

Miracles: Their Purpose and Duration

TEXT: “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.” (John 20:30-31)

THESIS: To discern the purpose and duration of miracles

INTRODUCTION:

1. The word, “miracle,” declares that a work of supernatural origin has occurred.
 - a. The word “sign” describes the miracle as a signal, mark and token; a visible and readily perceived proof or evidence of God’s power, approval or authority.
 - b. The word, “wonder” tells us that a miracle was so out of the ordinary, so amazing, defying natural explanation, that it excited the emotions and imaginations, causing the beholder to wonder and marvel.
2. The religious community is very excited about miracles today.
 - a. Belief in miracles today, especially tongues and healing, is common today throughout denominationalism.
 - b. However, miracles demand setting aside natural law, time and human effort.
 - c. They demand being instantaneous and not the result of long treatments or walks to a stage (Jn. 2:1).
3. So, what does the Bible teach about the purpose and duration of miracles?

DISCUSSION:

I. THE PROVISIONAL NATURE OF MIRACLES

- A. Creation resulted from supernatural law (miracle).
 1. But, there are different sources of power:
 - a. God is seen as the ultimate source of power.
 - (1) “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” (Gen. 1:3).
 - b. Satan however, is another source of power.
 - (1) “. . . whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” (2 Thess. 2:9).
- B. When we consider mankind, some say that having a baby is a miracle.
 1. A child being born is truly a wonderful thing, but it is not a wonder in the sense of it being miraculous.
 2. The birth of a child follows God’s natural law of procreation and its results which is established without miracles.
 3. Thus, mankind is eliminated as a source of power.
- C. Now, when considering the provisional nature of miracles, mankind received divine revelation through miracles.
 1. Today though, man uses divine revelation without miracles (the Bible).
- D. Therefore, miracles are considered provisional since they ceased when they accomplished the purpose for which they were provided.

II. THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

- A. Frequently, the primary purpose of miracles was to confirm the Word of God.
1. Mark penned that the disciples, “went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.” (Mark 16:20)
- B. Miracles confirmed God’s Word through Moses.
1. In Exodus 4:1-9, during the days of Egypt, Moses said to God, “. . . they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee. And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.”
 2. Over and again, Moses was to speak and then confirm that word by the miraculous.
- C. In the New Testament, the preaching of Jesus was confirmed by miracles.
1. “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” (Jn. 3:1-2)
 2. Jesus said later, “that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house” (Matt. 9:6-7).
- D. We also see the preaching of the apostles and other first century preachers whose word was confirmed by miracles.
1. In 2 Cor. 12:12, Paul said, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”
 2. In Acts 8:6, we read that, “the people with one accord gave heed unto

those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.”

- E. Now, since miracles have already confirmed the Word of God, they are no longer needed.
1. The Hebrew writer said, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?” (Heb. 2:3-4).
 2. Remember that John wrote, “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.” (John 20:30-31)
- F. Miracles were never intended to be permanent.
1. Paul, when addressing the Corinthian church penned, “. . . 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. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” (1 Cor. 13:8-13).
 2. James said, “whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” (Jam. 1:25)
 3. In Eph. 4:11-14, it is recorded that, “he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

III. WHAT WAS NOT THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

- A. First and foremost, Biblical miracles were not simply wondrous events out of the ordinary.
1. They were not done for show, for fund-raising, for personal glory or for the remission of sins.
 2. Today, a miracle is not an uninjured person in a serious car accident, it is not a miraculous drug we see on T.V or a miracle that a machine works the

- way it does.
3. Just because something is great or we do not understand it, does not make it a miracle.
- B. Also, the primary purpose of miracles was not healing.
1. Otherwise, why would Paul tell Timothy, “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.” (1 Tim. 5:23)?
 2. Why does it mention that Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick” (2 Tim. 4:20)?
- C. No, healing was a by-product of miracles designed to confirm the word.
1. Consider Matt. 9:2-8, where, “they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.”

IV. ADDITIONAL MIRACLES TO TONGUES AND HEALING

- A. Jesus exercised power over:
1. Diseased (Matt. 8:2), “. . . there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”
 - a. In Matt. 8:6-7, another saying, “Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.”
 2. Jesus exercised power over nature (Matt. 8:23-27), “. . . when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”
 3. Jesus exercised power over the spirit world (Matt. 8:28-34), when, “. . . there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils

besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

4. Jesus exercised power over the material universe (Matt. 14:17), “And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.”
5. Jesus exercised power over death (John 11 with Lazarus and 10:17), “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.”

B. The apostles also performed miracles by which they:

1. Healed (Acts 3:1-9), “. . . a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God:”
2. The apostles also performed miracles by which they struck a man dead (Acts 5:1-6), “But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.”
3. The apostles also performed miracles by which they raised the dead (Acts 9:36-42), “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in

an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.”

4. The apostles also performed miracles by which they struck a man blind (Acts 13:9-12), “Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”
5. The apostles also performed miracles by which they cast out demons (Acts 16:16-18), “And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.”
6. The apostles also performed miracles by which they received no affect from a venomous snake bite (Acts 28:3-6), “when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.”

C. Advocates of miraculous tongue speaking and healings today are obligated to subscribe to other miraculous manifestations in the church today:

1. They must also be able to calm the storm, cast out demons, miracle bread,

raising the dead, striking men blind, strike men dead, walking on water, turning water to wine, etc . . .

- D. Tongues, healing, snakes, poison, casting out demons, etc. all come in the same package and therefore, advocates of those who claim miraculous tongues and healing should argue for all of the other powers or none of it.
 - 1. For in Mark 16:17-18, it states, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”
 - 2. Jesus said, they ought to be able to, “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.” (Matt. 10:8).
- E. Oh, faith healers can’t do that.
 - 1. They can’t do that because they are frauds.

V. MIRACLES ARE UNNECESSARY TODAY

- A. Miracles are not necessary for anything God wants his children to do today.
- B. For example, there is but one baptism today, water baptism through which man is saved,
 - 1. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5)
 - 2. Peter said, “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:20-21).
- C. While once religious instruction was dependent on the Holy Spirit and the miraculous (Jn. 14:26), men are now dependent on the written Word of God!
 - 1. For, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 - 2. Nothing today is dependent on Holy Spirit baptism or miracles.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Miracles, as used in the Bible, were a suspension of the laws of nature or superceded them.
- 2. They were provisional in nature and once having accomplished the purpose for which they were provided, miracles ceased.
 - a. That purpose, for the miraculous, was to confirm the Word of God, which they have already done.
 - b. Healing was a by-product of miracles and these miracle workers today are too

modest; they should boast ability to perform ALL of the first century miracles, or admit they can perform none of them.

- c. Yet still, miracles are not necessary to perform anything God wants his children to do today.

3. Invitation:

- a. Instead, one must resort to the Word of God to know His will for mankind today, for by it, we will be judged, (Jn. 12:48).
 - i. John penned in Rev. 20:12-15, that he, “saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”
- b. The Word of God reveals God’s redemptive plan, which if we obey it, we will be saved.
 - i. For Jesus is the author of eternal salvation and that salvation is given to us if we obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9).
- c. Now, if we disobey, we will be lost.
 - i. Paul said in 2 Thess. 1:7-10, “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”