


# MIRACLES

*Are For Today!*

*Confronting the Powerless Gospel  
with God's Word*

*By Troy J. Edwards*

*Victorious  
Word*   
*Christian Fellowship*

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *King James Version* (KJV) of the Bible.

## **Miracles Are For Today: Confronting the Powerless Gospel with God's Word**

by Troy J. Edwards

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Published by **Victorious Word Christian Publishing**

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This book is dedicated to  
Christic and Elise Marblow  
*My friends and partners in the up building of  
God's Kingdom*

## Introduction

They act as if they worshipped God, yet they do not let God's power work in their lives. Keep away from people like that (2 Tim. 3:5; World English New Testament)

The word “power” is from the Greek word “*dunamis*.” The Strong’s Concordance defines the word as “specifically miraculous power (usually by implication a miracle itself).”<sup>1</sup> There have been a number of ministers throughout the past several centuries who have offered us a form of religious piety, but have denied that God’s miraculous power was available for us today.

I believe it was late in the afternoon when I received a phone call from the pastor of the Charismatic church in which I had the privilege of teaching the weekday Bible study and to occasionally preach on Sunday mornings. He said, “Troy, Kevin and Joseph (not their real names) have asked for a meeting with you. They asked if you would come to their house. Be careful and don’t let them gang up on you.”

“Don’t worry Pastor,” I replied. “I can handle them.” I was confident that God and His Word was on my side and I could deal with their contentions against me. A month or two prior to this meeting, I had taught a weekday class on the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Much of the church was in attendance. There was great interest in this subject. After about an hour of explaining to the class what the Scriptures had to say concerning the benefits of this experience and how to receive it, I invited those who had not yet received this infilling to come for prayer.

One person came and as I laid hands on him, he received immediately. This excited and stirred the faith of the others in the class, except Kevin who looked with skepticism. A revival had broken out in that little class and God began to perform a number of miracles. Joseph, who had begun having seizures from a head injury he received as a child, was completely and miraculously healed that evening. He

was so excited about what God had done that he would testify about this to almost everyone he met wherever he went.

Joseph had one small challenge to his new found faith in a miracle working God—his roommate, Kevin. Joseph and Kevin shared an apartment together and were very much involved in each other's lives. They were both Christians who loved the Lord. Kevin believed that God had called him into the body of Christ as a Bible teacher. However, Kevin had become fascinated with literature by a well known Reformed pastor who had written numerous books and Bible commentaries.

Kevin read this author's books voraciously and taught from them when opportunity was afforded him. Due to this love for this pastor's literature, it was inevitable that Kevin, a professing Spirit-filled, Charismatic Christian, would read a book that this same man had written that spoke against the Charismatic movement and denied that God worked miracles in our present dispensation. This particular book is one of the best known and most popular attacks on the Charismatic gifts as being relevant for today. It promotes a doctrine known in the church today as "cessationism." Cessationism is the teaching that the gifts and miracles of the Holy Spirit ceased either when the last apostle died, or after a certain century, or when the canon of Scripture was complete (Cessationists cannot fully agree on when God decided to stop working miracles). It is based on a number of extracted Biblical proof-texts.

Kevin had begun sharing with Joseph the information that he had found in this book. In spite of the miraculous touch that Joseph received from God, he had begun to doubt that the miraculous demonstrations of the Spirit were for the church today. They attempted to influence others in the church which began to cause strife. Since, out of all of the leaders in the church, I was the most vocal and bold in proclaiming that miracles are for today, I became the primary target for their contentions. Especially under scrutiny was the Bible study in which God in His grace and mercy, manifested Himself and brought a revival among His people. After meeting with the senior pastor in private (who, along with the other leaders, stood by me), it was recommended that these young men settle their differences with me in private. The pastor called me and told me about the meeting. I gladly agreed to it since I have been anxious to settle this dispute once and for all.

Upon entering their home and after going through the usual Christian courtesies and pleasantries, I remained silent as they expressed their grievances with me. Kevin began quoting a number of problems with today's Charismatic movement, some pithy statements, and some verbiage from the aforementioned author's material. I sat quietly and listened to him for about thirty to forty-five minutes.

Sadly, their grievances was had no Biblical basis to offer an adequate rebuttal to my teachings. Firmly but kindly I responded to Kevin, "I noticed with everything you have said you did not once refer to one passage of scripture to prove your belief in the cessation of the Charismata. You have cited *abuses*, all of which I reject as well, and you have cited a number of wonderful anecdotes, but not once have you shown me from God's Word that what I do in praying for the sick and in encouraging others to expect God to work in miraculous ways is an unbiblical practice." Afterwards I began to share with him several passages of Scripture that taught that God is still willing to work miracles in this present dispensation.

The portion of that evening that actually stung was the answer to a question I asked Joseph, "Joseph, when I prayed for you that night and you said that God healed you and the seizures had gone do you still believe that God healed you?" His reply was "I don't know." This man began to doubt not only God's Word concerning His promises of miracles, but he also began to doubt his own experience concerning these miracles. It was at this point that I knew that I must fight this faith destroying doctrine with every ounce of energy that I can muster.

The doctrine of cessationism has robbed the church of God's power for years. It has also kept many people from praying effectively with an expectant faith that God would truly intervene in some miraculous way in their situation. Furthermore, it has kept the children of God from claiming many of God's promises, especially healing in their bodies.

This doctrine has found its way into many churches in the Western world in some form or another. There are some who are outright cessationists and they make no bones about it. Then there are others who have intellectual denials of cessationism but have no practice or expectancy of God's supernatural power working among them. They are not seeking for it and would not want it if God offered it.

Due to some of the excellent books that have been published in recent years that refute cessationism, many no longer hold to this as a doctrine – *or do they?* Sadly some still have a subtle form of cessationism. This includes many who claim to be Pentecostals and Charismatics. There are still others who will deny that they are cessationists but will still advance the same *cessationist* arguments against Charismatic and faith doctrines that they do not agree with.

To complicate matters further, cessationism is not only found in books that are written primarily to promote this false doctrine, but can be found within the pages of many popular Evangelical books on a variety of subjects. It is also taught in some of the most popular Study Bibles and user-friendly Bible commentaries. More people are influenced into cessationism via these sources than the books geared especially toward promoting cessationism. My book is unique in that it addresses and refutes these pertinent sources of cessationist ideology.

To deny that the miraculous is for today and to relegate all of God’s miracles to some “past age” undermines a number of Christian events and practices. Among them is the *new birth* which is a miraculous event brought about by the Spirit of God (John 3:3-7; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 3:9; 5:4, 18). There are actually some so-called “Evangelicals,” some of them are even self-proclaimed “defenders of the faith,” who deny that there is a *literal* new birth. This could easily cause Christians to doubt their conversion experience.

Prayer is also undermined by such doctrines. Those of us who take prayer seriously, and not as some form or ritual, actually expect to receive answers from God. The reason for prayer for the most part is that we expect some type of intervention from Him. While God often uses *means*, He is a supernatural God and prayer, according to the teaching of Scripture, is an expectation of something miraculous and supernatural. If we cannot expect God to do miracles then prayer can easily become a powerless ritual, something to be done to make one feel religious and pious. It is no wonder that some in the church no longer believe in the power of prayer or that prayer changes things.

The life of holiness is also undermined by such doctrines. While we are required by Scripture to discipline ourselves and to exercise self-control, this is nearly impossible apart from the grace and power of the Spirit of God, who makes His abode in us and enables us to walk in victory over sin. It is no wonder that so many Evangelicals



teach that we *must* sin and that we are nothing more than “sinners saved by grace.” If God’s people do not expect God to work miracles in our day, then it is difficult to expect supernatural assistance in resisting sin and temptation. We will simply sin and go through repeated cycles of defeat and repentance.

Even more challenging is the fact that the denial of the miraculous for today undermines the experiences recorded in Scripture. Some so-called *Liberal Christians* go out of their way to deny that the entire Bible is God’s Word. This makes it easier for them to deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, to promote abhorrent practices that are forbidden in Scripture, and to lend scientific explanations to miraculous events recorded in Scripture. Those events that cannot be explained scientifically are relegated to *allegory*.

Nevertheless, even Evangelicals who affirm the validity of Bible miracles cannot find in them anything of any real encouragement because they do not believe that God will do the same or similar things in our age. Therefore, among this group, the miraculous events recorded in Scripture are nothing more than wonderful children’s stories or can be spun to provide an illustration of some spiritual theological point in a sermon.

Most of the promises of God become absolutely meaningless as we embrace the doctrine of cessationism. The majority of God’s promises actually require some supernatural intervention by God for their fulfillment. It is no wonder that we consign many of these promises to some past (or future) dispensational period while we pick and choose which promises we can tell God’s people belong to them today. Those promises we cannot relegate to some past age or limit to some specific group of people (i.e., the Old Testament promises are only for the Jews), we re-explain them in other ways to make them irrelevant to God’s people in this age

In this book, we will show you that God’s miracle working power is for you today. We will do this by confronting a number of the arguments against this truth by using Scripture. We will also attempt to build your faith through *practical teaching* from God’s Word as well as our experiences. We believe this will enable you to trust God to intervene in your life supernaturally. While we may make reference to other works, our primary tool for arguing for the miraculous and teaching you how to appropriate it will be the Bible.

Please note that though we might quote some people favorably to support certain points, this does not mean that we endorse all of their doctrines. For example, we quote the late Baptist Evangelist, John R. Rice, favorably where we find ourselves in agreement with him. However, we also find ourselves refuting him concerning his erroneous ideas about “tongues.” Also, while I express major disagreements with John MacArthur, I quote him favorably at least once (pp. 130-131). Therefore, do not accept our favorable quotations of anyone as an endorsement of all that they teach. On the flip side of that coin, do not accept an unfavorable quote as repudiating all that is taught by the individual.

In order to benefit from this book you must absolutely believe that the Bible is God’s written Word to man without fault or defect in its original manuscripts. You must also close your eyes to any preconceived ideas and allow the Bible to speak for itself. **Let Scripture change your theology and do not read your theology into Scripture.** Finally I would encourage you to read this book with an open Bible. To keep the page count to a minimum, we will not be able to always quote a passage in the full context. Therefore we encourage you to read to be sure that what we are saying is the truth within a full contextual setting. Too many have been deceived because they have had teachers who have quoted the Bible out of context and promoted destructive doctrines by this vice.

In some cases we will not be able to quote the passage at all and can only give a reference in parentheses. We would encourage you to look up the passage that we reference to be sure that the reference is consistent to that which we are advocating. It is easy for someone to make a statement and then place a reference next to the statement. False teachers know that the average person is too lazy to look up the reference and examine it to ensure that it actually supports the statement made.

We endeavor to the best of our ability to teach you the truth, and God’s Word is the only legitimate source of truth. Anything that contradicts it is a lie. Nonetheless, we are all human and, like others, we are growing in grace. This means that the writer of this book is still fallible and subject to err. Therefore, we encourage you to read this book, gain from it, but do so with the Scriptures opened. Nonetheless, we are confident that this book will strengthen your faith to believe God for present-day miracles.

## Chapter One

# The Power of a Closed Canon

For no word from God shall be void of power. (Luke 1:37; American Standard Version)

For centuries some theologians have told us that God's willingness to perform miracles and bring His supernatural intervention into our lives was only temporary and was not to be expected by God's people after a certain period. This is known as the doctrine of *Cessationism* (the ceasing of miracles).

The teaching of cessationism emphasizes the belief that God chose to stop moving in supernatural ways and to cease the performance of miracles. This teaching has become prevalent in our society in the last several centuries. In spite of the fact that it is not as popular today to refer to oneself as a "cessationist" as it once was, the arguments and ideas of cessationism still hold a grip on much of the Evangelical church.

This influence has not been limited to systematic theology books, but also finds its way in many of our Christian devotional books and commentaries. For example, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, John Phillips wrote, "The Apostles performed marvelous miracles and saw multitudes experience the greatest miracle of all--salvation (Rom. 1:16). As on all other occasions, the period of sign miracles was replaced by God's written Word. God would have us place emphasis on His Word, not on miracles."<sup>1</sup>

In his exhaustive book on the Holy Spirit, John Walvoord wrote:

Gifts of miracles ceased at the end of apostolic age. As has been previously indicated, it was evidently the purpose of God to confine this unusual display of divine power to the apostolic age, as the need for subsequent miraculous works ceased with the advent of the written Word of God with its manifest inspiration of

God. Much of the objection to the position that the gifts of miracles was confined to the apostolic age arises from the confusion of thought which identifies every miracle with the gift of miracles. The apostolic age is distinct because in it some men had the power to perform miracles at will in the name of Christ. It was not simply that a miracle was performed, but it was rather that men possessed a gift of performing miracles frequently.<sup>2</sup>

Walvoord justifies his belief in the cessationist doctrine on his claim that some men had “the power to perform miracles at will in the name of Christ.” This is debatable. It is also interesting since other cessationists disagree with Walvoord on this point, demonstrating the great divide even among those who advocate this erroneous teaching.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, one point in which the majority of cessationists agree is the idea that miracles ceased after some “apostolic age” and that they supposedly became unnecessary after the New Testament was complete, or some refer to it as “the closing of the canon.”

### **The “Biblical Proof” Offered by Cessationists**

Being the good Evangelicals that they are, cessationist theologians do not lack Bible proof-texts intended to undergird their teaching. One of the most well known passages used to support the idea that miracles were no longer needed when the Bible was complete is found in 1 Cor. 13:

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things (1 Cor. 13:8-11)

Many cessationists read verse 8 where Paul says that “tongues shall cease” and then they move to verse 10 which says that when “the perfect is come,” the things that Paul mentions in verse 8 will be done

away with. I have no disagreements with them on this. However, I strongly differ with them on their idea of what Paul is referring to when he mentions “that which is perfect.”

Many cessationists believe that the word “perfect” in verse 10 is in reference to the completion of the Scriptures.<sup>4</sup> For example, in his book which repudiates the Charismatic Movement, Hugh F. Pyle writes, “‘That which is perfect is come’ (v. 10) refers obviously to the completion of the perfectly revealed Word of God.”<sup>5</sup>

In order to further this idea, some quote James 1:25 which says, “*But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*” The idea here is that “perfect” in 1 Cor. 13:10 is in reference to the “law of liberty” (the Word of God) mentioned in James 1:25. This is an interesting way of interpreting Scripture, though it has an obvious major flaw—the context of 1 Cor. 13 clearly does not support it.

### **The “Perfect” – Completed Bible or Coming of Christ?**

When we add 1 Cor. 13:12 to the rest of the verses, we are left with little doubt that the “perfect” is that which is to come at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ: “*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*” There is no doubt that “face to face” is referring to the time in which we will see Jesus. Some Bible translators seem to agree:

Now all we can see of God is like a cloudy picture in a mirror. Later we will see him face to face. We don't know everything, but then we will, just as God completely understands us (Contemporary English Version)

Yet still I can see myself only as a poor reflection in a mirror compared with what God intends me to be. But when I see Him face to face I shall be like Him. Now I can only partially understand myself, but then I shall know God fully, and will see how complete is His

knowledge of me (The Truth New Testament by  
Apostle Colin Urquhart)

The Truth New Testament's rendering of 1 Cor. 13:12 comes very close to a statement by the Apostle John concerning the Lord's second coming which says, "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*" (1 John 3:2). Jesus is the perfect One who we will see face to face, and it is when we see Him face to face that we will know even as we are known. Taking 1 Cor. 13:12 along with 1 John 3:2, it is fallacious to insinuate that 1 Cor. 13 is teaching that miracles were no longer necessary with the completion of the New Testament.

Furthermore, Paul told the Corinthians, "*So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1 Cor. 1:7) The word "gift" is the Greek word "charisma" which refers to the miraculous faculties mentioned in 1 Cor. 12. If Paul was intending to teach the Corinthians that these gifts would end at the completion of the New Testament, then why would he, in the very same epistle, commend them for possessing the gifts while *waiting for the Lord Jesus to come*? It simply stands to reason that Paul was not teaching cessation of the Charismata at the completion of the Bible but rather at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not alone in this. Numerous non-Pentecostal/non-Charismatic scholars and commentators believe that 1 Cor. 13:8-12 is speaking of our Lord's second coming.<sup>6</sup> Even Hugh F. Pyle concedes to this when he writes, "It is true [that] many godly men and students believe that the term 'that which is perfect is come' refers to Christ coming and to Heaven, instead of the completed and finished Word of God."<sup>7</sup> Another interesting fact concerns one of the people that Pyle cites favorably in his book—Fundamentalist Baptist Minister Dr. John R. Rice.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Rice has also written a book which is strongly critical of the Charismatic Movement. Nevertheless, in this book he repudiates the cessationist interpretation of 1 Cor. 13 that his colleague advocates. Dr. Rice writes, "We do not believe the gifts of the Spirit are now passed away."<sup>9</sup> He then quotes 1 Cor. 13:9-12 and writes:

But that does not mean that when the Bible is completed, the spiritual gifts are to pass away. It means surely that in our perfect resurrection bodies we will know perfectly what we know only in part. Now we see through a glass darkly; but then—in the presence of Christ and in resurrection bodies—we will see face to face. Yes, Bible Christianity is for today also.<sup>10</sup>

The above is not written by a Charismatic minister, but one who was a colleague of Pyle's and who was also critical of the Charismatic movement. So while we may strongly differ with Dr. Rice in his criticism of the Charismatic movement, we appreciate his honesty here.

The idea that “the perfect” means “the completion of the New Testament” is based on cessationist bias rather than sound exegesis. This idea is disputed, not only by God's Word itself when read in context and in the light of other Scripture passages, but by numerous non-Pentecostal scholars, including those actually critical of Pentecostals.

One would wonder why God would see no more need to perform signs and wonders at the completion of the New Testament during a time in which only a few people had copies of the scrolls in which the Bible was written upon. Furthermore, most people during these early years were illiterate.<sup>11</sup> Illiteracy and lack of available manuscripts are evidence against cessationism. The complete Bible is actually meaningless if it lacks miraculous power in our day to back it.

### **God's Word Has Miracle Working Power**

The Word of God itself needs God's miracle working power in order to produce the results promised within its pages. If there is no power to make what God has promised in His Word happen, then it becomes nothing more than an intellectual exercise in reading. The Bible would be no better than a wonderful piece of literature that has little distinction between classical literatures of bygone eras.

**Nevertheless, we are thankful for the fact that God's Word itself has miracle working power that brings a fulfillment of that which it promises on our behalf.** The angel Gabriel told Mary, “*For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment.*” (Luke 1:37; The

Amplified Bible) In his *Word Studies*, Marvin Vincent says concerning this passage that, “The statement is, *Every ( ) word of God shall not ( ) be powerless.*”<sup>12</sup>

God’s Word has power to bring the fulfillment of its promises. The writer of Hebrews wrote:

*Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and **upholding all things by the word of his power**, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3)*

The word used for “power” in the passage above comes from the Greek word “dunamis.” The Strong’s Concordance defines the word as “specifically miraculous power (usually by implication a miracle itself).”<sup>13</sup> It is by the miracle power of God’s Word that all things are upheld. The Bible uses such phrases as “the word of the Lord” or “the word of God,” to describe God’s Word. About these phrases the Eerdman’s Bible Dictionary says:

Sometimes this word comes as an hypostasis of God, i.e., as a divine agent acting as an emission of God’s power. At other times it is described as a personalization of God’s power in the speech of a human agent such as a prophet. It was a short step from such usage to identification of the spoken or written word of the prophets and apostles as the word of God.<sup>14</sup>

If miracles have ceased based on the fact that the canon is closed, then the angel Gabriel and other inspired Biblical authors were wrong about God’s Word having power. With cessationism, the Bible becomes another lifeless piece of literature with promises we cannot take seriously. You see, the majority of promises in Scripture require supernatural intervention by God in order to be fulfilled.

## **God’s Word Is Meant to Achieve Results**

The Word of God is given to men and women in order to strengthen faith for specific results that it promises. The writer of



Hebrews again says, “*For the word of God is living and full of power, and is sharper than any two-edged sword*” (Heb. 4:12; The Bible in Basic English). The word “powerful” in this passage comes from the Greek word “*energes.*” W. E. Vine says that the word “denotes ‘active, powerful in action’”. Concerning Heb. 4:12, Vine says, “it describes the Word of God as ‘active,’ RV (AV, ‘powerful’), i.e., full of power to achieve results.”<sup>15</sup>

God’s Word is not simply a book full of sayings that is meant to make us feel good. It has active miraculous power that is meant to achieve results:

My word, which comes from my mouth, is like the rain and snow. It will not come back to me without results. It will accomplish whatever I want and achieve whatever I send it to do." (Isa. 55:11; God’s Word Translation)

The King James Version says, “*...and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*” God’s Word is always successful. It NEVER FAILS to accomplish that which He has desired (Josh. 21:45; 23:14; 1 Kings 8:56). As Joshua told the Israelites, “*And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that **not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you.** All have come to pass for you*” (Josh. 23:14). If we base our prosperity on what God has said in the completed Bible then we can expect His Word to bring it into our lives. Sadly, this expectation is absent if we believe that having the completed Word implies that miracles are no longer for us today.

Contrary to the teaching of cessationist theologians, God says that “*it*” (God’s Word) will accomplish the thing that pleases Him. God’s Word is so powerful that it seems to take on a life of its own. Yet, we know that God is the agent backing His Word. The word “accomplish” in Isa. 55:11 is the same Hebrew word used in Num. 23:19 as “*and shall **he not do it?**” and “*shall **he not make it good?**”**

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he

not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Num. 23:19)

In the above passage we are shown that the thing that keeps God from being a liar is the fact that the very thing He said, He would do and the very thing he spoke, He would make good on it. In other words, he is saying that we can bank on His Word and expect a fulfillment.

I am not sure if cessationists realize that if miracles ceased at the closing of the canon of Scripture, then this would make God a liar. God says that He will do the things He has said and spoken. This most often requires a supernatural intervention—in other, a *miracle*. Therefore, either the cessationists are wrong or God’s Word is unreliable. God’s Word *is* reliable and is guaranteed to bring results.

### **God Is a *Doer* of His Word and Not a *Sayer* Only**

The reason that we can expect results from God’s Word is because God will do the very thing He has promised in His Word. Jeremiah wrote, “*Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it*” (Jer. 1:12). While this passage refers primarily to God’s judgment upon His rebellious people, it does give us a principle concerning God’s dedication to do that which comes out of His mouth. One must be convinced that God will do the very thing He promises in blessing or warns in judgment. Other passages affirm Jeremiah’s statement from both a positive and negative aspect demonstrating that God ensures the *performance* of His Word (Gen. 26:3; Deut. 9:5; 1 Sam. 3:11-14; 1 Kings 6:12; 12:15; Jer. 11:1-5; 33:14; Eze. 12:25; Luke 1:45, 67-72).

The word “perform” used in Jeremiah 1:12 is the same Hebrew word used for “accomplish” in Isa. 55:11 (*asah*) as well as “do” and “make” in Num. 23:19. This word is defined as “to do, fashion, accomplish, make, produce, act with effect, bring about.”<sup>16</sup> It is the same Hebrew Word used for “made” or “create” in Gen. 1. This demonstrates the *creative ability of God’s Word* (see also Hebrews 11:3). It is a common Hebrew Word used with both man and God but it takes on new meaning when applied to God. God’s Word has supernatural creative ability. The great missionary pastor, **A. B.**

**Simpson** wrote, “The Word of God creates what it commands.... Faith takes God at His word and expects Him to make it real”<sup>17</sup>

### **Faith Is Based on God’s Power to Perform His Word**

The creative miraculous ability of God’s Word is seen in the life of Abraham. When God first spoke His Word to Abraham, the conditions needed to fulfill this Word in the life of the patriarch did not exist. However, Abraham’s faith was not in preexisting conditions, but in God’s ability to create something out of nothing:

*(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. (Rom. 4:17, 18; see also Psalm 33:9; 148:1-6; Heb. 11:3).*

Vincent says that “calleth” in verse 17 is speaking “Of God’s creative decree. To call forth from nothing”<sup>18</sup> What Abraham was believing was that God would perform His promise: “*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform*” (Rom. 4:20, 21).

The Greek word translated “Perform” in this passage is “*Poieo*” which is “to make; with the names of things made, to produce, construct, form, fashion, etc.; to be the authors of, the cause; to make a thing out of something; to be the authors of a thing (to cause, bring about).”<sup>19</sup> God was “able” to make, produce, to bring about and cause His promise to come into existence for Abraham.

Paul tells us that this truth concerning Abraham was recorded for our sake (vv. 23-24). However, if one adheres to the idea that miracles ceased once the New Testament was complete, then this becomes nothing more than a historical event that has no more meaning than George Washington crossing the Delaware River. It may inspire something in me, but I could not expect God’s Word to be

performed with the same power that it was performed during Abraham's time. This would be a sad testament concerning the completion of the New Testament.

I believe that many cessationists mistake *inspiration* for *faith*. To believe that God no longer works miracles while reading stories of God working miracles in the Bible may inspire us in some way, but it does not necessarily give us *faith*. You see, faith believes that God will actually do what He promised, and this often requires a miracle.

### **Faith Is Based On God's Faithfulness to Perform His Word**

Abraham's wife, Sarah, is credited with the kind of faith that believes that God will do exactly what He promised:

*Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, **because she judged him faithful who had promised.*** (Heb. 11:11)

Another translation says, "Even when Sarah was too old to have children, she had faith that **God would do what he had promised, and she had a son**" (Contemporary English Version). Like Sarah, we must judge God as being faithful to His promises (Heb. 10:23). His promises are a revelation of His will. If He would do something in contrast to them then He could not be said to be faithful. *His **faithfulness** to His Word is the basis of our **faith** in His Word.*

Cessationists, albeit unintentionally, put God's faithfulness into question when they give us a completed Bible apart from any expectation of the miraculous. They may teach us about how these miracles authenticate the Scriptures, but this is nothing more than a scholastic attempt at proving that the Bible is true. However, this argument is unconvincing to those who need God to perform actual miracles in our day that are consistent with His promises.

Apart from faith in the fact that God will actually *do* His Word, we cannot expect to see the results that the Word promises. After Mary accepted the truth by Gabriel that God's Word did not lack miraculous power, her cousin Elizabeth said under the inspiration of God, "And

*blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.” (Luke 1:45) In the case of Sarah, God honored this matriarch’s faith because she believed in His faithfulness, or that He would perform the thing that He promised:*

*And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him (Gen. 21:1, 2).*

This is the same Hebrew Word used in Jer. 1:12, Isa. 55:11, and Num. 23:19. Notice that God did not *do* (accomplish, perform, create) differently than what He promised Sarah but did exactly as He had spoken. God always does as He has promised (Deu. 15:6; 26:19; Josh. 22:4; 23:10, 15; 1 Kings 5:12; 8:20, 56; 9:5; 2 Kings 8:19; 2 Chron. 6:15, 16; Jer. 32:42; 33:14). The Psalmist said, “*Your kingdom is a kingdom eternal; you never get voted out of office. GOD always does what he says, and is gracious in everything he does” (Psalm 145:13; The Message by Eugene Peterson).*

If cessationism is true then God could not be a promise keeping God as He states so clearly within the completed canon of Scripture. The fact that God has clearly said that he does not lie, does not change, and that He performs His Word proves cessationism to be a teaching that is inconsistent with the closed canon that the advocates of this doctrine believe brought in the cessation of God’s miracle working power in our lives.

### **Faith is the Switch That Turns on the Power of God’s Word**

While we agree with our cessationist friends that the Bible is complete and that no other books can be added to it, we conclude from the completed canon itself that its completion did not bring in the cessation of miracles. God works miracles as the result of His Word. Therefore, it is not unbiblical to speak about the miracle working power of God’s Word.

Nevertheless, cessationists like John Phillips writes, “Those today who crave miracles and signs are out of line with the Lord’s

method in this age of people's faith being based solely on God's Word.”<sup>20</sup> Phillips misses the fact that faith in God’s Word results in the miracle working power of God being manifested. Paul commended the Thessalonians for having this type of faith:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. (1 Thess. 2:13)

The Bible in Basic English says, “*And for this cause we still give praise to God, that, when the word came to your ears through us, you took it, not as the word of man, but, as it truly is, the word of God, which has **living power** in you who have faith.*” This would seem to be a better translation due to the fact that the word “effectually” comes from the Greek word “energeo” which means “to be operative, be at work, put forth power to work for one, aid one.”<sup>21</sup> It is the same word used in relation to praying the prayer of faith for the sick and expecting results:

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:15-16)

If the completion of God’s recorded Word brought in a cessation of miracles then the above is meaningless. However, that would mean that the completed Word of God is meaningless since Paul told us that the same power that James says gives us the ability to pray and see the sick healed is available to those who actually believe God’s Word. God sent His Word to heal us and deliver us from our destructions (Psalm 107:20; Prov. 4:20-22). Therefore, the idea that the completion of the New Testament and the ceasing of miracles are doctrines that are strongly opposed to one another.

## Chapter Two

### Did Miracles Cease After The Last Apostle Died?

But those miraculous powers and manifest operations, which were distributed by the laying on of hands, have ceased. They were only for a time. For it was right that the new preaching of the gospel, the new kingdom of Christ, should be signalled and magnified by unwonted and unheard-of miracles.—John Calvin<sup>1</sup>

Along with the idea that supernatural signs and wonders were meant to continue only until the completion of the New Testament is the idea that the original apostles, who were the primary contributors to the last of our written Scriptures, were the primary conduits through whom the miraculous power flowed through. Upon the death of the very last apostle, the miraculous power of God was intentionally withdrawn from the church.

While he was not the first to propagate this view, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a man named John Calvin was certainly one of the most prominent in history to emphasize the cessation of the Charismata. John Calvin's teachings have had a very profound influence on numerous succeeding generations of theologians. One of the more influential followers of Calvin's theological perspective was a 19<sup>th</sup> century Reformed Calvinist theologian named Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield:

These gifts were not the possession of the primitive Christian as such; nor for that matter of the Apostolic Church or the Apostolic age for themselves; they were distinctively the authentication of the Apostles. They were part of the credentials of the Apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the Apostolic Church, and they necessarily passed away with it.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Warfield believed that God decided to do away with His promises of miraculous intervention at the close of the so-called Apostolic age, or *when the last apostle died*. Nonetheless, these types of teachings were not limited to mere debates among prominent

theologians. The teaching of cessationism, the belief that God sovereignly decided to stop working miracles after a certain period, has found its way into a number of Bible commentaries, dictionaries, and practical devotional books. For example, Herbert Lockyer, a man who has written a number of otherwise excellent Bible teaching books wrote, "...in this age of grace, the perpetual miracle is contrary to God's order."<sup>3</sup>

It is amazing that none of these men were able to offer any Biblical support for their views. Where did they get their information? It could not be from God since, from their perspective, God no longer speaks and gives revelation to men. If the idea that God ceased working miracles cannot be found in Scripture or by direct revelation from God, then what is the authoritative source from which this teaching is derived?

### **Cessationism Still Advocated In Our Day**

As I noted in the last chapter, cessationism as a doctrine is not as popular as it once was, but its influence in much of Christian theology is still prevalent, especially among Evangelicals. Some will claim that they are "not a cessationist" while still condemning anything that appears to be miraculous and also pushing away any attempt to have God's power manifested among them. Nevertheless, there are still some bold voices today who unashamedly advocate the cessationist doctrine. One of the most well known is the Reformed pastor, John MacArthur, Jr. who writes:

Nothing in Scripture indicates that the miracles of the apostolic age were meant to be continuous in subsequent ages. Nor does the Bible exhort believers to seek any miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Calvin, Warfield, Lockyer, and some other classic cessationists are reluctant to admit Biblical authority for their doctrine that the gifts ceased after a certain period (though they assert their beliefs authoritatively). However, MacArthur is a little more audacious. MacArthur again writes, "Tongues, healings, and miracles all served as signs to authenticate an era of new revelation. As the age of revelation came to a close, the signs also ceased."<sup>5</sup> MacArthur cites Warfield as his authority for this view, demonstrating the influence of past cessationists upon current cessationist teachings. However, the



consistent theme among theologians of this kind is that miracles ceased after the so-called “apostolic age.”

We will look at MacArthur’s claim that the Bible never exhorts believers to seek for miraculous manifestations later. Let us first examine his claim that “Nothing in Scripture indicates that the miracles of the apostolic age were meant to be continuous in subsequent ages.”

### **MacArthur’s Scriptural Proof Examined**

If MacArthur is correct, then there is no need for rebuttal since Scripture is the final authority on all matters pertaining to our Christian life. However, if he is incorrect then it is imperative that we refute him and those who believe as he does. Otherwise, aligning ourselves with them could limit God’s work in our own lives.

MacArthur appeals to Hebrews 2:3, 4 in his attempt to offer Biblical proof that the miraculous gifts were limited to the original apostles:

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? (Heb. 2:3, 4)

MacArthur believes that since the statement, “it was confirmed,” is in the past tense then this proves that miracles are not for our era. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to spot a number of problems with MacArthur’s interpretation of this passage.

First, the passage does not mention the Apostles at all. There were a number of people that could fall into the category of those who had these things “confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (See John 2:23; 6:2; Luke 7:21, 22; 1 Cor. 15:5, 6). Second, the passage not only mentions “signs and wonders” but it also mentions “gifts of the Spirit.” Why is this important to mention? These supernatural gifts are given, not just to the Apostles, but “to every man” (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). In light of these two important points, Hebrews 2:3, 4 could not make a valid case that only the apostles moved in the miraculous and it all ceased when they died..

There are also the grammatical problems inherent in MacArthur's exegesis. For example, the phrase "confirmed unto us" would have to include the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Scholars have a difficult time pinpointing the exact author of this epistle.<sup>6</sup> Some debate that it was Paul and others believe it could have been Silas. To our knowledge, no scholar believes that it was any of the original twelve. Therefore, if Paul or Silas authored this Holy Spirit inspired epistle, they could not fall into the category of "original apostles" if the criteria must be "those who [at the first] heard Him."<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, simply because "confirmed" is in the past tense in this passage does not mean that the gifts have ceased. This is a rule of interpretation invented by the cessationist's imagination. The word "confirmed" is connected to the "so great salvation:" "...*if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us.*" The subject of the sentence is the "so great salvation" and "confirmed" is the predicate (verb, action word) that expresses the subject's action or state of being. This is the simple rule of grammar.

If we use MacArthur's logic then the promise of salvation is no longer a legitimate promise of God to claim because "confirmed" is in the past tense. Nevertheless, it was the message of the "so great salvation" that was "confirmed" (past tense), not the signs and wonders nor the agents through which God performed the signs and wonders. It is important to remember that it was the "so great salvation" that was confirmed since "salvation" is the subject and "confirmed" is the predicate.

Finally, we read in verse 4, "*God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders.*" If MacArthur wants to be technical about denying the signs and miracles because the word "confirmed" is in the *past tense*, he is easily refuted by the fact that the word "bearing" and not "confirmed" is connected to "signs and wonders" in the passage. Once again, following simple rules of grammar, the phrase "bearing them witness" implies "continuous action." When we use "ing" after "bear" then this verb is usually a present participle. Greek scholar A. T. Robertson confirms this:

(sunepimarturontos tou theou). Genitive absolute with the present active participle of the late double compound verb sunepimartureo, to join (sun) in giving additional (epi) testimony (martureo). Here only in N.T., but in Aristotle, Polybius, Plutarch.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, using MacArthur's own rules of interpretation, we would have to conclude from this passage that signs and wonders *continue* rather than *cease* in this day and age. MacArthur's rule for interpreting this passage of Scripture actually damages his case rather than helps it in any way.

### **The Scripture Teaches Against Cessationism**

When Hebrew 2:3, 4 is examined in light of other passages in Scripture, we would have to conclude that it is not teaching cessationism. The Bible is full of promises concerning God's willingness to give us miraculous interventions. This same Bible says that God does not change his mind concerning His promises:

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it (Num. 23:19, 20)

We see from this inspired word from the prophet Balaam that God does not arbitrarily change His mind about things He promised. A king named Balaak paid Balaam a handsome sum of money in order to have him curse the people of God in spite of God's promised blessings towards Israel. However, Balaam could not reverse the blessing of God and neither can those who make the false claim that miracles are not for today keep God's people from His promised blessings concerning the miraculous.

God's very nature prohibits Him from denying the miraculous to His people in this present age. About Himself God says, "*For I am the LORD, I change not.*" (Mal. 3:6) Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible says, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.*" (Heb. 13:8) The Lord never changes concerning His promises.

Concerning God's gifts we are told, "*For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*" (Rom. 11:29) The Amplified Bible renders the passage this way:

For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. [He never withdraws them when once they are given, and He does

not change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call.]

Kenneth S. Wuest's *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation*, also offers an insightful rendering of this passage: "for the gifts in grace and calling of God are with respect to a change of mind irrevocable." The same Greek word used for gifts is the exact same word found in 1 Corinthians 12-14 concerning the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (*charisma*). God does not break His promises or change His mind concerning His charismas. They are *irrevocable*.

### **God's Promises Not Limited to Those Who Had Them Confirmed**

God promised miraculous power to all of His people in the *last days*. After His resurrection the Lord told His disciples, "And, behold, I send the **promise** of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49)

The word "power" is from the Greek word "*dunamis*." The Strong's Concordance defines the word as "specifically miraculous power (usually by implication a miracle itself)." The Lord says that this miraculous power is a *promise* from God. This is confirmed again in the first chapter of the book of Acts:

And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:4-8)

The word "power" in this passage is again the word "*dunamis*" which is God's miracle working power. It is worth repeating that Jesus says that this is a *promise* from God.

When we read further in Acts 1, we find that the believers that joined with the apostles to pray and to receive the fulfillment of this promise was 120 (v. 15). In Acts chapter two, we see that this power was not given to only the twelve disciples but was given to all 120 of those praying. When questioned about this by observers, Peter said:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy (Acts 2:17, 18)

Notice that the supernatural ability to prophesy, to have visions and dreams, etc. was not limited to the apostles nor to a certain age. It is the mark of the *last days*. Unless MacArthur and others want to dispute the fact that we are in the last days, we must accept the fact that God would lack both integrity and faithfulness to make everyone outside of the apostolic age ineligible to claim these promises.

Nevertheless, this promise for miraculous power to an unlimited group is further expounded by Peter in Acts chapter two:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:38, 39)

Notice that the gift of the miraculous power that comes from receiving the Holy Spirit (see Acts 10:38) is not only for the Apostles, but is a *promise* from God for the whole crowd that Peter was addressing. Yet, it was not even limited to *them*. The gift expands to *their children* and *all that are afar off*. That includes us.

### **Miracles are a Part of God's Covenant Promises**

This gift is a *promise* from God. A promise is binding upon the one who made it. MacArthur and many others who embrace cessationist theology are usually Calvinistic in their ideology

concerning God. This means that they put an emphasis on God's sovereignty that exceeds any other truth concerning Him. Some Calvinists have a difficult time believing that God actually binds Himself and obligates Himself to something because, in their view of sovereignty, God is even sovereign over His Word to the extent that He is not obligated to keep it. Regardless, the very nature of a promise is one in which a person has bound Himself. Webster's says that a promise is:

In a general sense, a declaration, written or verbal, made by one person to another, which binds the person who makes it, either in honor, conscience or law, to do or forbear a certain act specified; a declaration which gives to the person to whom it is made, a right to expect or to claim the performance or forbearance of the act. The promise of a visit to my neighbor, gives him a right to expect it, and I am bound in honor and civility to perform the promise. Of such a promise human laws have no cognizance; but the fulfillment of it is one of the minor moralities, which civility, kindness and strict integrity require to be observed.<sup>9</sup>

The Bible tells us that God has settled His Word in heaven and He places His Word above His very Name (Psalm 119:89; 138:2). The Name of God represents the character and attributes of God. If His Word is magnified even above His very character and attributes, and His sovereignty simply being another one of His many attributes, then this means His Word is magnified even above His sovereignty. When God makes a promise, he is bound to perform it.

