

MIRACLES (26)

Church Age Direct Miracle #7 - The miracle of knowledge comprehension .

Before I came to faith in Jesus Christ, the Bible was somewhat of a maze to me. There were some things, I thought I could understand, but there were other things of which I had no clue as to the meaning. All of that changed for me June 10, 1976 when God saved me. All of a sudden, I was drawn to the Bible. I was drawn to a Christian bookstore to buy books to understand the Bible. I was eventually so driven to want to understand Scripture that I went to a theological institution so I could learn it. Now, I am able to prepare a study like this. This is a miracle and this miracle is operative in millions of God's people.

The writer of Hebrews taught that the ability to grow deep in one's knowledge of Scripture was in fact a miraculous grant from God (Hebrews 5:14; 6:1, 3). In other words, if you are learning God's Word and growing in your understanding of Grace, there is a miracle taking place right now in your own life. A passion to know God's Word in a "rightly divided" way is not the passion of most. If you truly have this passion, it is a miraculous work of the living God.

Church Age Direct Miracle #8 - The miracle of fruit production .

God's goal for us in the Church Age is to bear much fruit (John 15:8, 16). In order to do this, we must "abide" in Him, that is we must continually live our lives in a close, honest relationship with Him. Now only God is in a position to know if this is really happening. A real fruit-producing believer is a miracle of God. God assesses the believer's relationship with Him and then uses that believer to produce fruit in accordance with that relationship. Fruit producing believers are walking miracles because supernatural things are happening through them. Their prayers get answered. People come to Christ. People get excited about God's Word. God's truth radiates from their character and their lips. Don't ever minimize the miracle of God using you to produce fruit.

These are the real Grace Age miracles and unfortunately, many in the Grace Age don't recognize this because they are looking for a miraculous in all the wrong places and looking and listening to all the wrong people. I would say if God has used this in any way to stabilize your faith - praise Him - for a miracle has truly occurred.

QUESTION #14 – What about the text like Matthew 17:20 that says if we have enough faith we can move mountains?

I have a pastor friend who was teaching on this text one time and made the statement that this text was not talking about moving Pike's Peak and a woman came up after his message and told him he was part of the reason people's faith was being undermined (Douglas Connelly, *Miracles*, p. 47). He went on to say that he did not think that these disciples went away from this determined to rearrange the geography of Palestine. But that does actually get real close to the true interpretation of this text.

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The idea of moving mountains is clearly eschatological. In other words, it is predicted that just prior to Jesus Christ coming to establish His kingdom on earth, mountains are going to be moved (i.e. Revelation 6:14; 16:20).

If we carefully look at the context here in Matthew, we will notice that Jesus literally has been on a certain mountain, where He was transfigured (Matthew 17:1) and had just come down with His three disciples from that mountain (Matthew 17:9). In verse 9, there is an article “the” before the noun “mountain” which indicates this was a specific mountain, which ought to be identified. When Jesus refers to this mountain in verse 20, he uses a near demonstrative pronoun “this” rather than a far demonstrative pronoun “that.” All of this would indicate, there is a specific mountain being discussed, and not just any mountain anywhere in the world.

The mountain on which Jesus was transfigured was Mount Hermon, better known as Mount Zion (Deuteronomy 4:48; Psalm 133:3). When Jesus Christ comes to reign, many cosmological things will happen in this mountain range (Isaiah 64:1-2; Micah 1:3-4; Habakkuk 3:6). What Jesus is saying here is had the people of Israel recognized who He was and accepted Him, He could have literally moved this mountain and established Israel’s kingdom right then. If they would have had just a little of right kind of faith in Him, those mountains could have been rearranged and He could have established His Kingdom reign. But of course they did not have the right faith, and in fact rejected Him and those mountains are still standing to this day.

QUESTION #15 – What about the miracle of casting out demons?

One of the miraculous things that Jesus Christ did while here on earth was to spot some who were demon possessed and then cast out the demon or demons. He did this in Capernaum a couple of times (Mark 1:23-28 / Matthew 9:32-33); He did this in Gadara (Matthew 8:28-34); He did this at Mt. Hermon (Matthew 17:14-18) and He did this in Galilee (Matthew 12:22). The truth is, the most bizarre forms of demon possession occurred in the Gospels, particularly during the three years of the public ministry of Jesus Christ. However, just because He was casting out demons did not mean people believed in Him. In fact, some were saying He was doing this by the power of Satan (Matthew 12:22-29), which was the unpardonable sin.

