***Miracles

RV176-01***

We continue looking at the subject of "The False Prophet." This is segment number eight in Revelation 13:11-18.

**The False Prophet**

This man, the false prophet in the future tribulation era, as we have learned, will be empowered by Satan to perform miracles. The false prophet will use his power to override natural laws in order to awe people into accepting the antichrist as God. The false prophet will in fact perform numerous miracles, which at that time will be seen worldwide on television. The false prophet will miraculously bring fire down from heaven, no doubt, in order to imitate the fire miracles of Elijah and of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:5. God does use miracles at certain points in history to authenticate His true messengers and their divine message. But again, I reiterate that miracles can be performed by both God and angels, including Satan and his demons.

**The Spiritual Gift of Miracles**

The spiritual gift of miracles has not been in operation since the first century A.D. It had a specific purpose at a specific point of time in the early church. It had the specific purpose of authenticating that Judaism was dead, and temporarily postponed in the program of God, and that it had been completely replaced by Christianity, a totally new relationship to God of a certain group of believers.

**Miracles Today**

The charismatic preachers today who claim to perform miracles are either con men or they are empowered by Satan in what they do. God Himself does perform miracles today, but He does not do it through individual agents.

**A Temporary Spiritual Gifts**

The gift of miracles is one of those temporary spiritual gifts of the church age. Why do we say that? Certain gifts (spiritual abilities) which you and I receive at the point of our salvation were designed for specific purposes at the stage of the birth and the infancy of the church age. The church age was a whole brand new operation. No one knew about it. It was never revealed in the Old Testament. Therefore, the believers had to begin from scratch. Everything had to be explained by God, piece-by-piece, to those who would make up this new special body of believers.

A group believers, in fact, we're going to be the aristocracy of all the believers of all the ages. During the beginning of the church, certain gifts were necessary. This was for the purpose of authenticating God's message of the church age, and the messengers who delivered that information. It had the purpose of confirming that there was a transition from Judaism and the age of the Mosaic Law, to Christianity and the age of grace. This was accomplished by miraculous gifts, which, in the nature of the case, therefore were temporary. The Bible may have no proof texts per se to suggest that certain gifts were temporary. That's not entirely true. In 1 Corinthians 13, as we shall see later, there is an indication that certain gifts like speaking foreign languages and the gift of prophecy will be phased out as they have served their purpose.

However, what the Bible does not say is that everything that happened in New Testament times will continue throughout the ages. The charismatics love to quote the passage in Hebrews: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever," as if that is going to prove that what Jesus Christ did was going to be the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is true that He Himself is immutable, but what God does, changes from age to age.

The truth of the temporary nature of certain spiritual gifts, while not explicitly declared in Scripture, is certainly as true as the fact of the Trinity, which also is never explicitly declared as such in the Scriptures. We do, however, have hints that certain gifts are used at a certain point in time because they have a specific purpose.

Take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews 2:3. The writer asks this question, speaking to Jews who are turning their back upon the new age of Christianity, and trying to hang on to the old age of Judaism: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was, at first, spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard it." The new age of the church was declared by the Lord Jesus Christ. He gave a great deal of information about this during that 40-day period after His resurrection – between His resurrection and His ascension to heaven. And the apostles, and the early Christians who were on the scene, had this message received from the Lord, then it was delivered to those of us who hear it even today. And their message was confirmed.

Notice verse 4: "God also bearing witness with them." With who? With these New Testament apostles who were transmitting this message of grace-age salvation. How did he confirm it? "By signs and wonders and by various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will." Those were these spiritual abilities which God the Holy Spirit sovereignly distributes.

So, what this is saying to us is that the apostles received confirmation of what Jesus told them with miracles. This confirmation was to them. They were the ones who saw the miracles. They were the ones who received this confirmation. They were the ones who were bearing witness to these things. We ourselves do not receive this confirmation all over again. What we receive is their record in Scripture that what Christ taught them was confirmed by the miracles of God.

**The Cyclic Pattern of Miracles**

The pattern of miracles historically, as you will find in Scripture, is to cycle in and out of human experience, as a messenger and a message arise that need to be confirmed by God. *Miracles are not continuous in human history*. And the Word of God makes it clear that miracles are not continuous. They arise at certain times for certain purposes.