Furthermore, God binds Himself to his promises by *oaths*. Hebrews 6:17 says, "*God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind.*" (New Living Translation) An oath is "a statement by which people give assurance that they have spoken the truth or by which they obligate themselves to perform certain actions."<sup>10</sup> God binds Himself to His promises and actually performs them (Jer. 1:12; Luke 1:38-45; Rom. 4:21). If God decided to limit His miracle working power to a specific group or He has ceased working miracles after a certain age then this would constitute as a "change." This would mean that He has broken a legally binding agreement on His part and we would have a right to call His integrity into question.

The cessationist theologians unintentionally make God into a covenant promise breaker. Nevertheless, the Scriptural record proves that our God is a promise keeping God, despite the cessationists'

sincere, but erroneous claims. This is proven by the fact that Stephen was used by God to do signs and wonders and he was not an apostle (Acts 6:8) and non-apostle Phillip was used by God to proclaim signs and wonders as he took the gospel to the Samaritans (Acts 8:1-8). Furthermore, whole groups, households, and cities received the enduement of this miracle working power (Acts 8:14-17; 10:44-46; 19:1-7).

The men who received this miraculous power in Acts 19 began to prophesy (v. 6), further demonstrating that God's promise for signs and wonders were not limited to the Apostles. This is proof that this miraculous power was available to anyone who would receive it. God's promises are for all people in all ages, their children, those who are afar off, and especially those of us who are living in "the last days."

### **God's Faithfulness and Integrity Questioned by Cessationism**

In chapter one, we examined the cessationist argument that a "closed canon" or the "completed Scriptures" dismissed the need for any more miracles. We saw how faulty this argument is in light of the closed canon itself.

Considering the Biblical evidence that we have examined concerning this, we found from the completed canon itself that miracles were supposed to continue in the last days and miraculous power was promised to others besides the original apostles. We must conclude from our examination that if cessationists are correct then this puts the faithfulness of God into question. If the promises concerning miraculous intervention ceased during the Apostolic age without prior warning that this would happen, then how are we to trust any of God's other promises such as salvation, forgiveness of sin, justification, the second coming of our Lord, and numerous other promises that all Christians, Charismatic and non-Charismatic alike, often claim and rely upon?

One of the reasons we can rely on God to keep His promises is due to His declaration that He is a faithful God who is full of integrity:

Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David (Psalm 89:33-35)

The Bible has a number of similar passages that attest to God's faithfulness and integrity (Josh. 21:45; 23:14; Psalm 143:1; 1 Kings 8:56; 1 Thes. 5:24; Titus 1:1, 2; Heb. 6:17, 18; 10:23; 11:11). If cessationists are correct then God has suffered His faithfulness to fail, and the statements about God's character in the references above are meaningless.

I find it amazing that Evangelicals who claim to hold to the sufficiency of Scripture, who regard the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, and who have defended the Bible against liberal critics who question the authenticity of Bible miracles, would advocate positions that, not only are absent in scripture, but cast aspersions on the very character of God.

Yet, not only have these views been advocated but they have been a part of the church for years. Advocates of these views have been the primary persecutors of every revival movement that came with signs and wonders to include the Anabaptists, the Wesleyan movement, the Quaker movement, the Great Awakening, the Holiness Movement, Faith-Cure, Pentecostal, and the Charismatic Movements. They have criticized and persecuted others based on *false doctrine*.

Even worse, their influence has impacted the church in a very negative way. This erroneous doctrine has lead us into a Gospel that is primarily "intellectual" with little to no reliance upon the power of God. Most sinners are cheated because they cannot know the reality of God by listening to "sound arguments" with nothing to back them. Many of God's people are cheated because the majority of Bible promises become irrelevant due to the fact that they require supernatural intervention for their fulfillment.

This makes the Bible nothing more than a book used for "sermonizing" and intellectual arguments. It provides plenty of fodder for theological debates, and even comfort for people who need it. Nevertheless, many of its promises, especially in the area of answered prayer, will leave us without much assurance if we deny the miraculous in our day.

In the next chapter, we will look at another cessationist argument regarding miracles and the original apostles and show you how it deviates from Scripture.



## Chapter Three

# Were Miracles Meant Only to Authenticate the Apostles?

In our last chapter we refuted the idea that miracles ceased upon the death of the last apostle. We demonstrated from the *completed New Testament* that the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit was available to all of God's people, and that its availability would last throughout the last days before the coming of Christ. Miraculous power in these last days is a promise that is binding upon God and he would not arbitrarily withdraw something that he promised.

Nevertheless, Cessationists would have us believe that Scripture teaches just the opposite; that God did not bind Himself in a promise to provide miraculous power for His people. Since so many have had their faith destroyed by the cessationist's arguments and misuse of certain biblical passages to prove their doctrine, it behooves us to examine and refute these with the truth of God's Word.

### **Miracles Authenticated Apostolic Ministry**

One reason that cessationists believe that miracles ceased with the last apostle is because, from their understanding, miracles were meant primarily to authenticate the apostles as legitimate messengers of Christ and foundational builders of the church. The prominent cessationist of the last century, Benjamin B. Warfield wrote:

But the immediate end for which they were given is not left doubtful, and that proves to be not directly the extension of the church, but the authentication of the Apostles as messengers from God. This does not mean, of course, that only the Apostles appear in the New Testament as working miracles, or that they alone are represented as recipients of the charismata. But it does mean that the charismata belonged, in a true sense, to the Apostles, and constituted one of the signs of an Apostle.<sup>1</sup>

Warfield further writes, "It is of equal importance to us, to teach us the source of the gifts of power, in the Apostles, apart from whom they were not conferred: as also their function, to authenticate the Apostles as the authoritative founders of the church."<sup>2</sup> Cessationists often refer to Ephesians 2:20 as their "Biblical evidence"

for this assertion: “*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*”

In a book that was, no doubt, intended to be a rebuttal to one of the few Christian books on the market today responding directly to the cessationist ideology,<sup>3</sup> Thomas R. Edgar writes:

Biblical evidence, therefore, demonstrates that apostles and prophets were only for the beginning or foundational stage of the universal church (Eph. 2:20). Biblical evidence also shows that miracles and signs were only for the first generation of believers and were past by the time some of the New Testament was written (Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:3-4). There is biblical evidence that the sign gifts were mainly apostolic and that their purpose was to confirm the original outreach of the church. From the Bible alone we would expect the gifts of apostle, prophet, healings, miracles, and tongues to be temporary.<sup>4</sup>

Similar to Edgar, Hank Hanegraaff, popular critic of the Word-Faith Movement, disputes with those who have some of the same experiences that Peter had in Acts 10. He writes, “Peter’s trance cannot be used as a precedent for people today because Peter as an Apostle was foundational to the church (Eph. 2:20).”<sup>5</sup>

The idea for many cessationists is that if the apostles built the foundation of the church and since miracles were the signs of an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12, a passage that will be examined in Chapter Four), and since apostles are *supposedly* no longer needed today, then there no longer remains that which authenticated the apostles gift, which were signs and wonders.

These cessationist ideas are propagated in our seminaries via a number of the “systematic theology” textbooks that are used.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, as I have stated before, this doctrine is not limited to seminaries and theological debates, but this teaching can be found within the pages of our most popular devotional books and practical Bible commentaries. However, there are a number of serious problems with this argument.

### **Have We Stopped Building the Household of God?**

One of the first problems with the argument presented by cessationists in using Ephesians 2:20 is that since the “church” was built upon the foundation of the apostles then they are no longer needed. However, we do not find this teaching in the passage. It must be read into the passage based on preconceived ideas. As always,

when we read the context of a passage, we get a different insight than that which is propagated by cessationists:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Eph. 2:19-22)

Many of the cessationists use the word “church” rather than “household of God” which is what the context is actually teaching. The context uses the phrase “household of God” vice “the church” as the entity that is built upon the foundation of the apostles of prophets. Is there a difference? Not in *substance* since the church and the household are made up of the same people, but certainly in *understanding* the kind of “building” that is being referred to in this passage.

One cannot be a part of the household of God and not be a part of the church (the Ecclesia, the “called out ones”). However, we often think of the “church” as an organism that is already fully complete and in existence. A “church” in the natural sense seems a little less personal than a “household.” A household gives us a picture of a family (Eph. 3:14, 15) while a church gives us the picture of an organization. When we think of the household of God, we think of something that is continually being built up because God wants more people in His family than the ones that are already there (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

The apostles did much more than establish the foundation of the church. Among the many things that they did includes extensive evangelistic and missionary work. Did evangelism and missions cease? If not then the need to continue to have the household of God built up still exists in our day.

An apostle is simply a “sent one.” (Acts 13:4) Jesus (who was an apostle Himself – Heb. 3:1) chose an original twelve apostles who will be forever recognized for their obedience (Rev. 21:14). Nonetheless, besides the original twelve who cannot be replaced, there were numerous other apostles (Acts 1:26; 14:14; Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor.

4:6, 9; 15:7; Gal. 1:19; Phil. 2:25-30; 1 Thess. 1:1, 2:6; 2 Thess. 1:1). Most were involved in some aspect of building the household of God. Why would God no longer need apostles and prophets to continue to contribute in building His household?

We also look at the fact that the household is still growing (present tense): “*In whom all the building fitly framed together **groweth** unto an holy temple in the Lord.*” (v. 21). The word “growth” shows us that God is not quite done yet in the building of His household. There is yet more work to be done in this area. Zechariah prophesies concerning Zerubbabel, “*The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.*” (Zec. 4:9). We need the same ministry gifts that built the foundation to continue building upon it and finish it.

### **Does Scripture Teach the Cessation of the Apostolic and Prophetic Offices?**

While I cannot endorse every present day Charismatic or Third Waver that refers to himself as an apostle or prophet, there is not one indication in Scripture that these two offices would cease. On the contrary, if we are to take Scripture for exactly what it says rather than interpreting it according to our theological bias, we will see that the offices of apostle and prophet were meant to remain in the church as long as the church is in existence:

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men....And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For 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,** and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man,** unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (Eph. 4:8, 11-13)

First, there is no indication in this passage that the apostles and prophets were temporary while the evangelist, pastors, and teachers were permanent gifts. All five of these gifts were to remain in order to produce the results mentioned in the succeeding verses.

Has the church come into the unity of the faith? As long as the church remains divided between denominationalism and the numerous theological divisions that accompany this (such as Arminianism versus Calvinism versus Open Theism, cessationism versus continuism, dispensationalism versus covenantism, etc.) we will not have come into the unity of the faith, the full knowledge of Jesus Christ, a perfect (mature) man, and many of us will continue to be children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (v. 14).

Until this happens, every ministry gift is needed because they are all meant to work together in maturing us. If we leave it only to the evangelist, pastor, and teacher then it will be like trying to go on a long distance trip with only three-fifths of a car. We need the whole car to get to our destination, not just three fifths of it. The rejection of the apostle and prophet ministry gifts has hindered the church from reaching the destination that God has laid out for her.

Further Scriptural proof that the prophetic office has not ceased is found in the fact that God will have two prophets who will usher in the end times: *“And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these **two prophets** tormented them that dwelt on the earth.”* (Rev. 11:10) If the prophetic office has ceased then we must remove the book of Revelation from the closed canon and conclude that none of the events written within it will come to pass. However, since we accept all Scripture as inspired by God then we must conclude that the prophetic office will remain until the end of the ages.

If that is true concerning the prophetic office, then it is equally true concerning the apostolic office. As a matter of fact, the book of revelation states that God is going to destroy Babylon on behalf of the apostles and prophets that will exist during this time: *“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.”* (Rev. 18:20) Therefore, cessationists who embrace a futuristic view of Revelation as I do must change their opinion concerning the cessation of the apostolic office if they believe that the book of Revelation is truly a legitimate portion of the Biblical canon.

### **The Needs Commensurate With Apostolic and Prophetic Office Exist Today**

In 1 Cor. 12, Paul lists the apostolic and prophetic offices with other functions in the church:

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? (1 Cor. 12:28, 29)

It is only logical to assume that if any portion of these functions were to cease, then all of them should cease. Is there no longer a need for the ministry of helps in our churches? Should the church no longer have any type of government? Do we no longer need teachers? Some claim that we need the above but since the foundation of the church has been laid, the apostles and prophets are no longer needed today. Warren Wiersbe, an otherwise excellent Bible expositor, promotes this erroneous view:

There are no apostles today in the strictest sense. These men helped to lay the foundation of the church—the foundation laid by the Apostles and prophets’ (Eph. 2:20), and once the foundation was laid, **they were no longer needed**. God authenticated their ministry with special miracles (Heb. 2:1-4), so we should not demand these same miracles today.<sup>7</sup> (Emphasis are mine)

And what is the foundation for Dr. Wiersbe’s position? Ephesians 2:20, of course. But contrary to the cessationist position that the apostolic ministry is no longer needed, Paul writes concerning all of the gifts and ministries of the Spirit, “*And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.*” (1 Cor. 12:21).

Even if it were true that the apostolic office had ceased, Paul separates the ministries of apostle, prophet and *worker of miracles*. Therefore, saying that the cessation of the apostolic office means that we cannot “demand” miracles today could only be true if cessationists can prove from 1 Cor. 12:28 that apostles, prophets, teachers, and workers of miracles are all ONE office. However, if that is true then that would mean that “teaching” ceased from the church upon the cessation of the apostolic office. The more we explore this, the more we see the unbiblical absurdity in the logic of cessationism.

Needless to say, the same conditions and needs that existed in the church during the time of the original apostles continue to exist in our day. People are still sick who need healing (in spite of the

excellent progress of medicine), people are still oppressed by demons, people still need edification and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3), and people still need power to be witnesses for God. If God still has compassion then why would He withdraw the ministries and power needed to demonstrate it? Compassion, by definition, is “a strong desire to alleviate suffering.” One does not alleviate pain and suffering by just simply saying, “There, there, I am with you even though it is no longer my will to perform miracles that will relieve you of your pain.”

### **Still a Need for Christ**

When we continue to look at the Ephesians 2:20 proof-text we see that if we must deny the need of apostles and prophets due to their having laid the foundation, then neither would there be a need any more for Christ since He is the chief cornerstone? The scripture says, “*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*”

That is the only logical inference we can derive from the passage. Eliminate the need for those who built the foundation then you eliminate any further need for the One who is the chief corner stone. After all, since the foundation has been laid and the chief corner stone has already been put in His place as part of the foundation, do we need anything further from Him? This may sound silly to some, but saying that there is no longer any need for those who laid the foundation is just as silly as saying we no longer have any further need for the ministry of the One in who is the foundation (1 Cor. 3:11) since His work has already been completed by being the chief corner stone.

Furthermore, the Bible says that Christ Himself is an *apostle*. Scripture says, “*Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.*” (Heb. 3:1) If the apostolic ministry has been done away with, and is no longer needed, then consistency would say that our Lord’s own present day ministry is no longer needed.

However, we know that there is still need for this apostle and chief corner stone and since we are told, “*Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*” (1 Pet. 2:6) While the corner stone has been placed in the foundation, it still requires *believing in Him* presently. The Lord’s ministry in this present life has not ceased because he is still our *Apostle* and *High Priest*.

However, consistency would say that if one cannot be eliminated then neither can the other. Eliminate the need for the apostle and prophet in our present day, and then consistency would obligate us to eliminate any further need for the ministry of the Chief Corner Stone as well (who is also an apostle). We cannot pick and choose which part of the passage remains for today and which part is ceased. Especially when there is no authoritative basis for the latter.

### Signs of the Apostle

Cessationists argue that no one outside of the apostles had the power to work miracles (an assertion we will refute more thoroughly in the next chapter). The exception to this rule is that an apostle would have laid hands on the non-apostle to work miracles. Warfield writes:

Only in the two great initial instances of the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost and the reception of Cornelius are charismata recorded as conferred without the laying on of the hands of Apostles. There is no instance on record of their conference by the laying on of the hands of any one else than an Apostle.<sup>8</sup>

This is an interesting statement. According to Warfield, the ability to lay hands on someone and confer the charismata was one of the signs of an apostle only. About the Apostle Paul, Warfield writes:

It is in accordance with this reading of the significance of this incident, that Paul, who had all the signs of an Apostle, had also the power of conferring the charismata, and that in the entire New Testament we meet with no instance of the gifts showing themselves—after the initial instances of Pentecost and Cornelius—where an Apostle had not conveyed them.<sup>9</sup>

Warfield is insistent that only the apostles were able to lay hands and impart miracle gifts on to others. Echoing this sentiment, John MacArthur says, “...no miracle ever occurred in the entire New Testament record except in the presence of an apostle or one directly commissioned by an apostle.”<sup>10</sup> I often wonder if the cessationists and I are reading the same Bible. For example, did they miss the Bible’s record about a man named Ananias? The Bible says, “*And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.*” (Acts 9:10) Notice that Ananias is not called an *apostle* here. He is not called a *prophet* either. Surprisingly, he is not even referred to as an



*Evangelist, pastor or teacher.* Ananias is simply referred to in this passage as “*a certain disciple.*”

There is not even a record in the New Testament in which Ananias was commissioned by an apostle. On the contrary, this *disciple* received his commission directly from the Lord through a vision. Yet, not only did Ananias receive a vision from the Lord (something that cessationists would claim is only for prophets), but he conferred the charismata through the laying of hands upon the one who would be one of the greatest apostles and the largest contributor to the New Testament, the one to whom we are told was of an elite group who were the sole possessors of the ability to confer the Charismata upon others, the man soon to become the Apostle Paul:

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized (Acts 9:17, 18)

Once again, Scripture proves that cessationism is an erroneous teaching. Ananias, a *disciple*, and not an *apostle*, talked to God in a vision, was able to lay hands on Paul, bring forth healing, and impart the power of the Holy Spirit unto him. Just this one incident alone destroys the cessationist teaching that the miracles and the ability to confer the charismata unto others belonged only to the apostles.

But it doesn't end here: Paul tells Timothy, “*Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.*” (1 Tim. 4:14) The word for “gift in this passage is “*charisma*”. This is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 12 in reference to the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. However, what is even more interesting is the fact that Timothy did not receive this “charisma” from the laying on of hands by any apostles, but Paul says it came by the laying on of hands from the “presbytery.” This word is often translated as “elders” in other parts of the New Testament (James 5:14). And these “elders” (not “prophets”) imparted this gift through “prophecy.” So here again Scripture is opposed to cessationist reasoning.

## **Gifts are Not Imparted at an Apostle's Will**

Concerning the charismata, Paul says, “*But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*” (1 Cor. 12:11) It is the Holy Spirit, and not an apostle or prophet, who decides which of His people receives the gifts. It is He who “works” them and “divides” them, and not an apostle. While having hands laid on oneself by a Spirit-filled believer is one way utilized by the Spirit to impart gifts, He has never limited Himself to this mode of operation. The Holy Spirit can and has imparted *charismas* with or without someone laying hands on the recipient.

There is no indication from this passage that the people of Corinth received the gifts manifested in their midst through anyone laying hands on them. It is possible but since the Bible is silent on this, it should not be assumed. Needless to say, cessationists have much to answer for concerning the fact their beliefs are in direct contradiction to the completed New Testament that supposedly ended the age of miracles.

## **Conclusion**

Cessationism promotes an unscriptural belief in the idea that only those called to be apostles had the ability to perform signs, wonders and miracles. The reasoning is that since they laid the foundation and wrote the New Testament, the need for miracles disappeared when they disappeared. This means that since the foundation was laid, then there was no longer a need for apostles, and thus, no longer a need for miracles.

We have examined and refuted the arguments for this by demonstrating that the primary text used to teach this, Ephesians 2:20, is misinterpreted and is inconsistent with both its surrounding context as well as other passages of Scripture. In the next chapter, we will show the reader how normal believers have been and can still be recipients of God's miracle working power in their lives.

## Chapter Four

### Miracles and the Name of Jesus

I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. (2 Cor. 12:11, 12)

In our last chapter we examined Ephesians 2:20, a proof-text used by cessationists who claim that since the apostles built the foundation and they were no longer needed, neither do we need the miraculous gifts that are the “signs of an apostle.”

As we have seen from a thorough examination, nothing in Ephesians 2:20 alludes to miracles passing away. No doubt this is why cessationists couple the passage with 2 Cor. 12:12. This is a form of Scripture interpretation known as *eisegesis*. Cessationists do not derive their doctrine from the Bible. They read their doctrine into the Bible. They start off with the doctrine of cessationism and then they begin to compile together a number of “proof-texts” to support it.

#### Miracles are Signs for Apostles Only?

Nonetheless, cessationists insist that, according to 2 Cor. 12:12, miracle-working power is primarily a sign of apostleship; a ministry that they claim no longer exists. Only apostles (and those who they conferred their power upon) had the ability to perform signs and wonders. Referencing 2 Cor. 12:12, the well known dispensationalist, Clarence Larkin writes, “That these ‘Signs’ were ‘Apostolic Signs,’ and were to confirm the claims of the Apostles, was the teaching of Paul.”<sup>1</sup> Larkin then ties this into to his dispensational-cessationist ideology:

These “Signs” were to convince the Gentiles (Rom. 15: 16-19), and to confirm the “Great Salvation” promised through the Gospel (Heb. 2:3-4), and when their purpose was fulfilled they ceased. The reason they ceased was because they were no longer needed to

confirm the Gospel or authenticate the mission of the preacher of the Word.<sup>2</sup>

John MacArthur is also a proponent of this view. After quoting 2 Cor. 12:11-12, MacArthur writes:

If doing miracles had been the common experience of ordinary Christians, it would be foolish for Paul to try to prove his apostleship by citing the miracles he had done. It is obvious though, that even during the apostolic age Christians couldn't do signs, wonders, and mighty deeds. Precisely because these things were unique to the apostles, Paul could use his experience with signs and wonder as a proof of his authority.<sup>3</sup>

Amazing that Paul, pointing to the signs and wonders in his ministry as the sign of his apostleship, supposedly means that ordinary Christians were not vessels of the miraculous. Yet this same Paul also told the ordinary Corinthian believers, "*So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1 Cor. 1:7) We pointed out in chapter one that the word "gift" is the Greek word "charisma" which is the same word used in reference to the miraculous gifts mentioned in 1 Cor. 12.

Paul was not writing only to the "apostles" in Corinth (if there were any there at the time), but he was writing, "*Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.*" (1 Cor. 1:2) These appear to be "ordinary" Christians. Paul said that these ordinary Christians came behind in no miraculous gift. Paul also wrote:

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to *every man* to profit withal. For to *one* is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To *another* faith by the same Spirit; to *another* the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To *another* the working of miracles; to *another* prophecy; to *another* discerning of spirits; to *another* divers kinds of tongues; to *another* the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to *every man* severally as he will (1 Cor. 12:7-11)

Notice all of the different pronouns that Paul used in this passage such as “every man,” “one,” and “another.” Paul was saying here that ordinary Christians were able to receive miraculous gifts by God’s Spirit. If MacArthur (and those like him) is correct then why didn’t Paul use phrases such as “every *apostle*,” “one *apostle*” and “another *apostle*”? Should we reinterpret 1 Cor. 1:7 to say, “So that ye apostles at Corinth come behind in no gift”?

### **Signs Ministry not Limited to Apostles**

Furthermore, when we go to passages such as Mark 16, we learn that “signs” were not meant only to authenticate apostles. Even cessationists agree that the apostles performed their signs by the authority of Jesus’ Name. Scripture shows us that the “signs” were to follow “*them that believe*:”

**And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name** shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word** with signs following. Amen. (Mark 16:17-20)<sup>4</sup>

If Larkin, MacArthur and others who share their views are correct then this would also diminish the power and authority that is resident in the Name of Jesus, further putting into question the integrity and faithfulness of God concerning His promises. God has promised that *believers* would be able to perform certain specific signs *in His Name*.

Notice that these signs are not limited to the original apostles, but are “*for them that believe*.” Anyone who “believes” falls into this category. The signs were meant to confirm God’s Word of salvation and not solely for confirming the agents that performed them. Of course, some like MacArthur will point to verse 20 and claim that this confirms the cessationist belief that such signs were meant only for the

apostles.<sup>5</sup> However, if that is true then *salvation* was given only to the apostles since the passage in context says:

He that *believeth* and is baptized *shall be saved*; but he that believeth not shall be damned. *And these signs shall follow them that believe*; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. (Mark 16:16, 17)

MacArthur differs from his predecessor, Benjamin B. Warfield, who wrote concerning this passage, “For the gifts that are promised to ‘them that believe’ seem not to be promised to eminent saints merely, one here and there who believes mightily, but to *all believers*; and what is promised to believers is not one or two of these gifts but all of them.”<sup>6</sup> (emphasis mine) Unlike many of his successors, Warfield did not deny the plain reading of the text, though he denied its canonicity.<sup>7</sup>

To claim that the signs were for only the apostles but salvation is for anyone that *believes* is certainly a demonstration of willful blindness to what the text actually says. If consistency is allowed within cessationist dogma, then salvation is only for the apostles and not for ordinary people. Those of us who do not follow the theological bias of cessationism will have to conclude that if the text says that salvation is for anyone that believes, then so are the miraculous signs that are promised in the text.

### **The Authority and Power of Jesus’ Name not Limited to Apostles**

This brings us back to our earlier point: *believers* (and not apostles) were promised to receive salvation and work these miracles in *the authority of Jesus’ Name*. However, cessationist logic is that only apostles were able to work miracles in the Name of Jesus, and since the apostolic ministry has ceased then naturally the ability to work miracles in Jesus Name ceased with it.

If we accept the teaching of cessationists that the Name of Jesus can no longer work miracles then how could we trust this Name to even bring us salvation? We are told that salvation comes through calling upon the Name of the Lord (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). If miracles have ceased then salvation has also ceased since both were a product of Jesus’ Name. Those who are claiming that they are saved could very well be in deception if we follow cessationist logic.

Peter said, “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:12) Salvation can only come through the Name of Jesus. If God has broken His promise concerning the power to perform miracles in the Name of Jesus, then the promise could no longer bring salvation, could it? Note that Peter’s statement was made in conjunction with a miracle that was wrought through this powerful and mighty Name. When Peter and John were on their way to prayer, they were stopped by a lame man who was begging for money. This was their response:

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God (Acts 3:6-8)

According to the cessationists, God had given this power to the apostles alone and to no one else (other than those to whom the apostles conferred this power on by the laying on of hands). However, Peter has a response to the cessationists:

And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, ***as though by our own power or holiness*** we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And ***his name through faith in his name hath made this***

*man strong*, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all (Acts 3:11-16)

Peter says some very significant things here that refutes the cessationists' claims. Peter said that the miracle that was performed was *not* by his own power. This means that God had not given the Apostles any special powers. If the cessationists are correct that the apostles only could work miracles (and some believe they did it at will) and that they could transfer this ability to whomsoever they wished, then this would be their own power. But Peter says that it was not by their own power that the miracle was done.

The second thing that Peter states is that the man was healed through *faith in the Name of Jesus*. Peter does not limit the faith in this Name to that of the apostles. As seen from Mark 16, this Name yields miraculous results to *anyone* who believes. In chapter eleven, the reader will discover that *unbelief* is the true reason for the cessation of the charismata rather than the death of the original apostles. Instead of believing that a calling to be an apostle is the requirement for the miraculous in our day, we must recognize that it is *faith in the Name of Jesus* that brings salvation and miracles.

Since the healing of the lame man caused quite a stir, naturally the Jewish religious leaders would question the Apostles. Read the nature of their question: "*And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?*" (Acts 4:7) Even the antagonistic Jewish Leaders recognized that the miraculous power displayed by the apostles was not their own, but was done by the authority of another, or, in the name of someone other than themselves. The Jewish leaders knew that the apostles did not have these miracles merely because they were apostles, but because there was an authority backing them.

In verse 12 we read a portion of Peter's response that is significant to our discussion here: "*...for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" As far as Peter is concerned, the miracle of salvation is not as separated from the miracles of healings and other divine interventions as many Cessationists would lead us to believe. Since Peter connected the salvation we receive in the Name of Jesus to the miracle that was wrought through this name, to claim that one has ceased would lead us to have doubts about the validity of the other.



## Non-Apostles and the Name of Jesus

Since we know that salvation is still available to us in the Name of Jesus then so is the miraculous. Furthermore, the power and authority of the Name of Jesus is not limited to a certain age nor was it limited to the original apostles. Peter said that it was not by his own power that this man was healed but it was faith in the Name of Jesus.

The power of this Name is given to all believers in all ages. Jesus said, “*And these signs shall follow them **that believe; In my name**...*” they would perform specific signs and wonders. It is faith in the Name and all believers have faith or they would not be considered *believers*. Therefore, power to do miracles is not limited to a specific age or group. There are clear examples in the Bible concerning this. There was a man who was performing works in Jesus, Name who was not a part of the original twelve and in which Jesus would not forbid:

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part (Mark 9:38-40)

In this passage a man that was performing a genuine miracle in the Name of Jesus was not one of the Apostles, had never had any hands laid on him by the apostles, and by their admission, did not even follow them. Nonetheless, Jesus did not dispute the genuineness of the miracle. He did not call it false. Neither did He commend His disciples for forbidding it. He simply said, “*...for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.*”

This means that, despite the erroneous interpretation we have been offered by cessationists concerning Ephesians 2:20, Hebrews 2:3, 4, 2 Corinthians 2:12 and other passages of Scripture, others outside of the Apostles had “heard” and had “performed miracles.” The Name of Jesus and faith in His Name is what makes people whole rather than being a part of some “apostolic age” or being one of the Apostles.

This truth is further demonstrated when we explore the gospels further and find seventy other men commissioned by Jesus to evangelize (Luke 10:1-12). In His commission to them, Jesus said,

“And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” (Luke 10:9). Jesus gave these men the commission to perform miracles. Notice their report to the Lord upon their return:

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:17-20)

These seventy performed miracles, not from inherent power, but by *faith in the Name of Jesus*. Here we see that it was never necessary to be an apostle to work miracles. The only requirement for being a channel for God’s miracle working power has always been faith in the Name of Jesus.

Furthermore, Jesus tells them that they, not the apostles alone, were given authority over the devil and demons by virtue of His mighty Name. He also acknowledges that the demons are subject to this group of non-apostles, though he tells them not to rejoice in this but rejoice in the fact that their names are written in the lambs book of life. Cessationists would tell us that the promise of authority over Satan and demons may have been for those seventy at that specific time but not for us today. We would have to then ask if the same is true concerning having our names being written in heaven. Shouldn’t this be applicable only to them as well? What authority do we have for claiming that one portion of a passage is ours to appropriate while totally dismissing another based on its supernatural element?

### **Healing by Church Elders in “the Name of the Lord”**

We also learn from Scripture that a group of non-apostles known as “elders” were commissioned to pray for the sick “in the name of the Lord” and expect miraculous results:

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with

oil in the *name of the Lord*: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:14-16)

The word “elders” here is from the Greek word “presbuteros” which is speaking about someone advanced in age or one who was advanced in rank. As a matter of fact, these are the same “Presbyterians” we saw in our last chapter who prophesied over Timothy and conferred *charismata* to him. (1 Tim. 4:14)

Nothing in either passage says that these were apostles. Neither do we have any proof in this passage that the elder’s ability to bring healing to the sick was conferred upon them by any apostle. On the contrary, it was not by their power or holiness that anyone would be made whole, but by anointing with oil in the name of the Lord and through faith that the Lord would act on their behalf and bring miraculous healing.

We would now have to ask our cessationist friends if the ministry of “elders” have ceased from the church. Do we not appoint elders in many of our Evangelical churches today? Of course. Elders are appointed in churches that advocate cessationism. Yet, according to Scripture, elders were expected to pray and impart miraculous healing to whom they were given oversight. This again proves that miracles were not limited to the apostles, and therefore did not cease when the last apostle died. Instead, they should have ceased when the last “elder” died, but that has not happened yet. Better yet, they should have ceased when the last *believer* died, but that has not happened yet.

### **The Name of Jesus in Post-Apostolic Times**

In spite of the Biblical evidence above, cessationists insist that miracles performed in the Name of Jesus are restricted to the apostles who are no longer with us. After disputing the so-called Charismatic interpretation of Mark 16:17-20, MacArthur writes:

Applying the historical and synthetic principles, we see that these signs were true of one certain group—the apostolic community. And indeed, the apostles did do these things, as the book of Acts clearly reports in many places. All these wondrous signs (except

the drinking of poison) can be scripturally verified as having happened during the apostolic era—but not thereafter.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, while Mark 16:17 says that these signs would be performed in Jesus' Name, MacArthur believes that the Name of Jesus does not have the same power and authority that it once had. But in contrast to MacArthur and others who hold his views, historians record numerous instances in which the promise of power to work miracles in Jesus' Name was successfully claimed in post-apostolic times. In one encyclopedia we read the following:

Even in the subapostolic church the divine power was held to be manifested, especially in the name of Jesus. (Heitmüller, In *Yamen Jesus*, Göttingen, 1903) Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, Augustine, and Jerome all bear witness to the belief in contemporaneous miracles. So far the belief in miracles created no particular problem, but was a natural inference from the belief in any supernatural power actively interested in the affairs of the world.<sup>9</sup>

History claims that even after the apostles, "...divine power was held to be manifested, especially in **the name of Jesus.**" (Emphasis mine) The Name of Jesus to work miracles was not a sole possession of the original apostles. Some cessationists who do acknowledge that miracles continued at least until the third century will sometimes claim that the miracles performed in post-apostolic times were not of the same caliber. Others simply claim that the reports of any post-apostolic miracles are false.<sup>10</sup>

It seems that cessationists who do not insinuate that the Name of Jesus lost its authority and power upon the death of the last apostle seem to believe that it slowly diminished and was not as powerful as it once was. Most of us often view history as we do when we read the Bible—through theologically colored glasses. Thankfully, all historians do not view this in the same way that cessationists do:

When we pass from this general testimony of the early fathers respecting the existence of a miraculous agency at work in their days to the more detailed accounts of later miracles, we learn more as to the means by which the miracles were wrought. We gather that on the whole these means were much the same as those which the apostles themselves and the saints of their time made use of, who on their part were guided in some measure by the example of our Lord, viz. in respect of prayer and the imposition of hands

(Mark vi. 41, vii. 34; John xi. 41; Mark vi. 5), and in some measure by the practices He enjoined, viz. the anointing the sick with oil, and the use of His name (Mark vi. 13, xvi. 17 ; Luke x. 17), although, as we may see from Acts v. 15, 16, xix. 12, they did not restrict their methods of working cures either to the divine precedents or precepts.

Taking first the miracles of exorcism and healing which were wrought by direct means, viz. invocation of the name of Christ, prayer, signing of the cross, and imposition of hands, we find that some of the earliest of which we possess any detailed account are those which Gregory, bishop of Neocaesarea in Pontus, wrought in the 3rd century, but the record of ' which belongs to the 4th century and is due to Gregory of Nyssa, who is said to have received his information from his grandmother Macrina.<sup>11</sup>

This historian believes that the miracles performed in the Name of Jesus among the church Fathers were not only real, but were of the same quality as that which the apostles experienced. That is because it is impossible for the Name of Jesus to lose its power. The Name cannot lose its power because Jesus Himself has never lost His power. If He did not withdraw or prohibit further use of His Name in post-apostolic times then neither did He withdraw the power nor the authority that comes with that mighty Name.

### **The Church Fathers Testify about the Power of Jesus' Name**

Nonetheless, MacArthur writes, "And I am persuaded by both Scripture and history that nothing like the New Testament gift of miracles.... is operating today."<sup>12</sup> On the rare occasions when MacArthur does appeal to church history, it is often distorted and bias.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, as we will see from the church fathers themselves, history shows that the promise of working miracles by the authority of Jesus' Name went beyond apostolic times.

Our first testimony comes from **Justin Martyr** who lived from 100 to 165 A.D. Justin Martyr believed that the promise of our Lord to the seventy was applicable in his time:

And again, in other words, He said, 'I give unto you power to tread on serpents, and on scorpions, and on scolopendras, and on all the might of the enemy.' And now we, who believe on our Lord Jesus, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, when we exorcise all demons and evil spirits, have them subjected to us.<sup>14</sup>

It would seem that **Justin Martyr** and the non-apostolic Christian *believers* during his time actually received results as a result of claiming this promise:

For we do continually beseech God by Jesus Christ to preserve us from the demons which are hostile to the worship of God, and whom we of old time served, in order that, after our conversion by Him to God, we may be blameless. For we call Him Helper and Redeemer, the power of whose name even the demons do fear; and at this day, when they are exorcised in the name of Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, governor of Judaea, they are overcome. And thus it is manifest to all, that His Father has given Him so great power, by virtue of which demons are subdued to His name, and to the dispensation of His suffering.<sup>15</sup>

Justin Martyr mentions how deliverance from demonic possession is wrought through faith in the Name of Jesus. There is still power in that Name. Here we see that God honors His promises to do miracles in Jesus name even after the (so-called) apostolic dispensation.

### **Irenaeus and the Name of Jesus**

However, Justin Martyr is not the only witness to the Name of Jesus performing miracles in post-apostolic times. **Irenaeus**, who lived from 125 to 200 A.D., spoke about numerous miracles done in this mighty Name during his time.

Wherefore, also, those who are in truth His disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His name perform [miracles], so as to promote the welfare of other men, according to the gift which each one has received from Him. For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe [in Christ], and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years.<sup>16</sup>

A couple of paragraphs later Irenaeus writes concerning the church:

Nor does she perform anything by means of angelic invocations, or by incantations, or by any other wicked curious art; but, directing

her prayers to the Lord, who made all things, in a pure, sincere, and straightforward spirit, and calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, she has been accustomed to work miracles for the advantage of mankind, and not to lead them into error.<sup>17</sup>

We can see from church history that God did not change His mind about His promises concerning the miraculous. The Name of Jesus retained its power and authority long after the last original apostle died.

### **Tertullian and the Name of Jesus**

Tertullian (155-220) was an orthodox church father who was also a theologian, apologist, and involved with the very Charismatic Montanus movement. Tertullian taught that Christians in his day still retained authority and power in Jesus Name over demons:

Why, all the authority and power we have over them is from our naming the name of Christ, and recalling to their memory the woes with which God threatens them at the hands of Christ as Judge, and which they expect one day to overtake them. Fearing Christ in God, and God in Christ, they become subject to the servants of God and Christ. So at our touch and breathing, overwhelmed by the thought and realization of those judgment fires, they leave at our command the bodies they have entered, unwilling, and distressed, and before your very eyes put to an open shame.<sup>18</sup>

Tertullian, along with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, taught from both Scripture and experience that the Name of Jesus continued to have power and authority to perform miracles well into the second century. The Name of Jesus had power back then and still has power today to heal the sick and drive out demons.

### **Origen and the Name of Jesus**

The evidence does not end with Tertullian. **Origen**, who lived from 185 to 284, also testifies to the fact that God honored His promise to perform miracles through faith in the Name of Jesus:

And some give evidence of their having received through their faith a marvellous power by the cures which they perform, invoking no other name over those who need their help than that of the God of all things and of Jesus, along with a mention of his history. For by these means we too have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities and from distractions of mind and

madness, and countless other ills which could be cured neither by men or devils.<sup>19</sup>

Origen tells us that nearly three hundred years after the death of Christ, the Name of Jesus still wrought miracles, further proving not only that the power of the Name of Jesus never diminished, but also proving the faithfulness and integrity of God that cessationism unwittingly calls into question.

