

**What Was The
Purpose Of
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WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES?

Among many churches of Christendom, the claim is made that miraculous powers—such as healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, speaking in tongues, and other manifestations of the Holy Spirit—continue with God's people today. Each denomination insists that it receives this power directly from God and bases its claim for genuineness upon examples and cases of miracles which, it is contended, still occur and serve to confirm their assertion. But each religious group preaches a different doctrine which conflicts with that taught by another group that makes the same claim to work miracles. They are in strong opposition to and in irreconcilable disagreement with one another, and yet each claims to work miracles by God's power and divine character. Surely, it can be seen that God does not confirm with signs the preaching of one sect, while at the same time, he is confirming with the same miracles the opposite and contradictory doctrines proclaimed by another sect. This would make God inconsistent and the author of confusion. We know that He is not.

Who Had Power to Work Miracles?

1. Jesus. During the Lord's ministry upon the earth, He performed many miracles. "... For this Man works many signs" (John 11:47). "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee" (John 2:11). He opened the eyes of the blind (Matthew 9:27-30), unstopped the ears of the deaf, loosed the tongue of the mute (Mark 7:32-35), caused the lame man to leap as a hart (Isaiah 35:6) and raised the dead (Matthew 11:5, John 11:43, 44). While he had compassion on men who were diseased and unfortunate, His primary reason for performing these miracles was to prove that He was indeed Christ, the Son of God. "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus in the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30, 31).

2. The Apostles. The Lord promised His apostles the power to work miracles. "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers,

raise the dead, cast out demons ..." (Matthew 10:7, 8). He assured them of additional power. "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endured with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father 'which,' he said, 'you heard from Me' ... 'But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' " (Acts 1:4-8). On the first Pentecost, after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and gave them this power to work miracles and speak in languages which they had not learned (Acts 2:1-11). One has but to read with some observation the Acts of the Apostles to learn that these men selected by Jesus to be His witnesses, His personal representatives, received power to work many and various miracles. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you..." (II Corinthians 12:12). "And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people ..." (Acts 5:12).

3. Those on whom the apostles laid their hands. Certain ones in the church of the first century received miraculous gifts by the "laying on of the apostles hands." Seven godly men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, were selected by the church and appointed by the apostles to do a special work in the church at Jerusalem—to distribute food and clothing to some widows who had been overlooked. These men were "... set before the apostles: and when they prayed, they laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:1-6). One of these men, Philip, later worked miracles as he preached the gospel in the city of Samaria (Acts 8:6). "And the people with one accord gave heed unto the things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." But Philip did not have the power to impart these miraculous gifts to others (Acts 8:16). This belonged exclusively to the apostles. Not until Peter and John, apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, came to Samaria did any of the Christians there receive miraculous gifts, or the power to work miracles. "Then laid they their hands (Peter and John) on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given ..." (Acts 8:17, 18).

In many places in the New Testament, we are reminded that the transmission of this miraculous power to others belonged solely to the apostles. When Paul came to Ephesus, he found there certain ones who had been baptized unto John's baptism. He taught them the truth about Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and they were immediately baptized into Christ. "... And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues (languages) and prophesied" (Acts 19:1-6). To the church in Rome, he wrote these words, "For I long to see you, that I [an apostle] may impart unto you some spiritual gift ..." (Romans 1:11). "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (II Timothy 1:6).

Not all Christians in the early church received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Paul discussed this very lesson with the Corinthian church. "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? (I Corinthians 12:29, 30)? The obvious answer is that all in the church did not exercise these miraculous gifts—only those on whom the apostles laid their hands.

Purpose of These Miracles

1. Miracles served the purpose of revealing the truth. "But the Helper, [one who stands by the side of] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26). Jesus was getting ready to return to the Father, but He realized that the apostles would need some help in remembering and teaching the gospel to the ends of the earth. So He promised them a miraculous measure of the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. He assured them that they would be taught all things by the Holy Spirit; and he would enable them to recall all that He taught them while He was with them. Without miraculous help, they would have been unable to do this. Jesus gave them the fullest assurance that they would be divinely assisted in what they should speak. "... do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" (Luke 12:11, 12).

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In further discussing with them the help they would receive from the Holy Spirit after he had gone back to heaven, Jesus said, "However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth ..." (John 16:13). From these verses, we are shown that the Holy Spirit would: (1) Teach the apostles all things. (2) Bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had spoken to them. (3) Guide them into all truth.

Paul later spoke to the Corinthian church upon this same topic, in these words: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory" (I Corinthians 2:7). In verse 10, he continues with this thought: "But God revealed them to us through His Spirit." This is what Jesus promised to do. The gospel was revealed unto the apostles by the Holy Spirit and they preached all that Jesus commanded. They did it without error. To the Ephesian Christians he said that the unsearchable riches of Christ "... as it has now been revealed by the Spirit ... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body ..." (Ephesians 3:5, 6).