**The Gift of Apostle**

So, the nature of some spiritual gifts will be temporary. For example, an apostle was a gift that was needed as the foundational stone in the building of the church. The gift of the apostle obviously had to be a temporary spiritual gift, because to have the gift of a possible given to a person by the Holy Spirit required that that person has seen Jesus Christ alive from the dead. No one today can claim to have seen Christ alive from the dead. This is why the apostle Paul could say, "I am an apostle." Why? Because on the Damascus Road, he actually saw Christ alive in heaven. No one today can claim to have seen Jesus Christ alive. Therefore, it's obvious that while the spiritual gift of apostle did exist in the New Testament church, it had to be temporary by the nature of the gift.

**The Gift of Prophecy**

Furthermore, the same is true for the gift of the prophet. The gift of the prophet – to predict the future with 100% accuracy. There's nobody today who can predict the future with 100% accuracy. In the New Testament church, that was important, and it was part of the receiving of information from God which was then going to be recorded in the Bible. There is nobody receiving direct information from God which is being recorded as more Scripture.

**Mormonism**

The Mormons claim to have that very thing. The Mormons are very proud to tell you that down the street from the temple at Salt Lake City, at the administration building, sits their prophet, seer, and president of the Mormon church, and that he has a direct line with heaven so that God speaks to him directly of information that the church needs to have. That is a fraud. And if he hears anybody, it's a satanic voice that he hears, not the voice of God.

History confirms also that certain gifts were temporary. They didn't last beyond the first century. These miraculous gifts moved off the scene. Therefore, it is obvious that they no longer exist today. There is a difference between the era when salvation was brought into being by Christ, and the church was founded, and this whole new operation had to be confirmed by God, and the era that we live in today, which is simply appropriating to salvation that has already been prepared. We today don't need that kind of confirmation now.

**Miracles are Supernatural**

The gift of miracles is referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:10, and we'll look at it in that passage. The apostle Paul is describing here how God the Holy Spirit sovereignly gives spiritual abilities to various Christians at the point of their salvation, which they then use to serve God. Verse 10 says, "And to another, the effecting of miracles." The word "miracles" here is the Greek word "dunamis." "Dunamis" is actually a word that means "power." You can see why we get the English word dynamite from "dunamis." This word, which is translated as "miracle," in the sense of a power expression that is beyond human ability, means a power which accomplishes a work of a supernatural character. It's a force which operates outside of the natural laws of the universe.

Jonah being swallowed by the sea monster is not exactly a miracle. That is something that could have happened in nature, and we are told that this has happened to sailors who have fallen overboard in the presence of large fish. But the timing of this particular fish and Jonah, at that particular point in time – that was a miracle. That was the act of God.

However, we're talking about a "dunamis," which is a power that is beyond human capacity, and that's how it is used here. It is speaking of the mighty power of God in Christ Jesus, and which was exercised by the early Christian leaders.

It says, "Effecting miracles. The word "effecting" is the Greek word "energema." The word "energema" means "an operation." So, literally what we have here is "operations of power." That is referring to supernatural acts of God – miraculous events. Some people have been given operations of power capacity. They have the ability to do things that override natural laws. So the early apostles could heal people of their diseases: instantly; perfectly; and, completely. The early apostles could raise people from the dead: instantly; perfectly; and, completely. The early apostles could strike people blind who were negative to the Word of God. The early apostles had all kinds of operations of power. Not everyone had that.

**The Purpose of Miraculous Gifts – Authentication**

Why did they have these gifts? What was the purpose? The purpose of these signs was to authenticate God's messengers and the message from God which they were bringing.

**Signs**

A miracle was not of so much value for what it did. Its value lies in what is indicated, and that's why it is called "a sign."

