

Are Miracles Happening Today?

Introduction

- Are miracles happening today? Many say “yes”.
 - Catholic church: to become a “saint”, you need to have worked at least two confirmed miracles during your lifetime.
 - Pentecostal church: people speaking in tongues, prophesying, and sometimes healing today.
 - Mormonism: Joseph Smith claims to have received special revelations from God which he recorded in the Book of Mormon in the mid 1800’s. He also claims to have raised his father from the dead.
 - Evangelicalism: no miraculous deeds or prophecy, but individual Christians still receiving special messages from God telling them what specific decisions they should make about jobs, marriage, etc...
- Miracles are for authority
 - Jesus did miracles to prove He had authority from God
 - Mat 9:4-6: *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, “Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” —then He *said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home.*
 - Jesus claimed to be speaking the word of God and performed miracles to prove it.
 - Therefore, we need to listen to Him!
 - If someone is doing miracles today, that means they have divine authority and we need to do what they say.
 - The question of whether or not miracles are happening today is a question of determining divine authority and who has it.
 - Acts 15:4 — Paul Barnabas argued that the fact God was performing miracles through them confirmed that their teaching to the Gentiles was authoritative.
 - Many faiths claim to perform miracles, and therefore be authoritative, yet teach entirely different things.
 - Is God confirming contradictory teachings?
- The significance of this lesson
 - Whether or not miracles are happening today will determine who we believe, and what we do.

What Is a Miracle?

- When God empowers a human to do supernatural things
 - Acts 3:14-16: *And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall*

on any one of them. Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

- Acts 19:11-12: *God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.*
- Here is a list of supernatural miracles God would work through people:
 - I Cor 12:8-10: *For to one is given the word of **wisdom** through the Spirit, and to another the word of **knowledge** according to the same Spirit; to another **faith** by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of **healing** by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of **miracles**, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**, to another various kinds of **tongues**, and to another the **interpretation of tongues**.*
 - Not just healings and wonders, but any divinely empowered actions such as prophecy.
- We are not referring to God's divine intervention
 - Answered prayers
 - Fortuitous circumstances

How Do People Obtain the Ability to Do Miracles?

- The Apostles received miraculous ability from Jesus
 - Jesus had many disciples, but specially called twelve to be "apostles".
 - He gave these twelve apostles the ability to work miracles during His ministry.
 - Mat 10:1: *Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.*
 - They could then perform miracles just like Jesus.
 - Jesus promised they would receive more power when He sends the Holy Spirit
 - Act 1:8: *but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*
 - We see this fulfilled in Acts 2 when they first speak in tongues.
 - We see the apostles continue to perform miracles throughout the book of Acts
 - Acts 2:43: *Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.*
 - Acts 3:6: *But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!"*
- Other Christians receive the ability to do miracles from the apostles
 - Soon we see other Christians performing miracles as well.
 - Acts 6:8: *And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.*
 - Acts 8:6: *The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.*
 - This miraculous ability came from the authority of the apostles
 - Phillip and the new converts in Samaria

- Philip goes to Samaria teaching the gospel and working miracles — Acts 8:6-8: *The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. So there was much rejoicing in that city.*
- The crowds believe and were baptized, but it doesn't say anything about them receiving the power to work miracles — Acts 8:12: *But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.*
- The apostles bestow miraculous ability
 - The apostles hear about the new Christians in Samaria, and decide to visit so that they can pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit — Acts 8:14: *Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.*
 - ✳ (It doesn't always, but in this context, receiving the Holy Spirit refers specifically to receiving the ability to perform miracles).
- Simon covets the authority to bestow miraculous ability
 - Simon, a former magician, sees that the apostles exclusively have the authority to bestow miraculous ability.
 - Acts 8:18-19: *Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.*
 - Simon isn't offering to pay for miraculous ability, but rather specifically the authority to give others miraculous ability.
- Peter rebukes Simon for this covetous desire, and Simon repents.
- The pattern is that Christians receive miraculous abilities from the apostles
 - Phillip could perform miracles, but not bestow miraculous ability.
 - Only the apostles had this power.
 - The apostles had to make a special trip for this purpose.
 - Simon hadn't seen this power in Philip, which is why he asked to buy it from the apostles.
 - Paul, also being an apostle, does the same thing — Acts 19:6: *And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.*
- There are some special cases:
 - Paul, being an apostle received it directly from Jesus.
 - Cornelius and his friends who received the ability to speak tongues straight from heaven as proof that God was saving them by faith in Christ as well.

- But the Biblical pattern is that Christians receive their miraculous abilities from the apostles.

*** Why from the apostles?**

- Miracles are all about showing divine authority.
- Jesus' apostles were specially chosen to be Christ's ambassadors and the standard.
- They were to be the standard of truth. The apostle's teaching was THE truth.
- By Jesus making them the source of all His miracles, He proved their word to be the authority and standard of truth.

Are Miracles Happening Today?

