

The Holy Spirit and Miracles Today

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Introduction

1. The Holy Spirit is God and can do anything that can be done.
2. In the New Testament we see the Spirit act in several significant ways to accomplish His mission.
 - a. He appears personally (Matt. 3:16), He empowers humans to perform miracles (Heb. 2:4), and He inspires men to write scripture (2 Pet. 1:21).
 - b. The miracles of Jesus (Luke 19:37), the miracles of the apostles (Acts 9:40; 19:11) and the miracles of others (e.g. Philip, Acts 8:6) served an important purpose as God revealed and enacted His unfolding plan for the New Covenant.
3. However, the need for miracles was short-term and therefore and so was their use.

I. Characteristics of Authentic Miracles (Acts 3:1-10)

- A. Obvious
 1. Confirmed by the senses – incontrovertible
 2. Validated by many witnesses – some hostile
 3. Independent of secondary causes (e.g. praying for blind kittens)
- B. Instantaneous (v.7 – immediately)
- C. Useful (vss. 7-9)
 1. For the recipient
 2. For the kingdom (usually followed by a Bible lesson)
 3. For the glorification of God, not the miracle-worker himself

II. Purpose of Authentic Miracles

- A. To confirm the identity of Christ
- B. To confirm the word (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4)
- C. The purpose of miracles, therefore, was to facilitate the founding of the church by validating the founder and the message.

III. Duration of Authentic Miracles

- A. Understanding this is tied to the purpose.
 1. Did the early miracles successfully validate the claims of Christ and the word of the apostles?
 2. If so, they are no longer needed.
- B. There are two ways that the miraculous gifts were conferred in the New Testament.
 1. Holy Spirit baptism
 - (a) Only recorded two times in the New Testament – at Pentecost (Acts 2) and at Cornelius' conversion (Acts 10)
 - (b) "One baptism" (Eph. 4:5, penned in AD 62) indicates that ongoing Holy Spirit baptism must not be part of God's plan.
 2. Laying on hands of the apostles
 - (a) Practiced fairly widely before the New Testament was completed (c.f. 2 Tim. 1:6).
 - (b) Philip is one example (Acts 6:6, 8:6).
 - (c) Yet, he could not pass gifts on to others – the apostles had to come (8:14-17).
- C. Therefore, miraculous gifts must have passed from the scene no later than the deaths of those who were contemporaries of the apostles.
- D. The New Testament confirms that miracles were a short-term phenomenon.
 1. 1 Corinthians 13:9
 - (a) The context is the proper use of miraculous gifts.
 - (b) Paul indicates that something greater is to come – that which is "perfect."
 - (c) When the complete comes, the partial will disappear.
 - (d) Interestingly, it is about the time that the New Testament begins to be gathered together into a canon that the last of those died who could have had the apostles' hands laid on them.

2. Ephesians 4:8-13
 - (a) Supernatural gifts were given to certain categories of people (“He gave gifts to men” – v. 8) like prophets, pastors and evangelists.
 - (b) This was done for the purpose of bringing the church to maturity (like in 1 Cor. 13).
3. When the plan and pattern for the church were fully revealed and implemented, the purpose of miracles was superseded by the fully revealed word of God.

Conclusion

1. That the Holy Spirit is capable of empowering men to perform supernatural acts is not in question.
2. This is not an issue of God’s power but of His will.
3. God can do miracles, but he is no longer doing them through men.
4. His plan worked perfectly.
5. Man need not try to “help Him out” by looking for miracles where the word is sufficient.