

# *Do You Believe in* **MIRACLES?**

**JOHN VAN DIEST**  
*COMPILER*



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## Preface

I don't know about you, but I've always been a bit skeptical when it comes to the subject of modern miracles. It's one thing to trust scriptural accounts of unexplained phenomena. But contemporary miraculous events? I'm a reasonable, educated man. I'm not impressed by supermarket tabloid headlines. Yes, I believe God works in mysterious ways. But such mysteries have never been a part of my everyday experience. The world I live in is rational, ordered, easily explained.

At least, I used to think so.

A couple of years ago, I pictured all miracles as dramatic, Technicolor events. If you had told me then that you had experienced a miracle, I probably would have smiled politely and scanned the room for the nearest emergency exit. I might have questioned whether you knew the definition of the word, or wondered aloud if you had ever seen Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*.

Now those were what I call miracles. A burning bush that was not consumed by fire. Wooden staffs turning to snakes. Moses parting the Red Sea. I could accept those miracles as true because they were straight out of the Bible, which I believe in quite literally.

Through years of study, I've discovered that miracles occur throughout the biblical text. Peter walking on water, Jesus healing the blind man, Lazarus being raised from the dead...it's all there in black and white. Biblical times called for biblical miracles. I can accept that. But as the saying goes: that was then, and this is now. It's a commonly held belief that God doesn't intervene in the natural order of things anymore. It isn't that He can't, He just doesn't.

Or does He?

Despite my skepticism and doubts, I have ultimately been confronted with overwhelming evidence to convince me that miracles still occur today. Not all are the sweeping, major motion picture type (although many would rival today's typical Hollywood story lines). Yet to the individuals who experienced them, these miracles are every bit as dramatic, every bit as life-changing as the emancipation of Israel.

In compiling this collection, I've sifted through hundreds of amazing stories about modern-day miracles to find the most interesting, the most compelling accounts. These include stories written by respected authors such as Billy Graham, James Dobson, Corrie ten Boom, Mother Teresa, and Adrian Rogers, as well as writers you may not yet know but whose words may forever impact what you believe about miracles.

These stories defy what most of us consider "reasonable" explanation. Yet, like me, you may soon find evidence that convinces you what is reasonable is not always the same as what is true. You may come to believe that a loving God is active and present and involved in our world—and that this God is a God of miracles.

Of course, you don't have to take my word for it. Examine the evidence for yourself. Within these pages, you'll find dramatic accounts about the occurrence of modern-day miracles. Of the hundreds of stories reviewed, the ones selected were chosen because:

1. The sources were highly credible.
2. The events or circumstances were not only improbable, but there was no evident "natural" explanation for their occurrence.
3. The uniqueness of the miracles illustrates the wide variety of examples of supernatural intervention.

The purpose of this book is not to give "miracle believers" ammunition to blow away the doubts of their friends, nor is it to prove to the skeptics among us that modern miracles really do occur.

In compiling these accounts, I have not attempted to resolve any philosophical or theological questions regarding miracles.

What I have tried to do is give you something to think about. Stories to consider. Claims to ponder. It's up to you to decide what you believe. So go ahead. Dig in. Weigh the evidence. Open your heart. God may surprise you yet, even reach into your life to do something you never thought possible.

Greater miracles have happened.



# MIRACLES *of Destiny*

“The miracles in fact are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see.”

C.S. LEWIS

## MIRACLES of *Destiny*

*It was meant to be.* How many times have you used those words to describe a wonderful coincidence that brought joy to your life? Indeed, at times there seems to be no other explanation for the unlikely chains of events that lead to the blessings we receive. Destiny? *Hmm*, we think, *perhaps...* The very word intrigues us, with its implication that certain events in our lives were preordained by One who has our ultimate good in mind.

There is something thrilling about the prospect of a loving God looking out for us, bringing into our lives the people and circumstances we need—through the natural order of life and even through miracles. Yet there is something frightening as well about this belief. For if we acknowledge that God is truly out there, acting on our behalf, then it naturally follows that we must decide how we will respond to Him.

This may explain why we sometimes try to convince ourselves that miraculous events are really nothing more than cosmic accidents. Yet there is no such thing as a true accident. Nothing happens outside of God's plan. Though we do not always understand His purpose, and though we struggle through times of suffering and confusion, God remains in control...always. In fact, it is frequently the very circumstances that cause us pain that God uses to bring us our greatest joy.