### **Gregory the “Wonder Worker”**

One of the fathers converted under Origen’s teaching, Gregory the “Wonder Worker” (213-270), is said by Basil to have worked great wonders in Jesus Name:

He too by Christ’s mighty name commanded even rivers to change their course, and caused a lake, which afforded a ground of quarrel to some covetous brethren, to dry up. Moreover his predictions of things to come were such as in no wise to fall short of those of the great prophets.<sup>20</sup>

Once again we have testimony of the Name of Jesus still working wonders centuries after the passing of the last original apostle. God simply binds Himself to His promises and he has promised that power in Jesus’ Name is available to the believer. Men may claim that this is no longer true but as we have seen already, they do not have a sufficient biblical foundation for this teaching. Scripture says, “...*let God be true, but every man a liar.*” (Rom. 3:4)

### **Anthony of Egypt**

Some of the “Desert Fathers” believed that the power and authority in Jesus name still had the power to work miracles beyond the so-called apostolic times. Athanasius (295-373 AD), known as *The Father of Orthodoxy*, documented many of the miracles performed by his friend, Anthony:

Antony, at any rate healed, not by commanding, but by prayer and speaking the name of Christ. So that it was clear to all that it was not himself who worked, but the Lord who showed mercy by his means and healed the sufferers.<sup>21</sup>



Athanasius documents numerous miracles that occurred in Anthony's ministry, many which match those of apostolic times. While Antony wrought miracles through prayer rather than commanding, the Bible certainly makes provision for both (John 14:12-14; James 5:14-16). Nonetheless, the Name of Jesus continued to have power and authority well into the third century.

### **Saint Hilarion and the Name of Jesus**

Saint Hilarion (292-372 AD) was also a "Desert Father" who was a channel of God's power for healing. Hilarion saw that there was power and authority in the Name of Jesus nearly four hundred years after the last original apostle left the scene. In one of the many cases recorded concerning him, Jerome, the theologian who recorded his life, gives us details concerning one of the miraculous healings that took place:

One day, however, as he was leaving his garden, he saw a man completely paralysed lying in front of the gates. He asked Hesychius who he was, or how he had been brought. Hesychius replied that he was the agent at the country-house to which the garden belonged in which they were located. Weeping much and stretching out his hand to the prostrate man he said, "I bid you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ arise and walk." The words were still on the lips of the speaker, when, with miraculous speed, the limbs were strengthened and the man arose and stood firm. Once this was noised abroad the need of many overcame even the pathless journey and the dangers of the place.<sup>22</sup>

Here again we find that the Name of Jesus wrought miracles well past the time of the original apostles. It is sad that cessationist theologians who claim to have studied history either have missed these testimonies or have ignored them. Even worse is that "faith in the Name" is diminished by their teachings.

### **Martin Luther and the Power of Jesus' Name**

There are many, many more historical accounts of post-apostolic miracles that could be cited here. A number of books have already been written that do an excellent job of documenting the charismatic experiences in the church throughout the centuries. Some will always dispute the historical evidence regardless of how credible it is. Our theological positions often prejudice and blind us to the facts.

Nevertheless, history proves that God has always had a remnant of believers who wrought miracles in the Name of Jesus

When we fast forward several centuries to the time of Martin Luther, the great Reformer, we find instruction for expecting supernatural results in Jesus' Name. The following was written in the March 2001 "Freedom Life Center" Newsletter by Dr. Col Warren in an article titled, "Modern Christianity and Healing:"

Luther was asked what could be done for one who was mentally ill. Luther wrote instructions for a healing service based on the New Testament letter of James, stating, "This is what we do, and that we have been accustomed to do, for a cabinet maker here was similarly afflicted with madness and we cured him by prayer in Christ's name."<sup>23</sup>

Even numerous centuries after Christ and death of the first original apostles, Luther tells us that we can invoke the Name of Jesus in prayer for healing based on the promises of God's Word. History proves that God's promise to perform miracles through our faith in Jesus' Name has not been revoked.

## Chapter Five

### Mark 16:9-20 and Your Bible

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that *believeth* and is baptized *shall be saved*; but he that believeth not shall be damned. **And these signs shall follow them that believe**; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. (Mark 16:15-20)

In our last chapter, we dealt with the cessationist idea that signs and wonders were restricted to the first apostles. We saw from Scripture and history that the Name of Jesus, which is the authority for performing signs and wonders, was not a sole possession of the original apostles but that it belonged to and still remains the possession of the body of Christ. Therefore, every believer who has faith in the Name of Jesus can become a channel by which God is willing to demonstrate His power.

The foundation in which we built our premise upon is Mark 16:17-20. It is strange that a number of cessationists ignore the plain language of this promise. They understand the phrase “them that believe” to be “only the apostles.” This is in spite of the fact that Jesus mentioned *salvation* in the same context. One certainly has to approach the passage with a deeply ingrained prejudice in order to ignore the plain fact that the promise is for all believers.

#### Questioning the Legitimacy of Mark 16:9-20

There are other cessationists that recognize that these promises are for all believers and therefore resort to another form of argument,

which is to question the genuineness of the passage itself. To the credit of some cessationists, there is no denying the authenticity of Mark 16:15-20. However, there are many others who use the idea that Mark 16:9-20 is not supposed to be in the canon of the New Testament. Not only have I discovered this in debates with cessationists (and “continuationists” who often sound more like cessationists), but I have seen the authenticity of this passage questioned in numerous Bible commentaries and other books.

Benjamin B. Warfield, whose book, *Counterfeit Miracles*, has been a strong inspiration among many cessationists in our day, used the idea that Mark 16 was not inspired Scripture to rule out the present day Charismata and make his case for cessationism. He refutes his continuationist opponents proof-texts one by one. Mark 16 is one of several that comes under his scrutiny:

We begin with the second of them, Mark 16:17, 18, because we may rule it out of court at once as spurious....the certainty that the last twelve verses of Mark are spurious is the same in kind as the certainty that the rest of Mark's Gospel is genuine....The truth is that these items bear an apocryphal appearance, and constitute one of the internal indications, answering to the sufficient external proof, that the passage is uncanonical and of uninspired origin.<sup>1</sup>

We see from this that the easiest way for some to deny the truth that God desires to work miracles in this present day is to simply deny that Mark 16:17-20 are of an inspired origin. Many of them believe that the passage should not be in anyone's Bible. The reasons for this are extensive, but as Peter Lange notes, since the evidence affirming their authenticity is greater than that against it, the reasons for denial are not enough for men like Warfield to make the claim that the passage is spurious:

The reasons for assuming that vers. 9-20 are an original portion of Mark's Gospel much outweigh those to the contrary. 1. They are found in the Uncial Codd. A., C., D., X., Δ., E., G., H., K., M., S., U., V.; as well as in 33, 69, and the rest of the Cursive MSS. which have been collated. They are in copies of the Old Latin, in the Vulgate, Curetonian Syriac, Peshito, Jerusalem Syriac, Memphitic, Gothic, and Aethiopic. 2. Irenaeus (Cont. Haer. iii 10, 6) recognizes their existence; as do Hippolytus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, Augustine, Nestorius. . . . The chief argument against the genuineness of this section is found in the fact that it was wanting in some of the early copies of Mark's Gospel. This is attested by

Eusebius, Gregory Nyssa, Victor of Antioch, and Jerome. But this is certainly an insufficient reason for affirming its spuriousness in the face of the strong testimonies upon the other side.”<sup>2</sup>

While, as Lange notes, that the reasons for keeping what Warfield claims to be “spurious passages” in our Bible, many cessationist scholars offer a number of reasons for questioning the inclusion of Mark 16:9-20 as a legitimate portion of Scripture. There is the so called “non-Markan” language that supposedly appears in the text, a concept adequately disproven by apologists for the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20. Then there are the claims of “lost endings” of Mark 16, which are speculative and unproven. Other scholars claim that Mark actually meant to end his gospel at Mark 16:8, which is a ridiculous and unproven speculation in as well. Then there are the claims that some church fathers in the *fourth century* had denied the authenticity of this passage (Eusebius, Jerome and others). We will deal with this argument momentarily.

### **The Number of Manuscripts Denying Mark 16:9-20**

In the ongoing debate over the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20, those opposed to it claim that the passage *is missing from the earliest and best manuscripts*. The truth is that out of over 4000 original manuscripts, the passage is missing from only TWO! Maurice A. Robinson, Senior Professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary writes, “The remaining unmutilated Greek manuscripts, versions, and fathers overwhelmingly support the LE. It is present in all Greek MSS save two.”<sup>3</sup>

When Professor Robinson writes about the “LE” he is referring to what is known as the “Longer Ending” of Mark 16 which is verses 9 to 20. He states that the two manuscripts missing this passage has textual peculiarities. John W. Burgon, Dean of the Church of England as well as the most experienced textual critic of his day, spent much time and energy researching this matter. He came to the conclusion that the two manuscripts missing the ending of Mark as we know it were simply corrupt. He writes:

....discrepant as the testimony of these two MSS. is throughout, the yet, strange to say, conspire every here and there in exhibiting minute corruptions of such unique and peculiar kind as to betray a (probably not very remote) common corrupt original. These coincidences in fact are so numerous and so extraordinary as to

establish a real connexion between those two codices; and that connexion is fatal to any claim which might be set up on their behalf as wholly independent witnesses.<sup>4</sup>

Burton states that the two manuscripts missing Mark 16:9-20 contradict each other in their witness and he believes that they were subjected to depraving influences.<sup>5</sup> If this is true, and no one I have read has yet been able to present evidence that counters Burton's findings, then we should be wary of any cessationist who makes the claim that the earliest and best manuscripts do not contain this verse. This is simply another cessationist argument that is contrary to the evidence.

### **Cessationist Goal: The Destruction of Miracle-Working Faith**

Casting doubt on the legitimacy of any portion of God's Word is satanic in origin (see Gen. 3:1-7). This is not to say that those who advocate this argument are servants of the devil. I do not question their love for God. However, we have all, at one time or another, accepted lies from the enemy as being true. Whenever one must make strenuous efforts to question the genuineness of any portion of Scripture rather than accepting its truths and applying them to one's life, we certainly cannot believe that God is behind such efforts.

On the other hand, some of the greatest and respected scholars affirm that the promises in Mark 16:15-20 are there to excite and inflame the faith of the believer. The great scholar Johann Albert Bengel (1687-1752) in his respected *Gnomon Of The New Testament* wrote the following comments:

...in the case of them that believe) by the instrumentality of that very faith, of which ver. 16 treats: comp. Heb. xi. 33, etc. The state of mind [faith] whereby Paul was saved, was not different from that whereby he performed miracles. Even in our day, faith has in every believer a hidden power of a miraculous character : every effect resulting from our prayers is really miraculous, even though that miraculous character be not apparent ; although in many, both on account of their own feebleness, and on account of the unworthiness of the world,—not merely because [as some say] the Church, being once planted, needs not the continuance of miracles, though no doubt the early miracles of the New Testament have made for the Lord Jesus “an everlasting name” (comp. Isa. lxiii. 12),—that power does not exert itself in our day. Signs were in the beginning the props and stays of faith : now they are also the object of faith. At Leonberg, a town of Wirtemberg [a.c. 1644,

thirteenth Sunday after Trinity], a girl of twenty years of age was so disabled in her limbs, as hardly to be able to creep along by the help of crutches; but whilst the Dean [Raumeier was his name] was, from the pulpit, dwelling on the miraculous power of Jesus' name, she suddenly was raised up and restored to the use of her limbs. Miracles are here alluded to of a most palpable kind, and such as are altogether removed from every suspicion of trickery.<sup>6</sup>

Bengel not only believed in the genuineness of these promises, and not only did he believe that believers can claim them today, but he provides testimony concerning how God honored these promises in his own day. Why would God answer prayer based on those promises if they are not a genuine part of His authorized canon? God does not honor faith based on a lie. God honors faith that is built upon His truth (Eph. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:13). Bengel was not some present day Pentecostal making wild claims, but a respected scholar of his time who affirmed the truth and saw it come to pass.

The great John Wesley fully agreed with Bengel and quoted him almost word for word in his New Testament Notes when he wrote, “Even at this day, in every believer, faith has a latent miraculous power; (every effect of prayer being really miraculous:) although in many, because of their weakness of faith, and because the world is unworthy, that power is not exerted.”<sup>7</sup> If what these giants of the faith are saying is true concerning Mark 16:9-20, then it would seem that great effort has been made to rid this passage of its Biblical significance for the very purpose of ridding the church of faith to claim these promises. Is it any wonder that these promises are virtually ignored by many outside of Pentecostal and Charismatic circles? With so much evidence presented by scholars to cast doubt on its authenticity, it is no wonder that a number of people ignore the passage as if it were not even there.

William R. Farmer, Professor of New Testament at the University of Dallas, is one of several who has researched and studied all of the so-called evidence against the canonicity of Mark 16:9-20 and has found it wanting. In his book which refutes the “Mark 16:9-20 is spurious” idea, Farmer believes that many Christians ignore this passage and are reluctant to claim its promises due to the attacks on it:

Mk. 16:9-20 contains promises of Jesus to which the church has never succeeded in accommodating itself, except by unconscious repression. Most Christians do not know what these verses teach. They are seldom if ever expounded from the pulpit and almost

never appealed to in didactic circumstances. Christians have long since learned to live with these promises by paying them no attention and to regard all efforts to take them seriously as bizarre acts of unfaith on the part of ignorant or misguided sectarians.<sup>8</sup>

Farmer says that people's thoughts have been so negatively influenced concerning Mark 16 that anyone who would attempt to act on them in the faith that is commanded are actually considered to be performing "bizarre acts of unfaith." Is this not a clear assault on genuine faith in God's Word? Farmer further writes that these questions on the authenticity of Mark 16 are "striking at the vital centre of the church's life, threatens its very existence."<sup>9</sup> In a footnote, Farmer explains his statement:

Striking at the confidence and trust the church has in the promises of her Lord, striking at the closely related confidence in her clergy and bishops, and also striking at the pulsating level of concern for what is edifying for the children of God.<sup>10</sup>

Farmer believes, and I agree with him, that the intent for denying the authenticity of the promises in Mark 16:15-20 is simply meant to strike at the faith in which they would produce when meditated and acted upon (Rom. 10:17). Since Scripture is the Word of God (John 10:35), if we do not believe that these promises are inspired Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16) then we will not act on them in genuine miraculous faith that Bengel and Wesley says latently resides in every believer.

Professor Robinson, a defender of the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20 believes that this is the very case:

Beyond apparent internal contradiction, a more pressing issue involves the specific sign gifts stated to accompany those who believe. After the legitimization of Christianity under Constantine, a possible area of concern involved perceived difficulties if certain "sign gifts" might be claimed in support of some revived form of prophetic leadership, particularly neo-Montanism. It would be no wonder were certain of the orthodox to have an interest in eliminating an appeal to continuing prophetic signs and wonders, lest a claim of advanced revelation become destructive of orthodoxy. In view of these considerations, removal or replacement may have been viewed as the optimal solution. Attention thus is directed to the Intermediate Ending.<sup>11</sup>



Professor Robinson comes to his conclusions after examining all of the historical evidence concerning these verses. If we took the time to look at the evidence that verifies the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20 as Holy Scripture as Burgon, Lange, Farmer, and Robinson have, we would see that many of those who battle against this truth are unwitting dupes of Satan's influence whose intention is to destroy faith in the fact that God wants to perform signs and wonders through His people.

If one gives careful thought to this, the passage promises that we can have power to make successful assaults upon Satan's kingdom. The fact that we are promised authority to cast out demons in the Name of Jesus is sufficient evidence since demons serve Satan. However, sickness and disease also has satanic origins (Job 2:7; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38), therefore, any recovery from it is a defeat to the devil. Why would he not go through great efforts, even to the point of influencing gifted, intelligent, and influential men to cast doubt as to whether or not the very passage that would impart faith in a believer to demonstrate Satan's defeat is actually a legitimate promise from God?

The passage says "these signs shall follow them that *believe*." Of course none of the promises mentioned in the passage will work if we do not believe. The best way to bring unbelief concerning these promises is to question whether or not they are a legitimate part of canonized Scripture. The devil knows this and has worked hard towards this goal.

### **The Earliest Church Fathers Affirm Mark 16:9-20**

The claim that the best and earliest manuscripts do not contain these verses becomes nothing more than fluff when we look at history. Burgon writes, "The earliest of the Fathers, the most venerable of the versions, [and] the oldest MS. of which we can obtain any tidings,—*all* are observed to *recognize these Verses*."<sup>12</sup> This evidence is seen in the writings of the fathers. Justin Martyr (100 to 165 A.D) is also an early witness to the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20. Speaking about the Lord's ascension, Justin Martyr stated that Mark 16:20 was the fulfillment of a prophecy in Psalm 110:1-3:

That which he says, "He shall send to Thee the rod of power out of Jerusalem," is predictive of the mighty, word, which His apostles, going forth from Jerusalem, preached everywhere; and though death is decreed against those who teach or at all confess the name of Christ, we everywhere both embrace and teach it.<sup>13</sup>

Here we have one of the very earliest church fathers quoting a passage which cessationists claim are not in the best and earliest manuscripts. Irenaeus (125 to 200 A.D) quoted Mark 16:20 when he writes:

Also, towards the conclusion of his Gospel, Mark says: 'So then, after the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God;' confirming what had been spoken by the prophet.<sup>14</sup>

Irenaeus also recorded that believers in his day were claiming the promises found in the Mark 16 verses when he writes, "His disciples.... do in His name perform [miracles]....For some do certainly and truly drive out devils....Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole."<sup>15</sup> Compare his statement to Mark 16:17-18 which says, "*In my name shall they cast out devils....they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*" So not only does Irenaeus affirm the legitimacy of Mark 16:9-20, he also affirms that the Lord's promises recorded therein can be claimed by the believer in post apostolic times. The proof in the authenticity of the promises in Mark 16 is not just the fact that the church Fathers quoted the passage, but also the fact that these promises were claimed and acted upon in their day and God honored their faith and brought a fulfillment of them.

As we continue to explore history, we find church fathers such as Vincentius, Bishop of Thibaris in Africa, who wrote the following in A.D. 258:

We know heretics to be worse than heathen. If, therefore, they would turn and come to the Lord, we have a rule of truth, which the Lord commanded the Apostles, saying, Go, in My Name, lay on hands, and cast out devils; (Mark xvi. 17.) and in another place, Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matt. xxviii. 19.) Therefore, first let them come by imposition of hands in exorcism, and then by the regeneration of Baptism, that so they may be made partakers of Christ's promises; but otherwise I think they cannot. Opinion delivered in the Council of Carthage. Acta Concil. Carth. apud Cyprian. p. 447.<sup>16</sup>

Vincentius believed that heretics needed deliverance from demon spirits if they would turn to Christ. He supports this belief by a direct quote from Mark 16:17. This is one of the ways that Vincentius believes that they can partake of God's promises. Well into the third century God had His servants who stood on these promises and taught others to do so. While teaching on the *force of faith* and what it can accomplish, Aphrahat (280 to 367 AD) used Mark 16:17-18 as one of his foundation texts:

And He said to them:— Doubt not, lest you sink down in the midst of the world, even as Simon when he doubted began to sink in the midst of the sea. And again He said thus— This shall be the sign for those that believe; they shall speak with new tongues and shall cast out demons, and they shall lay their hands on the sick and they shall be made whole....Let us draw near then, my beloved, to faith, since its powers are so many. For faith raised up to the heavens (Enoch), and conquered the Deluge. It caused the barren to bring forth. It delivered from the sword. It raised up from the pit. It enriched the poor. It released the captives. It delivered the persecuted. It brought down the fire. It divided the sea. It cleft the rock, and gave to the thirsty water to drink. It satisfied the hungry. It raised the dead, and brought them up from Sheol. It stilled the billows. It healed the sick. It conquered hosts. It overthrew walls. It stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the flame of fire. It humiliated the proud, and brought the humble to honour. All these mighty works were wrought by faith.<sup>16</sup>

After quoting Mark 16:17-18, Aphrahat exhorts his reader to *draw near to faith since its powers are so many*. We can see that Aphrahat believed that some of the powers of faith are found in the promises of Mark 16 which is exorcism, healing, a supernatural prayer language, and divine protection. Aphrahat not only recognized that Mark 16 was a legitimate portion of Holy Scripture, but believed that the passage was applicable to the people of his time.

Aphrahat further writes, "Furthermore, my beloved, there is much besides in the Holy Books about faith. But these few things out of the much have I written to recall them to your love that you may know and make known and believe and also be believed."<sup>17</sup> Aphrahat believed that there was much more in the Scriptures on the subject of faith than what he had given to his readers. If this is the case then why select Mark 16:17-18 out of the numerous passages he could have chosen if it was considered to be a spurious passage of questionable origin? It is obvious that Aphrahat knew that the passage was not only

true canonized Scripture, but was applicable long past the age in which it was written.

While those who oppose the legitimacy of this passage have told us that Origen and other church fathers are silent on the Mark 16:9-20 passage (as if this silence is sufficient evidence against its authenticity), we have observed that many others before and very soon after Origen recognized the passage and claimed its promises. Nevertheless, we are often confronted by the questioners of Mark 16:9-20's authenticity with the *unsupported belief* that some scholars in the fourth century such as Eusebius, Jerome and some others questioned it as well.<sup>18</sup>

Even if this were true (and some scholars dispute the claim), Saint Ambrose, who also lived well into the fourth century (339 to 397 AD) saw the promises in Mark 16 as canonical and believed that they were to be claimed by the believers of his time. Furthermore, in his book, *The Prayer of Job and David*, Ambrose writes:

Therefore, it was with good reason that the Lord became a stage, so that the word of the Lord might prepare such stages for Himself; of these He says, "In my name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak in new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." Indeed they took up serpents, when His holy Apostle cast out the spiritual forces of wickedness from their hiding places in the body by breathing on them and did not feel deadly poisons. When the viper came forth from the bundle of sticks and bit Paul, the natives, seeing the viper hanging from his hand, thought he would suddenly die. But he stood unafraid; he was unaffected by the wound, and the poison was not infused into him.<sup>19</sup>

Ambrose believed that the Lord became a stage in order to make us stages. A "stage" is a platform upon which actors perform. Ambrose was teaching that God wanted to perform through His people. He cites Mark 16:17, 18 as evidence of this. God wants to perform signs and wonders through us and has made us His stages upon which He can do so.

While disputing with a heretical group known as the Novations, Ambrose acknowledges that God wants His people to claim the promises and perform the miracles stated in Mark 16:17. Saint Ambrose writes in his book, *Concerning Repentance*:

It is the will of the Lord that His disciples should possess great powers; it is His will that the same things which He did when on earth should be done in His Name by His servants....And in fine He gave all gifts to His disciples, of whom He said: In My Name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall do well. So, then, He gave them all things, but there is no power of man exercised in these things, in which the grace of the divine gift operates....Why, then, do you lay on hands, and believe it to be the effect of the blessing, if perchance some sick person recovers? Why do you assume that any can be cleansed by you from the pollution of the devil? Why do you baptize if sins cannot be remitted by man? If baptism is certainly the remission of all sins, what difference does it make whether priests claim that this power is given to them in penance or at the font? In each the mystery is one.<sup>20</sup>

Ambrose believed that it is the will of the Lord that we, His people, should possess great powers. Some people, in spite of the clear promises mentioned in Mark 16, doubt that these things are always God's will. We pray powerlessly because we have no faith. We have no faith because faith can only come as we have a clear understanding of what God's will actually is. The will of God is known by the Word of God. When any part of God's Word comes under question concerning its authenticity, then the will of God for that area is placed under question and doubt and unbelief begins to prevail.

Nonetheless, these church fathers considered Mark 16:9-20 to be Holy Scripture and believed that these promises were to be claimed by God's people. Those in later centuries who dispute the authenticity of the passage based on two mutilated manuscripts are simply peddlers of unbelief and contribute to the powerlessness that prevails within Christianity.

### **One Sign in One Place in the New Testament**

More proof that the promises in Mark 16:17, 18 are legitimate canonized Scripture is the fact that history shows how God has honored one of the very promises that is only found in this passage and nowhere else in Scripture. This not only affirms the validity of Mark 16:9-20 as inspired Scripture but also demonstrates that its promises belong to the believer in post-apostolic times.

Even before Justin Martyr (100 to 165 A.D), who is on record as the earliest church father in which we find a direct quote from one

of the verses in Mark 16:9-20, we read of a church father named Papias (60 to 140 AD), who was the bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia and also known as a prolific writer. In one of his writings, Papias stated how one man had actually claimed one of the Lord's promises found in Mark 16:18:

The aforesaid Papias recorded, on the authority of the daughters of Philip, that Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, drank the poison of a snake in the name of Christ when put to the test by the unbelievers and was protected from all harm. He also records other amazing things, in particular one about Manaim's mother, who was raised from the dead.<sup>21</sup>

Since Mark is the only place in Scripture where such a promise is stated, there should be no doubt that Papias is making reference to this passage. Furthermore, we are not aware of all the circumstances that compelled Justus to intentionally drink poison in order to convince the unbelievers around him, nonetheless, we caution strongly against this practice. God will sometimes bless us in our ignorance, but we should not intentionally endanger ourselves just to prove the promises. As we will demonstrate later from Scripture, snake handling and drinking of poison are protective and defensive promises. They are not to be used to test the level of our faith when unnecessary. However, they are there to claim when we need them in dire circumstances.

We cite Papias' record concerning Justus because, first, Papias is the earliest church father to make a reference to the promises in Mark 16 which proves that this passage was not a later addition to the gospel of Mark as many cessationists claim, and second, to prove that these promises were not limited to the original apostles but were available to the believers during this period and are still available to the believer today.

Even the Apostle John was supposed to have claimed this promise according to second century legend and tradition recorded in the apocryphal book, *The Acts of John*. According to the book, John was challenged by Aristodemus, who was chief priest of idolatrous worship in his region, to drink poison if he would convince him that John's God was the true God. John was willing to accept the challenge. Aristodemus first decided to try the poison on some condemned criminals, hoping that this would dishearten the Apostle John. The poison did kill the criminals but John had no fear. On the

contrary, the writer of the Acts of John writes about how John prayed and was unharmed:

My God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose word the heavens were established, unto whom all things are subject, whom all creation serveth, whom all power obeyeth, feareth, and trembleth, when we call on thee for succour: whose name the serpent hearing is still, the dragon fleeth, the viper is quiet, the toad (which is called a frog) is still and strengthless, the scorpion is quenched, the basilisk vanquished, and the phalangia (spider) doth no hurt -in a word, all venomous things, and the fiercest reptiles and noisome beasts, are pierced (or covered with darkness). Do thou, I say, quench the venom of this poison, put out the deadly workings thereof, and void it of the strength which it hath in it: and grant in thy sight unto all these whom thou hast created, eyes that they may see, and ears that they may hear and a heart that they may understand thy greatness. And when he had thus said, he armed his mouth and all his body with the sign of the cross and drank all that was in the cup. And after he had drunk, he said: I ask that they for whose sake I have drunk, be turned unto thee, O Lord, and by thine enlightening receive the salvation which is in thee. And when for the space of three hours the people saw that John was of a cheerful countenance, and that there was no sign at all of paleness or fear in him, they began to cry out with a loud voice: He is the one true God whom John worshippeth.<sup>22</sup>

In this writing we learn about a boldness and confidence in prayer that is very little known today within Christianity. John is alleged to have said, “whom all power obeyeth, feareth, and trembleth, when we call on thee for succor.” We are told in Scripture, “*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not*” (Jer. 33:3). The fulfillment of such a promise requires supernatural intervention on God’s part. John expected circumstances to change when he called on God for help. Cessationists often teach that we cannot expect any supernatural intervention when we pray. Such a teaching is contrary to Scripture. Legend or not, there is Biblical truth contained in the *Acts of John* that should not be so easily dismissed.

We are not sure how much of this is true and how much is merely legend, but many legends have some basis in truth.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, even if it is legend, why would the writer claim that John could successfully claim protection from poison if the promises in Mark 16 were not known? After all, it is the only passage in God’s Word that promises such protection. The writer of the Acts of John

obviously believed that God answers prayer in miraculous and powerful ways and that the promises in Mark 16 were legitimate and can be claimed. Many centuries later, the great Protestant Reformer Martin Luther would mention the *Acts of John* as if it were historical, and connect it to Mark 16:18:

John the Evangelist drank real poison, but it did not kill him, for the power of faith was present. Yet faith did not make this real poison into something other than real poison, such as penalty or weakness. Rather it prevented it from doing harm. If some one else had drunk it, he would have died. Christ says "If they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them" [Mark 16:18]. He did not say that it will no longer be deadly, but rather that it will not hurt them because they drink it in Christ's name. Otherwise, where would be the glory of the miracle, if it had ceased to be deadly when it was drunk?<sup>24</sup>

Legend or not, Luther seemed to accept it as historical fact. This could either be due to his Roman Catholic background in which the apocryphal books were accepted as canon, or it could be due to the fact that he believed that the promises in Mark 16 were part of the canon and are for God's people today. Luther certainly believed the latter:

*These signs shall follow.* Some argue and interpret the signs spiritually; but they do not bear such interpretation; for thereby the Scripture becomes vacillating and unstable. Some say that although not every one has or can do these signs, yet they are given to the whole congregation, or the whole multitude of Christendom, so that one casts out the devils, another heals the sick, and so on. Therefore they say that such signs are a manifestation of the Spirit, that where these signs are, there is also the Christian Church, and vice versa. But these words do not refer to the congregation, but upon each individual especially, as is indicated in John xiv. 12. (See Matt. x. 8; Psalm xci. 13.) For a Christian has like power with Christ, is in communion with him, and sits with him in the entire life.<sup>25</sup>

Here we have the respected Reformer who taught that the promises in Mark 16, those rejected by some of today's scholars as being noncanonical, were relevant for post-apostolic times, and he saw this in the second century legend of John the apostle.

In the third century a man named Hippolytus, a student of Irenaeus, taught his readers to claim this promise in Mark 16:18 when



taking communion. In a work called “Apostolic Tradition” which is often assigned to Hippolytus, we find the following exhortation:

The faithful shall be careful to partake of the Eucharist before eating anything else. For if they eat with faith, even though some deadly poison is given to them, after this it will not be able to harm them.<sup>26</sup>

Some claim that there is some doubt as to whether or not Hippolytus is making reference to Mark 16:18 here. However, there is no other authority by which Hippolytus could make this claim since Mark’s gospel is the only place in the Bible where such a promise is clearly stated. Therefore, there should be no doubt that Hippolytus not only knew of the Mark 16 promises, but taught his followers to claim them by faith. He also taught them to reject fear when taking communion.

There are other early accounts and legends of God’s servants drinking poison and miraculously surviving. The Apostle Matthias was sent to preach the gospel to some cannibals in a foreign land. The land that he was sent to usually took foreigners and gouged out their eyes and then made them to drink a magic potion that would cause them to act like animals. This is exactly what they did to Matthias. However, the potion did not work on him since he stayed in his right mind. Furthermore, after prayer, God restored his sight to him.<sup>27</sup>

### **Modern Accounts of Protection from Deadly Drink**

The peculiar sign of drinking deadly substance and remaining alive and in good health did not occur only in the early centuries. In his book, *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics*, C. Douglas McConnell relates an incident that happened in more recent history:

In another part of the world, missionary Johannes Warneck recorded that from the 1860s the Indonesian Christian community increased after the appearance of similar “Pentecostal” phenomena: dreams, visions, signs in the heavens, and several instances where missionaries (e.g. Ludwig Nommensen) unwittingly drank poison given by their enemies and remained unharmed (Joel 2:28-29; Mark 16:18).<sup>28</sup>

Once again we see that God honored a promise that is unique to one book in the New Testament. The only thing that should amaze us is if God would honor a promise that was placed in the canon of Scripture deceptively and not by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Here is

proof that God desires to work miracles in modern times. McConnell writes that a well known theologian named Theodore Christlieb stated the following after becoming aware of the miracles in Indonesia:

in the last epoch of the consummation of the church...she will again require for her final decisive struggle with the power of darkness, the miraculous interference of her risen Lord, and hence the Scriptures lead us to expect miracles once more for this period....In the history of modern missions we find many wonderful references which unmistakably remind us of the apostolic age.<sup>29</sup>

I could not agree more. We are in warfare with the father of lies (John 8:44). As he leads the church to embrace a theology of powerlessness by denying God's Word, he becomes more victorious in his efforts to undermine its significance. This is why it is vitally important to refute the satanic idea that the promises in Mark 16 are not canonical. What better way to do this than demonstrate how God has honored one of the promises only found in this passage and nowhere else?

In even more recent times, Pastor Leon Schaub, senior pastor of Covenant Life Church in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, relates this incident in a sermon on prayer:

A number of years ago a religious denomination was holding a convention in Corpus Christi, Texas. After the people began to gather at the grounds where they were having the convention, some of them began to fall ill. Soon about 20 or 30 people were desperately sick, and they began praying for one another. As they had prayed, someone had a revelation the water in one of the hotels was poisonous. This was in the days when they didn't have running water. They had a pitcher and bowl on a washstand in each room. This person cautioned the rest of the people not to drink any more water. The Lord answered prayer and everyone was healed. They took a sample of the water to a nearby naval station. Laboratory tests showed there was enough poison in the water to kill a regiment of men. Under such circumstances we have a right to claim immunity in Jesus' Name.<sup>30</sup>

Once again we see Mark 16:18 utilized and working even in modern times, thus demonstrating that this is indeed a promise from God's very Word. Years ago I taught a series of lessons on the promises in Mark 16:15-20. It was not many days after I taught on

God's protection over snakes and poison that a woman who had been attending the services ran into a crisis. She walked into the kitchen only to find that her young daughter had ingested some cleanser. Her first reaction was to panic but she said, "I remember Brother Troy teaching on the fact that if we drink any deadly thing that it will not hurt us." She then prayed for her daughter and the daughter regurgitated the cleanser and was fine afterwards. It is testimonies such as this that tells me that these promises belong to God's people today.

Some can easily dismiss historical references to laying on of hands, speaking in tongues, casting out demons, and surviving snake attacks because these can be found in other portions of Scripture. Due to the prevalence of these signs in other parts of the Bible, the skeptic can say that they do not affirm that Mark 16:17, 18 is genuine Scripture. However, the drinking of deadly poison cannot be found in any other place than Mark 16. Yet, God has time and again honored the faith of those who were forced to drink poison for one reason or another because He honors His Word.

### **Snakes and Scorpions**

In his commentary on the gospel of Mark, James R. Edwards mentions a story from the Jewish Tosefta that *embellishes* (his word) a story about a Rabbi named Hanina ben Dosa who was bitten by a poisonous lizard while praying. The lizard died but the Rabbi suffered no harm. There is no reason why this could not be true since there have been numerous miracles of this kind wrought for those who accept Mark 16 as genuine promises from God.<sup>31</sup> For example, in his sermon on this text, Pastor Schaub mentions a missionary who was bitten by a scorpion:

A woman missionary in a foreign country was stung by a deadly scorpion. There was no antidote for the bite available; its sting was always fatal. The missionary was shopping on the street when the scorpion stung her, the people watching expected her to swell up and die. But she just shook it off in Jesus' Name and didn't even get sick to her stomach. As a result many of those people were saved.<sup>32</sup>

While not directly related to surviving snakebites, years ago when I lived in Okinawa, Japan we rented a home in an area that was normally infested by the dangerous Habu snake. For several years my

children, my wife and myself would go into the yard but we never encountered one incident. When we moved, the new tenants that came in after us complained that snakes were constantly coming into their yard. It let me know how God's hand of protection was upon me and my family during that period of time. My mother in law, who serves the Lord with faith and fervor, while cleaning up a yard once, ran into one of those snakes and simply chopped its head off. God's promises of protection can be applied in more than one way, but they are still available for God's people today.

### **Conclusion: Mark 16:9-20 Is the Word of God**

The fact that many in our day have claimed these promises and that God has honored their faith is sufficient proof that Mark 16:9-20 is indeed the Word of God. Equally so, to cast doubt upon the genuineness of a legitimate portion of God's Word is to violate His command not to add or take away from His Words (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19). Those who do this in the name of "scholarship" are truly skating on thin ice and should repent. I say this with the love of God and not with any malice whatsoever. It is through such "scholarly" efforts that so much has been hindered and destroyed and these promises are dormant in the lives of God's people.

There are some that have gone to extremes and applied these promises foolishly, thereby causing loss of lives and damage to the church's reputation. Nevertheless, those who oppose the authenticity of these promises or deny their validity for today are responsible for those who have lost their lives or the lives of loved ones due to failure to claim these promises in circumstances in which faith in them was merited. Let us learn to take God at His Word rather than attempting to remove those portions of it that does not suit our theological perspective.

## Chapter Six

# Christ's Miracles: Were They Meant Only to Prove His Deity?

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know (Acts 2:22)

For centuries, theologians such as John Calvin, one of the earliest proponents of cessationism, have taught that the miracles of Christ were meant primarily to affirm the truth that He was God while He walked on the earth. Calvin, contrary to Scripture, also taught that the Lord did this by His own inherent ability:

Christ, by his own inherent power, wrought miracles, and bestowed the power of working them on others.... It is not surprising, then, that Christ appealed to his miracles in order to subdue the unbelief of the Jews, inasmuch as these were performed by his own energy, and therefore bore the most ample testimony to his divinity.<sup>1</sup>

This teaching goes beyond theological circles and finds itself in some of our Sunday school material. One man wrote, "Christ... performed his miracles in his own name and on his own authority. His language was that of omnipotence; theirs was that of faith in him."<sup>2</sup>

I affirm with Calvin and others that Jesus is truly Yahweh, the true and living God and is the second person of the Triune Godhead. However, I believe that Calvin and others are mistaken when they teach that, while on earth, Christ wrought miracles of His own inherent abilities. Furthermore, this teaching has morphed into an argument against the present day Charismata. Since miracles were meant for the express purpose of attesting to Christ's deity, then there is no need for them today.

John MacArthur, in his book, *Charismatic Chaos*, uses the "miracles were meant to prove Christ's deity" idea to promote his doctrine of cessationism and his polemic against Charismatic teaching:

His gift was an authenticating gift. He used it to confirm his claims that he was the Son of God in a way that also displayed his divine compassion. Dispelling demons and diseases was Christ's way of proving that he was God in human flesh. John's gospel clearly demonstrates that truth. John said all the signs and miracles Jesus wrought validated his deity (John 20:30-31).<sup>3</sup>

One would wonder if cessationists believe that Christ has lost His compassion since they do not believe that He brings the same type of miraculous healing that has been recorded in Scripture. Regardless, there is *some* truth in what the cessationists are teaching. The miracles did authenticate Christ and His mission (John 10:25, 38; 20:30, 31; Acts 2:22). However, the cessationists are *not* teaching the complete truth on this subject. Their perspective is distorted by their theological bias.

### **Christ Did Nothing of His Own Authority or Power**

Calvin taught that Christ performed miracles from His own inherent ability as God. Another writer claims that Christ performed miracles in his own name, authority, and omnipotence. Scripture appears to give us a different story:

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:19)

Here is a plain and clear statement that Christ did nothing based on His own inherent authority or power. This statement was made in connection with a man who had just been healed (John 5:1-16). Jesus is saying that the miracle He performed in healing the man by the pool of Bethesda was not done from any inherent ability He possessed, but done by the Father's authority.

When Phillip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus replied by saying, "*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*" (John 14:10) In the next chapter, we will see that the works that Jesus is referring to here are the signs and wonders that He performed. However, in this instance, it is enough to show from this passage that Jesus did not do anything from His own inherent ability, omnipotence, or His own

authority. He said that the Father in Him is the One doing the miraculous works through Him.

### **Belittling the Humanity of Christ**

The idea that Jesus performed miracles from His own inherent ability and authority comes from the belief that He kept all of His God-like attributes (omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence) when He became a man.

