

Introduction:

1. Have you ever heard someone say "it's a miracle!"?
 - a. This has become a cliché, a phrase which someone uses in order to convey that they didn't think a certain thing would happen.
 - i. "It's a miracle if I get this work done on time."
 - ii. "If he catches that pass, it'll be a miracle."
 - b. Many people describe things which happen quite frequently as a miracle.
 - i. Have you ever heard of the "miracle of birth"?
 - ii. It is interesting that though it happens thousands upon thousands of times each day, it is somehow a miracle.
2. What is a miracle?
 - a. A miracle is NOT something happening that we didn't think could happen.
 - b. A miracle is NOT something wonderful that happens (such as birth).
 - c. A miracle is something done in the physical world by the intervention of God (usually through a human) which would not have happened otherwise.
 - d. Some examples of miracles:
 - i. The parting of the Red Sea (God's actions done through Moses).
 - ii. The raising of Lazarus from the dead (God's actions through Jesus).
 - iii. The writing of Scripture (the words are God-breathed, and written by means of the human writers).
3. Do miracles still occur today?
 - a. According to many so-called "Christian" religious groups, the answer is "YES!"
 - i. Pentecostal groups often claim to be able to speak in tongues.
 1. For some reason, they object to most of the major translations which use the word "languages" instead of "tongues."
 2. In the Bible, speaking in tongues always meant another language which was spoken by the listeners (see Acts 2).
 - ii. Some make the claim that they can heal the sick.
 - iii. Others believe that certain of their preachers or missionaries have been able to re-grow limbs or even raise the dead.
 1. These stories are mostly hearsay (So-and-so told me that another person did this).
 2. No one has ever actually seen this take place.
 3. One very devout Pentecostal once told me that a certain missionary told him about witnessing skin re-growing on a man's arm (notice that this is third person).
 4. Anyone who claims to have performed a miracle like this or claims to have seen it is either lying or gullible.
 - b. The Bible is clear on this subject.
 - i. Miracles were only given for a certain period of time.
 - ii. This was prophesied before the time of Christ.
 - iii. After Christ died, His apostles said that miracles would cease within the first century.
 - iv. This is our study for today.
- I. Micah 7:14-20
 - A. This is a prophecy of the Messianic Kingdom (the church).

1. It speaks of feeding the flock (Micah 7:14), and Jesus said He was the good shepherd (John 10).
 - a. Also, Jesus gave a command very similar to this when speaking to Peter.
 - b. Jesus said “feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17).
 2. It speaks of forgiveness of sins for “our iniquities” and “THEIR sins” (Jew and Gentile).
 - a. The way the passage reads, it seems as though Jews and Gentiles both have their sins forgiven at the same time and for the same reason.
 - b. This would fit perfectly in the Christian dispensation (there is difference between Jew and Greek – Romans 10:12).
 - B. This prophecy appears to speak of miracles.
 1. God will show “marvelous things” (Micah 7:15).
 - a. This phrase describes miracles done in Egypt (Psalm 78:12).
 - b. David equates marvelous works with wonders seen (I Chronicles 16:12).
 2. Could this simply refer to God’s providing for His people (providence)?
 - a. There are some instances where that MAY be what is described with this phrase (Job 5:9, Psalm 98:1)
 - b. However, that can not be said conclusively (they could still refer to miracles done by God).
 - c. The rest of Micah 7:15 proves that it cannot be God’s providence under consideration.
 - C. The marvelous things will be done “according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt.”
 1. The Israelites are not still coming out of the land of Egypt today; that time has ended.
 2. The Israelites had come out of Egypt approximately 700 years before this was written.
 3. Many believe that this refers to their time in the wilderness (coming out of Egypt, but not yet to the Promised Land), which was 40 years.
 4. This being the case, miracles (the marvelous things) in the church were limited to a 40-year period.
 - D. This prophecy shows that miracles in the church ended 40 years after Pentecost.
 1. If someone claims to do miracles today, that is actually saying that they are not in the church, because there are no miracles in the church after that initial 40-year period.
 2. For further study, Guy N. Woods debated a Pentecostal named Franklin and made this same point from this verse.
- II. Zechariah 13:1-6
- A. Some believe that this passage also deals with the end of miracles.
 1. The interpretation of this passage is debated, but needs to be mentioned anyway.
 - B. This is a prophecy about the time of Jesus and the church.
 1. Verse 1 says “in THAT day,” so we must look back to see what day is under consideration.
 - a. Five verses earlier (12:10), God says that He will pour upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem “the spirit of grace and of supplications.”
 - 1) This could be a reference to the power bestowed by the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:16-17).