In the next section, you'll read about a number of men and women whose lives truly may have been touched by God's hand.

Happy coincidences? Acts of love? Miracles?

You decide.

# It Happened on a Brooklyn Subway

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Paul Deutschman

There are two different explanations of what happened as the result of a subway ride taken by Hungarian-born Marcel Sternberger on the afternoon of January 10, 1948.

Some people will say that Sternberger's sudden impulse to visit a sick friend in Brooklyn—and the bright world of dramatic events that followed—was part of a string of lucky coincidences. Others will see the guiding hand of divine providence in everything that happened that day.

But whatever the explanation, here are the facts: Sternberger, a New York portrait photographer living in a Long Island suburb, has followed for years an unchanging routine in going from his home to his office on Fifth Avenue.

A methodical man of nearly fifty, with bushy white hair, guileless brown eyes, and the bouncing enthusiasm of a czardas dancer of his native Hungary, he always took the 9:09 Long Island Railroad train from his suburban home to Woodside, New York, where he caught a subway into the city.

On the morning of January 10, 1948, Sternberger boarded the 9:09 as usual. En route, he suddenly decided to visit Laszlo Victor, a Hungarian friend who lived in Brooklyn and was ill.

At Ozone Park, Sternberger changed to the subway for Brooklyn, went to his friend's house, and stayed until midafternoon. He then boarded a Manhattan-bound subway for his Fifth Avenue office. Here is Marcel's incredible story:

The car was crowded, and there seemed to be no chance of a seat. But just as I entered, a man sitting by the door suddenly jumped up

to leave, and I slipped into the empty place. I've been living in New York long enough not to start conversations with strangers. But being a photographer, I have the peculiar habit of analyzing people's faces, and I was struck by the features of the passenger on my left. He was probably in his late thirties, and when he glanced up, his eyes seemed to have a hurt expression in them. He was reading a Hungarian-language newspaper, and something prompted me to say in Hungarian, "I hope you don't mind if I glance at your paper."

The man seemed surprised to be addressed in his native language. But he answered politely, "You may read it now. I'll have time later on."

During the half-hour ride to town, we had quite a conversation. He said his name was Bela Paskin. A law student when World War II started, he had been put into a German labor battalion and sent to the Ukraine. Later he was captured by the Russians and put to work burying the German dead. After the war, he covered hundreds of miles on foot until he reached his home in Debrecen, a large city in eastern Hungary.

I myself knew Debrecen quite well, and we talked about it for a while. Then he told me the rest of his story. When he went to the apartment once occupied by his father, mother, brothers, and sisters, he found strangers living there. Then he went upstairs to the apartment he and his wife once had. It also was occupied by strangers. None of them had ever heard of his family.

As he was leaving, full of sadness, a boy ran after him, calling "Paskin bacsi! Paskin bacsi!" That means "Uncle Paskin." The child was the son of some old neighbors of his. He went to the boy's home and talked to his parents. "Your whole family is dead," they told him. "The Nazis took them and your wife to Auschwitz."

Paskin gave up all hope. A few days later, too heartsick to remain any longer in Hungary, he set out again on foot, stealing across border after border until he reached Paris. He managed to immigrate to the United States in October 1947, just three months before I met him.

All the time he had been talking, I kept thinking that somehow his story seemed familiar. A young woman I had met recently at the home of friends had also been from Debrecen; she had been sent to Auschwitz; from there she had been transferred to work in a German munitions factory. Her relatives had been killed in the gas chambers. Later, she was liberated by the Americans and was brought here in the first boatload of displaced persons in 1946.

Her story had moved me so much that I had written down her address and phone number, intending to invite her to meet my family and thus help relieve the terrible emptiness in her life.

It seemed impossible that there could be any connection between these two people, but as I neared my station, I fumbled anxiously in my address book. I asked in what I hoped was a casual voice, "Was your wife's name Marya?"

He turned pale. "Yes!" he answered. "How did you know?"

He looked as if he were about to faint.

I said, "Let's get off the train." I took him by the arm at the next station and led him to a phone booth. He stood there like a man in a trance while I dialed her phone number.