There are those who hold to this doctrine so strongly that anyone who opposes it will be accused of denying the Lord's deity and will be accused of cultic heresy. For example, in dispute with a statement by a Charismatic Word-Faith teacher, Hank Hanegraaff writes: "There is no better word than *blasphemy* for a teaching that demotes Jesus Christ to the level of a man, a mere prototype of millions and millions of others who are exactly like Him."<sup>4</sup> Later, we will demonstrate that, in his attempt to correct what he believes is erroneous teaching, Mr. Hanegraaff and others who believe as he does swings the pendulum in the extreme opposite and unbiblical direction.

Due to the numerous attacks upon the deity of Christ, many theologians understandably spent much time and paper defending this truth. Sadly, theologians sometimes have a tendency to refute error by going to an opposite extreme. While rightfully arguing for the deity of Jesus, many belittle His humanity and make it quite insignificant. Herschel H. Hobbs, the late president of the Southern Baptist Convention, wrote, "It is just as great an error to deny his human nature as to deny His divine nature."<sup>5</sup>

Understanding the humanity of Christ is important, even to our salvation: "*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*" (1 Tim. 2:5-6; see also John 11:49-52) Knowing Christ as a man is just as essential for benefitting from the merits of His death as affirming His deity. While Paul certainly affirmed the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Tim. 2:3), he did not allow the deity to crowd out His humanity as so many theologians have done and are doing today.

One of the arguments as proof of His deity is the miracles that He performed. One of the primary differences between a genuine Christian and a cult is that the former affirms the deity of Christ while the latter denies it.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, by making the miracles of Christ one of the primary proofs of His deity; many miss the true reasons behind

His miracles. The theological arguments have assisted in providing an apologetic for the deity of Christ, but this same teaching has been used by many cessationists to destroy faith for the miraculous in our day.

The cessationist's claim is that "Jesus did miracles to prove that He was God. Because we are NOT God, we cannot do miracles like Jesus did." Again, please understand that I do NOT by any means deny the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. I affirm it whole heartedly and would die defending this important truth. However, this truth is used by some to actually support blatant unbelief in what Jesus promised.

### **Jesus Came to Earth as a Genuine Man**

For centuries, there have been debates in Christianity concerning the incarnation of Christ. Some believed that Jesus maintained all of His attributes but did not use them (though He could have). Others say that He emptied Himself of His attributes and depended solely on the Father. Then there are those who claim that Christ kept all of His attributes and applied them in all situations where His miracles are recorded.

I affirm the second view and will explain my reasons from Scripture. Along with that I will be refuting the latter view, which is the one held by most cessationists. The latter view is a faith destroyer and has been one of the strengths of the cessationist dogma.

The Bible teaches us that Jesus came to earth in human flesh:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

**And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us**  
... (John 1:1-3, 14)

This is one of the best known passages affirming the deity and humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. We know from this passage that the Lord was 100% man and 100% God. He is the Word that is God who took on human flesh. However, this passage, as wonderful as it is, does not reveal all that we need to know concerning the incarnation of our Lord. The writer of Hebrews gives us even more insight:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the



same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. **Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren**, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. (Heb. 2:14-18)

Jesus did not come in His incarnation as a supernatural being. Instead, He took on flesh and blood. The Scriptures go even further to say that Jesus came in the *likeness of sinful flesh* (Rom. 8:3). The Bible is clear that Christ was made like us in all things. **Today's English Version** says, "*This means that he had to become like his people in every way ...*" The **Jewish New Testament** says "... *he had to become like his brothers in every respect.*"

Because He became like us in every single way possible, He was subject to the same limitations that you and I are subject to. *Though He never lost His deity, He did not have the ability to exercise His God-Like attributes.* The following chart shows us from Scripture that Jesus was subject to human limitations:

<u>God</u>	<u>Christ on Earth</u>
God can never be tempted (James 1:13)	Jesus was tempted in every way that men are tempted (Matt. 4:1; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2; Heb. 2:18; 4:15)
The Bible does not indicate that God suffers hunger or has any need for food (Ps. 50:9-13)	Jesus suffered hunger (Matt. 4:2; 21:17-18)
The Bible makes no indication that God in any way suffers thirst as physical human beings do. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit Himself is called the rivers of living water (John 7:37)	Christ suffered thirst (John 4:7; 19:28)
God is never tired or weary (Isaiah 40:8)	Christ became weary (John 4:6)
God never sleeps (Ps. 121:4, 5)	Christ needed sleep (Matt. 8:24)

<u>God</u>	<u>Christ on Earth</u>
God is omniscient and possesses all knowledge (1 Sam. 2:3; Ps. 147:5; Heb. 4:13)	Christ was limited in knowledge (Mark 11:13; 13:32)
God needs no man to teach Him (Isa. 40:13-14)	Christ advanced in wisdom (Luke 2:52). He actually had to learn obedience through the things that He suffered (Heb. 5:7-9)
God is omnipresent. He can be in more than one place at any given time (Ps. 139:7-10)	Jesus could only be in one place at a time (John 11:1-6, 32)
God cannot be killed or die (Ps 90:1-4; 102:24-27)	Christ was killed and died (Acts 2:23; Rom. 5:6-9)
God has no parents, was never a child, and never had any need to grow up.	Though Jesus was preexistent before His time on earth, He still had to be born (Luke 2:6-7) and grow up (Luke 2:40) in His incarnation upon the earth.
God has clearly stated that He is NOT a man (Num. 23:19).	Though Jesus affirmed His deity, He also claimed to be a man (John 8:40)
God is omnipotent. He has all power and can do all things (Rev. 19:6; Matt. 19:26)	Jesus depended upon the Father to perform His works (John 14:10) and there were some things He just could not do (Mark 6:5-6)

This leaves us with no doubt that Jesus suffered what you and I suffered. Now the question for us is, why did Jesus suffer the limitations of humanity if He is truly God and a second member of the Triune Godhead? Why was he unable to exercise the attributes that the Almighty is uniquely privileged to have?

### **Jesus Emptied Himself of His Divine Attributes While On Earth**

I personally believe that the book of Philippians provides the answers to the above questions for us:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found

in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:5-8)

Paul makes a similar statement in Philippians that the writer of Hebrews (who may have also been the Apostle Paul) makes: that Christ was made in the likeness of men. He was fashioned as a man. What the Apostle Paul is saying here is that the Lord gave up the inherent power that would enable Him to work miracles on His own. Sadly, men like Hank Hanegraaff believe that it is heretical to even suggest that Christ gave up any of His attributes:

He did not lay aside His divine attributes. To say that Jesus surrendered even one attribute of divinity is to assert that Jesus Christ is less than God and is therefore not God at all. While Christ voluntarily veiled His divine glory (Philippians 2:5-11), Scripture insists that He did not surrender His divine attributes. And as God, Jesus would not have sinned.<sup>7</sup>

If what Hanegraaff is saying is true, then as God, Jesus should *never have been tempted* (James 1:13). Yet, we know that Jesus was indeed tempted (Matt. 4:1; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2; Heb. 2:18; 4:15). The ability to be tempted includes the ability to sin (James 1:14, 15).

Notice that Mr. Hanegraaff cites Phil. 2:5-11. I am not sure how much Greek Hanegraaff has studied nor am I sure how thoroughly he has examined his proof-text. Nonetheless, a thorough examination of this text will prove Mr. Hanegraaff to be completely incorrect concerning his idea that Christ “did not surrender His divine attributes.”

Those who have studied the Greek tell us that the King James rendering of Phil. 4:7 is not accurate. The contributors to the Jamieson-Faussette-Brown Commentary write, “...rather as the Greek, ‘*emptied Himself*, taking upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.’”<sup>8</sup> (Emphasis are mine)

Other known Bible commentators familiar with the original Greek such as Adam Clarke also agreed with this. Clarke writes, “And his being made in the likeness of man, and assuming the form of a servant, was a *proof* that he had *emptied* himself-laid aside the effulgence of his glory.”<sup>9</sup>

The plain and clear fact is that Jesus emptied Himself of His divine attributes when He became a man. According to Barnes, the

phrase, “made himself of no reputation” (KJV) is better translated “He emptied Himself.” Barnes (who was a cessationist) wrote:

*But made himself of no reputation.* This translation by no means conveys the sense of the original. According to this it would seem that he consented to be without distinction or honour among men; or that he was willing to be despised or disregarded. The Greek is, *entimos*. The word *entimos* means, literally, *to empty, to make empty, to make vain or void*. It is rendered *made void* in #Rom 4:14; *made of none effect*, #1Cor 1:17; *make void*, #1Cor 9:15; *should be vain*, #2Cor 9:3]. The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, except in the passage before us. The essential idea is that of bringing to emptiness, vanity, or nothingness; and hence it is applied to a case where one lays aside his rank and dignity, and becomes, in respect to that, as nothing; that is, he assumes a more humble rank and station.<sup>10</sup>

Barnes believed that this emptying of Himself means that He laid aside His divine attributes:

It is conceivable that he might have laid aside, for a time, the symbols or the manifestation of his glory, or that the outward expressions of his majesty in heaven might have been withdrawn. It is conceivable for a Divine Being to intermit the exercise of his almighty power, since it cannot be supposed that God is *always* exerting his power to the utmost. And, in like manner, there might be for a time a laying aside or intermitting of these manifestations or symbols, which were expressive of the Divine glory and perfections.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to Hanegraaff, who claims that this would make Jesus “less than God,” Barnes concludes, “Yet this supposes no change in the Divine nature, or in the essential nature of the Divine perfections....The language before us fairly implies that he laid aside that which was expressive of his being Divine.”<sup>12</sup>

### **The Majority of English Translations Say that Christ “Emptied Himself”**

Furthermore, the majority of English Bible translations, both old and new, translate the phrase in Phil. 2:7 as “emptying Himself.” Some use even stronger language than this. One of the many older translations is the Young’s Literal Translation which says, “... *but did empty himself, the form of a servant having taken, in the likeness of men having been made.*”

An example of a more modern translation is the **New Living Translation** which says, "*He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.*" To make their position clearer they include this in their footnotes: *Or He laid aside his mighty power and glory.*

The New Living Translation started out as a paraphrase called **The Living Bible**. This paraphrase offers us an interesting perspective on how Phil. 2:7 could be translated (or at least accurately paraphrased):

Your attitude should be the kind that was shown us by Christ Jesus, who though he was God, did not demand and cling to his rights as God, but laid aside his mighty power and glory, taking the disguise of a slave and becoming like men. And he humbled himself even further, going so far as to actually die a criminal's death on a cross.

Some may argue that a paraphrase offers more of a commentary than an accurate translation. Nevertheless, it does prove that there is a consistency of thought among those who read the text of Phil. 2:7. I am unsure as to whether or not the man who paraphrased the Living Bible would be considered a "Charismatic" (or at the least, a "Continuationist") but it does seem that there are more Evangelicals who understand Phil. 2:7 in the exact same way that this Bible paraphrases it.

The prolific practical and devotional writer and Bible teacher, F. B. Meyer, believed that this passage plainly spoke of Christ divesting Himself of His attributes. Meyer gives the most solid and clarifying explanation of this particular passage of Scripture:

But probably we are specially here taught that He emptied Himself *of the use of His divine attributes*. This is a profound truth which it is necessary to understand if you would read rightly the lesson of our Savior's life. Men have been accustomed to think the miracles of Jesus Christ were wrought by the putting forth of His intrinsic power ....whereas a truer understanding of His nature, specially as disclosed in the gospel by St John, shows that He did nothing of Himself, but what He saw the Father doing ... His human life was one of faith, even as ours should be ...He chose to live like this. He voluntarily laid aside the exercise of His omnipotence, that He might receive power from God; absolutely and voluntarily

forewent the use of attributes that lay all around Him, like tools within reach of the skilled mechanic, that He might live a truly human life, weeping our tears, and receiving the plenitude of His Father's power.<sup>13</sup>

So here we have a number of witnesses: Experts in the Greek language, Bible translators, Bible paraphrasers, and devotional writers. These all attest to the belief that Jesus laid aside His mighty attributes when He became a man. Would our friends dare call all of these men blasphemers? Would they dare accuse them of making Jesus “less than God?”

### **Christ's Dependence On The Holy Spirit To Do The Miraculous**

The greatest witness to the fact that Jesus performed no miracle of His own authority or intrinsic divine ability is the Bible itself. The Bible has no records of Jesus performing any miracles before receiving His baptism with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16-17; Luke 3:22-23; Mark 1:10-11; John 1:31-34). The Lord received the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). It was after His Spirit baptism that He did His first miracle in Cana of Galilee (John 2:11). The Bible record states that even this first miracle was done in the power of the Spirit and not by any divine attributes He possessed: *"And Jesus returned in the **power of the Spirit** into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about."* (Luke 4:14)

Jesus' miracles were so significant that when Nicodemus met Him he says, *"We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these signs which thou doest except God be with him."* (John 3:2.) Jesus made no attempt to correct Nicodemus and take credit for the miracles Himself. On the contrary, our Lord attributed every one of His works to the power of the Spirit. He gave credit to the Holy Spirit who anointed Him:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

We will notice that Jesus either gave credit to the Father, the Holy Spirit, or just said that God was doing it through Him. Regardless

of which name or title He used, we know that He did His miracles by being empowered from a source other than Himself. Notice how the Apostle Peter used these titles interchangeably. In a text often used by cessationists to prove that miracles were meant to authenticate Christ, Peter says:

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a **man approved of God** among you by miracles and wonders and signs, **which God did by him in the midst of you**, as ye yourselves also know: (Acts 2:22)

Notice that Peter taught that God did the works through Jesus. Peter stated that Jesus was a *man* approved of God. It is important to note that, contrary to cessationist dogma, Peter did not point to Christ's deity but affirmed His humanity. Peter speaks of God as a separate individual from Jesus in this particular passage as he addresses the proof of Christ's having been approved: by the miracles and wonders and signs that God did by Him.

Peter most certainly believed in a triune God but was not attempting to give a theological discourse on the trinity here. He had a point to make. His point was that when Jesus came to earth He was as much a man as a man could be and that He depended totally upon the other members of the Trinity to perform the miraculous through Him. The fact that Peter believed in a Triune God is shown in another passage in which He says that Jesus did these miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit:

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (Acts 10:38)

Notice that all three members of the godhead are mentioned here. God being with Jesus was the reason Peter gives for the Lord doing the miraculous signs and wonders in His ministry during His time on the earth. Though Peter recognized the divinity of Christ, He did not promote this as the reason for the Lord's miraculous works. The first time He gives credit to God. The second time Peter credited the Lord's miracles to the power of the Holy Spirit. The phrases were

used interchangeably, but never did Peter ever say that Jesus did them from His own ability.

### **Miraculous Deliverance by the Power of the Spirit**

Jesus Himself used these contrasts. At times He said that God was working through Him and other times the Holy Spirit. Look at the contrast found between Luke's accounts and Matthew's accounts of an incident in which Jesus is falsely accused of casting out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus says, "*But if I with **the finger of God** cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you*" (Luke 11:20).

Even when accused by the Pharisees of casting out a demon spirit by the power of the devil, He did not tout the fact that He was bringing deliverance to this man by His own divine power or attributes. Instead, He gave credit to "the finger of God." In Matthew's account of this incident, Jesus gives credit to the Holy Spirit:

And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. **But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.** (Matt. 12:26-28)

Notice that our Lord did not promote His status as a member of the Godhead. He said that He cast out these devils by *the Spirit of God*. If the Lord depended upon the other two members of the godhead to perform miracles during His earthly ministry, then it stands to reason that when He came to earth as a man, He divested Himself of those attributes that would have expressed His divinity.

### **Jesus Says We Can Do It Too**

If the above is true, and multiple passages of Scripture affirm this, then Jesus, though He never ceased being God, operated here on earth as a normal man who was empowered by the Spirit of God. If he operated here on earth as a man then He was leaving us an example by which to follow. We can look to Jesus, not only for how to walk victoriously over sin, not only how to have compassion and do good works, but *we can also look at Him to learn how to move in the realm of the miraculous.*



In one of the gospel accounts, a man brought his demon possessed son to the disciples, hoping that they could deliver him. Sadly they were unsuccessful. The Lord had no choice but to work this miracle Himself. When the disciples, out of frustration, questioned the Lord as to why they could not exorcise the devil from the boy, Jesus did not attribute His success (and their lack of success) to His deity.

The Lord taught His disciples that their unsuccessful attempts to bring deliverance to this boy was due to a lack of *faith and prayer*:

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. (Matt. 17:19-21)

Cessationists would lead us to believe that the only reason Jesus had success in casting out the demon was because he is God and miracles affirmed this truth. However, Jesus did not tell His disciples that this was the reason. He told them that they had the ability to do exactly what He did. The only difference was in the matter of faith and prayer.

Cessationists who teach that Jesus was doing miracles by the power of His own divine ability find it unorthodox and blasphemous to say that Jesus was actually modeling what every man who prayed and placed true faith in God can do.

When the Lord was explaining the truth about the Father to His disciples, he was asked by Phillip to show them the Father. Whatever Phillip meant by his request, this seemed to have brought some disappointment to the Lord Jesus. Since they had been with Jesus for such a long time they should have known the Father through Him. He goes on to say:

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and

the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. (John 14:10-11)

Jesus teaches us here that He is not doing any of His miraculous works by any divine power that He possessed. It was the Father doing the works through Him. Jesus often stated that He could do nothing of His own self but completely depended upon the Father (John 5:19, 30). Jesus goes even further to teach that we could do the same works by the same power that He possessed: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.* (John 14:12)

Jesus was teaching us that He was the model to follow. We can have miracles in our ministry today. We simply need to have the same Spirit empowering us who empowered Jesus while He was on earth. The Lord said:

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

As we pointed out in chapter two, the word “power” in this passage is the Greek word “dunamis” which is *God’s miracle working power*. Jesus taught in every way that though He was and is God and the Savior of this world, that His life upon the earth was lived as a man with total dependence upon His Father and the Holy Spirit. He also taught us that we could walk in this same miracle working power (Matt. 10:1-8; 21:20-22; Mark 11:12-14, 22-24; 16:15-20; Luke 10:17-21; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 12-14).<sup>14</sup>

Do not allow the teaching of cessationism to rob you of this right and privilege to walk in the same miracle-working power that our Lord walked in. If the Lord Himself had not promised it, we could doubt this truth and would be under no obligation to concern ourselves with it. However, since Jesus Himself told us that we can do what he did, and even greater, then let us claim His promises by faith in His mighty Name.

## Chapter Seven

# Believers and the Greater Works than Jesus (Part One)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father (John 14:12).

In the last chapter we examined the cessationist's argument that because Jesus performed miracles to prove His deity, they are no longer necessary since this has been established. This is an interesting argument in the light of the fact that so many Judeo-Christian cults deny His deity. In our day, so-called Evangelical Christian colleges are placing pastors in churches who outright question the deity of Christ. It would seem that knowledge of our Lord's deity still needs to be established in our day.

Nonetheless, while we affirm the deity of Christ, we saw that when He came on the earth, Jesus operated as a normal human being with all of the pitfalls and shortcomings that befall us (except our Lord *never* sinned). Contrary to cessationist teaching, Scripture shows us that Jesus did not exercise any personal God-like attributes while on earth, but relied completely upon His Father and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord then gave us a promise that we can not only do the same works that He did, but even greater. If we did not read this passage from the Lord's lips ourselves then it could be difficult to believe it. However, since it is the Lord who said it, not only must we believe it but we must claim it for my our very lives and ministries. Sadly, cessationists attempt to discourage believers in a number of ways from taking our Lord's promise literally.

### **This Promise Restricted to the Apostles?**

There are two different cessationist interpretations of this passage. The first is the idea that, although Jesus was making reference to *miracles* when He spoke about "greater works," this was limited to the original twelve apostles and no one else. Therefore, this promise

cannot be claimed by just anyone. The second is that the passage is in reference to “spiritual works” and is not necessarily speaking about miracles. In this chapter we will examine the first interpretation.

Oliver B. Greene, a Fundamentalist Baptist minister who authored many books and Bible commentaries, writes in his commentary on this verse “...there is no reason to suppose that Jesus meant these mighty miracles to be performed by ministers today.”<sup>1</sup> In his otherwise excellent and insightful commentary on the Scriptures, Albert Barnes makes this disturbing statement:

This promise had doubtless special reference to the apostles themselves.... It cannot be understood of all his followers, for the circumstances of the promise do not require us to understand it thus, and it has not been a matter of fact that All Christians have possessed power to do greater works than the Lord Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Greene believed that the promise was restricted to apostolic times and is no longer valid today. Barnes taught that the promise was solely for the apostles. As usual, the cessationist interpretation is problematic. Jesus said “**he that believeth on me...**” When Jesus used the pronoun “he,” He most often made reference, not only to those He was addressing, but also to anyone beyond the group that He was addressing. In verse 9 of John 14, Jesus is correcting a misconception by Philip concerning the Father. Jesus says, “...*he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*”

A few chapters before this we find these words from Jesus: “*Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.***” (John 6:46, 47) We see that Jesus is addressing the same subject in both places, which is about seeing the Father. However, in John 6, Jesus says “**He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.**” If we follow the same rule of interpretation applied by cessationists here that are applied in John 14, we would have to restrict the promise of everlasting life to the period of time and the audience that Jesus was addressing. Can cessationists say that this promise of everlasting life was a promise restricted to this time and audience? We know that most would *not* say this. Therefore, cessationists clearly use an inconsistent hermeneutic.

Dr. John R. Rice, also a Fundamentalist Baptist minister and a contemporary of Oliver B. Greene, seemed to understand the passage

much differently. In his otherwise critical book on the Charismatic Movement, Rice wrote:

Again, this is a promise to “he that believeth on me.” Doesn’t that mean Christians in this day who put their trust in Christ? Then that means that the very works of Christ, a miraculous ministry, should be done by men today who please God and walk in the steps of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to his friend Greene (and Barnes), Rice is correct. Following a consistent system of Scripture interpretation, we find that the statement in John 14:12 which says, “*he that believeth on me...*” demonstrates to us that Jesus did not limit this promise to His disciples nor to the age in which they were living. He did not say, “If anyone in this particular group believeth on me...” but he said, “*he that believeth on me*” giving a universal and timeless application to this promise. If the promise was restricted to the disciples and the time in which they lived and was not meant to be claimed by anyone else, the Lord could and should have used plainer words.

Jesus spent three years with these disciples and not everything that was said and done among them has been recorded in Scripture. If the promise in John 14:12 was not meant for anyone beyond this group then we must ask why the Holy Spirit would select this promise to be recorded in Scripture vice the numerous other private statements that Jesus made to His disciples? It only stands to reason that this passage was placed in Scripture in order to teach, reprove, correct and instruct (2 Tim. 3:16). Therefore, it is among the many promises that God will say “yes” to (2 Cor. 1:20) if we meet the condition which is to “believe” on Him.

### **Church Father Ambrose and John 14:12**

The Lord tells us that if we were just to *believe*, we would be able to do the same works that he did. This is in contrast to what cessationists teach. When our theology contradicts what the Scripture teach, we should not wonder why we do not get the results that scripture promises.

Upon reading this, and without any prejudicial interpretation by “scholars,” we would assume that Jesus’ words were not limited to those who were with Him at the time, but His words were recorded for the benefit of all disciples throughout all ages. A general, unprejudiced reading would also assume that the works referred to here is in

reference to miracles. Nevertheless, cesaationist teachers dispute both of these otherwise clear understandings.

Though they may dispute this truth, history is not on their side. Saint Ambrose, who lived from 339 to 397 AD which is over 300 years after the original apostles, wrote a book refuting the followers of a priest named Novatius. These followers were basically a cult which emphasized a legalistic practice for those who fell into sin. Pointing out a basic hypocrisy in the Novation doctrine, Ambrose writes:

It is the will of the Lord that His disciples should possess great powers; it is His will that the same things which He did when on earth should be done in His Name by His servants. For He said: *You shall do greater things than these.*<sup>4</sup>

Ambrose follows this up with quotations from Mark 16:17-18 and other passages. Ambrose believed that the promise in John 14:12 was applicable to the Lord's servants in his day.

### **Church Father Chrysostom and John 14:12**

The church father Chrysostom who lived from 345 to 407 AD is said to make reference to John 14:12 in referring to miracles during his time. In his book, *Divine Healing of the Body*, the late Baptist minister J. Sidlow Baxter writes, "In his *Libra Contra Gentiles* he [Chrysostom] comments on our Lord's words in John 14:12."<sup>5</sup> Baxter says that "Chrysostom refers to the miracles recorded in the Acts of the Apostles as fulfilling that promise spoken by the Lord."<sup>6</sup> Afterwards, Baxter quotes Chrysostom extensively comparing the promise in John 14:12 to the miracles occurring in his own time:

But if anyone should assert that those were mere smoke and a fictitious wonder unworthy of credit, *let us view those of the present day*, which are calculated both to stop and put to shame the blaspheming mouth, and to check the unbridled tongue. For throughout our whole common habitable world there is not a country or a nation or a city where these wonders are not commonly spoken of, which, if figments, would never have occasioned so much admiration.<sup>7</sup>

Chrysostom saw miracles during his time and believed that John 14:12 affirmed them. Chrysostom did not limit the validity of John 14:12 to the apostles of a bygone era, nor did he deny the relevancy of the promise in his day. Therefore, at least one church

father seems to disagree with the idea that the “greater works” promised by Jesus was meant only for that time and only for those apostles that were present.

### **Martin Luther and John 14:12**

Martin Luther can sometimes be a complicated person in which to draw consistent ideas from. For example, when we read some of Luther’s early writings it would seem that he was a cessationist. However, we must keep in mind that reformers such as Luther were often challenged by the Roman Catholic Church to produce miracles in order to affirm their teachings. It seemed easier to take refuge under the umbrella of cessationism.

But as Jeff Doles points out in his excellent book on the manifestations of the Spirit in history, Luther not only appeared to reject the teaching of cessationism, but spoke out against it. In one of his sermons, Luther makes this remark concerning John 14:12:

Therefore, we must allow these words to remain and not gloss them away, as some have done who said that these signs were manifestations of the Spirit in the beginning of the Christian era and that now they have ceased. That is not right; for the same power is in the church still. And though it is not exercised, that does not matter; we still have the power to do such signs.<sup>8</sup>

Many “orthodox” cessationists look to Luther as a great man and one of the great lights in the church.<sup>9</sup> However, they seem to be unaware of the fact that Luther was no cessationist, especially later in his life. Luther explicitly believed, based on our Lord’s promise in John 14:12, that Christians can be God’s agents for bringing healing and deliverance from demons:

If there is a Christian who has faith, he shall have power to do these accompanying miracles, and they shall follow him, as Christ says in John 14.12: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do,” for a Christian has equal power with Christ, is a congregation, and sits with him in joint tenure. The Lord has given Christians power, as it is written in Mt. 10:8, also against the unclean spirits, that they might cast them out and heal every disease. Thus it is written in Ps. 91:13: “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.”<sup>10</sup>

Luther clearly believed that the authority of the believer had not ceased. Luther also believed in taking hold of God's promises to stand against disease and demons. John 14:12 was one of those that He felt undergirded this truth. These truths are severely attacked in our day by both cessationists and some who claim to be Charismatics. It would do them well to take a page from Luther's sermon since many of them count him as one of their examples of orthodoxy.

Martin Luther not only taught John 14:12 boldly, but was a practitioner. Not being one who simply taught theoretical concepts, Luther claimed the Lord's promise in John 14:12 when seeking to bring miraculous deliverance from demon possession to a young girl. In his book, *The Ministry of Healing*, A. J. Gordon writes:

But if we turn from Luther the controversialist to Luther the pastor, we find a man who believed and spoke with all the vehemence of his Saxon heart on the side of present miracles. "How often it has happened and still does," he says, "that devils have been driven out in the name of Christ, also by calling on his name and prayer that the sick have been healed?" And he suited his action to his words on this point; for when they brought him a girl saying that she was possessed with a devil, Luther laid his hand on her head, appealed to the Lord's promise: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do" (John 14:12), and then prayed to God, with the rest of the ministers of the Church, that for Christ's sake, he would cast the devil out of this girl. Perfect recovery is recorded in this instance, as well as in several others where he prayed for the sick.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike many of today's theologians who express admiration for the great reformer, Luther believed that John 14:12 was an unchangeable promise from God for miraculous intervention through prayer. Thomas Boys, who also talks about this event in his classic book on miraculous manifestations throughout history, highlights the importance of Luther's use of this particular promise in bringing deliverance to the girl:

The remarkable use made of a text of Scripture. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do." The use of such a text, on such an occasion, plainly proves that Luther, whatever technical statements he may have made, WAS NOT ENTIRELY WITHOUT BELIEF IN THE PERMANENT CHARACTER OF SUCH PROMISES, AND DID NOT REGARD THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HIS CHURCH AS ENTIRELY SET



ASIDE....To us the circumstance of Luther's quoting the above promise of our Lord, that such as believe in him shall do the works that he did, and greater, and quoting it with the possessed person before him, and indeed with his hand, as it appears, upon her head at the time, throws more light upon his views, and upon the whole character of the transaction, than any other particular that is mentioned.<sup>12</sup>

As we noted earlier, Luther did make some cessationist statements at one time in his ministry, especially when challenged by the Roman Catholic Church that he broke away from. However, many cessationists today will refer to some of his cessationist comments while ignoring the many statements made later that were anti-cessationist. They also ignore the mighty and miraculous answers to prayer that he experienced. If Luther were living and ministering in our day he would be castigated as a heretic by many that hail him as a hero of orthodoxy.

Nonetheless, we can count Luther as a man who did not limit our Lord's promise to the apostles and their time. 1500 years after the last apostle died, the promise was still being claimed, and God was honoring the faith of the man who claimed it.

### **Thomas Cartwright and John 14:12**

Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603), known as the "father of Puritanism," a movement that sought to purify the Church of England from its Roman Catholic influences, is said to have been a man committed to the Word of God. His sermons drew crowds so large that he had to open the windows of his church to allow those who were unable to get inside to hear the messages.

Thomas Boys writes about how Cartwright acknowledged that our Lord's promise of "greater works" can still be done in our day and time:

We believe that the Apostles and apostolical men did the wonders here mentioned, and in them the Church and whole company of believers together, and not every one particularly (as the daily experience doth declare) wrought these works. We know also that the Lord may and sometimes (extraordinarily) doth, work such miracles in other times, especially by their hands whose public ministry in the church he will seal and establish among men.<sup>13</sup>

Cartwright stated at least two things: One, believers other than apostles were agents of God in performing the works promised in John 14:12. Two, the miracles promised in John 14:12 were wrought in times other than those in which the apostles lived. Here we have testimony and teaching from the Reformers and Puritans—men hailed as the paragons of “orthodoxy” by cessationists—who disputed the current cessationist idea that John 14:12 was only for the apostles and only for their time.

### **Other Classic Authors on John 14:12**

Other men from the past who are respected in our time and whose books are read in our day believe that the promise in John 14:12 is a promise that goes beyond the original apostles and their dispensation. The prolific author, conference speaker, and South African pastor, **Andrew Murray** (1828-1917), believed and taught that the promise in John 14:12 was for God’s people today:

Men like Peter and Paul did much greater things than He had done. From the throne He could do through them what He Himself in His humiliation could not yet do. He could ask the Father, receiving and bestowing new power for the greater works. And what was true for the disciples is true for us. As we believe and ask in His Name, the power comes and takes possession of us also to do the greater works.<sup>14</sup>

Murray believed that what was true for the disciples is true for us. We simply need to exercise our faith by asking the Lord to fulfill this promise in our lives. It is sad that so many Christians in our day have been robbed of this power. How evangelism has been weakened because it had “methods” but no miracle power backing it.

Another well known classic author, **E. M. Bounds** (1835-1913), was a Methodist pastor and author of numerous books on prayer. Bounds’ books are still in print and are widely read today. Concerning the promise in John 14:12, Bounds wrote the following:

That which has been done in spiritual matters can be done again, and be better done. This was Christ’s view. He said “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” The past has not exhausted the possibilities nor the demands for doing great things for God. The Church that is

dependent on its past history for its miracles of power and grace is a fallen Church.<sup>15</sup>

Bounds words are a solemn rebuke to cessationists. Cessationists are often willing to defend the literal miracles of the Bible and point to the great things God wrought through the men of those times. Sadly it stops there. Bounds taught that the church that depends on past history for miracles and grace is fallen. Cessationism is a doctrine of defeat. It must relegate to past generations promises of God that should be claimed by believers today.

A great Baptist pastor and prolific author, **F. B. Meyer** (1847-1929), has written a number of commentaries and other books that helps the believer apply the truths of Scripture to their lives. In his commentary on the gospel of John, Meyer writes the following in reference to John 14:12:

Indeed, it was necessary in the present case that the marvelous announcement of the text should receive unusual confirmation, because of its wide extent. If our Lord had ascribed this power of doing greater works than He achieved in his earthly life, to apostle, prophet, or illustrious saint, we should have required no special assurance of its deliberate truth; but to learn that anyone who believes may outdo the miracles on the outskirts of Nain and at the tomb of Bethany, is as startling as it is comforting. There is no reason why the humblest soul that ponders this page should not become the medium and vehicle through which the Christ of the glory shall not surpass the Christ of Galilee, Jerusalem, and Judea.<sup>16</sup>

Meyer did not believe that the “greater works” were limited to the apostles. He taught that faith will allow us to become channels of Christ’s power and do those greater works that our Lord promised. In another commentary on specific verses of the Bible, Meyer wrote:

FAITH IN JESUS WILL MAKE OUR LIVES THE CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH HE CAN WORK. “He that believeth on me, the works,” etc. (vers. 12-14). The Gospels are included in the one clause; the Acts and all the marvels of the following ages in the other. Jesus is always the worker; and the man who yields himself most utterly to Him in obedience and faith, will become the channel through which He will work most mightily.<sup>17</sup>

Meyer clearly did not endorse a cessationist philosophy concerning the Lord's promise. A faith-filled person yielding to God can be the vessel and channel by which the Lord works through.

Sometimes cessationists are perplexed by John 14:12 because they find it difficult to believe that any mere man could exceed the greatness of the Lord's miracles. Meyer reminds us that it is the Lord working through the channels of His power (Mark 16:20). Therefore, it is the Christ of glory doing greater works through us. Believers should not be afraid to be the mediums and vehicles through which Christ can perform supernatural miracles of divine healing, deliverance, prophesy and other miraculous works.

### **R. A. Torrey's Rebuke of Orthodoxy in His Day**

R. A. Torrey (1856-1928) was a pastor, author, and evangelist. He was a close friend of the great evangelist and soul-winner, D. L. Moody. While commenting on the promise in John 14:12, R. A. Torrey has some strong words and warnings for those who claim to be "orthodox" in their theology:

The promise then is made, first of all, *to those who believe upon Jesus Christ*. Notice that it is not made to those who believe *about* Jesus Christ, but those who believe *on* Jesus Christ. People are constantly confusing in their own minds two entirely different things, believing about Jesus Christ and believing on Jesus Christ. God does not promise to answer the prayers of those who merely believe *about* Jesus Christ even though their faith is perfectly and rigidly orthodox. He does promise to answer the prayers of those who believe *on* Jesus Christ. A person may believe perfectly correctly *about* Jesus Christ, and yet not believe on Him at all. The devil himself believes *about* Jesus Christ, and is doubtless perfectly orthodox; he knows more about Jesus Christ as He really is than we do, but the devil certainly does not believe *on* Jesus Christ. There are many today who, because their view of Jesus Christ is perfectly orthodox, imagine that they believe on Jesus Christ. But that does not follow at all.<sup>18</sup>

Many of the cessationists (and some self-proclaimed non-cessationists) attempt to paint their opponents as "unorthodox." It seems that some have made "orthodoxy" into an idol. Torrey's words should be sobering as it shows that most theology that falls under the guise of orthodoxy is often powerless. While believing information about the Lord Jesus Christ, orthodoxy often has nothing to turn that

information into a practical experience. Orthodoxy makes excuses for lack of answers to prayer and disparages the miraculous for our day. They often do this by offering interpretations of John 14:12 that enforce the powerlessness of their positions.

While we should not reject orthodoxy altogether (if orthodoxy means affirming the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, and other essentials of the faith) we should be careful not to buy into their powerless positions for fear of being labeled a heretic. One should concern themselves with those things that please the Lord. Active faith in God's promises is what pleases Him and not merely acceptance of orthodox principles with no faith to walk in His power (Heb. 11:6).

### **Conclusion**

In the next chapter we will examine another cessationist argument for John 14:12. We will demonstrate from Scripture how this argument fails to line up with the truth of God's holy Word.

## Chapter Eight

# Believers and the Greater Works than Jesus (Part Two)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father (John 14:12).

In the last chapter we examined the cessationist's idea that the miraculous works in the above passage were limited to the apostles and their time. Scripture and church history demonstrated that the cessationist interpretation is found wanting. In this chapter we will examine another cessationist interpretation, which is the belief that Jesus is not speaking about *miracles* in John 14:12.

The second interpretation is the belief that when Jesus was making reference to "greater works" that He was not speaking about miracles or anything supernatural, but He was talking about our works of feeding the poor, visiting the sick and imprisoned, helping orphans and widows, etc. Cessationists say that these are the "greater works" that Jesus is speaking about. Cessationists reinterpret our Lord's plain words to mean "spiritual works" rather than actual tangible miracles.

A. C. Gaebelien, a minister who has written a number of books and commentaries that are still widely read, advocates a belief that, not only was the passage meant strictly for the apostles, but the only application that passage has for us today is primarily *spiritual*:

Christian Scientists and extreme faith-healers claim that He meant His actual works of healing and Christians should do now the same works and even greater works. But how could a believer do a greater work than the raising of Lazarus from the dead? The promise "the works that I do shall he do also" was fulfilled immediately after the day of Pentecost. The sick were healed by Peter's shadow, the lame man was healed, demons were driven out, and the dead were raised. "Were these miracles to continue to the end of the dispensation? There is nowhere a statement in Scripture that this should be the case. "If miracles were continually in the church, they would cease to be miracles. We never see them in the Bible except at some great crisis in the church's history. The

“greater works” are spiritual works. The thousands saved in the beginning of the dispensation, the preaching of the Gospel far hence among the Gentiles and the gracious results, are these greater works.<sup>1</sup>

Gaebelein applies a faulty dispensationalist hermeneutic to the text. However, he is not alone in his denial that “works” in this passage is a reference to the miraculous. Well known cessationist John MacArthur is also a proponent of this view. In his book, *Charismatic Chaos*, MacArthur writes:

“Greater works” does not mean more spectacular miracles; nothing in the context of John 14 speaks of supernatural signs and wonders. What is a greater work than raising the dead? John 5:20-21 indicates it is the giving of spiritual life to sinners.<sup>2</sup>

I believe that the average normal reader of Scripture would not hesitate to consider the “greater works” that Jesus refers to as “miracles.” It takes scholastic theology to convolute this idea and lead one to believe that it means something other than the interpretation that comes naturally. Therefore, we will examine other portions of Scripture to see if the interpretation offered by these men is consistent with the Bible as a whole.

### **Is “Works” In John 14:12 a Reference to Miracles?**

Not all cessationists would agree with Gaebelein and MacArthur. Though he denies that John 14:12 belongs to all of the followers of Christ, Albert Barnes does affirm that the passage is in reference to miracles when he writes, “The works that I do - The miracles of healing the sick, raising the dead, etc.”<sup>3</sup> This is a truth that can be very easily proven when we examine what other biblical passages say about “works.” We’ll begin with the gospel of John since the passage under dispute is from this very gospel.