**Confirmation**

This is exemplified in Mark 16:20: "And they (the early followers of Christ) went out and preached everywhere while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the Word by the signs (that is, the miracles) that followed." These were attesting miracles – the operations of power. Were the signs (the miracles) something of value in themselves. No. They were only of value because they confirmed what the people were saying about God. It is the sign factor of the miracle that is important. Therefore, the miracle is not necessarily to get you over a terminal disease. The miracle is not in order to get you some financial reserves and wealth that you would like to have. The miracle is not for you to be able to get anything in life that you would like to have. The regular purpose of the miracles of God historically was to confirm the messenger as being true representatives of the mind of God.

This is indicated for us also in 2 Corinthians 12:12, where the apostle Paul claims his own authority as an apostle. He says that this authority that he claimed to be an apostle, which meant that he really spoke for God, was confirmed by signs: "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance by signs and wonders and miracles." So, here the apostle Paul again was indicating that a miracle was not something to be sought in itself, but it was used by God as a confirmation of a message.

This message, of course, is now recorded in the New Testament Scriptures, and we don't need miracles to confirm the New Testament Bible anymore. The confirmation of miracles originally is now recorded for us in the Scriptures, so we have that confirmation that what we read is indeed a message from God.

No one today, of course, is capable of performing an instantaneous miracle at will through the power of God, such as the power of healing. Nobody has that power today. Some people do have miraculous powers from Satan, and those miracles always have certain limitations. Any group today, such as the charismatics, who are seeking miracles, are doctrinally disoriented. They're motivated by the lust patterns of their sin nature. They are not motivated by God the Holy Spirit. They're looking for emotional kicks, experiences, and prosperity. I reiterate, this is not to say that God cannot perform miracles today. He does, but He does not do it through a human agent who has a special gift to do that.

**The Cycling of Miracles Historically**

Let's take a look at this cycling of miracles historically. Have you answered the question: when did miracles first enter the human race (the human scene)? Who was the first miracle performer? There were five miracle-working theories.

**Moses**

The miracle worker in the first period of miracles was Moses. From the time of Adam to the centuries that passed until the time of Moses, there was not one miracle of God in the human race. The occasion of this outburst of miracles was God's demand for the release of the Jews from Egyptian slavery. The King of Egypt, the Pharaoh, refused to do this. His first reaction was, "Who is your God? Who is this Yahweh that I should subject myself to Him? He was surrounded by all the great gods of Egypt, which were represented in animal form. These were the gods that he considered the most powerful. Each of the major areas of life in Egypt had their particular God. It is interesting, which we cannot pursue now, that the ten plagues that finally brought the Pharaoh to his knees, all, one-by-one, attacked one of the gods of Egypt, and exposed that God to being a ridiculous nothing.

The purpose of the first miracles on the part of Moses was to confirm his claim that he spoke for God. Exodus 4:1-9 gives us the record: "Then Moses answered and said to God, What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say?" Moses said, "What if the Jews don't accept me as bringing a message to them from you? What if they won't listen to what I say?" "For they may say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.' And the Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' And he said, 'A staff.'" He had his shepherd's staff in his hand: "Then He (God) said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So, he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent. And Moses (understandably) fled from it. But the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail.'"

Have you ever stopped to realize what God was asking Moses to do? Have you ever dealt with a poisonous snake? If you want to play around with a poisonous snake, the one place you don't grab him is by the tail, because that enables the snake to pivot around and to bite you. If you're going to grab a poisonous snake, you grab him behind the head so that he cannot injure you.

Moses must have had a little bit of a skip of his heart, and a second thought, when he looked down at that – what has come to be known as "the staff snake" that is rolling around there – this snake made out of his staff. And God says, "Take it by the tail. Immediately, Moses himself was pressed to the demand, "Do you really believe that you have a message from God? Do you really believe that God has spoken to you with confident authority, so that you could reach out and take that snake by the tail?" Moses himself was being pressed to express his own belief.

"So, he stretched out his hand. (He believed God.) He caught it, and it became a staff in his hand again." Wow. That's a good trick: "That they believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has appeared to you." You notice that when he identifies God, he identifies them to be the God of their fathers. He also specifically says, "The fathers are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is present tense. He is their God. Later, Jesus used this kind of a passage to point out to the Pharisees that God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. He would not have said they are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob if those men were no longer in existence.