The apostles, in turn, preached the word which they had received from the Lord. "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God ..." (I Thessalonians 2:13).

Note one other passage which states that the Holy Spirit revealed the truth unto the apostles, "To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven ..." (I Peter 1:12)

1. Miracles served to confirm and verify the truth. When Jesus sent the apostles out on the Great Commission, it is said, "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20).

It should be well understood that the New Testament was not written at this time, and so miracles attended them to establish and corroborate the gospel message they preached. The miracles

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served to support with evidence the divine authority by which they proclaimed Christ. The Hebrew writer said that the great salvation, "... which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness [corroborated their testimony] both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit ..." (Hebrews 2:3, 4). These were supernatural proofs by which the truth was established—shown to be genuine and authentic. The inspired truth was written down, committed to record, by those providentially prepared men whom the Lord selected. Now you and I have access to the truth that was revealed and confirmed (John 20:30, 31; II Timothy 3:16, 17). Once the truth had been revealed and established by miraculous power, there was no further need for the exercise or use of that power. Jesus said all of the truth would be revealed to the apostles by the Holy Spirit. Further revelation of truth is impossible. The truth which the apostles preached was completely verified, and no man can further prove it. It can be preached, but it was proved almost two thousand years ago.

Were Miracles to Continue?

Listen to Paul as he discusses this subject with the Corinthians: "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 [complete] has come, then that which is in part will be done away" (I Corinthians 13:8-10).

God's will was revealed by the Holy Spirit only a part of the time, "bit by bit." A full and complete revelation was not made known to the apostles at once. Miraculous powers such as prophecies, foreign languages and supernatural knowledge, were some of the means by which the gospel was revealed and confirmed. But when the gospel system was completely revealed, miracles had served their purpose and came to an end.

But it is observed that the "perfect" to which Paul refers does not mean the will of God, but the coming of Jesus Christ, who is the "Perfect One." But this is not the case. When Paul said "When the perfect—to *teleion* is come," he used the neuter gender. Jesus Christ is not neuter gender. He is mascu-

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line. In speaking of the will of God in Hebrews 10:9, 10, the inspired writer employs the neuter gender. "He taketh away the first that he may establish the second. By that will [*to thelma*] we have been sanctified ..." The word for perfect means "brought to completion; fully accomplished, fully developed, complete, entire, as opposed to what is partial and limited" (I Corinthians 13:10, *Analytical Greek Lexicon*). So, when God's revelation to man was completed, "fully

developed, entire," there was no further need for miracles. They had served their purpose and come to an end—were "done away." We now have the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25).

"...'When he ascended on high, He led captivity captive, gave gifts unto men.' " These miraculous gifts, bestowed for the purpose of revealing and confirming the will of God, were distributed to apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The reason for their bestowal was "the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:8-13). "The faith" is the entire gospel system.

Jude speaks of it as "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). These miraculous gifts were to last until "the faith" was completed, until it became one unit. Once it was made whole, finished, fully developed, the miracles which had been responsible for its revelation and confirmation passed away. That revelation was completed in A.D. 96, when the apostle John finished the last letter. Since that day, there has been no need for miracles. We have the word of God, all of the truth into which the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit, and it is to govern us in all of our beliefs and practices.

No New Truth

One must not change, alter, or corrupt the gospel as it was preached by the apostles (Galatians 1:6-9). If anyone goes on and does not abide in the teaching which is from Christ he does not have God (II John 9). We are warned that if we speak, we must speak as the words of God (I Peter 4:11). Jesus Christ has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness (II Peter 1:3). The scriptures are able to furnish us unto every good work (II Timothy 3:16, 17). It is not only dangerous but damning to add to or subtract from the word of God (Revelation

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22:18, 19). There have been no new revelations through these past two thousand years since the close of the New Testament. There is no such thing as an additional revelation, or a progressional revelation. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, and we have the truth revealed and confirmed today in the New Testament, the perfect will of God (Romans 12:1, 2).

CAN YOU SPEAK IN TONGUES?

The subject of speaking in miraculous tongues has become a subject of keen interest among religious people of the world. This claim has been made by various Pentecostal groups for over one hundred years, but in the past ten years, many groups are claiming the modern practice of the New Testament feat and are claiming to possess such power by means of the Holy Spirit. Such groups as the Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Roman Catholic, and even groups of young people across the world who have no special church ties claim that they are baptized with the same measure of the Holy Spirit as people were in the days of the Apostles.

An investigation of these claims is the purpose of this tract. We need to prove every spirit or doctrine (I John 4:1), and are told to prove all things in order to hold fast to the good (I Thessalonians 5:21). Let us therefore try this doctrine held by so many lately and see if it can be approved by the Word of God.