It may be observed that demon work took on a different slant as the Church Age developed. In fact, in the N.T. epistles, demonic possession takes on a religious form as “angels of light” (II Corinthians 11:13-15).

Dr. Chafer observed: “Demon possession in the present time is probably often unsuspected because of the generally unrecognized fact that demons are capable of inspiring a moral and exemplary life, as well as of appearing as the dominating spirit of a spiritist or medium, or through grosser manifestations that are recorded by missionaries concerning conditions which they observed in heathen lands. These demons too, like their king, will appear as “angels of light” as well as “roaring lions” when by the former impersonation they can more perfectly further the stupendous undertakings of Satan in his warfare against the work of God” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, pp. 120-121).

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There are three ways that demons may connect themselves to human beings at the present time:

1) By demon possession, a demon takes up residency in a person - only potential for an unbeliever; 2) By demon influence, demons try to draw people away from God and His Word - potential for both believer and unbeliever; and 3) By demon obsession, people become obsessed with Satanology and Demonology and neglect rightly dividing Scripture - potential for both believer and unbeliever.

One problem for us is that we cannot be certain that a person is truly demon possessed. In other words, we do not have the ability to look at a person and know that the problem he/she is experiencing is truly a demon possession. We may suspect it, but that is all we may do. In fact, in one of the few times in the apostolic era where demons were cast out, we would have never guessed the person was demon possessed. A girl in Philippi was following Paul testifying of exactly what you would think you want her to be saying (Acts 16:16-18). If we would have seen this girl, we probably would have thought she had been raised up by God to announce that these were men of God telling the true gospel.

When we carefully search the N.T., we discover that nowhere are we admonished in Church Age Epistles to cast out demons. In fact, there are five satanic weapons we are challenged to have:

1) Be sober (I Peter 5:8a) - not emotional or irrational; 2) Be alert (I Peter 5:8b) - awake to things of God; 3) Resist the Devil (James 4:7) - stand firm against him and he will run from you; 4) Understand the Devil (II Corinthians 2:11) - don't be ignorant of what God's Word says; 5) Put on God's armor (Ephesians 6:11-18) - knowledge, truth, character, grace gospel, trust in God, belief in deliverance from the attack, knowledge of God's Word, prayer. Notice we are never challenged to cast out or try to cast out the demon.

In my first church, I was chaplain of a Juvenile Detention Center in Valparaiso, Indiana. Every Tuesday afternoon, I conducted a Bible study. One particular meeting featured a young man who was deeply involved in Satanism. In fact, that is what got him into this center. At the first session he was required to attend, he was so demonically repulsed (so I suspect) at the reading of the Bible that he literally ran to the window where the attendants were and started pounding on it, yelling for them to get him out of there. The next week he was back again and this time he seemed to listen. Week after week, he would come and I would conduct my study and always conclude with an opportunity for them to trust Jesus Christ. Most of the teens at this center were not there for long. In the final week I saw him, he trusted Jesus Christ as Savior. The best thing you can do if you come up against one you suspect is demon possessed, is not to cast out the demon but present Jesus Christ.

If Christ goes into the life, the demon will take off, for greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world (I John 4:4). Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. When you present the gospel accurately to an unsaved person who may be demon possessed, the convicting power of the Holy Spirit comes upon that person and if that person believes, Satan will be gone. So your job is not to cast out the demon, it is to present Christ as an ambassador.

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QUESTION #16 – Why doesn't God permit His people to do miracles today?

The simple answer to this question is because God's people are His Miracles! God's people are His signs and wonders all around the world. People in various parts of the world cannot deny the miraculous change of life that has occurred in millions upon millions.

We may also see that if God were to really permit someone to do the "sign and wonder" miraculous, often the men who did these things were worshipped (Acts 14:7-18). It is my observation that many of these "pseudo-miracle workers" do not have the integrity these Apostles had. They love the crowds. They love the accolades. They love the offerings. They will even con people into thinking they can do a miracle, if they think it will bring them these things.

Ada Habershon said the sweetest lesson we can ever learn when we contemplate the subject of miracles is that God's love for us is as great as His power (*The Study of Miracles*, p. 270).

When the Apostle Paul prayed for the Church, he did not pray that the Church could do the miraculous, he prayed that it might know the depth of God's love (Ephesians 1:18-19; 3:16-21). May God grant us the wisdom to truly know the miracle of God's love and the true miraculous of this Age.