**The Cessation of Miracles**

*Does the Bible teach about an end to miracles? If so, when is that end? If not, do miracles exist today?*

**Introduction**

1. Many in the religious world today believe that God still works in miraculous ways.
2. Even some in the Lord’s church believe God still works in miraculous ways, just perhaps on a smaller scale – i.e. not through man, and not always public and observable.
3. These beliefs are not matters of inconsequence. Mostly because miracles are a bible topic, and all bible topics are to be treated with utmost veneration. (**1 Peter 4:11** – speak as the oracles of God; **1 Corinthians 4:6** – don’t think beyond what is written.)
4. It is important to understand there is only one place we can go to find the truths concerning miracles:
	1. “The subject of miracles has given rise to much abstract discussion; but it is best approached by considering the actual facts involved, and it is best to begin with the facts nearest to us: those which are recorded in the NT.” (ISBE; 2063)
	2. Miracles come from God, and anything we know about God is revealed in scripture (**cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11-13**).
	3. We must go to scripture to answer all questions concerning miracles. We must let scripture have the final say. Not man’s heart – **cf. Jeremiah 17:9**
5. What are miracles?
6. A Definition of Words
	1. Much confusion about the cessation of miracles comes from an ignorance concerning what the Bible defines as a miracle.
	2. Miracle – a phenomenon which occurs contrary to the laws of nature, thus, by the power of the Divine who transcends natural law.
		1. “If we think of the laws of Nature as self-existent and uncaused, then we cannot admit any deviation from them. But if we think of them as designed by a Supreme Will, then we must allow the possibility of their being on some particular occasion suspended.” (ISBE; 2063 – George Stokes on the reality of miracles)
		2. “They [miracles] show that some power outside Nature, some supernatural power, has intervened.” (ISBE; 2064)
		3. Phenomena unexplainable by natural law. Only explanation for what happened is that the one who created nature intervened in a way contrary to nature.
	3. A few words given in description of miracles – **Hebrews 2:4** – God bearing witness of the word of the Lord spoken by the apostles:
		1. Miracles – *dynamis*; force (literally or figuratively); specially, miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself). (Strong)
			1. Where we get the English word “dynamite.”
			2. EMPHASIS ON THE EVENT ITSELF, AND ITS CAUSE, OR ORIGIN – GOD. (Only God can do this.)
			3. Jesus concerning miracles – **John 10:36-38** – works = miracles, if you see the miracles, know that I am the Son of God.
		2. Signs – *sēmeion*; an indication, especially ceremonially or supernaturally. (Strong)
			1. EMPHASIS ON WHAT THE EVENT INDICATES TO THOSE WHO WITNESS IT. (That man has the power of God – is God, Jesus, or God is with him.)
			2. What does the miraculous event signify?
			3. Jesus’ miracle signified, but the crowd missed the point – **John 6:26-27** – ultimately signified by creative power that He was God, and logically following, had the power to grant spiritual life.
		3. Wonders – *teras* – “something strange” causing the beholder to marvel. (Vine)
			1. EMPHASIS ON THE EFFECT HAD ON THE WITNESS OF THE MIRACLE. (astonish, amaze, marvel, in awe)
			2. It is not seen as something ordinary, or natural.
			3. After Jesus healed paralytic – **Mark 2:12** – never seen anything like it!
		4. “A sign is intended to appeal to the understanding, a "wonder" appeals to the imagination, a power (*dunamis)* indicates its source as supernatural.” (Vine)
		5. Gifts of the Holy Spirit – those gifts given to men of faith by God for the edification of the church in its infancy before the complete revelation – **1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11**
7. What Miracles Are Not
	1. Miracles are not events that have a natural explanation. (Child birth)
	2. Miracles are not improbable actions.
	3. Miracles are not coincidences. (Something happening at just the right time.)
	4. Miracles are not hidden. (Not seen, so not known.)
	5. SOMEONE HAS ASKED, “ARE ALL MIRACLES SIGNS?”
		1. This is a question bred from the thought that miracles happen that we just don’t see, or don’t know about.
		2. However, the very use of miracles by God are for a sign – i.e. to signify something.
		3. ALL MIRACLES ARE SIGNS – **Hebrews 2:4** – these words were used to show God’s means of bearing witness to the word of salvation spoken by men.
