Miracles

Lewis's worldview is very much based on a person that appeared in history. He looked very carefully at the historical documents, and this person who claimed to be God. And, indeed, Lewis concluded that this person was who he claimed to be, and that he died as he predicted he would, and that he rose again on the third day. Now if this person did appear today, so that we could experience him, would we believe?

Jeremy Fraiberg: No, you could still freely choose not to believe. You could say that the evidence is demonstrable and clear, but I choose to live otherwise because — for my own reasons I disagree with some of the claims of that authority.

Armand Nicholi: Did you not say that if you saw someone pick up this building, twirl it around on his finger, and set it down, that you would be forced to believe?

Jeremy Fraiberg: Strong motivating factor.

Frederick Lee: Do you believe in miracles?

Jeremy Fraiberg: I'd admit of anything, I just need to see evidence.

Frederick Lee: Well, I'm not asking about evidence; I'm asking about the philosophical question of is it possible? Is it possible?

Jeremy Fraiberg: Well, I operate by rules of induction, I mean — what happened before leads me to believe what will come in the future. But — I've never seen that before, and it would be so extraordinary that it would completely —

Doug Holladay: But you're open to the idea, that's the thing.

Jeremy Fraiberg: I am open to the idea.

Doug Holladay: That's the point he's trying to get to you on.

Frederick Lee: If you look at the Hebrew scriptures, though, I mean, it's filled with story after story after story of the Israelites, the chosen people, seeing God in the most miraculous ways, beyond anything that is conceivable in human terms, and certainly beyond anything that they had ... of science and intellect to explain.

Jeremy Fraiberg: What you presuppose in your argument is that these incidents actually happened. And show me the parting of the Red Sea. Show me turning water into wine.

Margaret Klenck: Yeah, but I think this is where we have to look at mythology, and how mythology is, is real — or is true, but not necessarily real, and that this is a way in which people make sense of the miraculous, make sense of the unknown, make sense of the battle to understand, to be loved, to not be loved, why does — going back to father or mother, you know ... why did mother love you best? I mean, we
come up with Cain and Abel, I mean, we do have mythology, it grows out for a reason. It's not just stories.

Armand Nicholi: Isn't it true, though, that — as Lewis says — that the philosophy that we bring to our experience, to our observations, influences how we interpret them? Now, if we approach a miracle with a philosophy that has ruled out the supernatural, then we have to find some explanation for it.

Frederick Lee: If one excludes a priori the possibility of miracles, as most scientists do, then any unusual event will always be interpreted in some way in terms we understand. On the other hand, if one does admit to the possibility of miracles, what one is saying then is that there are forces that can act on the universe from outside the system — the system being what we normally consider to be obeying the laws of physics and chemistry and so forth.

Jeremy Fraiberg: I grant you that.

Frederick Lee: And that's when one comes down to: Is this story made up or not? And the key thing there is, here is a man, Jesus Christ, who's documented as claiming to be the son of God. Now, I've seen patients do that in my psychiatric rotations — "I'm Napoleon, I'm Caesar, I'm God, I'm Jesus," but they're invariably psychotic. And yet, from the scriptures, from all the witnesses that we have, what Jesus said reflects some of the deepest, most insightful wisdom into human nature. He's not a lunatic, okay? He's not crazy. There's no other alternative, other than to assume that this bizarre claim, this fantastic claim, that's never been made or spoken by human lips in the history of the world has to be true. There's no other explanation.

Michael Shermer: Fred, can I ask you, just a simple scientific question.

Frederick Lee: Yes.

Michael Shermer: The Resurrection. As a scientist, aren't you curious how God did it? Jump start the heart? Rebuild the cells? New DNA? How'd he do it?

Frederick Lee: Well, I guess that's akin to asking the question, how did he create Adam?

Michael Shermer: Aren't you curious? Don't you want to know?

Frederick Lee: Sure, I'd like to know, but in some sense — well, here's an example: You have a God of infinite wisdom — assuming that you believe in a God, right? So, of infinite wisdom, who created this fantastic thing by means, you know, that you've asked me to explain ...

Michael Shermer: But, if I can clarify that. Once you've tried to understand the forces by which God intervened into this system from outside this system, you're just back in the system again, looking for natural causes. God used some electromagnetic force to tweak the genome, to restart the heart, to whatever. If that's what you're doing, then you're just doing science. And the only other choice is, you just say, "beats me, it's a miracle." I give up.
Margaret Klenck: Well, there are a few other answers to that throughout history. I mean, well, one of the classic theological answers is that God's time is not in any way connected to human time and that therefore, God can break in to human time, at any point, at any time, and does, so that God is infant in the manger, and God is reigning on the cross, and God is dead and alive. God is not confined by human history, human time, and it's just as reasonable, if we're going to stay with, you know, qualifying things by reason, to assume that God can have God's own time, and not be controlled by us, or confined by, you know, our little, limited consciousness.

Winifred Gallagher: It sort of disturbs me that we seem to be heading in this direction, where in order to be a religious person or to have a spiritual worldview, you have to believe in miracles, which I think is absolutely not the case. I think you can be — you can have no interest in miracles you can disbelieve miracles, or maybe you could say, "Maybe there are miracles, maybe there are not, I don't know, I don't particularly care," you could have any of those attitudes, and still be a profoundly spiritual person.