It seemed hours before Marya Paskin answered. (Later I learned her room was alongside the telephone, but she was in the habit of never answering it because she had so few friends and the calls were always for someone else. This time, however, there was no one else at home and, after letting it ring for a while, she responded.)

When I heard her voice at last, I told her who I was and asked her to describe her husband. She seemed surprised at the question, but gave me a description. Then I asked her where she had lived in Debrecen, and she told me the address.

Asking her to hold the line, I turned to Paskin and said, "Did you and your wife live on such-and-such a street?"

"Yes!" Bela exclaimed. He was white as a sheet and trembling.

"Try to be calm," I urged him. "Something miraculous is about to happen to you. Here, take this telephone and talk to your wife!"

He nodded his head in mute bewilderment, his eyes bright with tears. He took the receiver, listened a moment to his wife's voice, then suddenly cried, "This is Bela! This is Bela!" and he began to mumble hysterically. Seeing that the poor fellow was so excited he couldn't talk coherently, I took the receiver from his shaking hands.

"Stay where you are," I told Marya, who also sounded hysterical. "I am sending your husband to you. We will be there in a few minutes."

Bela was crying like a baby and saying over and over again. "It is my wife. I go to my wife!"

At first I thought I had better accompany Paskin, lest the man should faint from excitement, but I decided this was a moment in which no strangers should intrude. Putting Paskin into a taxicab, I directed the driver to take him to Marya's address, paid the fare, and said good-bye.

Bela Paskin's reunion with his wife was a moment so poignant, so electric with suddenly released emotion, that afterward neither he nor Marya could recall much about it.

"I remember only that when I left the phone, I walked to the mirror as in a dream to see if maybe my hair had turned gray," she said later. "The next thing I know, a taxi stops in front of the house, and it is my husband who comes toward me. Details I cannot remember; only this I know—that I was happy for the first time in many years.

"Even now it is difficult to believe that it happened. We have both suffered so much. I have almost lost the capability to not be afraid. Each time my husband goes from the house, I say to myself, *Will anything happen to take him from me again?*"

Her husband is confident that no horrible misfortune will ever again befall them. "Providence has brought us together," he says simply. "It was meant to be."

Skeptical persons will no doubt attribute the events of that memorable afternoon to mere chance. But was it chance that made Marcel Sternberger suddenly decide to visit his sick friend and hence

take a subway line he had never ridden before? Was it chance that caused the man sitting by the door of the car to rush out just as Sternberger came in? Was it chance that caused Bela Paskin to be sitting beside Sternberger, reading a Hungarian newspaper?

Was it chance—or did God ride the Brooklyn subway that afternoon?



# The Bullet

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Doris Sanford

It was a late March afternoon and Anya sat in the car memorizing Bible verses. She did it every week while her little brother, Zeek, had his piano lesson. Her turn would come next, but memorizing meant repeating the verses out loud and that worked best in the car. She was a part of her junior high Bible Quiz team and that required knowing a part of one of the books of the Bible *very* well. No problem. Anya loved the competition!

Their music teacher lived in a two-story house and the piano was upstairs. Just before the lesson began, Zeek told his mom, “I want Sissy to listen to my lesson.” Mom reminded him that Anya needed the study time, and besides, she had been listening to him practice his piano lesson all week at home. But Zeek was determined; he went down to the car and to Mom’s surprise returned with his big sister in tow.

The lesson began. Five minutes later the lesson was abruptly halted by a loud noise outside. Everyone stopped to watch a late-model car speeding away. The lesson resumed after the teacher reassured them that it was probably the car’s backfire they had heard.

Zeek’s hands were barely on the piano when the teacher’s husband rushed in: “A gunshot...into the car...shattered the passenger side window in the front seat!” The lesson was over. They hurried down to look. Sure enough, there was the bullet lodged in the back rest just where Anya’s head had been five minutes earlier.

They all knew it immediately. God had used seven-year-old Zeek to save his sister’s life. It was a profound moment. Zeek had

responded when it hadn't made sense to him or anyone else, and Anya had complied with his illogical request.

The two snipers who were driving through the streets of Salem, Oregon, randomly shooting at mailboxes, cars, and houses were arrested and held on one million dollars bail. The district attorney asked Anya and Zeek to come to court and tell their story. The young men were sent to prison for five years, but not without hearing how God had protected a seven-year-old and his big sister.

