

MIRACLES HAVE CEASED

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A beginning point in understanding the subject at hand is to define "miracles." Noted charismatic Pat Boone defined a miracle on the PTL Club as the sun rising or "when I get up in the morning and put on my pants." To try to convince someone who defines miracles in this manner that "miracles have ceased" is a complete waste of time. Has the sun ceased to rise? Do I not have my pants on? If so, then miracles have not ceased. However, a responsible treatment of the topic cannot accept this type of definition for miracles. There is a natural realm and a spiritual realm. From studying the miracles of the Bible the intervention of the hand of God into his natural creation takes place in such a way that the result is unmistakably the product of Divine power. During the personal ministry of Christ he said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (Jn. 4:48). Miracles were Divine testimony to his Sonship. Jesus told the Jews, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him" (Jn. 10:37-38). The miracles Jesus did verified his claim to be the Son of God. Mark 16:20 demonstrated the purpose of miracles in the ministry of the apostles. Mark wrote, "And they [the apostles, cf. Acts 1:9-13] went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

First Corinthians chapter thirteen, verses eight through ten, proves that miracles were not to be a permanent feature of Christianity. The apostle Paul wrote, ". . . 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." God does not fail. His knowledge will not vanish away. He is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (I Tim. 6:15-16). But, the nine miraculous gifts of I Corinthians 12:8-10, referred to by a figure of speech known as synecdoche where a part stands for the whole in chapter thirteen, would cease to be utilized in the working of God in the church. Paul is the one who said miracles would "fail, cease, and vanish away." Miracles ended with the death of the apostles, who alone could convey miraculous power by the laying on of their hands.

Three proofs of this point will be offered. First, it was necessary for Peter and John, apostles, to physically go to Samaria and lay their hands on the converts that they might receive the Holy Spirit, meaning receive miraculous spiritual gifts (Acts 8:12-20). Second, Paul, an apostle, articulated this proof to the brethren at Rome whom he had not yet visited (Rom. 1:11). Third, Timothy, an evangelist, received the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, and a spiritual gift was his as a result (I Tim. 4:14). However, Paul, an apostle, precisely told Timothy this gift came to him "by the putting on of my hands" (II Tim. 1:6).

The reason for the apostles' miracle working ability was to confirm that the message they presented unmistakably was from God. "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). Their words confirmed and properly recorded form the New Testament and are forever confirmed. Since the need for miracles has been satisfied, then "miracles have ceased."