When we read the context of the passage that MacArthur references to dispute that God’s “greater works” are miracles, we actually find that Jesus was making reference to the miraculous healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda:

The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, *which had made him whole*. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had

done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him **greater works** than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. (John 5:15-21)

As we look at the context of this passage, there is no denying that the miraculous healing was considered by Jesus to be one of the “works” that God performed through Him. It is a stretch to say that John 5 and John 14 make no reference to miracles when these passages speak about the Lord’s *works*. The context in both of them is clear that Jesus is speaking about the performing of miracles.

However, if this is not convincing enough, then an even clearer case is found in the ninth chapter of John’s gospel in Jesus refers to his healing of a blind man as one of His “works:”

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: **but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.** I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam,(which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his



way therefore, and washed, and came seeing (John 9:1-7).

It is clear from this passage of Scripture that the “works” that Jesus makes reference to is the healing of the blind man. While some have made very weak arguments for denying the miraculous in John 14:12 and John 5:20, the context in John 9 is too clearly stated to promote such a fallacy. Jesus leaves us with no doubt that the healing of the blind man as one of those *works*.

### **The “Works” of Jesus In Mark’s Gospel**

John is not the only one who used the word “works” and miracles” synonymously and interchangeably. In Mark chapter six, we also find a direct reference to the Lord’s miracles as one of His “works:”

And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them. And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore **mighty works** do shew forth themselves in him (Mark 6:12-14).

In this passage, Herod makes a direct link between Jesus, His disciples, and the miracles wrought through them and His mighty works. Here we find that the Bible understands “miracles” and “works” as synonymous terms. In John 14:12, Jesus promises His followers that the one who believes on Him will be able to do these *works*. These works are being done by many in our day and age in spite of the denials by some Evangelical leaders.

If Scripture is allowed to be its own commentary then it is clear that “works” in John 14:12 is a clear reference to miracles and that it is a lack of faith in what the passage is clearly saying that prevents cessationist theologians from experiencing God’s miraculous power. Several verses later in Mark 6, we learn that it is *unbelief* that keeps us from seeing miraculous works:

And he could there do no **mighty work**, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching (Mark 6:5, 6).

Notice again the reference to “works” has everything to do with miracles rather than non-supernatural acts. We can see this from its connection to the few sick people that were miraculously healed. This provides more Biblical proof that the cessationist understanding of John 14:12 and its reference to works is faulty at best, and downright *false* at worse.

Jesus was able to do a few things in His home village, but He was only able to do the bare minimum. He could only heal a few sick folk. He was not able to do “mighty works,” not because the time for Him to do miracles was over, nor was it due to a sovereign act of God prohibiting Him, but because of the unbelief of the people present.

### **The “Works” of Jesus In Matthew’s Gospel**

In Matthew’s gospel, we find John the Baptist in prison. He is beginning to doubt that Jesus is the Messiah that he had been proclaiming, in spite of the fact that he had heard about the works of Jesus. The Lord tells John the Baptist’s disciples to go back and tell him about these works:

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. (Matt. 11:2-6)

The healing of the sick and the raising of the dead along with the preaching of the gospel are connected to the “works” which our Lord had done. In an earlier chapter, the Lord speaks about those who are not being obedient to Him, even though they are performing miracles. He says:

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast

out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matt. 7:22, 23)

The “wonderful works” in this passage is connected to prophesying and casting out devils. Here we see that not everyone who works miracles in the Name of Jesus is an obedient servant and neither will they all make it into the kingdom. Therefore, we are not to be fascinated and overwhelmed by miracle workers. We must judge men by their fruits and not the great miracles that they are able to perform. Nevertheless, if men whose characters are less than what Christ desires can perform actual miracles in Jesus’ Name then how much more His true and sincere disciples? We learn from this passage that miracles of prophesy and deliverance are synonymous with “works.”

### **The “Works” of Jesus In Luke’s Gospel**

In Luke’s gospel, the Lord rebukes a number of cities in which He had ministered to due to their lack of repentance:

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the **mighty works** had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me. (Luke 10:13-16; see also Matt. 11:20-24)

The Lord is telling these cities that there is no excuse for their failure to repent because of the mighty works that had been done in them. He goes on to say that if other cities which had been destroyed such as Sodom had had the same mighty works done in them, they would still be standing in His day. What are the mighty works that Jesus did in these cities that leave them without excuse? When we read the commission of the Lord to His disciples in the verses preceding the ones above, we see that they are connected to miraculous works:

And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: **And heal the sick that are therein**, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. (Luke 10:8-12)

We know that healing the sick is a miraculous work. Jesus connects the healing of the sick that He commanded His disciples to do to the works He had done in these various cities. The *mighty works* that Jesus had done are obviously miracles. Examining this Biblical evidence we must conclude that the “greater works” that Jesus is referring to in John 14:12 are miracles as well.

### **The Context of John 14:12**

In spite of this overwhelming Biblical evidence, MacArthur claims that “nothing in the *context* of John 14 speaks of supernatural signs and wonders.”<sup>4</sup> (*italics are mine*) Even so, as we saw in the last chapter, Luther claimed this promise in *prayer* and received miraculous results. Along with Martin Luther, we would dispute MacArthur’s claim based on the fact that Jesus immediately refers to *prayer* in this passage. Let us examine John 14:12 and compare it to Matthew 21 so that we can see the connection that miracles has to prayer:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it (John 14:12-14)

Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, **ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree**, but also if ye

shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive (Matt. 21:21, 22)

Notice that in Matthew 21, Jesus connects believing prayer with the working of miracles. If He is connecting prayer and miracles together in Matthew's account, then why would we assume that He means something absolutely different in John's gospel?

Both passages speak about the fact that believers can do exactly what Jesus did. Yet cessationists like MacArthur will so easily claim that the Lord was not speaking about anything supernatural in John 14. Even so, prayer itself assumes that God will intervene if it is expecting an actual answer and if we are expecting God to actually change something that he would not otherwise do apart from it. This seems to be exactly what the Lord is saying about the power of prayer in the passages above. Most of us would normally classify such events as "miracles."

Nevertheless, MacArthur disputes this idea. Rather than recognizing genuine answers to prayer as miracles, he prefers to use superficial intellectual religious terms like "acts of providence:"

We often call such events miracles, but they are more properly termed acts of providence. They reveal God's working in our daily lives and often come as answers to prayer, but they are not the kind of supernatural signs and wonders Scripture classifies as miracles (cf. Acts 2:22).<sup>5</sup>

The problem with this perspective is that the word "providence" is never used in the Bible in connection to answered prayer (actually, with the exception of Acts 24:2, the word is never used in Scripture at all). The Bible, on the other hand, often connects miracles to answered prayer. MacArthur's desire to replace miraculous answers to prayer with "providence" lacks Biblical merit.

This is an easy step to take when one disconnects the idea that "works" in John 14:12 are non-miraculous. Therefore, the connection that Jesus made to prayer would also infer that the "anything" we ask in His Name would have to be "anything that is not miraculous." We simply accept any answers we might receive as "acts of providence." Nonetheless, I do not see how cessationists such as MacArthur can escape the connection of the miraculous to prayer in Matthew 21.

There is no doubt that God occasionally answers the prayers of His children who deny the miraculous gifts of the Spirit are for today. However, their unbelief limits what He could do in their lives. God says, “*According to your faith be it unto you*” (Matt. 9:29). If MacArthur wants to limit the answers to prayer to receiving money when needed, a parking space at the mall, a mother saving her child from electrocuting itself, or remembering a friend at just the right time to encourage the person,<sup>6</sup> then this is the extent of what he and those who adhere to his viewpoint will receive.

In contrast, Rice, who is also a critic of the Charismatic movement, contends with cessationists like MacArthur. In his book critiquing the movement Rice writes concerning John 14:12:

One who would say that God has no miracles for today, no wondrous answers to prayer, no signs and wonders to back up the gospel, is really taking away from us all the heart of New Testament Christianity and all of the sweet promises of God. No, we must believe that the Christian religion is still a miracle religion and that God wants to answer prayer miraculously by divine intervention in the affairs of men.<sup>7</sup>

Please keep in mind that Rice was not a Charismatic. We are quoting from a book in which Rice is very critical of Charismatics and we take issue with many of his criticisms. However, we naturally agree with Rice where he boldly chastises his fellow non-Charismatics when they pursue a course of watering down John 14:12 and disparage any belief that God works in supernatural ways today, especially in answer to prayer.

### **Classic Writers on John 14 and Prayer**

Once we reconnect the greater works that Jesus promised would be done because of our faith and the unlimited promise of answered prayer in His Name, we find that the miraculous is available to every child of God who knows how to pray and receive answers to prayer.

Many of the great writers and teachers of prayer from the past understood our Lord’s promise in John 14 to be a promise of powerful results in prayer. They felt that the lack of believing prayer is the reason for the lack of fulfillment of our Lord’s promise in John 14:12. **Martin Luther**, who we noted in our last chapter often claimed John 14:12 when working miracles, wrote the following:

But what shall we think of this, that he says this not only of the apostles, but of all those who believe on him? What kind of works may these be, which shall be greater than those of Christ...Christians also have prayer [v. 131], whereby they obtain from God all that they ask for themselves and others.<sup>8</sup>

Martin Luther connected the promise of God for miracles to our praying. This promise of miracles can be appropriated through prayer. **Andrew Murray** taught that the lack of power to do what Christ had done was due to our lack of praying:

Alas! There is little or nothing to be seen of the power to do anything like Christ's works, not to mention anything greater. There can only be one reason: the belief in Him and the believing prayer in His Name are absent. Every child of God must learn this lesson. Prayer in the Name of Jesus is the only way to share in the mighty power which Jesus has received from the Father for His people. It is in this power alone that the believer can do the greater works.<sup>9</sup>

Murray believed that we can share in God's power by our communion with Him through prayer. He believed that this was a lesson for every child of God. Cessationism devalues prayer and makes the promises of God concerning it meaningless. Since prayer is done in the Name of Jesus, cessationism, as we noted in chapter four, implies that the Name of the Lord does not wield the power and authority that it once did. Prayer should be able to tap into the omnipotent power of God based on what Jesus said in John 14:12-14.

The late great Methodist minister, **E. M. Bounds**, believed that a simple matter of faith and active praying allowed us to share in Christ's "enthroned power" on the basis of praying in His Name:

Among the large and luminous utterances of Jesus concerning prayer, none is more arresting than this: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it." How wonderful are these statements of what God will do in answer to prayer! Of how great importance these ringing words, prefaced, as they are, with the most solemn verity! Faith in Christ is the basis of all working, and of all

praying. All wonderful works depend on wonderful praying, and all praying is done in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amazing lesson, of wondrous simplicity, is this praying in the name of the Lord Jesus! All other conditions are depreciated, everything else is renounced, save Jesus only. The name of Christ -- the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ -- must be supremely sovereign, in the hour and article of prayer.<sup>10</sup>

Who of us, in our praying, measures up to this promise of our Lord: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to My Father." How comprehensive, how far reaching, how all-embracing! How much is here, for the glory of God, how much for the good of man! How much for the manifestation of Christ's enthroned power, how much for the reward of abundant faith! And how great and gracious are the results which can be made to accrue from the exercise of commensurate, believing prayer!<sup>11</sup>

Does the reader not find it more encouraging and more exciting to pray if he or she knows that genuine supernatural God-wrought miracles are the result? Apart from the knowledge that miracles can happen when we pray, prayer can be drudgery and when it is done it becomes no more than just another religious ritual with no life. When we know that we can pray in a way that will allow God to intervene in ways unimaginable and to work great things through our lives then many are more ready to take on the task of interceding for others as well as seeking God to change difficult and seemingly hopeless situations in our personal lives.

Prayer can heal the sick. It can raise the dead. It can cast out devils. It can open the pathway for God to speak to His people through words of knowledge, words of wisdom, prophecy, and tongues and interpretations. It can change the course of nature and bring provision in places that could not receive apart from divine intervention. It has the power to move mountains and open seas if these are necessary. Prayer moves the omnipotent God to work miracles on behalf of ourselves and those we pray for. But faith is necessary. Apart from it, God is displeased. Cessationism kills miracle-producing faith.



## Chapter Nine

# Cessationism and the Effectiveness of Prayer

It is reasonable that those who deny the possibility of prayer always deny the existence of the miraculous. What is a miracle? The word simply means something which surprises, something for which we cannot account. Now, the only reason why men deny the possibility of prayer is that they deny the possibility of things which they cannot understand. That is the meaning of everything which we call supernatural. –G. Campbell Morgan<sup>1</sup>

God wants us to pray and wants us to expect answers to our prayers. This is why He has provided us with numerous promises in which He pledges to answer prayer with the very thing asked for when we meet His conditions. God gives us such promises so that we can have our faith strengthened and so that we can see the visible results of them in our lives. By this, God is glorified (John 15:7, 8).

When cessationists deny the miraculous for our day this too often leads to the diminishing of plain Biblical promises concerning the efficacy of prayer and what it is able to accomplish. One example is found in a magazine published some years ago:

As, however, former times abounded in miracles, belief in prayer was natural and reasonable. To-day there are no miracles, unless indeed the word is used in a quibbling sense. Prayer answered by miracles may once have been part of God's plan in human affairs. But, miracles having ceased, the conclusion is reasonable that the plan has been changed.<sup>2</sup>

Another example is found in a classic commentary. In his commentary, *The Four-Fold Gospel*, John William McGarvey gave these comments on Mark 11:22-24:

Jesus here lays down the broad general rule in the application of which we must be guided by other Scriptures. The rule is, indeed, liberal and gracious, and the limitations are just and reasonable.

We must not expect to obtain that which it is unlawful for us to desire (Jas. iv. 2, 3), or which it is unwise for us to seek (II. Cor. xii. 7–9), nor must we selfishly run counter to the will of God (Luke xxii. 42; I. John v. 14, 15), nor must we expect that God shall perform a miracle for us, for miracles have ceased—in short, we must pray to God in full remembrance of the relationship between us, we must consider that he is the Ruler and we his subjects, and are not to think for one moment that by faith we can alter this eternal, unchangeable relation.<sup>3</sup>

In his book on prayer titled, *Getting Things from God*, Dr. Charles Blanchard, who was the second president of Wheaton Bible College, writes, “The man who doubts the possibilities of miracles is, as I have said before, simply an atheist.”<sup>4</sup> I agree with Dr. Blanchard. It is not that cessationists deny the existence of God, but that they seem to have a God who no longer manifests Himself.

We cannot simply have an intellectual reception of God's existence in order to pray effectively, but we must believe that He is everything that He says he is. The inspired author of Hebrews wrote, “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Heb 11:6). The word for “Rewarder” in this passage comes from the Greek word *misthapodotes*. It is a compound word in which the reader understands that it is God's nature to give a visible, tangible blessing as the result of our bringing a petition before Him, be it healing, deliverance, provision, etc. *Rewarder* is one of God's names and is just as much a part of His nature as His other covenant names such as Jehovah-Rophe (Healer), Jehovah-Jireh (Provider), etc. In other words, God works miracles in answer to prayer because this is consistent with his nature. Many of God's people do not experience these things, not because God is withholding them, but because they fail to “*cometh to God [and] believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*” As Blanchard notes:

God has in His heart not some of these people but every one of them and that He has at His command in the way of physical well-being, spiritual help, material resources, all and more than they require, yet there are these tens of millions, hundreds of millions, many of them in Christian lands, who do not know how to go to Him for the things which they need.<sup>5</sup>

I believe that cessationist teaching on prayer, the kind that denies the miraculous for God's people, is one of the major blames for this spiritual and physical poverty. After reading what some cessationists have to say on the subject of prayer, I am still unsure as to whether the doctrine of cessationism has led to their unbiblical teaching on prayer or unbiblical teaching on prayer has led to the faulty doctrine of cessationism. Most cessationists do not believe that prayer is guaranteed to bring about any circumstantial changes in spite of numerous promises in Scripture stating otherwise.

### **Cessationistic Theology of Prayer**

This does not mean that cessationists do not believe in prayer. Many of them certainly do. They simply believe that prayer has primarily what they call a *subjective value*. This means that prayer is primarily meant to change *me* and make *me* better. While there is some truth to this, to place emphasis on this alone as if it is the only true purpose for praying, then prayer becomes powerless for effecting change in circumstances. Yet, throughout Scripture we find the teaching that prayer has power to change *all things*. Those who emphasize the *subjective value* of prayer either ignore or seldom mention prayer's *objective value*, which is that prayer can be utilized by God to do things that He otherwise would not have done.

You find this type of thinking in such "spiritual" sounding statements as David Willis's often quoted phrase, "Prayer does not change things. Prayer changes people who change things."<sup>6</sup> This powerless anti-miraculous understanding of prayer that brings no supernatural visible results is also the foundation of Hank Hanegraaff's refutation of a popular book on prayer. In his book, *The Prayer of Jesus*, Hanegraaff writes:

For Christians, prayer should be its own reward. Prayer is not a magic formula to get things from God. Communing with God in prayer is itself the prize....The tragedy of contemporary Christianity is that we measure the success of our prayer life by the size of the accomplishments, rather than the strength of our relationships with God. All too often we are fixated on our outwardness, while God is focused on our inwardness.<sup>7</sup>

I would agree with Mr. Hanegraaff that prayer is not a *magic formula to get things from God*, but it most certainly is the *means by which we obtain things from Him*. These are verified by the words of

Jesus Himself, the person whose prayer Mr. Hanegraaff claims to be expounding upon:

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven *give good things to them that ask him?* (Matt. 7:11)

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching *any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them* of my Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 18:19)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* (John 14:12-14)

Jesus Himself teaches us that we can actually get “things” from Him as a result of prayer. I am not belittling the truth concerning prayers positive effect on us spiritually, but to degrade the Bible’s teaching on prayer’s ability to bring about tangible results is erroneous. Over a century ago, in his book (ironically) titled *Getting Things from God*, Dr. Charles Blanchard repudiated the type of ideas put forth by those who put an emphasis on prayer’s subjective value at the exclusion of its objective value:

Men, who in our time teach that God is in some way hampered by the regulations which He has made so that it is difficult or impossible for Him to answer prayer, nevertheless hold that prayer may be useful—that it puts men in a better state....in other words, that it is valuable to the person as an exercise, though it has no effect upon the action of God. That prayer does have a reaction on the human spirit is unquestionably true, but men are not so constituted that they take either spiritual, intellectual or physical exercise regularly and through long periods of time without the expectation of some practical results. In other words, men wish to bring things to pass. They wish to see results. If they ask men for favors, they hope to obtain them, and if they ask for pardon or peace, or purity, or power, or health, or life, or money, or friends,

or anything else from God, they hope to obtain it and if they become satisfied that their prayers do not result in obtaining the things which they seek, they will cease praying.<sup>8</sup>

Blanchard goes on to write, “Now, God answers prayer because He is interested in us, just as He made us. How pitiful, how absurd it would be if God should make men so that they need bread and water, and then provide for them nothing but air and the influence of His Holy Spirit.”<sup>9</sup> Blanchard is not alone in these thoughts. Refuting the idea that prayer is meant only to change us (and not circumstances, etc.), John W. Goodwin, who was a minister with the Church of the Nazarene, wrote the following:

It has been said that prayer changes us, and not things. Truly prayer changes us and builds and strengthens the soul on its most holy faith, but prayer changes attitudes and relationships, therefore it changes things. It gives God a chance to do what He otherwise could not do without our full co-operation with His plans. Prayer does not dominate and control God and make Him do what He would not like to do, or dictate terms to God. Prayer brings us in harmony with God so He can do what He wills and longs to do for us and others.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that men, who were never a part of the Charismatic or Pentecostal traditions, accept the fact that prayer itself can bring changes. We will demonstrate this from Scripture. But first, we need to look at the fact that our Lord Himself left us an example of how praying for the miraculous brings tangible results.

### **Jesus and the Miraculous through Prayer**

Jesus told His disciples that their failure to work a miracle in one case was due to a lack of praying (Matt. 17:19-21). Our Lord always practiced what He preached. There were times that Jesus asserted the authority given to Him by His Father as he later commands us to do, but there were also times that Jesus Himself depended on prayer to bring about miraculous results. The first of these miraculous incidents is when Jesus prayed and afterwards the Heavens opened, the Spirit of God descended upon Him, and the voice of the Heavenly Father spoke concerning Him (Luke 3:21-22).

Once, Jesus fed five thousand men (not to include the women and children that were present) with five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish. Before distributing this meal, He gave thanks,

demonstrating His complete dependence on the Father to bring about this miracle through Him (Matt. 14:14-21; John 6:9-14). Not too long after this miracle, Jesus sent His disciples away and went alone to pray. After spending time with His father in prayer, He decided to catch up to His disciples by walking on the water, even while seas were boisterous (Matthew 14:22-25).

In one more example, we find that Jesus prayed to His Father before raising Lazarus from the dead. He connected this miracle to the fact that His Father hears Him:

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. (John 11:41-44)

Jesus did not raise Lazarus from the dead simply because He is God (though indeed He is). Men raised others from the dead *before* Jesus (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:17-37). Men raised others from the dead after Jesus ascended (Acts 9:36-42; 20:7-12). Jesus worked miracles through *prayer* and it is by *prayer* that we will do the same.

The Lord connected the miracle of raising the dead to the fact that His Father “always hears Him.” John would later write, “*And if we know that he **hear us**, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him*” (1 John 5:15). If God hears, He actually answers with the very thing requested. Our concern should be when He does *not* hear us, because if He refuses to hear us, then we can expect nothing (Isa. 59:1, 2).

However, if God hears prayer then He will answer, even when the answer requires a supernatural working on His part. If God’s children believe in miracles then they should not be afraid to pray and expect great things from God (Jer. 33:3). If we are following the example that the Lord Jesus set for us then we will pray with great expectations. Too many of God’s people want to pray weak,

insignificant prayers, believing that such pleases God. Yet, Scripture proves that this is far from true.

### **Is It True Humility to Refrain from Praying for Miracles?**

Many of our friends who belittle the idea of asking God for signs and wonders might want to take a lesson from Ahaz. Ahaz was invited by God to ask for a sign, but thought that he should be “pious and humble” and refuse the invitation:

Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isa. 7:10-14)

I am sure that, like those who believe that prayer is limited to “changing the praying one,” demonstrate the same attitude that Ahaz did when he said, “*I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.*” Ahaz may have thought that he was being humble in refusing God’s invitation, but on the contrary, he was being disobedient. This caused God to lose patience with him.

Notice Isaiah’s response to Ahaz: “*Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?*” The Message paraphrases this passage with more clarity:

So Isaiah told him, "Then listen to this, government of David! It's bad enough that you make people tired with your pious, timid hypocrisies, but now you're making God tired. (The Message)

Many of God’s people are the same way today and do not realize how much they are irritating God with their “piety.” God has made thousands of promises that require His supernatural intervention and require Him to make changes even in nature itself upon our asking. When we refuse to take Him at His Word, He does not call that *humility*; He calls it *unbelief*.

## No Scriptural Precedence for Seeking Bible Promises?

In spite of all of the Biblical evidence presented so far, cessationists claim that there is no precedence for seeking miraculous manifestations. John MacArthur, in his book, *Charismatic Chaos*, claims that the Bible does not teach that miracles are for today and that there is no Biblical basis for seeking them:

Nothing in Scripture indicates that the miracles of the apostolic age were meant to be continuous in subsequent ages. Nor does the Bible exhort believers to seek any miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

MacArthur repeats this statement in his book. He writes, “There is no command in the New Testament to seek miracles.”<sup>12</sup>

These are very bold statements, statements that clearly contradict the Bible itself. For example, we are told in Scripture, “*But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*” (1 Cor. 12:31) Two chapters later we are told, “*Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*” (1 Cor. 14:1). The Analytical-Literal Translation renders the latter passage this way: “*Be pursuing love, yet **be seeking earnestly the spiritual [gifts]**, but rather that you\* shall be prophesying.*”

If we are told to “covet” and “desire” spiritual gifts then why would MacArthur make the claim that the Bible does not “...exhort believers to seek any miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit.” Are we reading the same Bible?

Furthermore, Jesus told His listeners to ask for the Holy Spirit:

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:9-13)



The reception of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by miracles, *“He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”* (Gal. 3:5; see also Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38) MacArthur would limit the Holy Spirit’s role to five commands that supposedly have nothing to do with miracles.<sup>13</sup> One of the passages he quotes to make this case is from Galatians 5:25. Can MacArthur conclude that Galatians 5:25 is valid for the Christian today but Galatians 3:5 is not? Nevertheless, we are taught to seek for the Holy Spirit and we are taught that the reception of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by miracles.

MacArthur continues to stand on shaky ground, Biblically speaking, as we explore the Scriptures even further on this subject. The same Greek word for seek (*zeteo*) used in Luke 11:9-10 is the same Greek word use in 1 Corinthians 14:12 where Paul exhorts the Corinthians when he writes, *“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.”* Here, Paul is telling the church to seek the spiritual gifts that would enable them to build up the church. Some other English translations give more clarity to this:

It is the same with you. Since you want spiritual gifts very much, seek most of all to have the gifts that help the church grow stronger (New Century Version)

Therefore, seeing that you are ambitious for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in them so as to benefit the Church (Weymouth New Testament)

Therefore, seeing that you are ambitious for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in them so as to benefit the Church (Wesley's New Testament)

Thus also, as for yourselves, since you are those who are most eagerly desirous of spirit [spiritual powers], be desiring them in order that you may abound in them in view to building up the local assembly (The New Testament: An Expanded Translation)

We are told in Scripture, “*let God be true, but every man a liar*” (Rom. 3:4). If a teaching or a statement contradicts Scripture then it is false and a lie. Either God is a God of integrity and faithfulness who is true to His Word or the cessationists are correct in their teaching. It certainly cannot be both. For Pastor MacArthur to assert that the Bible never exhorts the believer to seek any miraculous manifestations of the Spirit when Scripture clearly teaches otherwise is to certainly contradict what God has plainly stated in His Word.

I do not wish to be harsh here. I don’t doubt that MacArthur is a God-fearing Christian, but I believe he is blinded by theological prejudice and it allows him to ignore what the Bible actually teaches.

### **Prayer and Faith Brings Miracles**

In contrast to the teachings of MacArthur and other cessationists, the Bible makes clear promises concerning the fact that God is willing to perform miracles on our behalf in answer to prayer. It also provides clear examples that we may follow. This is not simply the belief of Charismatic theologians, but other Evangelicals outside of the Charismatic tradition believe this to be true.

The late Baptist preacher, John R. Rice, wrote a critique against the Charismatic movement. It should be no surprise to the reader that as a tongues speaking Charismatic, I would have strong disagreements with Dr. Rice’s book just as I do with MacArthur’s. In spite of my disagreement with Rice on tongues and healing, I commend Dr. Rice for the fact that he did believe that the miraculous was for today. Dr. Rice taught that God’s people have access to His miracle-working power through prayer:

Every time God answers a prayer and brings about something that would not have occurred had we not appealed to God—that means a divine intervention, a controlling of the forces of nature so that is not ordinary but extraordinary, not natural but supernatural. It is a miracle for God to intervene in the affairs of men even to answer prayer. The Christian religion is a miracle religion. Oh how sad is the state of those who leave out a miracle-working God from Christianity today.<sup>14</sup>

Keep in mind that Dr. Rice is a critic of the Charismatic movement, though, unlike its cessationist critics, Dr. Rice obviously does not deny that God’s people can receive miracles in answer to prayer. This means that cessationists advocate a position that is not

necessarily endorsed by some of their fellow critics of the Charismatic movement. Even in modern times, systematic theologians such as Donald Bloesch believe that God works miracles in response to prayer:

“God’s ultimate purposes, are unchangeable ... his immediate will is flexible and open to change through the prayers of his people.”  
“A personal God, who loves and cares, can be solicited in prayer. Prayer can work miracles because God makes himself dependent on the requests of his children.”<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, as we have observed, the Bible credits faith as a prime ingredient for receiving miraculous results in prayer. It is a lack of believing prayer that hinders the miraculous from manifesting in our midst:

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting (Matt. 17:19-21).

Jesus did not excuse the inability of His disciples to perform miracles with theological platitudes. Instead, He told them that the root cause of their *inability* was their *unbelief*. However, as we read even further, Jesus implies that they also failed to spend the necessary time needed in prayer. Cessationists may believe in prayer, but they do not believe in the kind that Jesus taught—one that brings miraculous results.

Thankfully, the disciples did not persist in such unbelief. They learned how to pray and get miraculous results and left us an example to follow:

And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. (Acts 4:29, 30)

Notice that the apostles did not have the ability to work miracles at will as so many cessationists teach. They actually had to pray and ask God to do these things. God worked through the prayers of the apostles as well as their exercising their authoritative faith using the powerful Name of Jesus.

Notice that they did not pray, “grant unto thy apostles.” They asked God to *grant unto His servants*. The apostles are not the only servants of God. Since all scripture is profitable (2 Tim. 3:16), we must conclude that the Holy Spirit had this prayer recorded for our benefit and for our learning.

Furthermore, the healings and other signs that were prayed for were not to be done by any supernatural God-given inherent ability of the apostles as so many cessationists teach. They asked that these things be done by the Name of Jesus. As we saw in chapter four, the scriptures and church history records prove beyond any doubt that all believers can work miracles using the Name of Jesus and not the apostles alone (Mark 9:38, 39). Therefore, we have a Biblical basis and prerequisite for asking God to perform miracles and expecting Him to do so.

### **Can We Do What Elijah Did?**

Sadly, cessationists deny that God’s people can pray and expect miraculous results today. John MacArthur writes, “I do not believe.... That God uses men and women as human agents to work miracles in the same way he used Moses, Elijah, or Jesus.”<sup>16</sup> MacArthur has already told us that he does not *believe*. It is his *unbelief* and not the Word of God that is behind the lack of supernatural events in his life.

We have seen in a previous chapter that MacArthur has a completely different understanding of John 14:12 in which Jesus tells us, “*He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.*” A basic understanding of this passage is that it is referring to miracles and that we can do what Jesus did. But some cessationists like MacArthur believe otherwise. Therefore, he is not easily convinced from Scripture that he is wrong in believing that we are unable to do the works of Jesus.

Nonetheless, even if MacArthur is correct in his beliefs about our doing the works of Jesus, could the same be said of *Elijah*? If we believe in the connection of prayer to the miraculous then we will

believe that we can be channels of God to do the same mighty works that Elijah did since he accomplished these works through *prayer*:

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit (James 5:14-18)

Notice that the Bible lifts up Elijah as an example of how faith-filled prayer brings miraculous results (1 Kings 18:24, 36-39, 42-45). We are told that Elijah was no different than we are, and yet he was able to have the windows of heaven closed for a period of time and then have them opened up again. James connects Elijah's prayer results to our ability to pray for the sick and actually see them healed.

Men like the late Presbyterian minister, Donald G. Barnhouse, were quick to make shocking statements like, "*Prayer changes nothing!*"<sup>17</sup> Yet, we are told from James 5:14 that "*the prayer of faith shall save the sick.*" This passage tells us that prayer does change things. One of the things it certainly changes is sickness to health. Therefore, Barnhouse and others who think like this are wrong.

In James 5:14-18 we are assured that prayer will bring about a change, not merely in our spiritual life, but even in our circumstances if we pray with faith in God. In the above case, we are told that we can expect our sickness to be driven away and replaced with divine health as a result of God's resurrection power. There are no "mights" or "maybes" in the passage. The passage shows us that if the proper instructions are followed, we should expect to see visible changes.

Some other translations make this even more clear: "*The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much*" (New American Standard Bible); "*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*" (International Standard Version); "*When a*

*believing person prays, great things happen*” (New Century Version). A righteous man's prayer “accomplishes much.” Our praying is “powerful and effective.” Our believing prayer makes “great things happen.” As Alexander McLaren stated many years ago:

The age of miracles is not gone. The mightiest manifestations of God's power in the spread of the Gospel in the past remain as patterns for His future. We have not to look back as from low-lying plains to the blue peaks on the horizon, across which the Church's path once lay, and sigh over the changed conditions of the journey. The highest watermark that the river in flood has ever reached will be reached and overpassed again, though to-day the waters may seem to have hopelessly subsided. Greater triumphs and deliverances shall crown the future than have signalled the past. Let our faithful prayer base itself on the prophecies of history and on the unchangeableness of God.<sup>18</sup>

God does not change. He is the same miracle-working God that He has always been. What He did for Elijah, He will do for us.

### **The God of Elijah is Here Today**

This is illustrated very beautifully in a true story by the famous Chinese preacher, Watchman Nee. Nee and several others decided to visit one of the islands during the Chinese New Year's day to do some missionary work. They found the islanders resistant to the gospel of Jesus Christ because of their worship of a false deity named “Ta-Wang” (which means “Great King”).

They were set to have a great festival for this false god on a certain day. One of the young converts among Nee's entourage presumptuously challenged the Ta-Wang worshippers by telling them that it would rain on that day. Indignant, the Ta-Wang worshippers told them that if this happens then they would believe that Nee's God is the true God.

Nee and his fellow missionaries went to prayer. During prayer the Lord gave Nee a revelation:

Up to this point we had feared to pray for rain. Then, in a flash, there came a word to me: “Where is the God of Elijah?” It came with such clarity and power that I knew it was from God. Confidently I announced to the brothers: “I have the answer. The Lord will send rain on the 11th.” Together we thanked Him, and then, full of praise, we went out – all seven of us – and told

everyone. We could accept the devil's challenge in the name of the Lord, and we would broadcast our acceptance.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, things did not happen as quickly as they may have wanted. Furthermore, reports about how Satan's own power was proven to have backed Ta-Wang also brought thoughts of doubt and discouragement to Nee and his fellow missionaries. However, when they would take this before God in prayer, He would sternly rebuke them by repeating the same question that Elisha repeated after receiving Elijah's mantle: "Where is the God of Elijah?"

The rain came on the day that it was needed and flooded the village. The villagers brought out the Ta-Wang idol in an attempt to stop the rain but found him powerless. They decided to hold this festival on another day but Nee and his missionaries besought "the God of Elijah" again and God brought pouring rain on that day as well. They won over 30 converts through this effort and others have been able to go to this island to continue missionary work. This was because "the God of Elijah" still answers prayer for miracles.

There are a number of modern missionaries who also attest to this truth. For example, in Burma we read about a showdown between an Assembly of God missionary and a Buddhist monk:

A Buddhist monk heard the gospel by shortwave. He became curious about the God named Jesus, so he left his monastery and came to the capital Yangon. He found the radio preacher Myo Chit, was led to Christ, and turned from his trust in Buddha. The new Christian entered Bible school and after several months returned to his home, burdened to tell the Arakans about Christ. The monks who used to be his companions prohibited the people from listening to the evangelist talk of this new God. All alone in his hometown, the new Christian continued to read the Word of God.

At the time there was a drought in the province. As the new convert read the Scriptures, he came across the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a power encounter--the true God would send fire and rain.

With the Bible as his script, this lone Christian challenged the monks. The farmers heard the word gladly for they needed the rain. The Buddhist monks prayed to their gods, yet nothing happened. The sky was cloudless. But when the evangelist called upon God to show himself by signs and wonders, the Lord sent rain on the land. The people rejoiced, but the monks said it was a coincidence. The evangelist wasn't discouraged. After the rain

ceased he said, "Let's try it again to see who really is God: Buddha or Jesus." The monks went through their prayers to no avail, but when the evangelist prayed a second time, God again sent rain. It is easy to understand why there are now several churches among the Arakan people. God is a God who answers by rain.<sup>20</sup>

Here we have the power of prayer bringing the same results as they did for Elijah over in Burma. I know from Scripture and experience that God works these miracles in our day. Years ago while serving in the military in Okinawa, Japan, I was asked to lead prayer for our unit's promotion luncheon. It was a lunch paid for by the unit to honor those who had received promotions during that time.

During this period of time, Okinawa had been going through a dry season and there had been no rain for months. There was no sign of rain ever coming. The whole island was placed on "water rationing" in which the water was turned on and off every several days. We were not allowed to shower for certain periods and had to drink bottled water. Of course this was becoming a great concern after several months of suffering this.

Just before the time to pray, several people began to taunt me: "Why don't you pray for rain Edwards." I knew that they did not believe that God would answer my prayer. In spite of this, I trusted God to work a miracle that day. After praying over the food and for those who had been promoted, I prayed something like this:

"Father, it has not rained for several months and we have had to suffer water rationing. Father, show these people how real you are and bring them some rain."

After the lunch was over and we stepped outside, it began to pour down rain. Many of the people saw this and could not deny that God was real. This was a number of years before the book, *Charismatic Chaos* was published.<sup>21</sup> If I had accepted the cessationist ideas that MacArthur and others espouse then it is possible that the little island may have suffered more drought and some would never have had the opportunity to see that God is a real God who answers prayer.

Cessationists may not believe that God works miracles in our day and age as He did with Moses, Elijah, and our Lord Jesus Christ, but Scripture and experience proves them wrong on this account.



## Chapter Ten

# Dispensationalism: Another Factor in Powerless Theology

Another influence upon cessationist thought has been a theology known as dispensationalism. Not all cessationists embrace dispensational theology nor are all dispensationalists. Interestingly enough, a number of Pentecostals and Charismatics are dispensationalists. Nevertheless, while some non-cessationist groups embrace this system of belief, the doctrine has been used, almost from its inception, to promote cessationist theology.<sup>1</sup>

In his book which refutes Dispensational theology's emphasis upon cessationism, Wilfred C. Meloon explains: "In a nutshell, dispensationalism teaches that the history of the world has been divided into seven 'dispensations' or 'period[s] of time during which man is tested in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.'"<sup>2</sup> Concerning its cessationist tendencies, Meloon writes:

....dispensationalism gave us an eschatology (doctrine of last things) and a pneumatology (doctrine of the Holy Spirit) which completely ruled out the power of the Holy Spirit in these latter days as far as the New Testament pattern of the supernatural is concerned—a theology which now needs serious reevaluation in the light of the burgeoning charismatic renewal. However, lest I bore you with big words, I simply mean that it is high time we faced up to why we are so powerless.<sup>3</sup>

As we have noted, numerous non-cessationists embrace the dispensational system and we would agree that there is quite a bit of truth taught in it. The problem that comes from the dispensational theology that emphasizes cessationism is how they have systematically robbed God's people of certain parts of Scripture, making them irrelevant. Meloon writes:

The whole can be summed up in three words: WE'VE BEEN ROBBED. Dispensationalists compartmentalize the scriptures, like a postman sorting our mail. Each little word or promise has to be put in just the right box (dispensation), and they forbid anyone to take any promise out of one box and put it in another.<sup>4</sup>

Even the great Fundamentalist Baptist Evangelist, Dr. John R. Rice noted that, “They have taught that material blessings are promised in the Old Testament for the Jews only, and spiritual blessings for Christians in this dispensation.”<sup>5</sup> Dr. Rice, who we have pointed out is neither Pentecostal nor Charismatic, gives more detailed examples demonstrating how dispensationalists have hindered God’s people from receiving all the Biblical truth that is available to them:

Some Christians overemphasize the dispensational teaching in the Bible. Of course there is a dispensational difference between the old covenant and the new covenant, between the ceremonial law and the Gospel. But ultradispensational people say that the Acts of the Apostles is a record of a transition period and that the Christianity of the book of Acts is not to be a pattern for present-day Christianity. Such people sometimes say that the Sermon on the Mount was for Jews only, not for us, that even the Lord's prayer is “a kingdom prayer” not suitable for us. They say that the miracles, power and gifts manifested among Christians in the book of Acts are now out of date. Such people usually say that the only “baptism of the Spirit” there is now is what one receives at conversion.<sup>6</sup>

This type of thinking is still prevalent in Christianity today, even among many of those who claim to believe in the continuation of the Charismata in our present day. It often affects how we interpret Scripture and how we view Biblical commands and promises. There are some who, due to dispensational teachings, confuse the need to live holy with the idea of “legalism” or living under the law of Moses. Others have denied God’s people of many of the blessings and promises in numerous parts of Scripture simply because they claim these are not in “Paul’s epistles.” Dispensationalists often have a “canon within the canon.”