Verse 6: "And the Lord, furthermore, said to him (to Moses), 'Now put your hand into your bosom.' So, he put his hand into his bosom. And when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow." Leprosy was a deadly disease. There was no cure for it. It would gradually turn the infected parts of your body white, and gradually those parts would shrink, and then they would fall off. So, if you have ever seen pictures of lepers, you will notice that their noses are gone; their fingers have fallen off; and, parts of the body deteriorate and gradually fall off, until a vital part is struck, and the person dies. Here, Moses brings his hand out, and it is leprous. Now, he has a deadly disease – a fatal disease. Talk about testing your faith!

"Then He said, 'Put your hand into your bosom again'. So, he put his hand into his bosom again, and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. And God said the Moses, 'And it shall come about that if they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign (the leprosy sign). But it shall be that if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile, pour it on dry ground, and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.'"

God said, "Let Me give you another miracle in reserve, just in case the Jews won't believe these first two. Try the old turning water into blood routine. That will set them back on their heels.

Exodus 4:29-31: "And then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel. Moses spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people, so the people believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about the sons of Israel, and that He had seen their reflection, then they bowed low and worshiped."

Here's a classic example of miracles being presented to convince a people that God is speaking, and to authenticate the message of the messenger.

**Pharaoh**

The miracles of Moses were also to authenticate his message to Pharaoh. Exodus 7:8: "Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, 'Entreat the Lord that He remove the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord.'" This was the miracle where the land was covered with frogs at the instigation of Moses and Aaron: "And Moses said to Pharaoh, 'The honor is yours to tell me. When shall I entreat for you, and your servants, and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, that they may be left only in the Nile?' Then he said, 'Tomorrow.' So, he said, 'May it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God.

What's the purpose of the miracle? Moses says, "We're making it clear to you that all your gods that you represent by animals are not gods. But I am speaking from the God who made all of us, and who made everything, and who is the cause of all these frogs that are crawling all around your house." Have you ever gotten into bed with a slimy frog? Have you ever sat down to eat a bowl of soup, and a frog jumps into it? I mean, these characters were everywhere, and people were in panic. Pharaoh finally had to appeal to Moses to bring this to an end.

The Pharaoh didn't respond to the frogs so the brought him the next plague which was gnats, all over the place. Up to now, the magicians of Pharaoh had had the power of Satan, so they even produced the frogs. By proving they could do this, they only made things worse for everybody. But now, they've got gnats everywhere, and the magicians can't reproduce this. They have finally run up against the fact that they have only limited miracle capacity.

Exodus 7:19: "Then the magician said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.' But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said. Now the Lord said to Moses, rise up early in the morning, and present yourself before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord: Let my people go, that they may serve." He refused to do it, and God had to hit him again.

Exodus 7:19-20: "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt: over their rivers; over their streams; over their pools; and, over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood. And there should be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'' So, Moses and Aaron did, even as the Lord has commanded, and he lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of the servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood."

This was a terrible, terrible plague, especially because the Nile was one of the most sacred gods of the Egyptians. The Egyptians said that their greatest god, Osiris, had his blood line in the Nile River. The Nile was the bloodline of Osiris. And here Moses turns it into real blood. It was the bloodline of Cyrus, but it was the lifeline of the people.

In Exodus 8:5-6, you have the record of the frogs which came up out of the water, and the plague that that brought. And in Exodus 7:3-5, here is the sum of all this: "God said, 'I'll harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.'" God says, "Pharaoh is not going to listen, and I'm going to multiply My miracles:" "When Pharaoh will not listen to you, then I will lay my hand on Egypt, and bring out my hosts, my people, the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt, by the great judgments.'"

Now notice verse 5: "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch out My hand on Egypt, and break out the sons of Israel from their midst." How will they know this? They're going to know this because of God's signs and wonders up in verse 3 Egypt. To some extent, the priests of Pharaoh were able to reproduce these things, but in time, they came to limitations. They could not completely do what Moses could do. Angel beings like demons are not omnipotent like God.

Well, for all the 40 years that the Jews wandered in the wilderness, Acts 7:36 says, "That they were followed by miracles." These included the crossing of the Red Sea; the manna from heaven; the supply of the quail; the water supply on certain occasions; the waters of the Jordan River parting; and, their clothes not wearing out. Miracle after miracle followed them for 40 years.