Is Man's Word Enough?

Let us say in the beginning that no claim of miraculous power to speak in tongues, heal the sick, or perform any other supernatural act should be accepted at face value. Just hearsay or some isolated case where I heard cannot be accepted as a factual happening. Human claims are not absolute facts in religion.

There must be an absolute standard by which all men evaluate and consider these claims. That standard is the New Testament. The great Book of God must sit in judgment upon human actions—not the other way, where human actions sit in judgment of the Bible.

Not that man is not honest and sincere when he makes a claim like this, but he could be honestly mistaken. Many millions imagine in their heart that they have cancer or some other disease they have read about and may become sick over worry about that very disease. The feelings of one about these diseases can either be verified or denied only after a careful examination by a qualified doctor. We claim that the Bible is the place to check these claims to verify or deny this mania. Feelings alone will not suffice. An examination is necessary.

There Have Been Miraculous Tongues!

There is no evidence that the gift of miraculous tongues was ever associated with the worship of God in the Old Testament period. There are several references to this great miracle in the New Testament. They are:

1. On the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit came upon the twelve apostles in a baptismal measure. These men had been told to wait for the promised power in Jerusalem after the Lord's ascension; and in Acts 2:4 we read, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This was from God and fulfilled his promise to guide them into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13). After inspiring these men with divine truth through the power of the Holy Spirit, an effective way of communication had to be provided. Since the group of people assembled were from many nations (Acts 2:5) and spoke different languages, some miracle had to make possible their understanding in their own language. They heard these apostles, who were all Galileans, speak in their own tongue or language (Acts 2:8)

The apostles then spoke in other languages in order to teach the truth and it was to give understanding. It was not ecstatic gibberish (which came from emotions) that no one could understand. It was not an unknown tongue. The word unknown in the King James translation appears in italics, which means that this word is not found in the original Greek, but the translators added this word. Paul later deals with people speaking in a tongue or language where no one understood and he commanded that they were to keep silent, unless there were an interpreter who could give the meaning (I Corinthians 14:27). Every tongue had to (1) be from God for the purpose of teaching the truth and (2) be in some language that people could understand. As a result the Jews believed and were baptized and were added to the church (Acts 2:47).

2. Cornelius and his household. In Acts 10 we find the next instance of miraculous tongues. Cornelius was a great moral man who was devout (Acts 10:1, 2), but was still in his sins (Acts 11:14). After Peter was sent to him to guide him into truth, he began to "speak with tongues and magnify God." This

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occurred when the Holy Spirit fell on all of them that heard the word (Acts 10:44-48). The Jews who had accompanied Peter to Cornelius "... were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also" (Acts 10:45).

The purpose of this gift of tongues was to convince Jewish Christians that "... God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18). God wanted all men to be saved. The gospel was to be for every creature (Mark 16:15). It was "... for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Therefore, God brought the Gentiles into His great family by the same sort of miracle he had used for the Jews on the day of Pentecost, about ten years before.

As a result of Peter's preaching and this great miracle to convince the Jews that God would accept Gentiles, Cornelius and his household were baptized into Christ (Acts 10:47, 48). They became Christians, and now all nations (Jews and Gentiles) were brought to a knowledge of truth.

3. The next miraculous tongue speaking took place in Ephesus. Paul was on his journeys and entered the city and preached to certain men who had been baptized with John's baptism. "They said, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' " Upon hearing Paul's message about Christ "... they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied..." (Acts 18:1-7).

It should be noted that this occasion differs from the first two in that the Holy Spirit's power was given through the laying on of the apostle's hands.

On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the Jews (apostles) received the gift of tongues **directly** from heaven. At the household of Cornelius (Acts 10), the tongues were given **directly** from heaven. But now these men at Ephesus received this gift **indirectly**. The first two times tongues were given without human hands. The third time the gift was bestowed by the laying on of hands. As a result of Paul's teaching, and this miracle, they were baptized with the baptism which the Jews and Gentiles had experienced. It was in the name of Christ (Acts 19:5).

4. The miraculous tongue gift was also given to certain

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members of the church at Corinth. I Corinthians 12:8-10 lists nine spiritual gifts, which were, evidently, given to these Corinthian Christians. Not every Christian had all nine gifts (I Corinthians 12:30). Also, there was no single gift (like tongues) that all possessed. He compared these gifts to different parts of the body (I Corinthians 12:19). The purpose of these gifts was to edify and build up these Christians; so teaching in other tongues or languages is mentioned as one of these nine gifts. Paul goes into much detail in the Corinthian letter to make sure that these Christians used this gift of tongues for teaching with understanding. He said, "Let all things be done for edification" I Corinthians 14:26). Remember that the word *unknown* in this chapter is added every time by the translators and means **not** understood (never means jabbering or not **any** language). In every case of tongue speaking, it was for man's benefit that he might (intelligently) understand, what was said. It was associated with teaching people how to be saved and be built up spiritually.

