

DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT WORK MIRACLES TODAY?

February 19, 2017

The fact that God is working in the lives of people today is undeniable. Through prayer and providence, God is working anonymously, behind the scenes to provide for sinners and saints. What we call providence differs from miracles in that, with the former, God acts on our behalf within the confines of the natural laws governing creation, whereas, with the latter, God acts on our behalf supernaturally, that is beyond or apart from the laws He has put in place to govern creation. Though the word “providence” is never explicitly stated in scripture with reference to God, His protective care is readily seen with and without the use of miracles. Our question is, “Does the Holy Spirit Work Miracles Today?” and we will answer by four observations.

First, we may observe that miracles, as defined Biblically, are nowhere seen today. The word “miracle” is thrown around quite often today. A basketball player throws the ball up at the buzzer and makes a “miraculous” shot. A person is very ill, doctors have done all they know to do, finally they say, “There is no hope.” Then, “miraculously” the patient’s condition starts improving. A child is born and the proud family thanks God for this “miracle” of life that science cannot explain. Countless other examples could be given of what people today, are calling miracles.

However, these modern-day miracles are not truly miracles at all. Biblical miracles were quite different from those things thus called today. Where are miracle workers raising the dead? When will one cause the sun stand still in the sky or call down fire from heaven? Show me men who can walk through fire and not get burned. Those who claim the power to work miracles today do not attempt such signs as these, instead they go for less showy feats.

Miracles performed in Biblical times were acts that violated the very laws of nature that God established in the beginning. The virgin birth is such a miracle; the birth of any other child ever conceived by the natural process of procreation is not miraculous no matter how powerless doctors and scientists may be to explain it or duplicate it. The mere touch of a man immediately curing a physical handicap is miraculous; gradual healing, through means of physicians, medicine, and the favorable response of the body, is not miraculous.

Those who claim to have power of healing or miraculous power to speak in unlearned tongues when asked to “prove it,” will often resort to one of their failsafe responses: “we must not tempt God,” or “you must have faith to witness a miracle.” These answers add more proof to the falsehood of their claims. Concerning their response, “we must not tempt God;” God said, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but **try the spirits** whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1). In Old Testament times, God gave the same advise concerning those who claimed to be prophets (Deut. 18:20-22). Therefore we are not tempting God but rather obeying His command to be cautious of pretenders. Concerning the response, “you must have faith,” the miracles performed by Jesus and His apostles were often done before the unfaithful in order to cause faith, on one occasion the Bible states, “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.” (Lk. 5:24) Likewise concerning tongues Paul said, “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not...” (1 Cor. 14:22).

Second, we may observe that the purposes for miracles have ended. Every miraculous happening in the

Bible had a purpose and those purposes are either readily seen or conveyed to us by the scriptures. Generally, they were for creating, revealing and confirming. In the New Testament we can note four specific purposes: (1) To confirm prophecy. “When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Matthew 8:16-17). (2) To confirm Christ’s claim of divinity. “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (Jn. 20:30,31 cf. Acts 2:22). (3) To confirm the truth of the message being preached. “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mark 16:20 cf. Heb. 2:3,4). (4) To confirm a true apostle. “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.” (2 Corinthians 12:12)

The prophecies have been fulfilled. Christ’s claims have been proven. The message of truth and the men who penned it have been confirmed. The purposes for which God used miracles no longer exist.

Third, we may observe that God has explicitly stated they have ended. The end of the miraculous age was foretold by God through Paul “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” (1 Corinthians 13:8–10 cf. Eph. 4:7,8,13) “That which is perfect” (not “He” but “that”), refers to the “perfect law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25; cf. Ps. 19:7). Some suppose, “that which is perfect” to be heaven, but neither can this be the case. The time in question is a time where the nine gifts of 1 Cor. 12:8-10 have ceased but three remain: faith, hope, and charity. In heaven faith will become sight, hope (desire plus expectation) will be realized.

Fourth, we may observe that the laying on of the apostle’s hands is now impossible. It was by the laying on of the Apostles hands that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given to others. This was plainly observed by Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:17,18). The fact others possessing gifts did not have this ability to pass them on is also seen in Acts 8:14,15 as Philip the evangelist was unable to do so but Peter and John were sent for this reason. This being the case, after the last apostle died (John c.100 A.D.) no more receiving of miraculous powers was given. A requirement of being an apostle was to be an eyewitness to Christ; therefore there are no new apostles.

Conclusion

An illustration often used in connection with this Bible teaching is one of a building under construction. While the building is under construction, scaffolding is used until everything is in place, then the scaffolding, no longer needed is removed. Such was the case with miracles and the unfolding of God’s plan. The first man, woman, plants, and animals were created by miracle, after that by the laws of propagation. The same is true with the church. Plant the seed in the heart and then add water!