah, establishing the reality of His more eminent resurrection (*Matthew 12:40*). Jesus believed Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days. From this reality fixed in time, He established in logical minds the reality of His imminent resurrection.