- 2) Some believe this simply refers to grace being made available.
 - 3) While I believe the first option is more likely, either interpretation points to the gospel age.
 - b. In that same verse is a prophecy of Jesus Christ.
 - 1) "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced."
 - 2) This passage was given as a prophecy of Jesus' being pierced on the cross (John 19:34-37).
 - 3) Because an inspired writer says this verse speaks of Jesus, we have a definite time frame for the rest of the prophecy.
 - c. 12:11 begins a sentence with "In that day..."
 - d. 13:1 is still speaking of the same day (time).
 2. Verse 7 gives another prophecy of Jesus.
 - a. "Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered."
 - b. This is quoted by Jesus Himself in Matthew 26:31.
 - c. Again, we see that this prophecy is Messianic.
- C. The intervening verses speak of the end of prophets and prophesies.
1. This prophecy appears limited to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (13:1).
 - a. Is this spiritual or physical Jerusalem?
 - 1) 12:10 says the spirit of grace is poured upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; this has to be speaking of the church.
 - 2) Chapter 14 begins with Jerusalem being viciously attacked, but that the Lord would fight for and make Jerusalem safe (14:2, 11).
 - 3) Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, so it does not make sense for God to say that physical Jerusalem would be safe.
 - b. Remember then, that these prophecies appear to be in the context of the church.
 2. The prophets will pass out of the land (13:2).
 3. If anyone prophesies, his own parents will know he is speaking lies "in the name of the Lord" (13:3).
 - a. Why would this be the case?
 - b. This would seem to only be the case if there were no prophets anymore.
 4. In that day, all who claim to be prophets would be ashamed and would stop trying to deceive people into thinking they were prophets (13:4).
 5. No one would claim to be a prophet anymore (13:5).
- D. There is debate as to the meaning of these verses.
1. Some (James E. Smith) believes this is speaking of the end of **false** prophets.
 - a. They will no longer seek to deceive the people (based on verse 4) because they have been converted to Christ.
 - b. There would be no idols or evil spirits either, because people would have left those behind to worship God (verse 2).
 2. Others (Homer Hailey, Robert Taylor) believe this is speaking of the end of miraculous gifts of prophecy.
 - a. "True prophets would pass out of the land, but false prophets would not, for they still plague us today" (Hailey, Minor Prophets).
 - b. How would people know there were no more prophets, unless there truly were no more real prophets (13:3)?
 - c. Why would no one claim to be able to prophesy (13:5)?

- d. Robert Taylor believes that chapter 14 describes the destruction of Jerusalem, and thus would fit with the context of the end of miraculous gifts.
3. I believe there are merits to both sides, and if the second view is correct, this gives a definite timeframe for the end of miraculous gifts: the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

III. Joel 2:28-32/Acts 2:16-21

- A. Joel prophesied of miraculous gifts which would take place; Peter said it began to be fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.
- B. Joel 2:28 says “afterward,” but Peter says the prophesy states “in the last days.”
 1. Our English translation may not be the best in the OT (because Hebrew is not as exact of a language as Greek is).
 2. Peter quoted this passage BY INSPIRATION, therefore his quotation of it MUST be accurate.
- C. What are “the last days”?
 1. Some believe that Peter is speaking of the “Christian dispensation.”
 - a. This is because there will be no more laws given; the Christian law is the final one, the last one.
 - b. The problem with this view is that the promise of miraculous gifts in this passage is upon people throughout this time period.
 - c. If it is speaking of the “Christian dispensation,” then miracles should still exist today.
 2. A much more likely answer (and one which fits the context perfectly) is that the prophecy is of the last days of the Jewish system.
 - a. When someone says “the last days are here,” you would expect the end of that thing to be near.
 - b. In AD 70, God made sure that Judaism was no longer a practicable religion.
 - 1) Jerusalem was destroyed.
 - 2) The temple was destroyed.
 - 3) All records of births and genealogy in the temple were destroyed.
 - 4) This made it impossible to prove if someone was descended from Aaron, and thus no one was able to be a priest.
 - 5) With no priests, no temple, no altar, there is no way of practicing Judaism.
 - c. Truly, Peter spoke during the last days of the Jewish system.
- D. The miracles were limited to these “last days.”
 1. In agreement with the other two passages we’ve discussed, miraculous gifts in the church were limited to a specific timeframe.
 2. Most scholars and commentators believe that Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, AD 30.
 3. Take the 40 years spoken of in Micah 7, and you end with AD 70, the year that Jerusalem was destroyed.
 4. This is the exact same timeframe Peter mentions: the last days of the Jewish system.
 5. After AD 70, then, no miracles existed.