Never Intended to Be Permanent!

These miraculous works of the Spirit (nine gifts of I Corinthians 12:8-10) were never intended to be permanent in the church. They were to be given in part. "But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away" (I Corinthians 13:10). This new and perfect thing would be a much more excellent

way (I Corinthians 13:13). All of the gifts mentioned in the Corinthian church were to pass away, or cease. He said in I Corinthians 13:8 that prophesies would **fail**, tongues would **cease**, and Divine knowledge would be **done away**. Now, when would these gifts cease? When that perfect thing (the complete will of God) should come (I Corinthians 13:10).

But What About Claims of Tongues Today?

Their claims must be false. There are a least four reasons we come to this conclusion:

1. There is **no** Holy Spirit baptism available today. The apostles and household of Cornelius were given this gift of tongues *directly* from heaven in baptismal measure. But each was for a specific purpose. And there was never another single case of Holy Spirit baptism referred to in the entire New

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Testament. These were special cases and for special reasons and were never promised or intended for all men in all ages. The apostle Paul says, "There is one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**" (Ephesians 4:5). What was this one baptism? Is it *water baptism* or Holy Spirit baptism? The apostle commanded and administered water baptism in fulfillment of the Lord's commission given in Matthew 28:18-20. They were to do this unto the end of the world. On both Pentecost, (Acts 2), and at Cornelius' house, two baptisms were administered—Holy Spirit and water baptism! But by the time Paul wrote the Ephesian letter that was only *one baptism*. Which baptism had ceased? Which one was to be administered to every creature until the end of the world?

Water baptism was used in every case of conversion in the book of Acts; whereas the Holy Spirit baptism was used only twice—once on the Jews at Pentecost and then on the Gentiles when Cornelius was converted. Thus all flesh (Jews and Gentiles) had been given the gospel by a special miracle from God. Since all people had been given a chance, the need for the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit ceased, and the baptism of water for *remission of sins* (Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21) continued.

2. Apostles can no longer lay hands on people and impart this special gift. Of all the people who had these special miraculous gifts, *only the laying on of the apostles' hands* would give them these special powers. Philip was a spirit filled evangelist from Jerusalem who could work miracles. But when Philip went to Samaria, because he was not an apostle, he had to wait for the apostles Peter and John to come and lay hands on certain people (Acts 8:14-19).

Since the death of the apostle John at the close of the first century there has been no possibility of men receiving miraculous spiritual gifts through these means. When the last man on whom the apostles had laid their hands died, miraculous gifts in special measure by the hands of men (like healing incurable disease, cleansing lepers, restoring sight to the blind, drinking poison, raising the dead or

speaking in a tongue or language they had never heard or known so that people could understand) ceased to exist.

3. Paul said by inspiration that miraculous gifts would cease when the Perfect thing was revealed unto men. Paul plainly

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taught all nine of these spiritual gifts would be done away, when "that which is perfect is come" (I Corinthians 13:8-10). The purpose for these gifts was to confirm and establish the gospel and to edify the Christian until such time as (1) the revelation of the gospel was complete, (2) the church was growing strong within, and (3) church leaders could be developed by normal means.

Once the New Testament was completed and circulated, the need for these special gifts, such as tongues, ceased. God does for us through His inspired word what He once did through miracles before truth was written down for us to know. Now we have in the Bible the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25) which will give us "all that pertains to life and Godliness" (II Timothy 3:16-17).

4. What purpose could tongues serve now in the plan of God? Spiritual gifts were helping hands to an infant church. Just as parents give support and special assistance to a baby to teach him to walk, the Heavenly Father gave special direct help to the first century Christians as they learned to walk. But when a baby begins to learn to walk, the parent gradually withdraws direct support and encourages his child to develop more strength and skill. To keep on holding the child's hand directly would stop his growth. So it is with God's dealings with His church. He has removed the miraculous, direct helps from her grasp and walks by our side, giving us direction and aid and warning in His word. We do not need special miraculous helps, for our Lord is not a respecter of persons and has given every Christian adequate instruction in His wonderful word, the Bible.

Conclusion

The very obvious and necessary conclusion from the facts presented in this tract is that miraculous gifts, such as speaking in tongues, are not available to men today. Thus whatever else may be said of modern day claimants of such powers, it cannot be said that such claims are based on scriptural authority. It therefore becomes our duty to refute such false claims and to brand those who make the claims as *false teachers*. They may fool you; but not the Lord. **Beware!**

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