**The End of Miracles in Moses' Time**

However, when they finally crossed into the Promised Land at Kadeshbarnea, an iron curtain came down on the performance of miracles. Not another miracle was performed for centuries – not a single one, because there was no reason for miracles. The reason of authenticating the message of Moses to people who, for 430 years had been slaves, required miracles. The need to convince a world ruler like Pharaoh to subject himself to this unknown God required demonstrating the power of this God through miracles.

**Elijah**

We come down to the period of time when Elijah was alive. The centuries have rolled by. Pentecostalist, as I say, love to quote Hebrews 13:8 – that Jesus is the same, but he does not work the same. The Jewish leaders themselves over the centuries could have said, "Hey, God performed miracles during Moses' time. Why wouldn't he perform miracles for us today? But He did not. Suddenly, we come to the time of Elijah, and now there's another great explosion of miracles. Why? Because Elijah lived in the time of Ahab and Jezebel, which was a time of enormous apostasy in Israel. Ahab, the king of the North, had married Jezebel, who brought her Baal worship with her into the kingdom. And her husband Ahab went along with it.

1 Kings 16:30: "And Ahab, the son of Omri, did even the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him. It came about as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. So he erected an altar for Baal at the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. Ahab also made the Asherah. So Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel were are before him."

Ahab was the worst king, more evil than any king that had come before. This brought about, inevitably, the confrontation with God and with God's messenger Elijah. 1 Kings 18:4: "It came about when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took 100 prophets, and hid them by 50s in a cave, and provided them with bread and water." The apostasy was so complete that Jezebel was wiping out the true voices of God.

1 Kings 18:17-18: "It came about, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Elijah said to him, 'Is this you, you troubler of Israel?' And he (Elijah) said, 'I've not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed the Baals.'" Now Elijah has faced off with the king. The nation has been plagued with the messages of false prophets. The people are in a rebellious, disobedient condition.

Just notice 1 Kings 18:20: "So, Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel. And Elijah came near to all the people." This is to his own people, the Jewish people, who had the Word of God. "He said, How long will you hesitate between two opinions?'" Some of them were going along with Jezebel and Ahab. Some of them had reservations. If the Lord is God, follow Him. But if Baal, follow him.'" And look at this rebuke: "But the people did not answer him a word." Here is their messenger saying, "Face off. Either God is God, or Baal is God. Make up your mind." They were so indifferent and so callous toward God that they didn't even answer Elijah a word.

So, how is God going to prove that Elijah speaks for Him? Now was the time once more for miracles to break out on the scene. That's how God confirms message and messenger. Here are some of the miracles that Elijah performed to confirm his message to Ahab and Jezebel.

1 Kings 17:1: "Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither due nor rain these years except by my word.'" That is really putting himself on the spot. He said, "You're not going to see any more rain until I say so. Furthermore, you're not even going to have due on the ground to help water." That's devastating in Israel. That is an enormous devastation in that part of the world.

Now Elijah himself, understandably, had to flee for protection for the preservation of his own life. That meant that he had to have some kind of sustaining provision. 1 Kings 17:2: "And the word of the Lord came to Elijah saying, 'Go away from here. Turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of Jordan,'" because Ahab is seeking to kill him because of the pronouncement of no rain: "'And it shall be that you shall have drink of the brook. And I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.' So, he went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. And the Ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook."

Isn't that amazing? Here he is, and God provides him with birds who bring in the food. And that certainly is a miracle.

Then in 1 Kings 17:13-16, he is with a poor widow woman who also, because of the famine created by the curse on the rain, is hard-pressed: "Then Elijah said to her, 'Do not fear. Go and do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first." She told him, "I have just a little oil in a jar, and just a little bread (a little flour). I'm going to make some bread, and then I'm going to die with my son. This is going to be our last meal." Elijah says, "Well, let me put your mind at ease. I want you to make a cake for me first." How do you like that? We're going to eat and die, and he says, "Don't worry. Just make a meal for me first out of whatever you have. Anything will do:" "And bring it out to me. Afterward, you may make one for yourself and for your son."