IV. Acts 2:38-39

- A. What is the gift of the Holy Spirit?
 - 1. I refer you to brother Price's tract on "the Gift of Acts 2:38-39."
 - 2. Some view this as a gift which is the Holy Spirit Himself literally living inside all Christians.
 - 3. Some view this as a gift FROM the Holy Spirit (usually said to be salvation).
 - 4. Without getting into the Greek, we can see exactly what the gift is by looking at the only other place in the Bible where this phrase is used: Acts 10:45-46.
 - a. The Jews were able to visibly see that the Gentiles had received "the gift of the Holy Spirit."
 - b. What did they see? The Gentiles speaking in tongues, just like the apostles had at the beginning.
 - 5. Since the same author used the same phrase, and we know without a doubt what it meant in one passage, that ought to tell us what it means in Acts 2:38-39.
 - 6. The gift of the Holy Spirit is promised miraculous gifts (note that miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit was called a "promise" in Acts 2:33).
- B. The miraculous gifts were promised to a certain group of people.
 - 1. "This promise is to you" – Jews.
 - 2. "and unto your children"
 - a. The phrase "your children" only applies to the next generation every time it is used in the NT (again, see brother Price's tract for more specifics).
 - b. Therefore, the promise was time-limited—it would last only through the next generation.
 - c. A generation is usually considered to be 30-40 years.
 - 3. "and to all that are afar off" – Gentiles (see Ephesians 2:17).
 - 4. "as many as the Lord our God shall call"
 - a. This limits the amount of people who would receive the miraculous gifts.
 - b. The word translated "call" here does not refer to the "call" of the gospel, but instead a "call" to a certain work or function.
 - 5. Therefore, the miraculous gifts are for Jews, Gentiles, ending in the next generation, and would be limited to those whom God chose to have/use them (not all Christians in the first century possessed miraculous gifts – Romans 1:11).
- V. I Corinthians 13:8-10
 - A. After instructing the Corinthian Christians on the proper attitude in using miraculous gifts, he tells them that they are only temporary.
 - 1. Prophecies will fail.
 - 2. Tongues will cease.
 - 3. Knowledge will vanish away.
 - B. When will this take place?
 - 1. The miraculous knowledge is limited.
 - 2. The prophecies are limited.
 - 3. But, the completeness (that which is perfect) will come; and when it does, these partial things (miracles) will vanish away.
 - 4. What is "that which is perfect"?
 - a. Some say it is Christ coming again (Pentecostals).

- 1) This cannot be the case, because “that which is perfect” is neuter, and cannot refer to Jesus Christ.
- b. Some say “perfect love”
 - 1) However, “love” is agape, a feminine noun.
- c. James calls the law of Christ “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25).
 - 1) Since partial (miracles) is contrasted with complete, it would make sense that miracles would last until the completed revelation of the Law of Christ.
 - 2) We already have a timeframe set by other writers for miracles: from Pentecost to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
 - 3) Therefore, the completed word of God must have been finished by the same time.
- d. Some believe that “that which is perfect” refers not to the completion of the written word of God, but the completion (fulfillment) of the prophecies Christ made about the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - 1) While this view is not common, it also fits the same timeframe.

Conclusion:

1. Miracles do not exist today, and were never intended by God to last past the destruction of Jerusalem.
2. God prophesied that it would only last for 40 years.
3. God gave certain signs that would show miracles were over (completion of the revealed word and the end of the Jewish system).
4. Anyone who claims to work miracles today does not have a love of the truth.
5. These things they claim to do are not from God.
6. We do not need miracles today, because we have the completed word of God!