It is not my intention here to give a thorough historical analysis of dispensationalism<sup>7</sup> nor do I attempt a dismantling of the whole dispensational theological system. I merely intend to point out how it has been used to promote cessationism and to demonstrate how this system fails to line up with Scripture when it does this.

### **Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth**

Throughout the majority of this book I have been straightforward in expressing my disagreements with Pastor John

MacArthur due to his cessationist views. However, this may be the first chapter that I write expressing some agreement with him when he says, “That’s the danger in dispensationalism: it begins to hack the Bible up and cut it into pieces.”<sup>8</sup> The Biblical foundation for dispensational theology is derived from 1 Timothy 2:15 where Paul writes, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” The interpretation used by dispensationalists is that, in order to rightly divide the Bible’s teaching to determine what is for the church and what is not, we must divide it into dispensations.

If one “rightly divides the word” from the dispensationalist perspective, then they should not attempt to live by any of the moral teaching of the Old Testament or the gospels, nor should they attempt to claim any promises found outside of the epistles (most especially Paul’s). The Old Testament, the gospels, and the book of Acts are historical only and are not relevant to the church of today. Most especially taught among many dispensationalists is that the Old Testament was for the Israelites only.

The major problem with using 1 Timothy 2:15 to support this view is the fact that, in another epistle to the same person (Timothy), Paul stated that *all Scripture is profitable to today’s believer*:

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:15-17)

First, Paul tells Timothy that it was the Scriptures through which he had known as a child was the agency through which he gained wisdom for salvation. The epistles were not available for Timothy to read as a child. Therefore, the only Scriptures that Paul could be making reference to here are the *Old Testament Scriptures*.

Paul further writes that “*all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*” Keep in mind that this is the same Timothy that he commands to “rightly divide the Word of Truth” in

his first epistle to him. Therefore, if “all Scripture is profitable” then Paul could not have been telling Timothy to divide the Word in a way that demonstrates that major portions of it are *not profitable* for the Church.

As we read further in the passage, all of Scripture is given to perfect the man of God and to thoroughly equip him for all good works. *Miracles* are some of the works that the man of God needs to be equipped with (John 14:12). Therefore, those portions of Scripture that promise the miraculous to God’s people cannot be relegated to a past dispensation and made irrelevant for the church today as so many dispensationalists have done and still do today.

In another epistle, this same Apostle Paul writes, “*For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*” (2 Cor. 1:20; see also Gal. 3:16-17) What are “all the promises” that Jesus says “yes” to? Those promises made by Him in the Old Testament and the gospels as well as those found in the New Testament epistles.

The New Testament writers often quoted Old Testament promises<sup>9</sup> and commands and clearly stated that these things were applicable to the people of God today. They certainly made distinctions between ceremonial laws, things which were fulfilled in Christ, as well as repudiate attempts to earn salvation by fleshly efforts rather than reliance upon the sacrifice of Christ and attempts to obey God by self-effort rather than the power of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, the inspired writers of the New Testament epistles did not relegate God’s promises and our moral responsibility to a bygone dispensation no longer meaningful to the church today. Therefore, God’s promises of miracles were not to be relegated to a past dispensation.

### **Examples of Dispensational Cessationism**

An example of pure cessationist thinking based on dispensational thought is found in an old book by Marcus Dods in which he writes:

I cannot admit therefore, that the Christian dispensation is susceptible of improvement; nor consequently can I admit that it is ever to be superseded by any other dispensation. Miracles therefore I conceive to be no longer called for.<sup>10</sup>

The basis for Mr. Dods “conception” is a man-made theological system rather than the Scriptures themselves. Again, we do not deny that there is much needed truth taught in dispensational theology, just as many other systems of theology contain Biblical truth often neglected by others who do not adhere to them. The problem comes when we develop our conceptions about such things as miracles from the system rather than from an unprejudiced study of Scripture.

Dods wrote many books during his time and we do not doubt that he was a student of the Scriptures. Unfortunately, when we have embraced a particular system of theology then we have a tendency to read Scripture through the spectacles of the system itself. This is why dispensationalists can affirm the truth that the whole Bible is God’s Word while embracing a contradiction that numerous parts of it are irrelevant to today’s believer.

For example, the dispensationalist can deny the relevancy of those portions of Scripture that teach us about how the Holy Spirit often manifested Himself in powerful ways, but still affirm the truth of His existence, personality, and present day ministry to the believer. Herbert Lockyer provides us with an example of this contradictory thinking:

While we may not live in a miraculous dispensation such as Pentecost represents and no longer receive miraculous gifts from the Spirit, yet the same silent and powerful Spirit Himself is still with us.<sup>11</sup>

Many cessationists who affirm the present day ministry of the Holy Spirit speak about how He imparts to us supposedly non-supernatural gifts such as teaching, exhortation, mercy, etc. They mention how each Christian is indwelt by the Spirit and in order for them to fulfill the requirement of obedience, they must “walk by the Spirit” as the strongly dispensational and clearly cessationistic book on the Holy Spirit by John Walvoord states implicitly.<sup>12</sup> It is interesting that Walvoord writes an exhaustive work on the present day ministry of the Holy Spirit and acknowledges that believers must “walk by the Spirit” in order to live holy in this “dispensation,” but takes several chapters in order to outright deny the miraculous is for this “dispensation.”<sup>13</sup>

The idea of “walking *by* the Spirit” (which, Scripturally speaking, should actually be “walk *in* the Spirit”) in order to walk in victory over sin is taught in a couple of places in the New Testament,

prominently in Galatians 5:16-25. Yet, Paul also writes within this same epistle, “*He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*” (Gal. 3:5)

Dispensationalists like Walvoord and Lockyer must explain how Paul can write about *two* aspects of the Holy Spirit’s work in the same epistle, yet only *one* of these aspects, which is the *miracle* aspect, is no longer for our dispensation as they claim. Notice that the passage does not say that the apostles worked the miracles nor does it state that the Holy Spirit worked miracles through any of them specifically. It simply says that the same God who gave *them* (that is, the Galatians) the Holy Spirit so that, by walking in Him, they could overcome the desires of the flesh, is the same one who worked miracles among them.

After listing several categories of *supernatural* gifts (such as tongues, healings, working of miracles, etc.), Paul writes the following:

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. (1 Cor. 12:8-12)

The Spirit, in the church age dispensation, divides supernatural miraculous gifts, not to apostles of a bygone dispensation, but to *every man*. These gifts were not given to a special few but to the *whole body* of Christ. There is no past tense in the distribution of the gifts by the Spirit in the passage above. Paul is speaking in present tense terms and gives no indication that this was only for the dispensation in which he was writing. If that were true then God wasted much paper inspiring this passage to be written, telling us that it was for our “profit” while at the same time telling us that we could not benefit from this particular

area of the Holy Spirit's work. Therefore, the pneumatology of the Dispensationalists is lacking in Biblical merit and substance.

### **Miracles are *not* for the Church Dispensation?**

E. W. Bullinger is another who has written numerous Bible study helps. I have personally benefitted from some of his work. Unfortunately, Bullinger was an extreme dispensationalist who, strangely enough, believed that miracles were only for Israel and never belonged to the Church, this being the reason for their alleged demise:

Alas! the promise of blessings for Israel are for the present "dead," and the Gentile blessings dependent on Israel are buried in Israel's grave. Both are alike in abeyance until the day of Israel's national repentance. This is why the "signs and wonders" of the Dispensation of Acts ceased with Acts xxviii. These "signs" were the birthright of Israel, and never belonged to "the church" or "the churches" in any shape or form. They were born with the nation.<sup>14</sup>

This is a strange position to take and is proof that no matter how much we study Scripture, we can still be blinded by theological prejudice. Nevertheless, since so many in our day continue to rely on Bullinger's writings to gain understanding of the Scriptures, he continues to exert influence over the thinking of many Christians. Therefore, his extreme position must be repudiated.

When we look again at the Corinthians, we learn several things that directly refute Bullinger's statement. Notice in the passage we cited above that the Holy Spirit dispenses His gifts to "the body." Bullinger should know that Colossians 1:18 tells us "*And he is the head of the body, the church.*" "The Church" and "the body" are the same organism as far as God is concerned. Yet, Bullinger tells us that these gifts belonged to "Israel" and not "the church." As we read further in 1 Cor. 12, we find this statement by Paul:

And God hath set some **in the church**, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (1 Cor. 12:28)

Some dispensationalists such as Walvoord would lead us to believe that non-miraculous gifts such as teaching, helps, and governments are for the church age dispensation but miracles and

other supernatural manifestations are not. However, we see in the above passage that Paul makes no such distinction. He groups them all together and says that they *all* belong to *the church*.

For both Walvoord and Bullinger, this should be a rebuke. For Bullinger to claim, “These ‘signs’ were the birthright of Israel, and never belonged to ‘the church’ or ‘the churches’ in any shape or form” is to totally ignore the inspired Scripture which says that “*God hath set some in the church.... miracles, then gifts of healings.... diversities of tongues.*” According to some Greek experts, the word “set” here means “to fix, establish, and ordain.” In contrast to Bullinger, Paul says that these things did belong to the church. To *establish* something means “to bring about permanently.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it was not dependent on the establishment or disestablishment of Israel as a nation. The first chapter of 1 Corinthians reveals to us the permanency of these gifts:

We are sending this letter to you, the members of God’s **church** in Corinth. You have been made holy because you belong to Christ Jesus. God has chosen you to be his holy people. He has done the same for all those everywhere who pray to our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is their Lord and ours....**There is no gift of the Holy Spirit that you don’t have.** You are full of hope as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to come again. (1 Cor. 1:2, 7; New International Reader's Version)

Notice that the *Gentile* Corinthians were in possession of *all* the gifts, including the *miraculous* ones. These gifts were to last until the Lord Jesus Christ came again, and were not to cease in some future church age dispensation. Paul referred to the Corinthians as “the church” and therefore they were already in the “church age.” The miraculous gifts manifesting in their midst had nothing to do with the condition of the state of Israel.

Even in the Galatian letters Paul was not writings to the Jews but to the *church* when he wrote, “*And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia*” (Gal. 1:2). It was to this “church” that he wrote “*the Spirit.... worketh miracles among you*” (Gal. 3:5).

## **The Church has Gentiles and Jews**

Bullinger also claims that “the Gentile blessings dependent on Israel are buried in Israel’s grave.” This claim ignores the fact that the



Corinthian church, the church which Paul said God had set miracles, healings, and tongues, was made up of *Gentiles*:

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were **Gentiles**, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. (1 Cor. 12:1, 2)

The Corinthian Church (mark that this was “the church”) was not full of *Israelite* believers, but full of GENTILE believers. These *Gentiles* were the ones who “came behind in no gift” (KJV). It is important to understand the seriousness of the error that Bullinger is promoting when he claims that the church was dependent upon Israel for the miraculous. Even under the Old Testament God worked miracles outside of Israel:

Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings: Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and **among other men**; and hast made thee a name, as at this day (Jer. 32:19, 20)

Jeremiah’s statement that God did signs and wonders, “*even unto this day*” is significant. Dispensationalists tell us that God had only done special miracles during the time of Moses. He never did any more notable miracles until the time of Elijah and Elisha and again they ceased until the time of Jesus and His apostles. Yet, Jeremiah says that from the time of Moses until his own very time God has been doing miracles. I will touch more on this aspect of dispensationalism in a moment. Nevertheless, I believe that it will do well to note that here again, Scripture is strongly opposed to dispensationalistic cessationism.

Jeremiah’s statement that God had, “*set signs and wonders...in Israel, and among other men*” lets us know that under the Old Covenant dispensation God did signs and wonders among other men outside of Israel. Here we have Scripture demonstrating signs and wonders were not the sole property of Israel, but were done by God towards (or against) others outside of the Israeli nation.

Furthermore, Jeremiah does not say that other men received these miracles because of Israel. Such an idea would have to be read into the text. Jeremiah makes a clear distinction between “Israel” and “other men.”

As we wander back to the New Testament we find that James, who wrote his epistle “to the twelve tribes” (James 1:1), alluding to Israel, did not limit the miraculous healing power of God to Israel or its state, but stated that this was a benefit that belonged to *the church*:

Is any sick among you? let him call for the **elders of the church**; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. (James 5:14, 15)

James did not instruct the sick person to call for the “elders of Israel.” He did not even instruct them to call for one of the twelve foundational apostles. He told them that they are to call for the elders of *the church*, which we have seen consists of both Jews and Gentiles. There is nothing in Scripture indicating that the church was dependent upon Israel’s status to bring about healing in a person’s body. It was the Lord who would raise that person up and only on the condition that the prayer was offered in faith.

However, even if Bullinger is correct concerning his idea that miracles were exclusively the property of Israel, he still loses his argument on the basis that those in the Church are Abraham’s seed: “*And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*” (Gal. 3:29). Since Israel is the seed of Abraham and the church is the seed of Abraham then Scripture makes it clear that we are entitled to the same miraculous properties:

He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto

Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham....That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:5-9, 14)

The same promised Spirit that we are entitled to because of our connection to Abraham is the same Spirit who works miracles among the Gentile churches. Isn't this why Jesus said that one woman suffering a spirit of infirmity had a right to miraculous healing due to the fact that she was "a daughter of Abraham?" (See Luke 13:16). We in the church are also his children based on Scripture and have a right to these miracles. These miracles are the children's bread (Matt. 15:22-28).

### **Were There Only Three Periods of Miracles?**

Another problem with dispensational theology and how it so often strays from Biblical truth concerning the miraculous is the insistence of some of its adherents upon the idea that there were only *three* periods in history in which God fully manifested Himself miraculously. John MacArthur, who we noted earlier, admits to problems within the Dispensational theological system, nonetheless, embraces the erroneous "three periods" view:

God can, of course, interject himself into the stream of history supernaturally anytime he wishes. But he chose to limit himself primarily to three periods of biblical miracles, with very rare supernatural displays in between. The rest of the time God works through providence.<sup>16</sup>

John Walvoord in his strongly dispensational book on the Holy Spirit explains:

Three notable periods of miracles are recorded in the Bible as history: (1) the period of Moses; (2) the period of Elijah and Elisha; (3) the period of Christ and the apostles. In each of these periods there was a need of evidence to authenticate the message of God.<sup>17</sup>

This teaching can also be found in many of our popular devotional and practical Bible commentaries. For example, the well known and popular Bible expositor, Warren Wiersbe, writes:

In Bible history, you will find three special periods of miracles: (1) the time of Moses; (2) the time of Elijah and Elisha; and (3) the time of Jesus and His Apostles. Each period was less than 100 years. Depending on how some of these events are classified, the total number of miracles for all three periods is less than 100. Of course, not all the miracles were recorded (see John 20:30-31)<sup>18</sup>

If this is true then we need to cut the majority of pages out of our Bibles and burn them since so many of them attest to miracles that have happened in between all of the periods stated above. We also cannot trust our church history books since they also attest to numerous miracles occurring after the period of the apostles (many we have cited in this book). I choose to believe the Bible over the doctrines of otherwise good men who hold to erroneous views.

If God did not want to do miracles in our present dispensation then why would He present Elijah as one of the examples of someone who persevered in prayer and got results if those miracles were meant only for *his* period (see James 5:16-18). Disputing this idea, Daniel writes:

I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation. (Dan. 4:2, 3)

Daniel lived some two to three hundred years after Elisha and more than five hundred years before Christ. Yet, Daniel says that God had wrought toward him “great signs and wonders.” This is different from the idea purported by our dispensationalist friends who say that there were no “notable” or “special” miracles during his time.

According to some Hebrew experts, the word “generation” in the passage above means “period” or “age.”<sup>19</sup> This is how the word “dispensation” is understood among those who promote this theology. It would appear to me that Daniel connects God’s working of signs and wonders from “age to age” or from “period to period” or from “dispensation to dispensation.”

When we look at Scripture we find that God never takes responsibility for the lack of miracles in any dispensation. When the Lord visited Gideon (who lived between the periods of Moses and Elijah) to commission him as an agent of deliverance for Israel, there was an interesting exchange between them:

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and **where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of**, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? (Judges 6:12-14)

How quickly Gideon forgot the godlessness in which Israel had fallen into during his time, even after God sent a prophet to them who reminded them about this. (Judges 6:1-10) Therefore, when Gideon begins to ask, “Where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of?” he needed only to look to himself and the rest of the nation.

It is also worthy to note that Gideon felt, unlike many today, that the lack of the miraculous in his time was due to the Lord having forsaken His people. While the opposite is true (the people actually forsook the Lord), it does remind us that an ongoing lack of miracles in any dispensation is usually consistent with a lack of God’s presence. It is unfortunate that in our day so many seem to believe that God’s presence resides in churches where there is no miraculous activity whatsoever while any church that has miracles is castigated as a den of demons.

However, the most important thing we see in this passage concerning Gideon is the Lord’s response. God did not offer Gideon the theological explanations that we hear today. He did not tell Gideon that He planned to work special miracles in only three periods and that Gideon was the unfortunate fellow to be born in between those periods. The problem with Gideon was not that he was born in a certain dispensation, but that he and his people had forsaken the Lord.

Rather than wasting His time reminding Gideon about why he and his brethren are not seeing the miracle power of God, the Lord tells Gideon to perform an act of faith that would manifest this power in their midst again. Gideon, who felt himself to be weak and fearful, was told by God that he possessed the might that was needed to save Israel. He asks Gideon, *“have not I sent thee?”* If God sent him then this is enough to work with in order to see the miracle working power of God in Israel again.

### **A Dispensation Without Miracles is a Perverse and Faithless One**

Church history along with Gideon’s story proves to us that God does not discontinue working miracles simply because we have moved into a new dispensation. On the contrary, miracles cease when people of a certain generation or dispensation allow themselves to become perverse, faithless, and godless. After leaving the mount of transfiguration, Jesus was confronted with His disciples failure to cast out a demon:

Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.  
(Matt. 17:15-18)

Jesus does not allude to “the sovereignty of God” as the reason that this demonized boy was not delivered. Neither did the Lord make any allusion to the idea that only He could perform this miracle and no one else. On the contrary, He rebukes the failure of this boy’s deliverance by referring to the “generation” or “dispensation”<sup>20</sup> He is in as “faithless and perverse.” This failure to perform a miracle occurred in the dispensation in which these theologians claim that it was one of God’s three chosen periods in which to perform them.

Amazingly, Dispensationalists that argue that God only worked miracles in three distinct periods and that He no longer work miracles today accuse their objectors of walking in unbelief. Ada R. Habershon writes:

But in Scripture we are not given any reason for expecting that the second class of miracles should be continued through the dispensation, though they will be seen again at its close. They served their purpose at the three different periods when they were given. God's revelation is complete; He has nothing to add to His Word. We walk by faith, and not by sight; we need no signs, nor should we crave for them: for "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed."<sup>21</sup>

Habershon claims that his dispensationalist viewpoint is one of "walking by faith." However, Jesus has a different description of his view—it is called "faithless and perverse." Habershon claims that "we need no signs, nor should we crave for them" goes directly against Paul's statements in which we are told to "*covet earnestly the best gifts*" (1 Cor. 12:31) and, "*Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*" (1 Cor. 14:1).

Those who claim that because God intended to work the miracles in three distinct periods of history we do not (supposedly) experience them today would do well to study the rest of the passage. Jesus, who is living during the time in which some dispensationalists claim was one of those three periods, had disciples who failed to perform them. The Lord does not credit any ability to do miracles to conferred dispensational power nor does He credit inability to a lack thereof. He says that the problem was their *unbelief*. When asking the Lord why they were unable to perform this task, Jesus explains this very thing to them:

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, **Because of your unbelief:** for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you (Matt. 17:19, 20).

Jesus gave an answer to His disciples that would have cost Him a major amount of persecution from many well known leaders in today's Evangelical community. The Lord placed no theological spin on their lack or inability. Basically, He did not place any of the responsibility on God or any other outside force. He laid the

responsibility on those who were supposed to have yielded themselves as conduits of God's power. He told them that their inability to work miracles was due to their lack of faith.

Sadly, to rebuke someone for unbelief in our dispensation is akin to blasphemy. It paints one as insensitive and one who "blames the victim." Nonetheless, Jesus often commended faith where He saw it and rebuked unbelief wherever it reared its ugly head. Almost every place where a commendation or a rebuke was given concerning someone's faith was in the area of receiving or performing a miracle.

## **Conclusion**

The dispensationalist view of Scripture lacks Biblical support in a number of areas, but most notably when it attempts to justify cessationism. While we learn much Biblical truth in some dispensational ideas, we must learn to reject any ideas in this system that denies God's people their rightful heritage to receive His miraculous supernatural intervention in their lives and service for Him.



## Chapter Eleven

# Unbelief: The True Reason for the Cessation of the Miraculous

I was fully convinced of what I had long suspected....That the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn, was, not only that faith and holiness were well-nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all, as either madness or imposture. –John Wesley<sup>1</sup>

There have been a number of reasons offered for the cessation of the charismata. The majority of these reasons have been offered to merely excuse the church's powerlessness in our day. Most of these excuses can be summed up in this way: *it was God's sovereign will that miracles are no longer to be experienced*. However, as we look at church history, as the great John Wesley points out, we will find that the problem is not with God's willingness, but with our lack of faith to receive and operate in His power.

### **The Decline of the Miraculous in the Church**

Church history reveals to us that there was a decline in the miraculous after the first century, though they had not completely disappeared.<sup>2</sup> The decline was most prominent in the year 312 when emperor Constantine became converted to Christianity. It became popular to be a Christian during this time. The harsh persecution that Christians had known had diminished. Sadly, Constantine created a new, unbiblical version of Christianity that was closer to his pagan ritualism than that which is described in the New Testament. Those who did not accept the new popular form of Constantine's Christianity went to an opposite extreme by embracing asceticism.

Since persecution of Christians was not occurring too frequently, many of the defectors of Constantine's Christianity began to believe that God substituted this with sickness and harsh conditions in life. Since this type of suffering was "the will of God" and enabled

one to become a holy and pious Christian, then there was no longer a need for miracles that would relieve one of this suffering. The only healing that was needed was the healing of the soul (i.e., forgiveness of sins).

Furthermore, a number of other ideas competed for a place within Christianity. Stoicism taught an impassible God (a God without compassion) and Christians were taught to emulate this deity by putting aside any emotional response in worship. Other ideas such as Manichaeism which taught against enjoying sexual pleasure in marriage infiltrated Christianity through the teachings of Origen and Augustine. Married couples were permitted sex only for the production of children.

Of course these ideas were far from scriptural but they serve as examples of how Satan was able to slowly bring in a decline of the miraculous in the church. Since miracles such as healing were meant to do something for the body, and ascetic ideas deny the needs and desires of the body, there was no need to ask God for healing miracles. What need is there for the “edification, and exhortation, and comfort” that prophecy is meant to bring when we serve a passionless God? What need do we have for any material provision of any of our bodily needs and desires when the pathway for holiness was to deprive oneself physically and concern oneself only with the soul?

### **Some Reformers Agree That Cessation Is Due to Unbelief**

With numerous pagan ideas taking root into the church, faith for the miraculous steadily declined. In spite of the recorded history concerning the church’s turn to worldliness, many in the church, including some of the most well known reformers, believe that it was a decision by God alone to withdraw these miracles because, as they claim, miracles were no longer needed.

During the time of the Reformers there was one man who took a different stance on this. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), who is often associated with John Calvin, wrote the following:

But, inasmuch as far later times are full of testimonies to this point, I know not from what motive some persons restrain the gift to the first ages. While I readily grant to such persons, that there was a richer abundance of miracles in order that the foundation of so great a structure might, in spite of the world’s power, be laid, I cannot with them perceive why we should believe that this promise of Christ has ceased to be in force. Wherefore, if any one now

preach Christ, as He would have himself preached, to the nations that know him not (for miracles are peculiarly intended for such, 1 Cor. xiv. 22), I doubt not that the promise will still be found to stand good : ' for the gifts of God are without repentance' (Rom. xi. 29): but we, whenever the fault lies in our own sloth or unbelief, throw the blame on Him.<sup>3</sup>

Grotius' words should challenge all cessationists. Too often we take the responsibility from ourselves and place it on God. We would rather retreat to the comfort of our unbelief than to exercise faith in God's Word in order to see a manifestation of His power. We ignore church history, forgetting that it was man's worldliness and unbelief that removed the miraculous from our midst.

The great Methodist pioneer, John Wesley, sums this up well in his writings on the subject:

It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian, and from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby heaped riches, and power, and honour, upon the Christians in general; but in particular upon the Christian clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not (as has been vulgarly supposed) "because there was no more occasion for them," because all the world was become Christian. This is a miserable mistake; not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christian. The real cause was, "the love of many," almost of all Christians, so called, was "waxed cold." The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other Heathens. The Son of Man, when he came to examine his Church, could hardly "find faith upon earth." This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church – because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left.<sup>4</sup>

Due to the pagan Christianity introduced by Constantine, as well as the extreme reactions and pagan philosophies brought in by other sincere but deceived men, biblical faith in God's care and concern for the whole man (spiritual, physical and emotional) was all but gone. In its place were pagan ritualism, philosophical meandering, and scholastic intellectualism. When faith in God's miraculous intervention is gone, Satan is happy to bring in many substitutes.

## The Real Reason For Lack of Miracles

Many in our own day have accepted an intellectual gospel in the place of the miracle working power of God that should accompany the preaching of the kingdom. While I am not anti-intellectual (I believe fully in taking advantage of a good education and I rely heavily upon scholars in understanding original Biblical languages), reliance upon scholasticism has a tendency to promote unbelief in the miraculous power of God.

Regardless of the numerous intellectual reasons for the doctrine that miracles are no longer for today, it all boils down to *unbelief*. In his well known critique of the Charismatic movement, John MacArthur writes that he does “not believe” that God works miracles through men as He did in Biblical times:

*I do not believe....* That God uses men and women as human agents to work miracles in the same way he used Moses, Elijah, or Jesus. I am convinced that the miracles, signs, and wonders being claimed today in the Charismatic movement have nothing in common with apostolic miracles. And I am persuaded by both Scripture and history that nothing like the New Testament gift of miracles.... is operating today. The Holy Spirit has not given any modern-day Christians miraculous gifts comparable to those he gave the apostles.<sup>5</sup> (emphasis are mine)

MacArthur’s reason for denying that God uses men in our day to do miracles in the same way that he used Moses, Elijah, and Jesus is, “I do not believe.” Another cessationist, Richard Gaffin writes, “I do question....whether the gifts of healing and of working miracles, as listed in 1 Corinthians 12:9-10, are given today. I note here at least two factors *sustaining that doubt*.”<sup>6</sup> (emphasis are mine) The Bible tells us that it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks (Matt. 12:34). What we find from statements that say “I do not believe” and “I....doubt” is doubt and unbelief concerning God’s promises.

In the rest of his dissertation, Gaffin offers the usual cessationist arguments and proof-texts that sustain his “doubt” (Heb. 2:3b-4 and 2 Cor. 12:12). Gaffin “questions” whether God still manifests supernatural gifts and he has allowed cessationist dogma to sustain the *doubt*. When we look to the teaching of Christ, we see that cessationists disqualify themselves for miracles, not based on any thing God has said or done, but due to their admitted “doubt and unbelief”:

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, **Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree**, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive (Matt. 21:18-22)

Jesus specifically states in the passage that if a person has faith, they not only can do the exact same thing that He did to the fig tree, but they can go beyond this and command mountains into the sea. This sounds exactly like His words in John 14:12 which says, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that **believeth on me**, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*”

*Believing* is the key here. The teachings of our Lord on faith and the power that God exhibits when it is applied contradict what our cessationist friends say that they do not believe—or rather, what they doubt. When our theology contradicts what the Scripture teaches, we should not wonder why we do not get the results that scripture promises.

MacArthur says that “Scripture and history” persuades him to deny that God uses men in our day as he did Jesus. Yet Scripture appears to contradict MacArthur’s claims. Jesus said that anyone who *believes* will do what He did. MacArthur has already said, “I do not believe” and it is this, and not Scripture, that disqualifies him and other cessationists from being able to perform the same works that Jesus did. Jesus said, “*According to your faith be it unto you.*” (Matt. 9:29) Therefore, if cessationists believe that miracles have ceased, they have received *no miracles* according to their faith.

## Jesus' Faith Promises are for the Disciples Only?

Cessationists are not without their arguments concerning the Lord's "faith promises." Many cessationists argue that the Lord's promises of "faith for miracles" were given only to the disciples. The Reformed Baptist minister, Arthur W. Pink, was one of many proponents of this view. In an article titled "Faith to Work Miracles," Pink writes concerning Matthew 21:21, 22, "Since Christians in our day have no right to appropriate this special promise to themselves, they have no warrant to ask for any favour, whether temporal or spiritual, private or public, absolutely and unsubmitively."<sup>7</sup>

In the article, Pink tells his readers that this promise was restricted to the original twelve disciples. Pink makes references to the usual cessationist proof-texts like 2 Cor. 12:12 to underscore his points. Cessationists very quickly retreat to the "that was meant only for the original apostles" idea when confronted with a text that exposes the weakness of their theology. Nonetheless, if we applied this type of faulty hermeneutic to all passages of Scriptures, we would have to conclude that nothing in the Bible applies to us since nearly everything in Scripture was first addressed to a general audience. However, we are told that "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" (2 Tim. 3:16). If it is not applicable to us then it cannot be inspired Scripture.

Furthermore, the same man who wrote 2 Cor. 12:12 said earlier in this same epistle, "*For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*" Which of the Scriptures that records the promises of Jesus do we find that is not "*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*"? Which of the promises that the Lord has spoken will He say "no" to if He said that all of them are "yes and amen"?

In Mark's account of this incident and subsequent promise, Jesus says, "*For verily I say unto you, That **whosoever** shall say unto this mountain....*" (Mark 11:23a) The "whosoever" in this passage removes all restrictions concerning who can see the fulfillment of this promise when the proper conditions are met. If Jesus wanted to restrict this promise to His immediate disciples, He could have done a much better job by simply saying, "Whichever of you disciples shall say unto this mountain...." Instead, the Lord used a pronoun, indicating that the promise was for "whosoever" would apply the faith required.

## The Real Problem Is Unbelief

The reason that we have found ways to reinterpret the promises of God to fit a non-miraculous paradigm is due to a simple thing called “unbelief.” The lack of miracles in any ministry has nothing whatsoever to do with any restriction of God’s promises since we are told that “all Scripture is profitable” and that “all promises are yes and amen.” Jesus explains this very thing to His disciples in another one of His “faith promises.” After leaving the mount of transfiguration, Jesus was confronted with His disciples’ failure to cast out a demon and had to undertake the task Himself. Later, the Lord would engage in a “question and answer” session with His disciples:

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you (Matt. 17:19, 20).

The word “impossible” here comes from the Greek word “*adunateo*.” This word means “not to have strength, power, or ability; to be weak.” Lack of faith deprives us of God’s power, ability, and might. God makes His omnipotent power to do all things available to the believer through the exercise of faith. Faith and prayer makes the omnipotent power of God work on your behalf. Is it any wonder that the Bible continually puts an emphasis on faith?

Jesus stated that the lack of miraculous power that the disciples experienced had nothing to do with restrictions on His promises. On the contrary, if they applied genuine faith, they would be able to move literal mountains if that were necessary. Commenting on this passage, John Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), whose well known commentary on the New Testament is still published and referenced today, wrote, “The reason why many miracles are not now wrought, is not so much the establishment of the faith, as the general prevalence of unbelief.”<sup>8</sup> Bengel believed that the Lord’s words had an application that went beyond His inner circle.

Sadly, the cessationists cannot comprehend this truth because they limit even this passage to the original disciples. Rather than seeing Jesus’ rebuke as one that applies to all who would read His

words (2 Tim. 3:16), Arthur W. Pink in his comments on this passage claims that the Lord's statement is limited to the original disciples:

We must next inquire wherein did this faith to work miracles differ from any other kind of faith? The answer: It rested on an entirely different foundation. In the first place, it could only be exercised by those who had been specially endowed by supernatural power to work miracles, which pertained alone to Christ's servants at the beginning of this Christian era.<sup>9</sup>

As we stated earlier, Pink believes that those who were "specially endowed" were the original disciples. He believes that this passage is limited "to Christ's servants at the beginning of this Christian era." However, Pink is not alone in this. Apologist Hank Hanegraaff, in his attempt to repudiate the "seed-faith" teaching of a well-known Charismatic Word-Faith teacher writes, "Jesus here simply promises His disciples that, if they trust Him to do what He says He will, they will succeed in the mission Jesus gives them."<sup>10</sup>

Hanegraaff's statement is somewhat vague. Nevertheless, Hanegraaff is attempting to prove that Matthew 17:20 is being used erroneously and misapplied by the Word-Faith Teacher he is disputing. The easiest way to do this is to apply the usual cessationist interpretation to the passage that claims that the words of Jesus were meant only to His disciples.

If the reader remains in doubt about this due to the vagueness of the statement (as well as Hanegraaff's past claims to be a "Charismatic"), all doubt is removed as we examine Hanegraaff's views further. Further examination of statements by Hanegraaff reveals his cessationist belief that the miraculous was limited to the original disciples. One of numerous examples is found in his criticism of the supernatural experiences of the late John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard church. Hanegraaff writes:

....it is crucial to understand that the Almighty appeared to the apostle Peter, the apostle Paul, and the apostle John to directly reveal Scripture, which alone is sufficient for faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Rather than flocking to conferences to experience new revelations as they are slain in the spirit, Wimber's followers would do well to study the revelation that God has already given through the apostles He has chosen to be the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20-23).<sup>11</sup>



Notice that Hanegraaff references Ephesians 2:20, the usual cessationist proof-text used to limit miraculous experiences to the original apostles. It would do Mr. Hanegraaff well to read this revelation too and he will see that supernatural experiences, to include visions, were not meant for the apostles alone nor were they for the sole purpose of revealing Scripture (Acts 2:17). The cessationist views from men such as Pink and Hanegraaff are the reasons for the widespread unbelief in the church. If we find it difficult to believe that the Lord's rebuke concerning unbelief applies to us, we will further perpetuate even more unbelief.

### **Historical Orthodox Views on Matthew 17**

In chapter four we mentioned Athanasius, who lived from 295 to 373 AD, and was known as *The Father of Orthodoxy*. We noted that Athanasius wrote a biography about his friend Antony who was a channel for God in healing the sick and casting out devils. Athanasius stated that Antony was able to perform such great miracles because he believed that the promise in Matthew 17 was valid even in his time:

And we ought not to doubt whether such marvels were wrought by the hands of a man. For it is the promise of the Saviour, when He saith, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, remove hence to and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you."<sup>12</sup>

Antony served the Lord and God worked miracles through him several centuries after "the beginning of this Christian era." Athanasius believed that this was due to Antony applying Matthew 17:20, a promise that our cessationist friends say is restricted to the apostles of our Lord's Day.

The same is true of Jerome. Jerome, who lived from 347 to 420 AD was one of the most well known Christian scholars in his day. As we noted in chapter four, Jerome recorded the miracles that God performed through a man named Hilarion. After writing about a miracle in which Hilarion stopped a wall of water from destroying a village, Jerome notes:

Verily, what was said to the Apostles, "If ye have faith, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove into the sea, and it shall be done," may even be literally fulfilled if one has such faith as the Lord commanded the Apostles to have.<sup>13</sup>

Jerome believed that God could work such marvels through Hilarion because of His promise in Matthew 17:20. Again we find this happening nearly five centuries after the passing of the last original apostle. It would seem that many of the earlier Christians did not recognize the limitations of this promise that some of our theologians are claiming exist in our day. Cessationists seem to believe that God placed such promises in the Scripture only to let us know what we could never have.

### **The Promise Goes Beyond the Original Disciples**

The problem with those who limit this passage exclusively to the disciples is their failure to read both the context of the passage as well as Mark's account of this situation that merited the Lord's promise. Jesus did not address the disciples alone when He used the words "faithless and perverse" in verse 17. He spoke to those of *that generation*.

Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour (Matt. 17:15-18).

It would be unfair of Jesus to rebuke a whole generation as "faithless" and "perverse" if He only endowed the disciples alone to exercise faith for the miraculous. When we turn to Mark's account, we see further evidence that the promise of "faith for miracles" is given an application beyond the disciples. In Mark's account, rather than addressing the disciples, the Lord speaks a particular faith promise for miracles directly to the father of the boy who was possessed:

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief (Mark 9:23, 24).

Notice that in Matthew 17:20, Jesus tells the disciples that with genuine faith, “*nothing shall be impossible unto you.*” The cessationists believe that this statement is for the apostles only. Yet, Jesus makes the exact same promise to the boy’s father, one who is not in the Lord’s inner circle, when He says in Mark’s account of this same incident, “*all things are possible to him that believeth.*” This was not made to the disciples, but the father of the demonized boy.

It was after this exchange with the father that Jesus delivered the boy from the evil spirit. We see here that Jesus did not limit miracle working faith to the disciples/apostles alone. This promise was spoken to the father, but it was spoken *generically*. In essence, Jesus told the father of the demonized boy that anyone who believes can have those things that would often appear impossible.

Also we see the humility of this father. He did not blame the boy’s situation on God’s will. He did not become offended with Jesus’ rebuke to him and the others for their lack of faith. He confessed to his unbelief and asked for help. We live in such a sad age in which faith is castigated and unbelief is taught and reinforced by questionable Bible interpretations from respected ministers.

In another place, Mark tells us that Jesus was unable to work mighty miracles in a certain place because of the unbelief—not of His disciples—but of the ordinary people in the town in which He was there to minister:

And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching (Mark 6:5, 6).

In this case miracles could not be done because of the unbelief of the people in the Lord’s hometown. Therefore, the responsibilities to exercise faith to obtain miraculous results were not upon the original disciples alone, but anyone who desired to receive supernatural intervention in their circumstances.

### **Jesus Demanded Faith of Anyone Who Desired to See Miracles**

When we look at the case of Martha, the sister to Mary and Lazarus, we see that Jesus demanded faith from someone who, as far as we know, was not an apostle. When Martha’s brother died, Jesus

tells her that faith in God would allow her to see Him manifest Himself miraculously:

Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? (John 11:39, 40)

Some bring up ridiculous arguments concerning the subject of faith when it comes to Lazarus. They ask, “Faith teachers claim that people don’t receive miracles due to a lack of faith. Where was Lazarus’s faith?” Lazarus did not need to have faith, but *Martha did*. It was no different than the situation with Jairus, a leader in the synagogue. His daughter was sick and Jesus went to heal her. When He finally arrived at Jairus’s house He heard that the girl was dead. Yet, our Lord told Jairus, “*Be not afraid, only believe.*” (see Mark 5:21-36) Faith would open the door for a miracle to be wrought, particularly the raising of Jairus’s daughter from death (Mark 5:37-42).

What was the “glory of God” that Jesus promised Martha if she would just believe? It was the raising of her brother from the dead (John 11:41-45). Miracles are meant to manifest God’s glory (John 2:11). Jesus demanded this miracle-working faith from Martha, an ordinary person and not an apostle.

With few rare exceptions, we find throughout the gospels and Acts that faith is often credited for the miracles that took place (Matt. 8:10-13; 9:2, 22, 29; 15:22-28; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 1:28-45; 17:11-19; John 4:46-54; Acts 3:16; 14:8-10) and doubt and unbelief was given as the reason for their lack (Matt. 14:31; 16:8; Mark 4:35-40). Never do we find any miracles denied anyone because it was the will of God. The majority of people that were commended for their faith were not apostles, but ordinary people.