		4. SIGNS, WONDERS, AND MIRACLES – three different words describing the same thing. (EX: Husband, Father, Son – same man?)
8. The Characteristics of Miracles
	1. Undeniable – miracles were seen, and left no doubt as to the supernatural nature of the work.
		1. Peter to the Jews on Pentecost – **Acts 2:22** – you yourselves ALSO KNOW.
		2. Jewish rulers concerning Jesus after raising Lazarus – **John 11:45-48**
		3. Sanhedrin concerning Peter and John healing a lame man – **Acts 4:16**
	2. Instantaneous – the miracles recorded in scripture happened instantly.
		1. Jesus heals woman with spirit of infirmity – **Luke 13:10-13** – immediately.
		2. Jesus heals woman with flow of blood – **Luke 8:43-44** – immediately.
		3. Peter heals a man lame from birth – **Acts 3:6-8** – immediately.
		4. Not healings through time for natural processes.
	3. Complete – the miracles performed did not heal partly. They did not treat symptoms, but they were full cures.
		1. When someone was miraculously healed it was not a partial recovery, but a full and flawless recovery.
		2. All previous examples show this. (**cf. Acts 3:8** – received strength, and leapt, not struggled to walk.)
	4. NONE OF THE SO-CALLED MIRACLES TODAY EXHIBIT THESE CHARACTERISTICS.
9. What is the purpose of miracles?
10. God’s actions are not random and senseless. God has eternal purposes which He intends to fulfill. ANYTHING HE DOES IS TOWARD THE FULFILLMENT OF THOSE PURPOSES.
11. Evidence of Divine Power and Authority
	1. Miracles proved Jesus’ Divinity – **John 20:30-31**
		1. Nicodemus’ conclusion – **John 3:1-2**
	2. However, proof of Divine power was not a matter of “showing off.” Such had a greater purpose, i.e. to give evidence of authority.
	3. The beginning:
		1. **Genesis 1:1, 3** – God created by speaking. (**cf. Psalm 33:6-9** – evidence of authority – HE COMMANDED, AND IT STOOD FAST)
		2. SUCH STOOD TO PROVE THAT GOD’S WORDS WERE POWERFUL, AND CERTAIN, AND COULD NOT BE LEFT UNDONE.
		3. Law given to Adam and Eve – **Genesis 2:16-17** – Law broken, death given as spoken – **Genesis 3:6-7; Romans 5:12**
	4. Displayed by Jesus in the healing of the paralytic – **Mark 2:5-12** – forgave him of sins, and proved He could do so by healing him.
		1. **(v. 10)** – power – *exousia* – denotes “authority” (from the impersonal verb exesti “it is lawful”) (VINE)
		2. The miracle (dynamis) proved Jesus’ authority (exousia). (**cf. Matthew 28:18** – all authority)
		3. **Matthew 8:27** – even the wind obeys Him. (Disciples when Jesus calmed sea.)
		4. **Cf. Romans 1:16** – power – dynamis – the same force which worked miracles is in the gospel to save. (GOD’S AUTHORITY – ONLY WAY TO SALVATION)
12. Revelation and Confirmation
	1. “This leads us to the true view of the value of miracles as proofs of a revelation…Arguments have been, and still are, constructed to show that there can be no real revelation without miracles, that miracles are the proper proof of a revelation, and so on.” (ISBE; 2064)
		1. Creation – foundation of revelation – **Psalm 33:8-9**
		2. Moses – revelation of Old Covenant – **Exodus 4:1, 5** – turning rod to serpent and back to rod – the leprous hand healed, then water to blood.
		3. Prophets – revelation of prophetic writing – **Deuteronomy 18:21-22** – telling of future events.
		4. Jesus – revealing of the promised Messiah – **Matthew 11:2-5** – John inquired, and Jesus gave proof by miraculous works.
