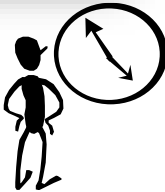


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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When Miracles Ceased

By Jefferson David Tant

Miraculous events were commonplace in the Old and New Testaments, beginning with Creation, when God “spoke” and the heavens and the earth came into existence. A true miracle is basically the suspension of or overriding the laws of nature. The word is used rather loosely today, as people refer to the birth of a baby as a “miracle.” A baby is born according to the laws of nature. Someone may have escaped injury in an accident and claim that it was a miracle they were spared. Their escape may have been unusual, but it was not a miracle in the true sense of the word.

We want to examine whether the age of miracles has passed or if we still live in the age of miracles today. Many claim miraculous powers, particularly the power to speak in tongues and perform healings.

Claims that Are Made Today

Some years ago, there was a debate in Covington, GA, between a Pentecostal preacher and David Harkrider. Preacher Payne, as he was called, claimed he had all the power of the apostles. One night, David brought a bottle of something that would make one throw up and vomit but would do no permanent harm. He put a poison label on it and challenged Payne to drink it. He referred to Mark 16:17-18: *“And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”*

Preacher Payne responded by citing the “if” in the phrase about drinking deadly things and thus said he had no obligation to drink the “poison.” After I got home that evening, David called asking if I could secure a rattlesnake for

him. I called a local Science Center curator and talked the fellow into loaning us a snake. Of course, I had to sign waivers in case the snake got out and bit someone. If that happened, the curator said he would claim he did not know me and had never heard of me!

The next night, we put the snake in a glass cage inside a cardboard box with the lid closed. David again referred to the passage in Mark 16, citing the phrase, "they shall take up serpents," and emphasizing the "shall" in the passage. Payne wouldn't go near the box until, after being chided two or three times, he went and looked in the box. Surprise! It really was a rattler. He wouldn't touch it! I guess he realized he didn't have all the power of the apostles after all.

Another incident took place in California. A while back, there was a faith healer named Amiee Semple McPherson. She had a large place called Angeles Temple. Tours could be taken through the facility, which included a "trophy" room, where a display of canes, crutches, and various other similar items was left after a person was "healed" of some infirmity. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. was with a group taking the guided tour. After the group left the trophy room, Foy stayed behind. Soon, the guide (a church member) came looking for him. "Can I help you, sir?" "Yes," replied Foy, and he explained he was looking for a glass eye, an iron hook replaced by a healed hand, or a wooden leg left after an amputated leg was replaced. None could be found. If McPherson had miraculous powers, why could she not do such things? Christ healed the blind and replaced a fellow's ear that Peter had cut off.

Then, there was Oral Roberts and his hospital. He was a famous faith healer of a generation ago, holding "healing" revivals nationwide. He founded Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, OK, and then built a hospital. When funding ran short, he got on TV and claimed he had seen a vision of a 9-foot-tall Jesus in his closet, who told him he would take his life if he didn't raise 8 million dollars to complete the hospital. And sure enough, some fellow in Florida gave him the money.

But why did he need to build a hospital when he could just touch people and heal them? Come to think of it, neither Christ nor the apostles built hospitals. They just healed people with their power.

So, what was the purpose of miracles in the New Testament? They were used to authenticate the message of Christ and the apostles. Anyone can claim to be a messenger of God, but their claim needs to be authenticated.

The apostles had a new revelation from God that supplanted the former, the Old Testament. The Hebrews' writer mentioned this in Hebrews 8:13: "*When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.*" When a fact or statement has been proven true, it doesn't have to be authenticated again. Once established as true, that foundation stands.

Christ warned that some would claim that they were performing miracles to draw people to them, "*And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him; for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect*" (Mark 13:21-22).

"I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you" (I Corinthians 1:4-6).

"And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed" (Mark 16:20).

Some time ago, a reporter went to one of the "healing" campaigns and contacted those who had been "healed." He got their name and contact information. After some time had passed, he contacted each of these people. And guess what he found? Not a single person had a healing that lasted. It is known that under a hypnotic stance, one may temporarily overcome some physical weakness. But in time, that wears off, and one's normal state returns. He didn't find a single person who had been permanently healed.

Dear Readers, the Word has been confirmed. We don't need miracles today. In fact, the apostle Paul said that in time, they would cease. "*Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away"* (I Corinthians 13:8).

Be sure you follow God's Word, not false prophets and false signs.

Joel: A Leader Who Knew What to do Next

By Max Dawson

"So, what are we supposed to do now?" I have heard that question so many times over the years. Leaders may be faced with a moral issue within the church, or maybe a budget shortfall, or possibly a disaster (like a hurricane?) has come upon them. What to do next?