### **Why Does God Demand Faith?**

The Word of God teaches that the manifestations of God in the church require an exercise of faith. This is not limited to divine healing and deliverance from demonism. It is also for verbally inspired miracles such as prophecy. Paul said, “*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us*

*prophesy according to the proportion of faith.”* (Rom. 12:6) We are told that faith pleases God:

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Heb 11:6)

The word “must” in this passage comes from the Greek word “dei.” Dr. Ken Chant, a Pentecostal scholar, says that this word “is more emphatic than the English word ‘must.’”<sup>14</sup> Chant further writes:

...it was associated with anything that was seen to be a fixed necessity or an irresistible purpose. It described an unchangeable fact, an invincible authority. It represented whatever was absolutely unshakeable in force or will. The early Christians took hold of “dei” and added to it the special meaning of “a divine imperative” – that is, something decreed by the immutable, indestructible, unalterable will of God. Hence it is used by John: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must (dei) soon take place” (Re 1:1). Nothing in heaven, on earth, or in hell can prevent what God has spoken from happening.<sup>15</sup>

So we see here that when God says that we *must* believe. On the strength of this “must” there is no alternative. This is the only way God can be pleased. When we please God then we see the fulfillment of our faith because He is a Rewarder.

Of course this means that the opposite is equally true—lack of faith displeases God. As we read this chapter in Hebrews, nearly every event mentioned is related to a supernatural event, whether the event is being translated while still alive, surviving a worldwide flood, having a child well past child-bearing years, walking across a divided Red Sea and then watching one’s opponents drown, etc. All of these happened as a result of the faith of those individuals involved.

Furthermore, we see that each person mentioned in Hebrews 11 placed their faith in some word or promise from God. Paul tells us “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” (Rom. 10:17) Paul also asked the Galatians, “*He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*” (Gal. 3:5) The faith that is produced from hearing God’s Word enables Him to work miracles

among us. If we are not seeing miracles among us is it because they have ceased or is it because we do not believe God's Word? I believe that it is the latter.

Faith is a product of God's Word. When we accept God's promises to perform miracles when we exercise faith, we are taking God at His Word and acknowledging it as true. As we understand this then we can understand why faith would please God and unbelief would displease Him. When we believe God's Word we are acknowledging it as true. When we do not believe God's Word then we are calling God's integrity into question. Basically, we are calling Him a liar (1 John 5:10).

I do not wish to sound harsh here. Many cessationists sincerely love God and would never intentionally call God a liar. God, in the end, judges the heart and its motives. Sadly, when we say that God does not work miracles in this dispensation based on nothing more than theological conjecture, we are indeed calling Him a liar, albeit unintentionally.

### **Faith Does Not Merely Believe that God is Able**

As we saw in Matthew 17:19, 20, Jesus stated that *unbelief* was the reason for the impotence of His disciples. Perhaps like so many Christians today, they did not deny God's omnipotence from an intellectual standpoint, but they seemed to have difficulty believing that they could appropriate this ability to fulfill the work of God. In other words, they doubted the integrity of God's Word and promises to them (see Matthew 10:1-3).

Unbelief is an area that prevents many a Christian from receiving God's miraculous intervention in their lives. Their lack of faith constantly limits what God will do on their behalf. Again, few people have trouble believing that God *can* do all things. Yet many have trouble believing that He *will* do all things for them. However, faith is not established upon an intellectual acknowledgment of God's *ability*. Faith is built upon the idea that God has made promises and that He is willing to exert supernatural power to perform them in our lives (See Rom. 4:19-21)

Some theologians seem to imply in their writings that God makes known His omnipotence for the primary purpose of some egotistical glory. They may not phrase it this way but that is what one derives from their writings. Yet, when we study Scripture we realize that God is not some egotistical braggart who talks about His power

only for the purpose of our knowledge of His greatness. He tells us about His power so that our faith in His Word is undergirded with the knowledge that no matter how great the promise, it can be accomplished (Psalm 106:6-12). Moses told the Israelites, “*But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand....*” (Deut. 7:8). Notice how God speaks about His “mighty hand” in relation to His love for Israel and His ability to keep His promise to them. God is not a braggart. He is a confidence builder. He speaks about His *might* in relation to His *willingness*.

Andrew Murray writes, “A minister once told me that, although God is able, the verse does not say He is willing to do it. God does not mock us, beloved. If He says He is ‘able’ then it is a proof of His willingness to do it. Do let us believe God's Word and examine our own experience in light of it.”<sup>16</sup> God has no need to have His ego stroked by pointless references to His ability. God makes mention of His ability so that we can trust Him to accomplish what He promised to do. God told Asa, “*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him*” (2 Chron. 16:9). God speaks of His power because He wants to show Himself strong on *our* behalf. Therefore, if we are going to have the omnipotence of God working on our behalf then it is essential that we not only believe that He is *able*, but that He is also *willing*.

## Conclusion

Biblical and historical testimony has been presented that should encourage the type of faith that God demands. God honors faith and makes His power available to those who simply take Him at His Word. Historical testimony encourages and strengthens our faith as we know that these are not “new discoveries” or some “reinterpretations of Scripture” brought to us by leading Charismatic ministers. While some have made accusations of cultic practices among a number of the Charismatic groups, especially those who emphasize the necessity for an active faith, the historical and Biblical evidence demonstrates otherwise. Sound and “orthodox” men of God have been teaching and practicing these truths for centuries.

One would think that this is sufficient for proving that the teaching that miracles ceased when the last apostle died simply cannot be true based on the Biblical and historical evidence. The miraculous

power of faith in God continued well into the preceding centuries. Sadly, many cessationists lift up materialistic powerless theology as a standard of “orthodoxy” and label as “heretical” and “aberrant” those who will take God at his Word and see Him move in mighty ways. But when one honestly looks at history, one would have to truly wonder who is “heretical” and “aberrant”.

It is our desire to move past the labels that we attach to one another. Let us look to God’s Word, humbly reject the unbelief that we pedal under the guise of “orthodoxy” and let us begin again to move in the miraculous power of God.



## Chapter Twelve

# The Cessationist Idea that Modern Miracles are Satanic

It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? (Matt. 10:25)

Cessationist unbelief very often leads to a number of rationalizations when genuine miracles occur. Some will claim that the “miracle” was a mere “coincidence.” There are also those who will claim that the “miracle” was not supernatural but came about through natural means. Then there are some that will claim that the miracle was not a miracle at all but was an event that was psychosomatically induced. Hank Hanegraaff makes this insinuation against some prominent Charismatic healing and revivalist ministers:

Like hypnotists and Hindu gurus, these “healers” use the power of suggestion to create placebos for psychosomatic symptoms and sickness. In truth, however, there is nothing supernatural about this kind of “healing.” Hinn and Howard-Browne can “heal” asthma, allergies and arthritis, but then, so can mesmerists and medicine men.<sup>1</sup>

Unbelief is reluctant to give God credit for any healing of sickness. Instead, it would prefer to view all such occurrences as fraudulent and it prefers to paint such men as hucksters who use gimmicks and trickery to make things happen rather than relying upon the power of Almighty God. Such harsh accusations are only a step away from insinuating that those who are involved in miracle ministries are agents of Satan.

### **From “Hypnotists” to “Agents of Satan”**

Kurt E. Koch unashamedly makes this leap. When a miracle occurs that cannot be explained by any means other than the fact that it was a supernatural occurrence, then many cessationists credit the

enemy of both God and man, Satan. These ideas are captured in a statement by Kurt E. Koch:

In reality, however, this so-called charismatic movement has issued a great sea of confusion, depending on evidences of power which owe much to religious suggestion, hysteria, hypnotic and occult influence. This pseudocharismatic awakening has become a worldwide threat to true Christians. The pseudocharismatics are the elite, the advance guard of Satan, who would use them to attack the best members of the church of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Cessationist John Phillips made similar statements concerning the Charismatic movement in his commentary on the epistle of John:

The modern charismatic movement exposes people to the occult, only in the name of Christianity and of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit here, through the pen of the apostle, warns us not to be taken in. Just because something is tinged with the supernatural does not validate it. We are bluntly warned, as those beloved of God, to be skeptical of all extrabiblical communications and to be wary of accepting them as valid. In this advanced age of Christianity in which we live, the so-called “charismatic” gifts--transitional at most--have long since been withdrawn by the Holy Spirit Himself (1 Cor. 12:14).<sup>3</sup>

Koch and Phillips accuse the Charismatic movement of exposing people to the occult, which we know is satanic in every way. Notice that the foundation for Phillips’ argument is his belief in the doctrine of cessationism. While using 1 John 4:1 as his “proof-text” for repudiating what he claims to be “extrabiblical communications” he misses the Apostle John’s point.

John wrote, “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.*” John is not saying that every “spirit” is an occultist spirit. If that were true then there would be no need to test them. John should have simply written, “Beloved, believe no spirit since the age of miracles are gone and there is no more supernatural communication.” Instead, John encouraged us not to reject every spirit but to simply try them to ensure that they are of God.

Paul said it this way, “*Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*” (1 Thess. 5:19-21). Paul makes it clear that we are not to reject prophesying. A cessationist such as Phillips misinterprets the Bible to teach otherwise. Christians are certainly not to accept every supernatural

communication as coming from God. They are to “prove” or “test” all things, and they are to “hold fast that which is good.” While cessationists want us to reject all supernatural communication, we are taught from Scripture to hold on to that which is good, or that which is consistent with God’s Word. This is only one example of how cessationist logic fails Biblically when alluding to the idea that all modern miracles are satanic in origin.

### **Is Satan the only One Allowed to Work Miracles?**

Has God withdrawn His power from His people while allowing His enemy, Satan, to have all of the power to perform miracles? It hardly seems sensible but this is the position that numerous cessationists have taken. In another comment, Phillips makes it absolutely clear that it is his belief that miracles in this dispensation are satanic in origin:

By the time John wrote this gospel the apostolic age was over. The visible appearances of the Lord had long since ceased. Faith had to replace sight. The “sign miracles” had ceased. It has been like that ever since. The Lord bestows a special beatitude on us: “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe.” Those today who crave miracles and signs are out of line with the Lord’s method in this age of people’s faith being based solely on God’s Word. As Paul put it, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). Those who insist on signs, wonders, and miracles can have them—at a price. Satan is only too willing to oblige.<sup>4</sup>

I’m afraid that once again Mr. Phillips has (I would assume unintentionally) manipulated God’s Word. While it is true that Jesus told Thomas, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe,” it was in relation to Thomas’ willing unbelief that Jesus had risen from the dead, in spite of the fact that the Lord had told his disciples numerous times that He would die and rise again. Furthermore, the Scriptures themselves taught this and there was no excuse for Thomas’ unbelief. Yet the Lord condescended to Thomas by appearing to him physically. Nevertheless, the Lord rebuked Thomas for *not believing that a miracle had taken place* (His resurrection). It is ironic that Phillips would use this passage to teach that faith is conducive to not believing that miracles are for today.

Jesus was not telling Thomas that a craving for miracles was not conducive to a walk of faith. In another part of the gospel of John

we read concerning the resurrection of Lazarus, “*Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*” (John 11:40). Rather than rebuking Martha for craving for a miracle, the Lord chastised her for *not* believing Him for one. Furthermore, Mark tells us, “*And these signs shall follow them that believe....*” among them being the ability to cast out devils, speak with new tongues, and healing the sick.

Phillips also misapplies Rom. 10:17 in which he implies that faith has its basis on hearing God’s Word and not on seeing miracles. This implication is only half right. If we will take God at His Word, without the cessationist commentaries, then we will actually develop our faith for the miraculous. Paul asked the Galatians, “*He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*” (Gal. 3:5). The reader should see how cessationists must strain God’s Word in order to teach the idea that all modern day signs and wonders are satanic.

### **Nothing New Under the Sun**

Sad to say, there is nothing new about the type of anti-charismatic rhetoric as seen above. Whenever and wherever God’s faithful people have discovered that God still works miracles today and have yielded to Him as channels for His power, persecution has taken place. Too often the persecution has come from the very people who should be excited about such events.

The most hurtful type of persecution a Christian can receive by other established and respected Christian leaders is to be labeled as “satanic.” During the beginnings of the Pentecostal movement on Azusa Street, this appeared to happen commonly according to Pentecostal historians:

The majority of the institutional holiness movement, which had been so instrumental in praying for a new Pentecost, came out vehemently against the revival. The leader of the Pentecostal Union Church, Bishop Alma White, accused the Azusa Street Revival of worshipping the devil while promoting and practicing witchcraft and sexual immorality. These charges were published in a book with the arresting title, *demon tongues*. Many of the holiness periodicals were quick to caution people that this could be a satanic counterfeit of what they were looking for, and within a short time began to say that the “tongues movement” was of the

devil. One holiness leader went so far as to call it the “last vomit of Satan.”<sup>5</sup>

Even in our day, the Azusa Street revival still has its critics.<sup>6</sup> As you read further, you will see that the harshest criticism among cessationists is concerning the Pentecostal doctrine of *speaking in tongues*. Needless to say, Pentecostals, Charismatics, Third Wavers, Word-Faith and other groups who affirm the present day miraculous interventions of God are in good company. Jesus too was accused of having a devil:

There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? (John 10:19-21)

Sadly, this was not the first time that the Lord was accused of being demon possessed or being in league with Satan. The Pharisees claimed that the miracles of deliverance wrought by Jesus were of satanic origin:

And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils (Luke 11:13, 14)

Matthew 12:24 specifically points out it was the Pharisees that made the accusation that Jesus casted out demons by the power of Satan. Our Lord who “*with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him*” (Acts 10:38) is accused of doing His work by the power of the devil. The parallel among cessationists in our day is strikingly similar.

### **Fear Mongering Among Anti-Charismatics**

The intentions of cessationists (and some anti-Pentecostal noncessationists) in using the tactics of the Pharisees in this day is to scare their listeners away from seeking the Charismata for today. If my

statement reads as harsh and uncharitable then I believe that it would be best for me to provide several examples from the pen of these men that will prove my point. The reader will then understand that I am presenting factual information.

One example of this modern day pharisaic tactic is found in a statement by Kurt E. Koch in which he tells us that believing and attempting to receive God's promise of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a chance for demons to inhabit Christians: "We see here again that demons sometimes claim to be Jesus. Further, it here becomes evident that the so-called *baptism of the Spirit* in the charismatic movement is usually an opportunity for demons to enter."<sup>7</sup>

In much of this book we have quoted Dr. Rice favorably as one who disputed cessationism and one who supported the belief that modern miracles were for today. I am sad to say, however, that when it came to tongues and other aspects of Pentecostal experience, Dr. Rice fit well within the cessationist camp as he utilized the same demon fear tactics that others use:

I recently had a very earnest letter from a young man who had been in the Pentecostal movement and had sought tongues. His wife had talked in tongues. Then he came to feel satanic influences taking hold of him in these services as he sought to speak in tongues. He escaped; now he writes earnestly urging me to warn people that evil spirits may take part when your mind turns blank and you give yourself over to whatever may happen to you. Leave a door into the psychic personality open and evil spirits may well enter.<sup>8</sup>

I am not sure why anyone would believe that one's mind must "turn blank" in order to receive the supernatural prayer language of the Holy Spirit promised in so many parts of the Bible (though I don't dispute that some have taught this), but to use this fear tactic to dissuade anyone from seeking something that the Bible says is available to the believer is certainly on par with the Pharasaic attacks on Jesus.

One of Rice's contemporaries, Hugh F. Pyle, claims that one man was not saved until he left the Pentecostals. In his book, "The Truth about Tongues and the Charismatic Movement" Pyle relates a conversation with a man who claims that he was saved AFTER leaving the Pentecostal Movement:

I asked him about what *he* thought “tongues” was. He said, “Preacher, it is just mumbo jumbo. Some run out of ‘maws maws’ and end up with e-i-e-i-o’s just like Old MacDonald’s Farm.” He said they used to beat on his back at the altar. People would be rocking and swaying, laying their hands on people until the “tongues” came out. He said it was of the Devil! He ought to know, as he had been in the movement all his life and was not saved until he came out of it.<sup>9</sup>

Pyle believes that this man is an expert because “he had been in the movement all his life.” I wonder if Pyle could accept a testimony as legitimate from a man who believed that the Independent Baptist Fundamentalist Movement was “of the Devil” simply because the person had been a part of that movement all their life. No doubt that Pyle would be quick to repudiate this claim on such thin evidence. Unbelief and prejudice often breeds hypocrisy.

Yet, it is statements like those quoted above that have brought fear among Christians who might otherwise seek God concerning His promises and also begin to cause doubt among those have experienced these blessings from God. John MacArthur’s conversation with a Pentecostal minister provides us with an example of this:

I talked with a man who is a leader in the modern Pentecostal movement, and he said to me, “You cannot deny my experience.”  
I responded by saying, “Well, let me ask you this: When an experience occurs, do you always, without question, know that it is of God? Be honest.”  
He answered, “No.”  
“Could it be of Satan?” I asked.  
He reluctantly replied, “Yes.”  
“Then how do you tell the difference?”  
My Charismatic friend had no answer.<sup>10</sup>

While I do not intend to be critical of the Pentecostal leader mentioned by MacArthur, I must point out an essential requirement for anyone confronting a cessationist and his logic: **KNOW YOUR BIBLE!** If you are going to initiate a conversation with a cessationist then at least know what your Bible says about your experience so that you are not so easily duped into doubting that your experience comes from God. Knowing our Bibles will give us the same confidence that Jesus had when He was confronted with similar accusations. Most cessationists are confident in their theology and the noncessationist must be equally confident.

## Having the Confidence of Jesus

When Jesus was told that His experience was of the devil, He did not begin to wonder and doubt. He countered his accuser's accusations with wisdom from His Father:

But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. (Luke 11:17-20)

Matthew renders the last verse this way: “*But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you*” (Matt. 12:28). Our Lord was confident in His experience. He did not doubt that it was the Holy Spirit working through Him to perform the miraculous. Why would Jesus set out to sincerely do the work of the Father only for the Father to step out of the way and allow Satan to work through Him? For Koch to say that the baptism of the Spirit in the charismatic movement is usually an opportunity for demons to enter is to go directly against all of the Holy Spirit inspired promises concerning this experience (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:8; 2:33, 38, 39).

Furthermore, the majority of experiences with the promised Holy Spirit baptism is most often accompanied by the recipient speaking in other tongues (Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-48; 19:1-7). If this were not an experience that one could seek then why would God have it recorded in His Word for us to learn from (2 Tim. 3:16)? Why would Paul tell us that we should “*covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues*” (1 Cor. 14:39)? If it were possible to get demon possessed when genuinely seeking God for this gift, shouldn't inspired Scripture have told us to forbid this practice altogether?

The truth is, when we ask God to genuinely bless us with an experience that is consistent with His Word, He will not turn us over to the devil. Just before Jesus refuted the accusation by the Pharisees that



He was operating by the spirit of Satan, He gave His disciples (and us) this encouraging promise:

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:11-13)

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that the one who earnestly seeks the Lord will not be put to shame by receiving a demonic substitute. If we seek God for a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit He is not going to leave us in the hands of a demonic spirit. David said, "...for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee" (Psalm 9:10). Solomon wrote, "*The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe*" (Prov. 29:25).

If I ask God to give me a supernatural tongue, why should I be afraid that He would forsake me and leave me in the hands of the devil? Jesus said these signs will follow them that believe:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (Mark 16:17, 18)

Notice that the passage distinguishes between what the believer will be able to do and what He will be able to "cast out." The believer has authority to *cast out demons* but also the ability to *speak with new tongues* if he so desires. If a person seeks "tongues" and receives a "demon" then this passage is meaningless and God's Word cannot be trusted.

In my experience, tongues have never brought demons. On the contrary, supernatural tongues have driven devils away. I recall the time when I first received the baptism with the Holy Spirit. I was so elated that I went home that night praying in tongues. I was so overwhelmed with excitement that I prayed in my bedroom very loud

and for a lengthy amount of time. However, I did not realize how loud I was praying.

Sometime later a wonderful Christian lady that worked close to my office came to visit me. She asked me if I believed in speaking in tongues. I answered “yes.” She then began to relate a story to me. She said, “My daughter lives next door to you and she told me that one night she saw two demons walking around in her room. She was very frightened. Moments later she heard you next door praying in tongues. She told me that when you started praying in tongues those demons became afraid and disappeared.” After hearing this I realized then that I possessed something very powerful.

God’s promises do not put us at risk for demons. On the contrary, God’s promises, when fulfilled, drive demons away. Men have brought fear to both seekers and possessors alike with their stories of demonism, but God promised that He would not forsake those who seek Him and that those who do trust Him will be safe.

### **Criticizing those Who Take God at His Word**

In spite of God’s solid promises that He will give us the very thing that we ask for (and not a substitute), some cessationists chastise Charismatic believers for seeking these Biblical experiences without fear. For example, Hanegraaff criticizes Toronto Airport Vineyard Pastor John Arnott for “throwing caution to the wind”<sup>10</sup> as he calls it:

Another reason for failing to receive is people’s fear of deception. The antidote, says Arnott, is not to become a good discerner, but instead, when you come “asking to be filled with the Holy Spirit, I don’t even entertain the thought that you might get a counterfeit.”<sup>11</sup>

Hanegraaff sarcastically adds “Caution would be a big mistake.”<sup>12</sup> However, Arnott was not telling his people to “throw caution to the wind,” “not become a good discerner,” nor did he insinuate that “caution would be a big mistake.” Only a cessationist bias that is built more on the fear of what the devil can do vice the promises of God would lead someone to misinterpret Arnott’s statements as Hanegraaff has done.

Contrary to Mr. Hanegraaff misinterpretation, Arnott is simply stating his belief that one who comes to God with sincere faith in His promise need not sit in fear that God would turn His back and let Satan possess him. It is sad that Cessationists use fear tactics to dissuade

others from experiencing the supernatural experiences that God has promised.

Hanegraaff is, ironically, an ordained minister with Calvary Chapel. He was ordained by Chuck Smith himself. While Pastor Smith is certainly not one who endorses all of the experiences in the Charismatic Movement and is no friend of the Vineyard church, neither does he seem to embrace the fearful caution of Hanegraaff and his fellow cessationists. Smith writes:

I want to be open to God. As I open myself unto God, I do so unreservedly, without any fears. I don't worry about the bogeyman stories that we so often hear, about some poor fellow who opened himself to God and they carried him away to the booby-hatch a blithering idiot. He made the mistake of saying, "God, I want to be filled with your Spirit," and that did it! What a blasphemous concept of God and of Jesus!<sup>13</sup>

Smith quotes Luke 11:13 to support his view. I believe that Hanegraaff would do well to listen more thoroughly to the Biblical view of the man who ordained him into the ministry and accepted him as a minister within his denomination. Otherwise, Hanegraaff and others are coming close to committing the sin of blasphemy if they have not already done so (see Matt. 12:30-32). Opening oneself up to God is not *throwing caution to the wind*. Rather, it is putting one's trust in God's plain and clear promises.

### **Lying Signs and Wonders in the Last Days**

The propagators of fear often point to the fact that there will be much supernatural satanic activity in the last days. In order to refute modern day miracles, many of them appeal to Scriptures that refer to last days satanic miracles (2 Thess. 2:8-10; Matt. 24:24; Rev. 13:11-14). No doubt that Satan is able to work "lying signs and wonders," yet, I am not sure why anyone would consider this to be a sound rebuttal against genuine Pentecostal and Charismatic doctrine concerning the miraculous.

The devil's greatest deception is to present so many counterfeits to Christians and then give them a fear of the genuine. Even worse, too many Christians fall for it. For example, John Calvin (and Martin Luther in the beginning of the reformation) rejected the miraculous gifts of the Lord due to the strange and often ungodly miracles that occurred among the Roman Catholics. This over-reaction

in response to demonic activity is exactly what the Deceiver is looking for. And again, Christians fall for it. Thankfully, Luther later rejected this cessationist dogma and began seeing mighty answers to prayer for healings and other miracles.

When the church rejects or neglects the supernatural, Satan takes advantage of this by supplying his own lying signs and wonders. This is how we lose so many to the cults. People who begin as Christians see non-Christian and Pseudo-Christian cults moving in the miraculous. They look at their own churches that bring great dissertations from the pulpit but the service is as dead as a roach sprayed with Raid, and they make haste over to the cults. Screaming at the top of our lungs about these defectors being “reprobate” and “heretics” hasn’t won them back. That’s because the DEADNESS in many cessationist churches speaks louder than their apologetic skills and ability to tear apart the cult’s doctrine.

Many of these cessationists are more concerned about the devil’s activities in the last days than God’s activities. Because we are said to be living in the last days, many cite those Bible passages about Satan’s lying miracles out of fear of any purported miracle. They seem to believe that in the last days God will withdraw His own power and let Satan continually have his own way. Unfortunately, cessationist theology has a selective bias concerning “last days” passages. The Bible does not limit the last days’ miraculous events only to the kingdom of darkness. God intends to do some great miraculous things in the last days as well:

And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, saith God, **I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:** And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out **in those days** of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:17-21)

Therefore, we do not deny that God warned us about *satanic* miracles in the last days, but God also promised *genuine* miracles during these days as well. Why is it that religious people put more faith in the work of the devil than they do in God's promises? Cessationism has brought about fear of Satan, and this is ungodly and spiritually unhealthy.

### **God's Power for Spiritual Warfare**

No child of God should be sitting in fear of satanic miracles. God has promised to give us authority over all the miracle working power of the enemy:

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. (Luke 10:17-19)

If we would simply stop putting off God's promises for some period other than our own, or if we would make a decision to cease our unbelief in His willingness to demonstrate His power on our behalf, then not only will we cease having an unhealthy fear in the works of Satan, but we will also counter the works of the enemy, including his false miracles.

If one desires to combat those lying signs and wonders in these last days, one must combat them with TRUE SIGNS AND WONDERS!!! This fearful attitude that because "Satan works signs and wonders then Christians should not want any part of that miracle stuff" is nothing more than Satan's deception over the church to keep it from operating in the fullness in which God intended it. God did not give us the new birth to make us spiritual wimps and leave us without a means for proclaiming His Name amongst heathens working black magic. He expects us to believe Him to work with us in overcoming the lying signs and wonders of the enemy. When will the church wake up and realize that we are in warfare with the kingdom of darkness?

When Moses was confronted with the powers of darkness, he saw how God's power was able to crush that of Satan's. For example, Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate the miracles God wrought

through Moses by satanic power, but God demonstrates His superiority over the devil by having Moses' rod eat theirs (Ex. 7:9-12). On other occasions the magicians were able to duplicate the miracles performed through Moses, however, they were not able to *undo* what God was doing (Ex. 7:15-22; 8:1-7). Since the satanic magicians could *duplicate* but not *undo* God's work, Pharaoh finally had to humble himself and ask Moses to pray to the true God to have Him stop the plagues, demonstrating God's superior power over Satan's (Ex. 8:8-13).

However, it finally got to a point where Satan could no longer duplicate God's miracles and his agents, the magicians, had to admit the superior power of the true God (Ex. 8:16-19). After God punished Pharaoh's continuous obstinacy with a plague of boils (Ex. 9:1-10), we are told, "And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians" (Ex. 9:11).

Moses' defeat of satanic magicians is only one of many examples found in Scripture. In the New Testament we learn about how the Apostle Paul was confronted with satanic power on an island called Paphos:

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. (Acts 13:8-12)

Not only did Paul exercise the authority of the believer in demonstrating that the power of God was superior to demonic miracles, but a ranking official was converted to Christ as a result. How much more could the Christian church do in winning those who

are in bondage to satanic cults by simply demonstrating that God's power is greater than Satan's. We will not win such people with intellectual arguments alone. They need to see that our God still has power over the power of darkness.

The Bible has so much more to say about this. We could easily recount Elijah's defeat of the prophets of Baal (Ex. 18:21-40). We can look at the numerous New Testament accounts in which God's believers exercised authority over demons by the miraculous power of God. Miracle power is God's power for waging successful warfare against the powers of darkness.

### **Modern Day Missions and Demon Power**

The Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal denomination, have reported in their periodicals about how God has manifested His power on behalf of their missionaries on numerous occasions. One of them was on an occasion in Mongolia where they were confronted with demonic power:

Outer Mongolia was isolated from the gospel for 2,000 years. The people are proud of their ancestral heritage with Genghis Khan. These nomadic people live in gers (felt tents) across the plains north of the Gobi Desert. When a crack came in the door to the country and it was about to open, Assemblies of God missionaries went to see what could be done. With no Bible in the Mongolian language and only a minimum of Christian literature, a crusade was held in the capital Ulan Bator. The first night a young deaf man was healed in the meeting, and others were touched by the power of God. In 3 days, 500 people responded to the gospel. The last night a demon-possessed monk was trying to prevent people from coming to the Lord. In front of 800 Mongolians, the power of God bound the power of Satan. People who lived in fear of demonic power and control witnessed a greater power. The kingdom of God came to Mongolia. After the monk was cast out of the meeting, people ran forward to the altar. As they came, they discarded their Buddhist prayer papers, their amulets, and their prayer beads. Signs and wonders authenticated the call to follow Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

Here we have provided to us another modern example demonstrating the vital need for signs and wonders in our day. Why would God allow Satan to work all kinds of miracles in the last days while leaving His own people without any power at all. It certainly

presents a distorted view of our Heavenly Father to believe that He would do this.

It is sad that many missionaries who have been taught cessationism are unprepared for the satanic confrontations they meet with in other countries. Rather than recognizing the supernatural demonic power behind the witchdoctors and sorcerers they meet, they simply dismiss their practices as superstitious nonsense. Others who do recognize that this is satanic power are unprepared to deal with it. Missionaries who survive these encounters often find that their intellectual and rationalistic efforts are unsuccessful in winning the natives to Christ. God's supernatural power is needed today if we are going to demonstrate Christ's victory over Satan and win the lost to Him.

### **Conclusion**

Many cessationists, while believing that miracles have ceased, admit that Satan is able to work signs and wonders. Therefore, the cessationist is not fully a cessationist in every sense of the word since he/she believes that miracles are still happening. They simply give Satan the credit for most modern day miracles. It appears to me that cessationists have more faith in the power of Satan than God.

However, Satan did not begin working his miracles when the so-called "Christian age of miracles" supposedly ceased. He was also working lying signs and wonders through false apostles and prophets long before the completion of the New Testament or the death of the last apostle, the events in which it is said that modern miracles ceased. It is sad when Christian leaders ascribe so much power to Satan and, while believing that God is all-powerful, teach that He is parsimonious in giving that power to His own church, thus leaving us at the mercy of satanic supernatural power.

Nonetheless, we can take comfort in the fact that Scripture gives us a totally different perspective of God: one in which our God still gives His people authority and power to defeat the already defeated powers of darkness in the task of evangelizing the world and helping God's needy people.



## Chapter Thirteen

### More Cessationist Arguments Refuted

In this chapter I will attempt to briefly deal with a few more cessationist arguments that I did not feel were necessary to dedicate whole chapters to. Many of these arguments can be found scattered in numerous Evangelical commentaries, books on theology, devotional books, and practical Christian living books. When reading such books, the Christian must be on his or her guard against certain statements of unbelief.

#### **1. The sign gifts have ceased. Miracles and healings continue, though now, for the most part, they are of a spiritual rather than of a physical nature.**

This may be the experience of the writer above but Scripture does not support this as the norm for the church. Jesus said:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (Mark 16:17, 18)

Notice at least two things about the passage: First, Jesus said that these signs will *follow* them that *believe*. Notice it does *not* say “These signs *followed* them that *believed*” nor does it even imply that the promise was meant to be limited to that particular time. It speaks as present-continuous, letting us know that it is meant to be applied by the reader. If the Lord meant these to be temporary then He should have stated this, or He should not have had it recorded in the way that He did so that we would read it and get the false impression that it was profitable to us in some way (2 Tim. 3:16).

Second thing to notice is that all of these signs were of a *physical* nature. There is no mistaking this or the promise in James which says, “*And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be*

*forgiven him*” (James 5:15). Notice how the spiritual (forgiveness) and the physical (healing) are both promised in this passage. The Lord’s benefits do not only include “forgiving all our iniquities” (spiritual) but they also include “healing all our diseases” (physical) (see Psalm 103:1-4). We see an example of the Lord extending both to a paralyzed man (Mark 2:4-12).

There is no Biblical authority to claim that sign gifts have ceased nor is there any reason to give us a watered down version of God’s promises in that imply that we have more of a guarantee of God’s “spiritual” benefits with only rare occurrences of any physical miracles.

## **2. The only miracles we have today are internal miracles of regeneration, sanctification, and the granting of prayers, which are greater than external miracles.**

This argument is somewhat close to the one above. Like the first one we see no biblical basis for asserting that “internal miracles” are still for today while “external miracles” have ceased. Neither is there any Scriptural authority for determining that one is better than the other. This is nothing more than western philosophy which denies the possibility of physical manifestations from God in our time.

The external miracles mentioned by the individual above are indeed vitally important. Apart from regeneration we are hell-bound. We need the new birth. We also need to be sanctified so that we can live in victory over sin. However, Scripture does not teach that we can have this and nothing else. The same church in Corinth that was “*sanctified in Christ Jesus*” (1 Cor. 1:2) was the same one that “*came behind in no [miraculous] gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor. 1:7).

It is interesting that this individual places the idea that “granting of prayers” is an “internal miracle.” This could only be true if one believes that the sole purpose of prayer was to change “us” but not to change external circumstances or providing us with something we would not have had apart from praying. We refuted this unscriptural idea in chapter nine. Statements of this nature demonstrate how far from Scripture cessationism treads.

## **3. The only miracle needed in our generation is the new birth.**

While those who advocate this position give us numerous philosophical reasons for it, like every other cessationist arguments, it

does not hold up well when the light of Scripture is shined upon it. If we read the Scriptures, we will see that the thing that drew Nicodemus to Jesus so that he may learn the truth about the new birth was miracles:

The same [Nicodemus] came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:2-3)

How can the average sinner believe that God will actually bring about the *internal* miracle of the new birth if he does not believe that God will do any external miracles? Why do many critics of Christianity use the term “born again Christian” with such invectiveness? Why is it that even some so-called Christians do not believe that the new birth is a literal fact and believe it is nothing more than metaphoric language?

If Jesus had never performed any miracle then it is unlikely that Nicodemus would have been interested in talking to him. If Nicodemus had never held the conversation with Jesus record in John chapter three then it is possible that we would not have one of the clearest teachings on the new birth found in Scripture.

As stated earlier, the new birth is essentially and vitally important because without it we are hell-bound. Nonetheless, it is unbiblical to say that it is the only thing needed while claiming that external miracles are meaningless. External miracles paved the way for teaching on the new birth, and they are still important today to help sinners understand that God is still a miracle-working God and will give us a new birth.

#### **4. God’s greatest miracles is not the healing of physical ailments but the peace that He gives.**

Such a statement demonstrates blatant ignorance of Scripture. It also would behoove the cessationist to look up the word “peace” in the Bible. The Hebrew word “shalom” is not limited to the western understanding (tranquility of mind) but is also in reference to “welfare,

health, and prosperity.” The word is used twice in reference to physical health in the Old Testament (Gen. 43:28; 2 Sam. 20:9).

The Greek equivalent of *shalom* which is *eirine* means “security, safety, prosperity, felicity.” Jesus, demonstrated that giving someone “peace of mind” while leaving them with a sick body was not something He personally advocated when He said to the woman with the issue of blood, “*Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace*” (Luke 8:43-48). Why did He not chastise her for wanting physical health? Why did He not tell her, go in peace but you need not be made whole since wholeness is a minor miracle and peace is the greatest?”

As usual, the cessationist argument has no merit in Scripture, especially when it attempts to lift up a supposedly “spiritual” benefit as something grand and any physical miracle as something trivial and not to be sought after. Jesus cared for both the woman’s body and her tranquility of mind.

## **5. God performs miracles today but the big showy miracles of the days of the apostles are no longer a part of God’s plan.**

The idea above insinuates that God does not respond to prayer in the dramatic ways that He did during the times in which Scripture was being recorded (see Acts 4:29-31). Of course no passage of Scripture is presented to justify this belief. This seems to be a partial-cessationist theory that implies that we may have *some* miracles but we should not expect any major ones. Ironically, the idea above comes from a book teaching on prayer. Contrary to the partial-cessationist idea above, the Scriptures teach that God has still chosen to give large answers to large prayers:

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. (James 5:16-18)

Paul wrote, “*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that*

*worketh in us*” (Eph. 3:20). Why would we want God to do only little when He is not only able, but willing to do much more than we could ever ask or think? If we are not receiving “big showy miracles” from God it is not due to His unwillingness, but it is due to a failure to believe (Matt. 17:20) and a failure to ask for them (James 4:2).

Jesus said, “*According to your faith be it unto you*” (Matt. 9:29). The size of our faith determines the size of our answer to prayer. If we expect God to only do small things, then that is what we shall receive. However, those of us who seek God for greater things (for His glory and not ours) will receive those “big showy miracles” of apostolic times.

## **6. An evil generation seeks after a sign**

Cessationists who use this argument base it on the following passage:

And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet (Luke 11:29)

This is nothing more than a distortion of the Lord’s words. It seems that when one is desperate to find biblical support for an unbiblical ideology, one will resort to any tactic, to include Scripture-twisting. Nonetheless, when we read Matthew’s account, we understand fully why the Lord made this statement:

And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, ***tempting him***. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. (Matt. 8:11, 12)

The motives of the Pharisees in asking for a sign was not from a genuine need for healing, deliverance, encouragement, comfort, or any of the other reasons why the Lord worked miracles. For example, in one of the gospel accounts in which the Lord rebuked the Pharisees for asking for a sign, the Scriptures records Him rebuking His disciples for forgetting the fact that Jesus was willing to do miracles in order to

care for them (Mark 8:10-21). Another example is provided by John as he records the story of how one nobleman came to Jesus for the healing of his son. While Jesus seemed to rebuke the man for failing to believe unless he saw signs and wonders, He nonetheless healed the man's son (John 4:46-54).

On the other hand, the Pharisees had a devilish motive about them that was no different than that which Satan himself wanted to do when he attempted to make the Lord "prove" to the people that He truly was their Messiah (Matt. 4:6, 7). To miss this point and apply only one portion of what Jesus said to a whole group of sincere Christians who simply believe the promises of God is borderline wickedness.

As we saw in chapter ten, according to Jesus, a generation that *cannot* believe God for miracles is a "faithless and perverse" one (Matt. 17:15-18). Either the Lord contradicts Himself (unlikely) or cessationists are misapplying Scripture (more than likely). God has promised signs and wonders to believers (Mark 16:15-18) and tells us to seek spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 12). Therefore, the *seeker* should not submit to this type of cessationist blackmail.

## **7. Charismatics are focused more on experience than doctrine.**

This argument has more holes than an overused dart board. Unfortunately, many Pentecostals and Charismatics have allowed cessationists to use this argument to shame them into focusing more on *intellectualism* and less on the miraculous. Now we have many Pentecostals and Charismatics who are this only in name. They affirm the miraculous being for today but hardly ever believe God to work miracles. Too many have compromised the power of God in order to be accepted into mainstream Christianity. Many of them have also become persecutors themselves by calling "fanatics" those who continue to trust God for the miraculous. I have often referred to these types as "noncessationists cessationists." They have an intellectual affirmation of the gifts being for today but no present experiences and join with cessationists in criticizing those who do.

Nonetheless, history and present day research can prove that the foundation for cessationist doctrine is from *lack of experience*. Furthermore, cessationist doctrine, as seen from our study, is unbiblical doctrine. If Charismatics are to focus on "doctrine" then they should focus on the "doctrine of the Lord." After Paul, full of the Holy Spirit, brought divine miraculous retribution upon a sorcerer who

opposed him, Luke wrote, “*Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord*” (Acts 13:12).