		5. Apostles – revealing of the New Covenant – **Mark 16:15-18** – signs will follow. (**cf. Matthew 28:20** – I am with you always.)
	2. Confirmation of teaching by God – **Hebrews 2:1-4** – God bore witness of the word taught with miracles.
13. Inciting Faith
	1. More miracles than recorded, but written for our belief – **John 20:30-31; 21:25** – That you may believe.
	2. Jesus to Jews – **John 5:36** – bear witness that the Father sent Him.
	3. Jesus’ resurrection – **Romans 1:4** – ultimate proof of divinity.
14. What the Purpose is Not
	1. Not merely for the betterment of man – if so, why weren’t all healed, fed, etc.?
	2. Not for mere amusement – they weren’t performed to entertain.
	3. Not for personal gain – Jesus didn’t even use His power for personal gain – **cf. Matthew 4:3-4** – did not use power to feed self.
15. Has the purpose of miracles been accomplished?
	1. If the purposes of miracles are completed then they are no longer in effect, i.e. being used by God, for His purpose concerning them is served.
		1. Example – The Old Law served a purpose, and because its purpose is completed, it is no longer in effect – **cf. Galatians 3:24-25** – no longer under a tutor.
	2. Jesus is the Confirmed Son of God – **Romans 1:4**
	3. The Revelation of God’s Will – **Jude 3** – once for all delivered.
		1. This can further be seen in Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians.
		2. **1 Corinthians 13:8-13** – the better way of love in the discussion of spiritual gifts. It is better because it will not fail, or cease, like spiritual gifts will.
			1. **(v. 10)** – what is that which is perfect?
				1. Some say Jesus in the second coming, but it doesn’t fit the context.
				2. We must understand the “in part” to understand the “perfect.”
			2. (**vv. 8-9)** – in part = revelation through the spiritual gifts.
				1. “Fail” is the same Greek word as “vanish away.”
			3. ***“that which is perfect”*** = complete revelation.
				1. Perfect – *teleios*; complete. (Strong)
				2. The revelation is complete, so the miraculous gifts used to reveal in piece meal are done away.
			4. **(vv. 11-12)** – Illustrations regarding the infancy of the church, and therefore the TEMPORARY NEED for spiritual gifts.
16. Logical Consequences of Insisting Miracles Have Not Ceased
17. Implies an Insufficiency of Scripture
	1. Purpose – REVELATION AND CONFIRMATION
		1. **1 Corinthians 13:8-10** – Prophecy, knowledge, and tongue speaking in part, UNTIL THE COMING OF THE PERFECT.
		2. **Romans 1:11** – so churches are established.
		3. **1 Corinthians 14:26** – for edification – i.e. through revelation.
		4. **Ephesians 3:3-4** – MADE KNOWN BY REVELATION THROUGH ANOTHER SO WE CAN READ AND UNDERSTAND.
	2. “’Miracle’ is the general term for the wonderful phenomena which accompanied the Jewish and Christian revelation.” (ISBE; 2062)
		1. Ergo, if miracles exist, then revelation is still coming.
		2. **Jude 3** – once for all delivered.
		3. **Galatians 1:8-9** – regardless of who brings the revelation, it is to be rejected if it differs from that which is already revealed and confirmed.
			1. If it is the same, then it is not a new revelation, and adds nothing.
			2. If it is different, then it is false.
	3. GOD HAS NOT GIVEN MIRACLES AS OUR SUFFICIENCY IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS, BUT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THAT WHICH IS SUFFICIENT – **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – all scripture is sufficient for man’s equipment.
18. Manifests a Lack of Faith, Rather than a Strength of Faith
	1. Often, those who maintain the cessation of miracles are castigated by those who insist in their continuation as not having strong enough faith in God. THE REALITY IS THAT THEY MANIFEST A LACK OF FAITH.
	2. Faith does not support miracles, but miracles support and incite faith – **John 20:30-31** – written that we may believe.