This man was indeed putting her on the spot. This is like God does with our paychecks, isn't it? And all the things that the Lord's work needs? And we say, "Oh boy, I have to take care of all these other things." So, we take care of our things first, and we don't give a second thought, or we give a last thought, to God's things. And we think that that's the way we're going to make it. That is wrong. First, you take care of God's things, then He says, "I'll take care of your needs."

"For thus said the Lord God of Israel. The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty until the day that the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth. So, she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bowl of flour was not exhausted, nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke through Elijah."

**Bob Tilton**

Bob Tilton, of the "Success in Life" here at Carrollton loves this passage. He waxes eloquently on it frequently because it plays right into his hand: "Do you want more? Take out of the little you have, and what do you do first? First, you have to send something to the prophet, and I am the prophet. Send something to me. That would be a little cake, a little seed that you plant, and do you know what will happen? God will prosper you. God will expand." What a con artist! How could anybody sit and listen to that, and take it seriously? But he will talk about this verse, and he's the prophet, and you give it to him first.

There was the widow's son in 1 Kings 17:21-23: "And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the Lord and said, 'Oh Lord, my God, I pray to You. Let this child's life return to him.' And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down from the upper room of the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, 'See, your son is alive.'"

Now notice: why the miracle? Verse 24: "Then the woman said to Elijah, 'Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth." Here is this woman, grieved by the death of her son. Elijah takes the dead boy from her; goes into a private room; prays that God would perform the miracle of resurrection; God does; and Elijah brings the boy back. And this woman says, "I know that you speak for God."

This is why Satan cannot give life, and why Satan cannot raise anybody from the dead. If you are able to do that, he would really be able to deceive people with his message. We looked earlier at the confrontation in 1 King's 18 between Elijah and the Ball prophets. We also looked at the fire from heaven on Azariah's soldiers in 2 Kings 1. When Elijah finally went off the scene, he was followed by his student Elisha, and sure enough, Elisha asked that a double-portion of Elijah Spirit would fall upon him – a double capacity. What happened? Exactly that. We find exactly twice as many miracles recorded at the hands of Elisha in the Bible as we do of Elijah. Here are some of them:

He takes Elijah's garment that fell off as Elijah went up to heaven in the chariot alive, and he uses it to separate the waters of the Jordan River in 2 Kings 2:14-15: ... "And when they saw this happen (this miracle), they said to Elisha, 'Now we know that you are the new spokesman for God.'" Why a miracle? It was needed in this enormous time of apostasy in Israel.

In 2 Kings 2:20-22, you have water which was contaminated. He takes a little salt, and by a miracle, the water becomes drinkable.

In 2 Kings 4:1-7, you have this widow who has a small supply of oil, and she has a great debt. He says, "Get as many pots as you can, and pour out the little more you have into those pots. And she pours it, and what happens? Pot after pot gets filled with oil. Then she comes back and says, "I have no place else to put the oil. It was flowing from the little she had. He said, "Sell what you need to pay your debt, and keep the rest to live on. What a miracle!

Then there was the Shunammite woman who could not bear child. 2 Kings 4:14-17: "Elisha said, 'I will cause a miracle to happen for you, and you will bear a son.'" Then, tragedy of tragedy, the Shunammite woman's son dies. In 2 Kings 4:32-36, Elisha brings him back to life.

In 2 Kings 4:40-41, he neutralizes poisoned food.

In 2 Kings 4:42-44, he multiplies loaves of bread.

There is the famous story in 2 Kings 5 of the Syrian Naaman, who has leprosy, and who Elisha heals by dipping in the Jordan River seven times.

In 2 Kings 6:5-7, some men are working, and an ax-head flies off and sinks to the bottom of the river, and Elisha causes it to float back to the surface.

In 2 Kings 6:18, he causes the Syrian soldiers to be blinded.

Every time Elisha does this, his message and his claim to be the spokesman of God is confirmed.