Joel was a leader who knew what to do next. He opens his book by discussing the terrible plagues of locusts that have ravaged Judah (Joel 1:1-12). These awful plagues were out of the ordinary. It was not the normal course of nature to have such devastation. This was a judgment of God! And it was a preliminary to what lay ahead for the people of Judah (Joel 1:15-18). A day of darkness and gloominess was on the horizon (Joel 2:1-11). As bad as things were, it was about to get worse!

"So, what are we supposed to do now?" Joel called for the leaders in Judah to hear his message. "*Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the*

land! (Joel 1:2). In times of trouble, God's people must hear God's message. That's the first thing to do! The judgment on Judah was because they had not listened to Heaven's message! O, how we bring awful problems upon ourselves because we refuse to hear God's word!

Joel knows what to do next. It is time for repentance! He calls upon the older men of the land to hear (Joel 1:2-4). These men could remember better times before the plagues came. He calls upon the wine drinkers to weep (Joel 1:6-7). He calls the farmers to lament and wail (Joel 1:8-12). With each group he calls, he talks about what the particular locusts had done to destroy all they had! It looked hopeless for everyone!

Next, Joel calls upon the priests to put on sackcloth and lament (Joel 1:13-18). The plagues of locusts impacted everyone in Judah. There was no grain for the offerings in the house of God, and even the animals suffered because of God's judgment.

The people must repent, humble themselves, and pray to God for help. They had offended God; God was their only hope of relief. If they do not turn back to Him, things will only get worse. Joel urges the priests to call for a fast and to cry out to God (Joel 1:14).

Joel knew what to do in this terrible time. And it is what wise leaders always know to do in bad times--even if our disasters are not the result of God's judgment. Joel's call to turn back to God would serve the nation well for centuries to come-- if only the people would listen! But would they? Will we listen to Joel's advice when hard times come to us?

So, what do we do when there is a moral issue within the church? Do we turn to God in prayer? Do we insist that God's word be plainly taught and obeyed? Do we address the problem in the way God teaches? (See I Corinthians 5.) And what do we do with a budget shortfall? Do we turn to God in faith and trust that He will get us through difficult days? And when faced with a natural disaster, is our first thought to pray to God and ask for His help? That's what Joel did (Joel 1:19). "*O Lord, to You I cry out...*"

When in trouble, Joel knew what to do next! What was next was what to do first! It was to cry out to God for help for his people. Kingdom leaders know to do that, don't they?

Saving Faith is Obedient Faith

By Dennis Abernathy

Many passages could be cited to show that one must **believe** (have faith) to be saved. However, believing is more involved than the sole mental act. Ultimately, **believing** in the Lord is to **do** what He says, and **refusing to obey** His will is an expression of **disbelief**!

The thought of "obedience" and "works" has been brushed aside by many people in deference to popular views of "grace alone" and "faith only." But the religion of

Jesus is a way of righteous **action!** It is the way of **obedient** service by **faith.**

Ben Bogard, denying that baptism is essential to salvation, said, "I am going to maintain that there is no act at all that any man in the Old Testament time or the New ever had to perform to be saved. Salvation is received by faith, and faith is the only thing you can do without doing anything. Faith submits to the Lord and doesn't pretend to do; as long as you attempt to do, you are working it yourself and not depending upon the Lord." [Hardeman Bogard Debate p. 93]. Is that a true statement? No, it is not.

In many instances, "believing" is a summary term that embraces all of the conditions inherent in God's divine plan of salvation, including the command to be immersed in water. This is crucial since many absolutely repudiate the idea that baptism is a requisite to forgiveness. So, when the New Testament speaks about saving faith or belief that leads to salvation, it is not speaking about faith **alone!** It talks about belief as the foundation of one's surrender to Christ and the motivating factor in obedience to His will. For example, to the Romans, Paul mentions "the *obedience to the faith,*" and also "the *obedience of faith.*" (Romans 1: 5; 16:26). Thus, we learn that "the faith" can and must be **obeyed,** and that one's personal *faith* can and must lead to obedience! So, one's personal faith should, and it will, if it is genuine, motivate one to **obey** "the faith," i.e., "the system of faith, the Word of God, the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16-17).

Therefore, faith does not stand **alone!** Faith **acts!** Faith **works!** Faith **obeys God's will!** Saving faith will do what God says. In fact, faith does not save before it **acts!**

Calling Attention to the Heart

By Doy Moyer

One can work and not have faith, but one cannot have a living faith and not work. One can do for others and not have love, but one cannot love and not do for others.

We may be prone to evaluating the outward works, the visible doing, "*but the LORD looks on the heart*" (I Samuel 16:7) from which flow the works (or lack thereof). By stressing faith and love, we call attention to the heart that responds willingly to God's grace. All else can then fall into place.

"*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ*" (Colossians 3:23-24).

**Someone told Me
They don't Believe
In GOD because
They Can't See
HIM.**

**I replied,
You can't see
this Virus either,
But you're
wearing a mask
and gloves.**