		1. John does not say, “ONLY THOSE WHO BELIEVE KNOW THESE HAPPENED.”
		2. Rather, “THESE HAPPENED SO THAT YOU WILL BELIEVE.”
	3. While miracles were undeniable, this does not mean that all who witnessed them had saving faith:
		1. **John 6:61-66** – Concerning Jesus’ teaching those who sought Him for the bread. (Miracle of feeding the 5,000)
		2. **John 11:45-48** – Jewish rulers.
		3. **John 12:37-43** – Others who witnessed Lazarus’ resurrection.
	4. **Romans 10:17** – faith comes from hearing God’s word.
		1. The insistence of miracles is more like the faith of the Pharisees – **Matthew 16:1, 4**
		2. THEY SAW MANY SIGNS BUT WANTED MORE. (Truly just testing.)
	5. WE SHOULD EXIBIT THE FAITH JESUS SPOKE OF – **John 20:29** (after Thomas believed) (BELIEVE CONFIRMED TESTIMONY)
19. Ironically Limits God Contrary to the Notion that Teaching the Cessation of Miracles Limits God
	1. The assertion that miracles have ceased is not an assertion that God has no power to perform them. It is an assertion that God had a purpose for them, and has ceased to perform them after that purpose was served.
	2. **Job 42:2** – no purpose is withheld from Him.
		1. This includes His purposes of completion.
		2. IF GOD’S PURPOSE OF MIRACLES WAS FOR REVELATION, AND THE REVELATION IS COMPLETED, IT FOLLOWS THAT THE WORK OF MIRACLES IS COMPLETED.
		3. Who are you to reply against God – **cf. Romans 9:19-21** (Jews replied against God concerning the completion of the Old Law, and the plan of salvation in Christ, not according to the Old Law.)
			1. When the Old Law ceased, they replied against God.
			2. NO DIFFERENT WITH MIRACLES – WHO ARE YOU TO REPLY AGAINST GOD?
	3. We shouldn’t limit God to supernatural works:
		1. The supernatural does not always have to work in supernatural ways.
		2. EXAMPLE – Providence – God’s government through natural law.
20. Misses God’s Focus on the Spiritual, and Makes God a Respecter of Persons
	1. Peter’s conclusion – **Acts 10:34-35**
		1. God shows no favoritism.
		2. God’s main concern is the salvation of man **(v. 35).**
	2. If the spiritual work of miracles is completed, then the only effect they would have now is physical – THIS MISSES GOD’S FOCUS.
	3. ALSO, IF GOD’S FOCUS IS THE PHYSICAL THROUGH THE CONTINUATION OF MIRACLES, WHY AREN’T ALL HEALED?
		1. **Matthew 26:11** – poor you have always.
		2. WHY? IF GOD’S FOCUS IS PHYSICAL WITH MIRACLES THEN WHY AREN’T ALL HEALED, TAKEN CARE OF, ETC.?
	4. If God’s purpose of miracles is physical, and He does not heal all, then He is showing favoritism.
	5. **Romans 1:16** – God has given the power to salvation to all men.
21. Reduces the Wonderful Works of God that are Miracles to a Matter of Inconsequence
	1. Some suggest that there may be miracles of God that we just can’t see. So they can’t be ruled out completely.
		1. EX: Microscopic miracle in the body to be healed.
	2. This contradicts the characteristic of miracles.
	3. This limits the purpose of such a miracle to the physical.
	4. THEN MIRACLES ARE REDUCED TO A MATTER OF INCONSEQUENCE – **Ecclesiastes 12:7; 2 Peter 3:10** – body will return to dust, and physical elements to be destroyed anyway.
	5. BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD, WHICH MIRACLES REVEALED AND CONFIRMED, ENDURES FOREVER – **Isaiah 40:8**
		1. **1 John 2:17** – so does the one who abides in it.
		2. God is concerned with establishing our spiritual man, not our physical man, and physical lives.

**Conclusion**

1. We must accept the teaching of God on miracles. **(cf. 1 Peter 4:11)**
2. The belief of the continuation of miracles is not a matter of inconsequence.
3. The Bible clearly indicates the purpose of miracles, and that the purpose was completed.
4. Miracles have ceased, and we’re left with the perfect revelation of God.