**Jesus Christ**

When Elisha goes off the scene, the iron curtain falls down again, and there are no more miracles. Centuries roll by, and there is not another miracle until the Lord Jesus Christ appears on this earth. And He said, "I look like a man, but I am in fact a God-man. I am the God-man promised to David, and I will be the King who will sit upon the throne of Israel. I have come to introduce the Kingdom of Heaven to the people of Israel." Who is going to believe this carpenter from Nazareth? He has to confirm it. Now miracles again come into the picture.

John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets. It is interesting that in John 10:41, we're told that John the Baptist performed no miracles. Miracles, even at the hand of John the Baptist, were out. Not until Jesus began performing miracles, when He began His public ministry, were miracles again brought into the picture. He claimed to be the Son of God. He claimed to be deity. What did he do? He had miracle after miracle that authenticated His claim. Let me give you the passages. We don't have time to read all these now, but each of these deals with a miracle that only one with the power of God could perform: John 2:11; John 4:47-54; John 7:31; Luke 11:20; Matthew 11:20-23; Matthew 13:54-58; Matthew 11:2-6; John 10:36-38; John 3:2; John 12:37; Acts 2:22; and, John 20:30). Jesus performed an enormous number of miracles.

**The Disciples**

When He went off the scene, the miracles continued in the hands of the disciples who authenticated their message of the new age of the church with miracles. Let's look at a couple of them.

Luke 10:8-12: "And whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat what is before you. And heal those in it who are sick and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your city, which clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet be sure of this that the Kingdom of God has come near.' And I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city."

So, here the early disciples are sent out by Jesus on missions. They are preaching the gospel, and they are confirming it again by miracles. Matthew 10:1: "And having summoned His 12 disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness." The apostles could perform miracles because they were given the power of God. You either perform miracles through the power of God, or through the power of Satan. Here, the Word of God was confirmed very clearly through the power of God.

The same thing is true of the early church. Acts 8:5-6: "And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. And the multitudes, with one accord, were giving attention to what was said by Philippi, as they heard saw the signs which he was performing." Why did they pay attention to Philippi? Miracles. So, the apostles had the confirming power of miracles.

**The Early Church**

Then there was the period of the early church after the day of Pentecost. The day of Pentecost was the start of the church age. We have that recorded in Acts 2:1-4. Suddenly, something very dramatic had come to pass. Judaism was out, and the Mosaic Law was now passé. How were the Jews to accept the claim that God was forming a new group of believers out of Jews and gentiles called the church, the body of Christ? The Lord Jesus anticipated this problem, and He provided His followers, in the early years of Christianity, with the capacity to perform miracles to confirm their message.

This is indicated for us in Mark 16:17: "And these signs will accompany those who have believed. In my name, they will cast out demons, and they will speak in new tongues. He mentions these miracles that will confirm their message. The apostles also authenticated their message of the new church age with miracles.

Notice Acts 2:42-43: "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching; to fellowship; to the breaking of bread; and, to prayer." In that verse, you have a summary of what a local church is supposed to be doing. They were continually devoting themselves as they gathered as believers, for the apostles teaching (Bible doctrine); to fellowship with one another (testimonies and sharing the Word of God); and, to the breaking of bread (first of all, referring to the Lord's Supper, and then even to sharing meals together, and to praying together). That's the whole business of the local church.

In verse 43, the result of this is that: "And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe. And many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Acts 5:12-14 also indicates how the apostles used miracles.

Christians who are under persecution also used miracles to face-off their persecutors (Acts 4:29-31).

**The Apostle Paul**

The apostle Paul confirmed his ministry also with miracles. Notice Acts 14:1-3: "And it came about then in Iconium, they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed, both of Jews and Greeks. But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. Therefore, they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the Word of his grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands." Paul and his party of missionaries received resistance for their message. How did they respond? Miracles. That close the mouths of the opponents.

**Miracles are for Confirmation**

These miracles were a confirmation to unbelievers that the message that these men spoke was from God. That's the only reason for miracles. It is always to confirm that the message is from God – that the spokesman is a true representative of God.

1 Corinthians 14:22: "So then, tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers." Isn't that interesting? ... The work of the Holy Spirit is the work of miracles to confirm the message of God.