- The source of miracles has ended:
 - No more apostles
 - The apostleship is not an office that is meant to be replaced and continued.
 - Only Judas was replaced
 - Commanded by God in scripture to be replaced.
 - Qualifications:
 - Having been with Jesus from the days of John the Baptist
 - Witness of the resurrection.
 - No one is qualified = no more apostles.
 - If the apostleship has ceased, so has the source of miraculous abilities.
 - If only the apostles have the authority to give people miraculous powers, when they all die, that authority dies with them.
 - Eventually those who had received this authority from the apostles as well will die.
 - Which leads to a natural cessation of miracles.
 - Anything different will be an exception to the pattern — are you the apostle Paul?
- I Corinthians 13
 - Context:
 - Corinthians had miraculous abilities.
 - This made them proud, and they acted arrogantly by exalting themselves.
 - Paul is going to compare spiritual gifts with love
 - He will humble them by showing that love is more important.
 - They should stop bragging because of their spiritual gifts, and get busy loving each other instead.
 - He shows that love is superior to spiritual gifts in two ways:
 - Verses 1-3: Love is essential (spiritual gifts are not)
 - Verses 8-13: Love is eternal (spiritual gifts are not)
 - We will discuss verses 8-13.

Spiritual gifts = miraculous powers

Not always, but yes in this context, so if I say spiritual gifts, then I'm referring to miraculous powers.

Miraculous Abilities Are Going to End

- 8:
 - Love: never fails, stops, it goes on forever, it will last forever.
 - Spiritual gifts:
 - Prophecy: done away
 - Tongues: cease
 - Knowledge: done away
 - These are all three miraculous abilities.
 - These three are listed because they are the most relevant to the Corinthians circumstances.
 - They are representative of all spiritual gifts / miracles.
 - They are all going to stop.

* Miraculous abilities end. When?

When Will Miraculous Abilities End?

- 9-10:
 - The part
 - Prophecy part
 - Know part
 - The perfect
 - There is a “perfect” that is coming
 - When the perfect comes, the part will end
 - The part refers to spiritual gifts.
 - When the “perfect” comes, spiritual gifts will end.

* Miraculous abilities will end when the perfect comes. What is the perfect?

- If we know what the perfect is, we will know whether it’s come or not. If it has come already, miracles are no longer happening. If it has not come yet, then miracles are still happening.

What is the perfect?

- Part and perfect are related.
 - Part is a portion of something.
 - Perfect is all of something.
 - We typically use perfect for being without defect.
 - Bible uses is often for complete, full, mature, finished.
- Part and perfect are referring to the same thing.
 - The part is *PART* of some *THING*.
 - The perfect is *ALL* of that same *THING*,
 - If we know what the part refers to, we will know what the perfect is

Mat 5:48: *Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Phil 3:12: *Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.*

- What did they prophesy and know?
 - The prophesied the word of God.
 - The know the will of God.
- The perfect refers to...
 - ALL the word of God.
 - ALL the will of God.

Perfect =
God's complete
revelation

* The perfect is God's complete revelation. Has God's complete revelation come?

Has the perfect come?

- God has spoken all His word, and revealed all His will in the Bible.
 - Gal 1:8: *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed.*
 - Jd 3: *Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*
 - II Pet 1:3: *seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*
- The Bible is the complete revelation of God.
 - The Bible has come = the perfect has come = miracles have ceased.
 - Fits historically
 - The apostles and miracles were dying...
 - ...at the time all NT texts (the completed Bible) were already written and being copied and distributed.

Why did miracles end?

- 11-12:
 - 11: they were immature, but the the complete revelation of God is mature.
 - 12: they were unclear, but the complete revelation of God is clear.
- Time of miracles
 - You didn't know whole revelation of God...
 - Only what you are prophesying
 - Or what you remember from your past prophesy
 - Or what you remember from someone else's past prophesy.
 - EX: Imagine three months ago I read I Corinthians, and that's the last time you heard it.
 - You don't know what is the revelation of God.
 - There were false prophets.
 - They had to test spirits.
 - They had the challenging of determining what was from God or not.
- Time of the perfect

Luke 1:3-4: Luke writes everything down so Theophilus can know the *exact* truth about what he has been taught. The inspired written word presents the truth more exactly.

- We have the word written in front to read and reread without limit.
- We don't question what the word of God is, but what it means.
- How can we discuss what it means, if we can't even look together on a page and at least agree with what God said in the first place.
- Miracles are no longer necessary
 - God gives miracles to empower people to do things they can't do alone.
 - They couldn't convince people without miracles.
 - They didn't have reason to believe without miracles.
 - Today, we can convince and believe without miracles.
 - The perfect revelation of God is sufficient for us to believe.
 - Why do you believe? Witnessed a miracles? Or convinced by the word?

Practical Conclusions

- There are false miracles today — there have always been people doing fake miracles, and they will continue to do so today.
- There are false christs and false prophets today — there will always be liars claiming to be prophets of God.
- You're not a prophet
 - You are not a prophet, and God is not speaking to you.
 - EX: a man chose to marry after divorce because God told him to marry that woman.
- Only trust the authority of the Bible
 - Don't trust so-called miracles.
 - Only trust the Bible.