

Have Miracles Ceased?

by Casey Head

We see Jesus and His apostles performing miracles in the New Testament. The blind were given sight; the lame were made to walk; devils were cast out of those who were possessed and the dead were even raised. It would be absurd to deny that these miracles occurred by the power of God. The first century was certainly an age of miracles, but do miracles still happen today? That is a legitimate question, one worthy of our consideration. While many passages and points could be presented to prove that miracles *have ceased*, let us focus our attention briefly on just one passage in the New Testament- 1 Corinthians 13.

The apostle Paul says in verses 8-10, “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.” It is plainly stated in this text that miraculous gifts would cease at some point. That is indisputable. Three specific gifts are mentioned here- prophecy, tongue speaking and knowledge; and it is said of each of these gifts that they would fail, cease and vanish away. In other words, they would not last forever. There would come a point at which miraculous gifts would cease to be performed.

With this in mind, the question then becomes, “when would they cease to exist?” The answer can be found in verses 9-10. First of all, understand that these miraculous gifts are said to be “in part.” This means simply that they were incomplete and insufficient, especially in correlation to “that which is perfect (complete).” In verse ten, the Lord tells us that “when that which is perfect has come, then that which is *in part* will be done away.” Again, the phrase “in part” sums up the miraculous gifts named in verse eight. When “that which is perfect” comes, then these miracles would cease to be performed.

Many will say that “perfect” refers to the return of Christ, but this is incompatible with the text. The passage under consideration is within 1 Corinthians 13, a chapter wholly devoted to the supremacy of love. Paul says in verse one, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, *but have not love*, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.” Verses 4-7 discuss the many qualities of love. Notice also verse thirteen, the conclusion of this discussion, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” While these miracles would cease to exist, the supreme quality of love, as well as faith and hope, would continue to exist. Now let us define hope and faith. In Romans 8:24, we are told, “For we are saved in this hope, but *hope that is seen is not hope*; for why does one still hope for what he sees?” And faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1 as “the substance of things *hoped* for, the *evidence of things not seen*.” Both faith and hope involve the unseen and unrealized. A person cannot have faith in something that he sees, nor can one hope for something that is right in front of them. Therefore, Paul *cannot* be discussing the return of Christ in 1 Corinthians 13, because faith and hope continue to exist after “that which is perfect has come.” We can conclude, then, that Paul is referring to something that has already happened. There would be a time while humanity continues on planet earth, between the first century and the return of Christ, in which miracles would not exist.

What is “that which is perfect?” In verses 11-12, Paul says, “When I was a child, I spoke 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 in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.” In other words, while the church was in a state of infancy in the first century, there would come a point of maturity and “complete” revelation. At this point, miracles would cease, for they would no longer be necessary. The church has long since been established and the revelation of God fully confirmed.

This passage alone proves that miracles have ceased to exist. A companion passage worthy of consideration is Ephesians 4:11-14. Let us accept these points and rid our minds of all emotional arguments and non-biblical sources of authority. God’s word is true!