With the passing of the apostles; the formation of the New Testament church; and, the completed canon of Scripture, the miracle gift ceased. In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, we're told that certain other temporary spiritual gifts are going to come to an end: "Love never fails (that is, being in temporal fellowship – "agape" love), but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away with (that is, they will be terminated – this is what the word means). If there are tongues, they will cease." The Greek language, this word means that they will simply wither. They'll stop operating and they'll just dry up: "If there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect thing (that's neuter in the Greek) comes, the partial will be done away with."

What this passage is saying that we have only a partial, hopscotch, piecemeal knowledge of doctrine. But when the perfect completed canon of Scripture comes, then all of these communication gifts of prophecy, and tongues, and knowledge, and words of wisdom (all these things we have looked at) are going out the window. They're no longer going to be needed. It's all recorded in Scripture. And miracles went along with them.

After the first century A.D., the curtain once more fell on miracles. Throughout Christian experience, not another miracle was to be found. People claiming miracles are fakes, but there is no longer any genuine evidence of the working of God in miracles.

We've come through four periods. There's a fifth period of enormous miracles ahead of us, and that is the period of the tribulation. It's a future occasion when miraculous powers will be used. Some of these will be miracles from God, such as demonstrated by the two witnesses. They will have their message authenticated again (Revelation 11:3-6). But a large number of miracles in the tribulation will be of satanic origin, in order to create the illusion of confirming his works and his false doctrine.

We close with these verses that are so important for you to understand – that Satan is a miracle-worker, and he's getting ready to open up the fifth period of miracles for the purpose of countering the message of God's true prophets, and to try to confirm in the minds of the people of the world his false message.

In Matthew 24:24, Jesus says, "For false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." This tells us that the miracles that Satan will perform through the false prophet are going to be so realistic, and so spectacular, that even believers are going to have to take a second look, and wonder if these are not of God.

This is like the kind of sad thing we have today when preachers do not alert people to the false base upon which the charismatic movement operates – that Christians are wondering whether the charismatics really might have something more with God, instead of knowing immediately that they're frauds, and that they're working on the power of Satan.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10, the apostle Paul points out again that the era of the tribulation will be an era of satanic miracles: "And then that lawless one (the antichrist) will be revealed, whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to an end, by the appearance of His coming (the Second Coming of Christ when the antichrist is killed); that is, the one who is coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders." And there we have that word "signs" again, meaning "attesting miracles." The antichrist is going to be working the miracles of Satan.

We have seen this in Revelation 13:13-14. This is what we're studying: "And he (the false prophet) performs great signs (miracles), such as fire coming down from heaven in the presence of men." Notice verse 14: "And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs (because of the miracles) which it was given to him perform in the presence of the beast." He deceives people with the miracles.

**Armageddon**

Let's look at one more verse which is referring to the next era of miracles, Revelation 16:14: "For they are spirits of demons performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world to gather them together for the war of the Great Day of God Almighty." Out of the mouth of Satan; out of the mouth of the antichrist; and, out of the mouth of the false prophet, on this occasion, comes a demonic spirit. These demonic spirits go through all the world and they instigate among the leaders of the world the desire to go to war. And the whole world suddenly starts gearing up for war, because these demonic spirits are doing this. And the war that they're gearing up for is the great final war of all times: the war of Armageddon. And the countries of the world are turning against the antichrist, and they're all streaming toward Israel. They're all moving toward the field of Megiddo.

I have stood on the mountain overlooking the field of Megiddo, what is called the field of Armageddon in Scripture. It is a vast, tremendous, open area with ravines and mountains around it. Napoleon called it the finest battlefield in the world because of the possibilities of maneuver; fire; and cover.

Why would Satan send these demon spirits out to start a war when he finally has a one-world government, and he has things under his control? It is because Satan, at this point in time, has watched the prophetic clock ticking off. When this is done, he's got just a short time left before the seven-year period is over, and he knows he's on his way out. This is his last hurrah. He is bringing the nations of the world together so that they will be there on the field of battle under his direction, purportedly to fight one another. That's what motivates them. But as the Bible tells us, suddenly, they all join forces together, and they're all there on the scene when they see Jesus Christ coming in the Second Coming, and this mob of church-age believers.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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