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**Doris Sanford** is the author of more than a dozen books and a teacher of psychiatric nursing.

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# The Gold and Ivory Tablecloth

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Howard C. Schade

At Christmastime men and women everywhere gather in their churches to wonder anew at the greatest miracle the world has ever known. But the story I like best to recall was not a miracle—not exactly.

It happened to a pastor who was very young. His church was very old. Once, long ago, it had flourished. Famous men had preached from its pulpit, prayed before its altar. Rich and poor alike worshiped there and built it beautifully. Now the good days had passed from the section of town where it stood. But the pastor and his young wife believed in their run-down church. They felt that with paint, hammer, and faith they could get it in shape. Together they went to work.

But in late December a severe storm whipped through the river valley, and the worst blow fell on the little church—a huge chunk of rain-soaked plaster fell out of the inside wall just behind the altar. Sorrowfully, the pastor and his wife swept away the mess, but they couldn't hide the ragged hole.

The pastor looked at it and had to remind himself quickly, “Thy will be done!” But his wife wept, “Christmas is only two days away!”

That afternoon the dispirited couple attended the auction held for the benefit of a youth group. The auctioneer opened a box and shook out of its folds a handsome gold-and-ivory lace tablecloth. It was a magnificent item, nearly fifteen feet long. But it, too, dated from a long-vanished era. Who, today, had any use for such a thing? There were a few half-hearted bids. Then the pastor was seized with what he thought was a great idea. He bid it in for \$6.50.

He carried the cloth back to the church and tacked it up on the wall behind the altar. It completely hid the hole! And the extraordinary beauty of its shimmering handwork cast a fine, holiday glow over the chancel. It was a great triumph. Happily he went back to preparing his Christmas sermon.

Just before noon on the day of Christmas Eve, as the pastor was opening the church, he noticed a woman standing in the cold at the bus stop.

“The bus won’t be here for forty minutes!” he called, and invited her into the church to get warm.

She told him that she had come from the city that morning to be interviewed for a job as governess to the children of one of the wealthy families in town but she had been turned down. A war refugee, her English was imperfect.

The woman sat down in a pew and chafed her hands and rested. After a while she dropped her head and prayed. She looked up as the pastor began to adjust the great ivory-and-gold lace cloth across the hole. She rose suddenly and walked up the steps of the chancel. She looked at the tablecloth. The pastor smiled and started to tell her about the storm damage, but she didn’t seem to listen. She took up a fold of the cloth and rubbed it between her fingers.

“It is mine!” she said. “It is my banquet cloth!” She lifted the corner and showed the surprised pastor that there were initials monogrammed on it. “My husband had the cloth made especially for me in Brussels! There could not be another like it.”

For the next few minutes the woman and the pastor talked excitedly together. She explained that she was Viennese; that she and her husband had opposed the Nazis and decided to leave the country. They were advised to go separately. Her husband put her on a train for Switzerland. They planned that he would join her as soon as he could arrange to ship their household goods across the border.

She never saw him again. Later she heard that he had died in a concentration camp.

“I have always felt that it was my fault—to leave without him,”

she said. “Perhaps these years of wandering have been my punishment!”

The pastor tried to comfort her, urged her to take the cloth with her. She refused. Then she went away.

As the church began to fill on Christmas Eve, it was clear that the cloth was going to be a great success. It had been skillfully designed to look its best by candlelight.

After the service, the pastor stood in the doorway; many people told him that the church looked beautiful. One gentle-faced, middle-aged man—he was the local clock-and-watch repairman—looked rather puzzled.

“It is strange,” he said in his soft accent. “Many years ago my wife—God rest her—and I owned such a cloth. In our home in Vienna, my wife put it on the table”—here he smiled—“only when the bishop came to dinner!”

The pastor suddenly became very excited. He told the jeweler about the woman who had been in the church earlier in the day.

The startled jeweler clutched the pastor’s arm. “Can it be? Does she live?”

Together the two got in touch with the family who had interviewed her. Then, in the pastor’s car they started for the city. And as Christmas Day was born, this man and his wife—who had been separated through so many saddened Yuletides—were reunited.

To all who heard this story, the joyful purpose of the storm that knocked a hole in the wall of the church was now quite clear. Of course, people said it was a miracle, and I think you will agree it was the season for it!