What is the “doctrine of the Lord” that amazed the deputy? It was not an intellectual argument that Paul gave him, though Paul did use intellectual reasoning to convince people of the gospel (Acts 17:1-19), but *the doctrine of the Lord* is one that includes signs and wonders. Look at what the people said about Jesus when He brought deliverance to a man tormented by demons:

And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. (Mark 1:27)

They asked “what new *doctrine* is this.” Biblically speaking, when Charismatics pursue experiences promised in Scripture, they are pursuing *doctrine*. It is simply a doctrine that is not endorsed by cessationism. Charismatics are in good company with Peter and John since the Pharisees of their time rejected their doctrine of the miraculous as well (see Acts 5:12-28). Nevertheless, the Apostle John wrote, “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son*” (2 John 9). Cessationists need to be careful before claiming to have the high ground based solely on their bias scholasticism.

Church life and Christian community was never meant to be solely a scholastic and intellectual acknowledgment of “truth” (though we question how much “truth” is taught in many “theologies” that are accepted as “orthodox”),<sup>1</sup> but was also meant to include miraculous experience (1 Cor. 14:6, 26). Charismatics should be sure to have *Biblical doctrine* taught consistently, but experience of the miraculous should not be neglected at the expense of doctrine.

## **8. The miracles of Christ we are to work in our age is feeding the hungry and helping the poor.**

While I wholeheartedly agree that Christians are supposed to feed the hungry and help the poor (and the majority of Charismatics and Pentecostals most certainly do this), I could accept this as a

“miracle” if we fed them in the supernatural way that Jesus did when He fed a crowd of 5,000 men (not counting women and children) with only five loaves of bread and two fish (Matt. 14:13-21) and on another occasion He fed 4,000 men (not counting women and children) with seven loaves of bread and a few little fish (Matt. 15:29-39).

If we are not helping the poor and feeding the hungry in this manner then we cannot truly classify any of our efforts as “miracles,” at least we cannot classify them in the way that Scripture defines the word “miracle.” They may be good works and pleasing to God, but they are not “miracles.”

Needless to say, the poor can also be helped when their sicknesses are miraculously healed so that they will not have to spend the little money that they have on medical care. It also enables them to work so that they can provide for their families. What better help can be given to the poor, besides food, clothing and shelter than to also have deliverance and healing? Jesus and the apostles helped many poor people in this manner.

## **9. Miracles are the swaddling clothes of infant churches**

The insinuation here is that those who believe that they no longer need God’s miracle-working power in their church are mature and enlightened. No longer do their sick need to be healed, their demon oppressed need to be delivered, their discouraged need the edification that comes through prophecy, nor any of the other spiritual gifts given for the benefit of the church. Many of these cessationists believe that God brings His children to maturity through suffering hardships such as sickness, tragedy, and other types of suffering. They teach that since miracles are usually meant to relieve these sufferings, and since such suffering is supposed to make us more mature, then miracles are for the immature, the infant church.

Nevertheless, there is no indication in Scripture that miracles were for the immature while a lack of them were for the mature. Paul accused the Corinthians, one of the most Charismatic churches mentioned in Scripture, of being “babes in Christ.” However, this was not due to the fact that they had miracles in their church. On the contrary, Paul commended the Corinthians for the fact that they came behind in no gift (1 Cor. 1:7). Paul states that their immaturity was due to the dividedness and strife among them (1 Cor. 3:1-10).

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews also accused his audience of being “babes,” but again it was not due to the fact that



they had miracles working among them. The writer of the Hebrew epistle says that they were immature because he had to teach them the elementary principles of Christianity (Heb. 5:11-6:2). In neither of these cases, or any other place in the Scriptures, are we told that having miracles is a mark of a church's "infancy." We are told that immaturity is due to division, strife, and failure to move on from basic Christian teachings.

Nor is there even the slightest hint in Scripture that a lack of miracles is the sign of a mature church. On the contrary, we are told that a lack of miracles is usually due to dryness and unbelief (Mark 6:5, 6). Considering this Biblical fact, cessationists should not be so quick to pat themselves on the back and proclaim their *maturity*.

### **10. Prophecy is adding to Scripture**

Some believe that because of the closing of the canon that there is no more need for God to give personal revelation. If prophecy is given then it is supposedly extra-biblical and is adding to the Scripture, something that is forbidden by the Scripture itself (Rev. 22:18, 19).

This argument fails to account for the fact that Scripture records numerous people who have prophesied genuinely for the Lord, and none of the prophetic utterances were included within the canon of Scripture. Here are just a few examples: Moses had seventy upon whom the Spirit was given who prophesied (Num. 11:25, 26). King Saul and a number of prophets prophesied without having any of their utterances added to Scripture (1 Sam. 2:1-13; see also 1 Sam. 19:20-24). Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied but none of them added anything to Scripture (Acts 21:8, 9). The Corinthians were encouraged to utilize the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1-5) but there is no indication that any of their prophecies became a part of holy writ.

Based on these facts we can see that the cessationist argument is groundless for claiming that Charismatics are "adding to Scripture" when they prophesy. Quite often, a prophecy within a church setting is meant for that local church or particular individuals needing encouragement, correction or confirmation from the Lord. No true prophecy will ever deviate from Scripture but will always be consistent with it. Scripture is how prophecy is to be judged. Any prophecy that contradicts Scripture must be rejected. Nonetheless, prophesying itself is not against Scripture. Actually, rejecting personal prophecy is a violation of Scripture (1 Thess. 5:19-21), which demonstrates that cessationist theology is unbiblical teaching.

## **11. False prophets are condemned in Scripture.**

False prophets most certainly are condemned in Scripture and cessationists often use this as a whipping stick against Charismatics due to the fact that some have prophesied falsely (some intentionally and others unintentionally). This has, admittedly, been a source of embarrassment for many of us.

However, some of the same Scriptures that condemn false prophets also condemn false teachers:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction (2 Pet. 2:1).

The Evangelical community is full of false teachers who teach a distorted view of God in which He is made to be responsible for all of the evil and sin that is in the world. This is supposed to be “orthodox” theology. We have shown throughout this book that cessationism is a false teaching; therefore, those who teach this theology *could* be classified as false teachers, that is, if we are to go by the standards that the cessationists use to judge the Charismatics.

James warned against people becoming teachers since we would receive the greater condemnation (James 3:1). Therefore, my cessationist friends should not be as concerned about the false prophesying among the Charismatics as they should be about the many teachers within their Evangelical community who teach so-called Orthodox theology that does not line up with the Scripture.

## **12. All of the false cults and religions claim to have miracles.**

This is true. Many of the false cults and religions may be faking miracles and others may actually have demons working on their behalf to perform lying signs and wonders (2 Thess. 2:9). However, why would this fact be criteria for rejecting genuine miracles in our day? False cults and religions have had demons working miracles on their behalf for centuries. Remember Moses and the Egyptian magicians?

We are not to embrace cessationism out of fear that cults and false religions also have some claims of the miraculous in their midst.

We are to simply look for the genuine miracles within the true church of Jesus Christ. Paul explained as much to the Corinthians:

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 12:1-3).

Paul could have discouraged them from moving in the miraculous since there were plenty of cults around them worshipping dumb idols, idols that may at times exhibit demonic power (Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; 2 Chron. 11:15; Psalm 106:37; 1 Cor. 10:20, 21; Rev. 9:20; 16:14). However, Paul knew that there was a “false” as well as a “genuine” and differentiated between the two while continuing to encourage the Corinthians to covet and pursue the miraculous gifts.

One of the reasons that many are attracted to the cults in the first place is because they view the church as powerless and find that the cults have power to help them (at a price of course). God is concerned for their soul and in this warfare between God and Satan, in which we are a part, shouldn't we have the greater One and His power displayed in our midst in order to defeat the kingdom of darkness and its agenda?

**13. Modern miracles in the church are few and uncertain. Most who claim to work them are pretenders. This proves their cessation.**

Cessationists who make statements like these do not realize that they are contradicting themselves. The cessationist statement above admits that there are miracles in the modern church. He simply believes that they are “few and uncertain.” The cessationist above does not say that *all* who work miracles are pretenders; he says *most* are. This means that there must be *some* genuine miracle workers in the church from this perspective.

Yet, in spite of admitting that there are a few miracles in the church and some miracle workers are not pretenders, this cessationist claims that the few miracles and miracle workers proved that they have *ceased*. How could they have ceased if there are some there?

Does the reader see the irony in this statement as well as the utter ridiculousness of it? You cannot prove that something has ceased by stating that they have not ceased. You cannot prove that something has ceased by stating that there is very little activity concerning it. Cessation means *no* miracles and *no* miracle workers, not *few* miracles and *some* miracle workers.

The cessationist above is a good example of one who promotes the doctrine of cessationism based on *experience*, or lack thereof. If there are a *few* miracles or *no* miracles, the fault is due to unbelief and not to any decree from God that this should be:

And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching (Mark 6:5-6)

In this village there were only a *few* miracles. The Bible is clear that there were no mighty miracles being done. Yet, rather than proving their cessation, the divine record says that it was due to *unbelief*. This cessationist contradicts the Bible and *himself*.

**14. As Christianity became established in the world, it could point to its continued moral effects as the best evidence of its truth, and the necessity for outward physical miracles ceased.**

If I did not believe that this cessationist was serious then I would probably believe that the above statement was written in jest. History shows us that when miracles had ceased, it was due to the church *compromising* with the world. Christians began persecuting one another and attempted forced conversions of people of other religions. Anyone with any knowledge of history would scoff at the idea that the church was able to point to its “moral effects.” When cessationism became the norm in compromised Christianity, holiness was substituted for extreme asceticism or outright immorality.

However, even if the statement is true, why would the average sinner be interested in Christian morality. Many people of non-Christian religions believe that they have better moral lives than many of the Christians they have met (and they have sadly been correct about that all too often). Those involved in no religion at all have their own standards of morality. I was just recently sharing Jesus with a non-Christian man who began to tell me what a good person he is and

gave me a list of his virtues. He had no interest in Christian morality because he already had his own standards of morality. On the other hand, when I have prayed for someone in their hopeless situation and they see God answer that prayer, this usually gets their interest.

Recently we had a sister in our church relate to me a testimony about a Hindu lady that she works with. This sister is an excellent example of moral living but that was not having an effect on the Hindu lady she befriended. However, one day the Hindu lady came to her to tell her that her husband had been in the hospital in a coma. Our sister simply said, "Let's pray" and she offered a prayer for this Hindu and her husband in Jesus name. The next day the girl came back to work excited. She said, "HE WOKE UP!" Three days in the hospital with a coma and nothing that the medical professionals could do. One prayer offered by a regular Christian woman and the man woke up. This got the Hindu lady's attention and caused her to inquire more about Christianity.

Christians should certainly be the perfect examples of moral living because we have the Holy Spirit in us and He gives us the power to live holy. However, Christians should also endeavor to walk in the power of God and to allow themselves to be His channels to bring blessing to the world. Then we can point to both our power to live holy as well as the gracious compassion of a miracle working God who is ready to relieve suffering.

### **15. Miracles ceased for a time after the apostles died but will be renewed again in the last days.**

Nothing in Scripture indicates that God gave a period between the early church and the end times in which miracles were to cease only to be renewed again later. They were supposed to continue from the earliest days until the coming of Christ. Nevertheless, even if the statement above is true, everything going on in our world indicates that we are living in what the Bible refers to as "the last days" (2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Pet. 3:3-7). Is there any reason why we should not be experiencing the miraculous if all the other signs concerning the last days are manifesting?

In Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, he applied the promise of miracles to the last days at the very moment that they were experiencing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit:

And it shall come to pass in the **last days**, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy (Acts 2:17-18)

Now this happened two thousand years ago, and yet Peter applied a “last days” promise of the miraculous to his present time. Cessationists either do not believe their own statements or they do not realize that their theological position contradicts Biblical revelation. The “last days” does not have a break in between the events in Peter’s time and some future period. *These are the last days* and in these last days we can expect God to do miracles.

#### **16. Christian miracles ceased when their purpose, faith in God’s immanent working, was achieved.**

There are at least two problems with this statement, the first being that it puts “faith in God’s immanent working” on an intellectual level in which we hail and give tribute to all that God has done in the past, but have no true expectation that God will do anything in the present or the immediate future. This is not true faith of the Biblical sense. The kind of faith that God demands is one in which we still expect Him to work (Heb. 11:6) and one in which we expect miracles to be wrought by answer to prayer (Mark 9:23; 11:22-24). Once again, cessationists deviate from the teaching of Scripture by redefining faith to make their unbelief appear to be what it is not.

The second problem with the statement above is that miracles were never meant to be the primary source of faith production. On the contrary, faith was meant to produce miracles since *usually* miracles cannot come about where faith is absent. In the majority of places in the gospels and Acts where a miracle was wrought, faith was already present before the miracle came about. Jesus almost always gave credit to the faith of the individual for bringing about the miracle.

Therefore, if miracles ceased then there is no more need to have “faith in God’s immanent working.” The Bible’s teaching on faith primarily deals with being able to perform supernatural exploits by the power of God. If God has decided to no longer work miracles then He has redefined what it means to have faith and has relegated

His Word to nothing more than a history book of past exploits. This book then will have no more power than a textbook on American History – informative but not necessarily life changing. I believe that this cessationist idea once again falls short of Biblical revelation.

**17. The evidence for the cessation of miracles is proven from the time that Chrysostom declared that even with their prayers, church leaders could not work genuine miracles.**

Chrysostom is sometimes quoted by those on both sides of the cessationist/continuationist debate. Either Chrysostom was inconsistent or one side is misquoting him. However, Chrysostom’s experience of the operation of the miraculous in his day should not be as important to us as what Scripture teaches. We have proven in this book that there is absolutely no Biblical support for the cessationist position and the few Scriptures used to support it are shown to be misused by its proponents. Historically, miracles did cease to a certain extent but as we appeal to the Bible we find that it was not due to God’s willingness but to the Church’s worldliness and unbelief. Interestingly enough, Chrysostom seems to also support this position:

What now can be more awful than these things? For in truth the Church was a heaven then, the Spirit governing all things, and moving each one of the rulers and making him inspired. But now we retain only the symbols of those gifts...they thus used to speak, not of their own wisdom, but moved by the Spirit. But not so now: (I speak of mine own case so far.) But the present Church is like a woman who hath fallen from her former prosperous days, and in many respects retains the symbols only of that ancient prosperity; displaying indeed the repositories and caskets of her golden ornaments, but bereft of her wealth: such an one doth the present Church resemble. And I say not this in respect of gifts: for it were nothing marvelous if it were this only: but in respect also of life and virtue.<sup>2</sup>

Notice that Chrysostom is not advocating a doctrine of cessationism that teaches that it was God’s desire that these gifts should cease from the church, but he is lamenting the fact that such gifts are no longer present in the church today. He says that “life and virtue” was missing from the church as well.

Furthermore, to state that cessationism is true because certain people in a bygone era were unable to get their prayers answered would mean that prayer was useless (except if it were only used as the

means for making one a better person, but we have already dealt with this unbiblical notion). It makes numerous promises of God concerning answered prayer meaningless since the majority of answers require supernatural intervention. Chrysostom was more than likely lamenting the fact that even through prayer, there was no supernatural manifestations. Therefore, the argument above is baseless when seen in the light of Scripture and historical data.

**18. It is conceded that many Christians other than the apostles did miracles, but they could not confer the gifts upon others or make others work miracles. This was unique to the apostles. Therefore, when this generation died out, the gifts ceased.**

This teaching would be convincing if it were not for Scripture. First, the Bible makes it absolutely clear that the gifts are conferred on His people by the Holy Spirit: *“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”* (1 Cor. 12:11). It is the Holy Spirit who gives miraculous gifts and these are received by faith.

One of the ways that the Holy Spirit does impart gifts is through others praying, prophesying, and laying hands but He has not limited the vessel to a select apostolic few. Paul writes to Timothy and says, *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”* (1 Tim. 4:14) The “presbytery” could be made up of apostles but not limited to them. The word “presbytery” is primarily in reference to “elders” who were the leaders in the church.

The apostles did not have the authority to give or withhold miraculous gifts to anyone they chose. On the contrary, when they were confronted with a non-apostle who discovered the miraculous power and authority inherent in the Name of Jesus, they tried to stop him. Yet Jesus told them not to stop anyone from doing miracles in His Name (Mark 9:38-40). It is clear that none of the apostles conferred the miraculous upon that man since they actually did not want him doing it.

The man in Mark 9 also demonstrates to us that even during those times, men of faith could work miracles without having them conferred upon them by the apostles. The Holy Spirit obviously had this recorded for our benefit so that we may learn that God has made His power available to us through the Mighty Name of Jesus. As we can see, cessationism simply cannot stand up to Biblical truth.



**19. If you truly believe in miracles then let us see you perform one. Maybe then we will believe.**

I have been amazed at the number of times cessationists have actually challenged me and others to prove to them that miracles are for today. I don't believe that they realize how pharisaic and devilish such a challenge is.

The Pharisees often asked Jesus to perform some miraculous sign for them in order to "help them believe" but He would not do it (Matt. 12:38, 39; 16:1-4; Mark 8:11-13; John 2:18-21; 6:30-34). Even while at the cross the Pharisees cruelly mocked the Lord by saying, "*Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe*" (Mark 15:32a). The Pharisees, like modern day cessationists, had the order backwards. You must believe first, and then you'll see (John 11:40; Mark 11:22-24).

The Pharisees saw the Lord perform numerous miracles and yet they still challenged Him to perform a sign in order for them to believe, though when they saw the miracles they still wallowed in unbelief (John 12:37) and actually hated Him (John 15:24). Cessationists today question the validity of modern healings and miracles, yet,, many of them still ask for a sign.

It is no different than Satan tempting Jesus to do a miracle by jumping from the pinnacle of the temple (Matt. 4:6, 7). When a cessationist challenges us to perform some sign in order to "help them believe," he may not realize that he is being satanically influenced. God is not into showmanship and does not need to prove Himself to anyone. God's display of miraculous power is for the benefit of helping those in need and not in satisfying someone's curiosity.

On the other hand, Satan loves to draw attention to himself and will use signs for this express purpose. Satan and God are so much unlike. They are exact opposites in their character and nature. When this is understood, then the cessationist will be careful about asking for a demonstration to satisfy curiosity or in order to prove by circumstance that his doctrine of cessationism is legitimate.

**20. I am open but cautious. While I do not believe that the gifts of the Spirit are not for today, I do not believe that we have seen any genuine miracles in our day.**

Those who fall into the "open but cautious" category know that there is no Biblical basis for the doctrine of cessationism but they still

have a difficult time believing that God will work an actual miracle in our day. There are different types of “open but cautious” people. Some truly are genuine seekers of truth while others are simply cessationists who know that there is no Biblical argument for their doctrine so they will claim to be non-cessationist while still castigating those who actually yield themselves as vessels to God for the miraculous. The standard, “I am not a cessationist” statement is actually saying, “I have a right to criticize every manifestation which does not meet my test of approval” - which is usually *every* manifestation.

The extreme “open but cautious” person believes that it is his duty to criticize every miraculous manifestation among Charismatics and claim that they are of the devil. He ridicules and condemns every thing that doesn't fit within his rigid paradigm as a “Watchman” in the church. He uses the exact same arguments that cessationists use concerning Scriptures like Mark 16:15-20; 1 Cor. 12, 14; James 5:14-16; etc. He freely admits that he has seen little to no miracles done in his life and feels he doesn't need them. Finally, while he freely condemns the Charismatic for their so-called “false teachings,” he will claim that though the cessationist position is possibly wrong, it is not really false and it is not important. The extreme “open but cautious” also prefer the writings and teachings of the cessationists over those of the Charismatics.

The Pharisees also were noncessationists intellectually speaking, “*For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both*” (Acts 23:8). The Sadducees were cessationists—well, actually more like unbelieving liberals—but the Pharisees were not. Yet, Jesus still condemned them for their self-righteous and legalistic attitude (Matt. 23:2-30). Their intellectual affirmation of the resurrection is meaningless because these same *noncessationists* were quick to deny the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:11-15). Instead they constantly persecuted those who believed this truth.

Hence the intellectual affirmation of the miraculous while denying and ridiculing all of its manifestations is nothing new. The “noncessationist” cessationist has been around for centuries. It is one of the most perverse and subtle lies that Satan has been able to propagate to deceive Christians and keep them on the path of unbelief. This position is just as effective in preventing the miraculous as the out-right cessationist position because both are based on the concept of UNBELIEF (Mark 6:5, 6).

## Chapter Fourteen

### Miracles and the Character of God

And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits (Daniel 11:32)

There are very few cessationists who will deny that God is *able* to work miracles in this present age, but the majority of them will emphatically assert that He will *not* work them. This belief is not based on an intimate knowledge of God or His wonderful Word, but on rationalized reactionary theology.

Many cessationists are educated in numerous fine points of theology but they do not truly *know* God. To know God is to be strong in Him and to be a channel by which He can do many mighty exploits upon the earth.

To know God is to know His character. I am not talking about knowing some theological facts concerning the attributes of God. Numerous books have been written by cessationists on this very subject. To truly know God is to truly know His character as it pertains to how He desires to work in this sin ridden, disease infested, and Satan ruled world. Those who know their God know that He is still full of compassion for the lost, the sick, the dying, and the multitudes of other needy people that are plagued by different types of suffering..

Those who claim that miracles have ceased and that God no longer (or very rarely) work supernaturally in this day and age are charging God with a change in His character. Yet, concerning His character, God tells Israel, “*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed*” (Mal. 3:6).

What does this mean? God has told Israel that if He were not still the same compassionate, merciful, and patient God that He has always been—if He had changed in any part of His divine nature—the sons of Jacob would have been destroyed. Jeremiah makes a similar statement: “*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not*” (Lam. 3:22). In the Psalms we read:

“But He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them; And often He restrained His anger And did not arouse all His wrath” (Psalm 78:38; New American Standard).

God did not destroy Israel, not because they were undeserving or that He lacked power to do so, but because of His character. The Ninevites are another example of God’s compassion. They deserved destruction more than anyone and the prophet Jonah wanted them to get their just desserts. Jonah tells us exactly why He did not want to preach to the undeserving Ninevites:

He prayed to the LORD and said, “Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity (Jonah 4:2; New American Standard)

Jonah reluctantly gives us insight into an important aspect of God’s character—an aspect that God says never changes—God is compassionate. He is full of compassion. God told Israel that it was because of this unchangeable aspect of His character that they were not consumed.

### **The Old Testament Portrays a Compassionate God**

Due to our inability to correctly interpret Scripture, we have often portrayed God as an arbitrary deity who lacked any love or compassion. Many have sought to solve this problem in a number of ways. A first century theologian named Marcion attempted to rid us of the Old Testament (and a good portion of the New Testament). His claim was that there were two deities—the evil deity of the Old Testament and the good one of the new. The early church rightly rejected this idea and branded Marcion as a heretic.

However, so many today still attempt to divide God into two different people. Some dispensationalists teach us that God sort of “changed His ways” because of the sacrifice of Christ. On the other side of this, many who embrace a theology in which God determines everything that happens will use the common misunderstanding of the

Old Testament to promote this view. All of these misunderstandings of the Old Testament casts serious aspersions on God's character.

When we interpret the Old Testament correctly then we get a better understanding about the character of our God. For example, let us read Job 42:11-12:

And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses (Job 42:10-12)

The Scripture says that Job's friends, "*comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him.*" Reading such passages by themselves does not put God's character in a good light. Many reject the Old Testament because passages like this depict Him as one who brings sickness, disaster, and tragedies. On the other hand, determinists embrace passages of this type in order to portray a "God who is in control" of all events. However, when we read chapters one and two of Job we see that Satan, rather than God, instigated all of the trials that Job faced. God neither suggested that these tragedies come upon Job nor did He make them happen. He simply gave Satan permission.

For centuries, wise theologians have distinguished between God's *permissive* will and His *causative* (or "*perfect*") will.<sup>1</sup> David Atkinson emphasizes this point well in his commentary on Job:

The distinction between God's perfect will and his permissive will needs to be made. It is clearly seen, for example, in the biblical story of Noah. After the flood, God again says to Noah what he said at the start of creation: 'Be fruitful and multiply', but the tone is now different. God speaks of fear and dread, and he gives laws to curb human sinfulness. This is no longer the Garden of Eden.

The world this side of the Fall is a broken world, and though God's will is still made clear to us, it comes refracted through the needs of a fallen world. The first two chapters of the book of Job have indicated the divine *permission* to the Satan to afflict Job. We cannot read that as God's perfect will as though we were still in the Garden of Eden. We can distinguish God's perfect will from his permission. But Job cannot at this point see enough to make that distinction.<sup>2</sup>

This truth is evident as we study Job chapters 1 and 2 and then the statement about God in Job 42:11 in light of these two chapters. The ancient Hebrews did not necessarily make clear the distinction between what God *caused* and what He *permitted*. Therefore, it is necessary to understand their language and idioms. In his excellent book, Richard Twopeny says, "the Hebrew language is little fitted to express the distinction between the event and the final cause, which it always confounds."<sup>3</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, in his book, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, writes, "It is a known characteristic of popular conceptions to express in an imperatival and active form things which we understand only to be permitted."<sup>4</sup>

God speaks using the language of the people. Since He gave His Word to the Hebrews, He spoke in their language and used their idioms. Therefore, we often find God in the Old Testament taking the responsibility for things He did not do but were instead done by Satan and evil men. The problem with modern day Bible readers is our failure to understand this truth. This failure leads us to reject sound principles of Bible interpretation. Job, when studied without theological bias, provides a key to interpret all Old Testament passages that appear to make God to be arbitrary, the author of evil, and to be a monstrous despot. When we read Job 42:11, we only need to go back to Job 1 and 2 and see that the Lord was not the one who brought these things against Job. The causative agent was Satan.

God's part was not to bring suffering to Job but to work a miracle on his behalf in order to turn his captivity. The Bible's description of sickness, disease, and tragedy is "captivity," and this is ascribed in the New Testament as the work of Satan (2 Tim. 2:26). The New Testament describes the character of Satan as one of destruction, oppression, captivity, and bondage (Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

This brings us to another important key to interpreting the Old Testament, which is to interpret Old Testament passages in the light of

the New Testament. Look at how the New Testament defines God's character in the case of Job:

We consider those who endure to be blessed. You have heard about Job's endurance. You saw that the Lord ended Job's suffering because the Lord is compassionate and merciful. (James 5:11; God's Word)

The Old Testament God is described in the New Testament as "compassionate." God demonstrated His compassion in this way: "*So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning*" (Job 42:12). These passages give us a practical view of what it means for God to be compassionate. The average dictionary definition of compassion is "a feeling of distress and pity for the suffering or misfortune of another, often including the desire to alleviate it" (see also John 3:17). The character of God is not seen in the tragedies that came upon Job because this was the devil's work. The character of God is seen in "the end of the Lord"<sup>5</sup> (KJV), or how He ended Job's sufferings. It was God's intense desire all along to deliver Job from the suffering that Satan brought upon him.

Character is who and what we are. Who and what we are determines how we will act. God does not act capriciously and arbitrarily in bringing sickness and tragedy into our lives because this is not His nature. The book of Job shows us that this is a characteristic of Satan. God demonstrated His character by healing Job and giving Him twice as much as the devil had stolen from him. Healing miracles and miracles of restoration reveal a compassionate God. Sadly though, many who embrace a cessationist and anti-material mindset continue to distort the character of God and hinder the faith of God's people through their belief that God has somehow changed and may not work on our behalf today as He did for Job.<sup>6</sup>

### **God's Glory Reveals His Character**

We can see that our God is given a bad rep because people have misread the Old Testament. Yet, we have seen that so much of the Old Testament describes God as one "full of compassion." God gave Moses this revelation of His divine character. Notice the request that Moses made and then notice God's response:

Then Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your glory!” And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” (Ex. 33:19-20; New American Standard)

Moses asked God to show him His glory and God responded by giving Moses insight into His character. Quite often, when we think of the “glory of God” we think of a supernatural glow or some physical manifestation of God. While these are true aspects of His glory, the most dominant feature of God’s glory is His character. In his dictionary on Biblical words, W. E. Vine writes, “As the glory of God is the revelation and manifestation of all that He has and is..., it is said of a Self-revelation in which God manifests all the goodness that is His.”<sup>7</sup>

God responded to Moses by telling him about His goodness and that in His goodness we see that He is gracious and compassionate. Grace and compassion is a demonstration of God’s glory. The two cannot be separated. Let us fast-forward several centuries later and look at an incident concerning Jesus and the death of Lazarus:

Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! (John 11:32-36)

We must understand that Jesus *is* the God of the Old Testament (John 5:38-40). Our Lord represents the Father in every aspect of His character (John 14:9-11; Heb. 1:1-3). The compassion that was demonstrated by Jesus in the New Testament is not new. This has always been a manifestation of God’s character.



Therefore, our God did not lose His compassion from the time of Moses to the time He came to earth as a man. His compassion remained intact. His compassion was demonstrated through His emotional reaction to the hurting of the people in their loss as well as the fact that His friend, Lazarus, had been taken in by death. Death is an enemy, a tool of the devil, and God does not desire its grip on anyone (1 Cor. 15:26; Heb. 2:14, 15; Ezek. 18:32; 33:11; Gen. 2:17). Our pain at the death of loved ones touches the heart of God. He hurts when we hurt. God's compassion is an aspect of His glory.

However, demonstrations of supernatural power are also an aspect of God's glory. Let us read further:

Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the **glory of God**? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth.... (John 11:39-44a)

Jesus told Martha that her faith would allow her to see a visible manifestation of God's glory, in other words, her faith would allow her to see God perform miracles. Here we see Jesus demonstrating both compassion and a miracle. The Lord told Moses that compassion was a manifestation of His glory. The Lord told Martha that raising the dead was a manifestation of His glory. God connected miracles with His glory (Num. 14:22) and His compassion. Compassion and miracles go together. To rid us of one is to rid us of the other and to claim that there is a change in God's character and nature.

### **The Primary Purpose of Jesus' Miracles**

When we look at the miracles our Lord did during His time on earth, all of them were connected with compassion. Some passages make this emphatically clear:

Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. (Luke 7:12-15)

And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick (Matt. 14:14)

I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away. (Mark 8:2-9)

So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him (Matt. 20:34)

And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be

with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee (Mark 5:18-19)

And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed (Mark 1:40-42)

All of the miracles performed by the Lord in the above passages are attributed to His *compassion*. Sadly, so many claimed that Jesus did miracles primarily to prove that He is God. Yet this cannot be true since not only did He give power to His followers to perform miracles, but Jesus did not always make public the miracles that He performed. In the last Scripture concerning the leper that Jesus healed, we read some instructions that He gave:

And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them (Mark 1:43-44)

If Jesus' primary purpose for doing miracles was to prove His deity, why not tell the man to "go and broadcast it everywhere. Let them know that it was I who did this and tell them that this proves that I am truly the God of Israel manifested in the flesh." This would have been true but it obviously was not the intention of the healing.

Even when Jesus did tell a man to go tell others about the miracle as is the case in Mark 5:18-19 concerning the demoniac who was delivered supernaturally, Jesus did not tell him to go and broadcast the fact that Jesus is God but told Him to, "*tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*" Jesus wanted, more than anything else, to reveal the true character of our loving Heavenly father. He wanted everyone to see that God is a God of compassion.

We also see from Mark 1:40-42 that God's compassion is connected to His *willingness* to do miracles: "*And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will.*" There are a number of people, even some who reject cessationism, who believe that it is not always God's will to heal. They teach us that prayers for healing must be prefaced with the statement, "if it be thy will." This teaching, though sounding spiritual, places a question mark on the revelation of God's character.

The leper in this passage did not have the insight that we are given. He affirmed his confidence in the *ability* of Jesus to heal but was unsure of His *willingness*. Jesus was moved with compassion and demonstrated His willingness. The Holy Spirit had this incident recorded for the express purpose of showing all that would listen that our God remains compassionate and willing to heal. If God is able but no longer willing, then He is no longer compassionate.

### **Miracles Lead Men to Ascribe Glory to God**

As we read through the gospels we find some passages in which men ascribed glory to God when miracles were done (Luke 5:24-26, 43; Acts 4:21-22). W. E. Vine tells us that men ascribing glory to God means "to magnify extol, praise.... ascribing honor to Him, acknowledging Him as to His being, attributes and acts."<sup>8</sup> We find no Biblical record of anyone glorifying God for sickness and tragedy. The reason is because these things do not bring God glory, nor do they demonstrate what men perceive to be the character of a loving God. On the contrary, men glorify God when the truth about His character is *revealed* and that of Satan's is *exposed*. Let us look at a classic example in the life of our Lord:

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work:

in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him (Luke 13:10-17)

The woman never glorified God for the sickness she was suffering. To ascribe glory to God for this sickness would have been to ascribe to Him false characteristics. Jesus revealed that the sickness was of a satanic origin. However, when the woman was loosed from Satan's bondage, she began to ascribe to God glory, proclaiming His character of love, compassion and goodness.

Notice verse 17: "*And when he had said these things....and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.*" The Bible tells us that the things that Jesus did were *glorious*. God's character is what He is. What He is demonstrated through what he does. It is by this revelation of the true character of God that the people were made to rejoice. Satan constantly attempts to cast aspersions on God's character. He blames God for putting sickness on people and then tells them that He has ceased doing miracles. What a blight such theology puts on God's nature.

It is sad that Satan has been able to use educated Christian theologians with well known names to castigate God in this manner. He used the lack of compassion of the Pharisees in Jesus' day to keep people from receiving the revelation of God's glory, as if God cared more about strict adherence to laws than He does for the well being of His people. The devil has since used the tactic of leading men to teach that God has dispensed with miracles altogether. Satan does not want men to ascribe glory to God. He does not want men to have a true understanding about God.

### **The Lord Did Not Change**

Thankfully, we know that the Lord remains compassionate. The writer of Hebrews tells us, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and*

*to day, and for ever*” (Heb. 13:8). Anyone who says that He no longer does miracles would have to say that He no longer has compassion. If miracles have ceased then so has compassion. This would say that the inspired Word of God is in error.

Compassion is connected with miracles. God’s essential character and nature is connected with miracles. To say there is change in one would imply a change in the other. Character is seen through one’s actions. If God has the power to heal but refuses to do it for no other reason than the belief that it no longer suits some dispensational purpose, then He can no longer be said to be compassionate.

However, if God does not change and remains compassionate today, then cessationism must be renounced as a false teaching because it casts aspersions on the very being of God Himself and teaches a lie about Him that the Bible proves to be totally false. Whatever will cause men to think highly of God, whatever, will cause men to see the truth about God, whatever will draw men and women to the true and living God, whatever will cause men to have faith in God, is that which glorifies Him, or reveals His true nature.

## Chapter Fifteen

### Miracles and Motives

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing (1 Cor. 13:2)

In the last chapter we dealt with the character of God as it is related to miracles. We saw that God does not work miracles in an attempt to promote Himself or to prove how powerful He is. He works miracles because *He is compassionate*. It is the nature of a compassionate person to bring relief to the suffering when they are able to do so.

#### Wanting Miracles for Personal Gain

God's people must possess God's character if they expect Him to manifest His power through them. Too often, because we have failed to understand fully what God is like, we embrace wrong motives for seeking the power that God wants to distribute to His church.

And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God (Acts 8:18-21)

Before the gospel was preached in this city, Simon, who was a sorcerer, used demonic power to portray himself as “some great one” and we are told in Scripture that the people in that region regarded him as “the great power of God” (Acts 8:9-11). Later on, Simon became a baptized believer and sought to learn more. However, he had not yet developed a godly character that cared more for the welfare of people

than his selfish prestige. He sought to have an advantage in being able to administer the gift of the Spirit.

Peter told him that his heart wasn't right. A heart filled with wrong motives cannot receive from God. James wrote, "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts*" (James 4:3). Simon only cared for personal gain. He had no desire to receive God's power to help people. He was only concerned with self-exaltation and to look good.

### **Self-Exaltation**

Sadly there are many in the church today who are just like Simon. They want God to display His power through them so that others may see them as "some great one." They want to be able to promote themselves and "their ministry" by being seen as one who has God's power. It is no wonder to me that manifestations of God's power are more prevalent among humbler nations than those in our west, including the United States. Here in the USA we seem to forget that "ministry" is "service." Sadly, many of us in the USA want our names and our ministries to be known and exalted so that we can have the adulation of the crowds. This can happen if multitudes receive healing by our laying on of hands or if we are to perform some other great public miracle. By this means many will come to *our* church, attend *our* meetings, buy our books, CDS, and DVDs, send us large offerings to assist in our lavish lifestyles, and invite us to speak and perform at various churches and on different Christian television networks. Too many of us want to be "Christian" superstars. The spirit that Simon had still exists in the church.

While God can certainly affirm His servants by performing signs and wonders through them and use this as a means to open doors for further ministry, He usually does this when our own motives are pure and our desire is to promote *Him* and not ourselves. I should be able to rejoice in the privilege of being a vessel for God in private ministry that no one ever hears about just as much as I can rejoice if a miracle God performs through me is seen and heard about by thousands. I should not be concerned about receiving any credit for what God does. If my objective is anything other than wanting to be a vessel by which God can work through to bless others, then perhaps I need to take an inventory of why I would want to have God's miracle working power in my life.



## **To Prove Something to Critics and Challengers**

Apart from God's authorization we have no right to attempt performing miracles in order to defeat challengers and critics. It is tempting for immature Christians to want to demonstrate how real God is when confronted by skeptics and cessationists. I understand fully this temptation, having been challenged on more than one occasion to prove my beliefs by performing some sign (command a mountain into the sea, empty all of the hospitals, grow someone's missing body part, etc.). Nonetheless, Jesus' example is the best one to follow. Jesus, who was constantly working miracles, refused to give in to those who asked Him for miraculous proof that He was from God (Matt. 12:38-39; 16:1-4). He saw no need to waste divine power trying to prove anything to skeptics. He only used His power for the purpose of helping those in need. Jesus was not an egotist and His followers should not be either.

## **Retribution for Ourselves and Others**

Sometimes we want God to bring retribution upon unbelievers who would dare to question the truth concerning God's power and authority for today. That's exactly what James and John wanted after seeing the Lord rejected by some ungrateful Samaritans:

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village (Luke 9:54-56)

Jesus told His disciples that they had the wrong spirit about them. Their motives for miracles were ungodly and could not be honored. Jesus wants His people to have the right motives which are to help people, especially those that are lost. We should not want God's power for the vindication of ourselves or for the Lord. God is not vindictive. He is kind, forgiving and compassionate. He expects us to be likewise. If we are to be trustworthy channels of divine power, we have to be sure that this power is to be used for the saving of souls and not for their destruction. Love must be the primary factor for wanting to be vessels of God's power.

## **Right Motives for Miracles**

As has been pointed out by a number of great Charismatic Bible teachers, there is no mistaking the fact that God's Word describes 12 miraculous gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8-10) and 12 fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Godly character must be consistent if we are to operate in God-like power. When we are full of God's love and walking fully in it then we will always have the motives for power that God is delighted to work with.

## **Evangelism**

The Bible tells us that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for the salvation of all individuals living in it (John 3:16). When we have become full of the same kind of love for the world that God has then we will seek to proclaim God's message of love to it. Millions die and go to a burning eternal hell every day. The sad thing is that they do not have to because there is a Savior who has suffered the penalty on their behalf (John 3:17-18). They both know about Him and reject Him or they do not know about Him at all. Either way, God's heart is often broken because it has never been His will that any should perish (1 Tim. 2:1-6; 2 Pet. 3:9), but He is unable to prevent them if they choose to follow Satan to his eternal destiny (Mat. 25:41; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-5).

It is necessary for us to share this good news with those who do not know. God so much desires the salvation of the lost that He is willing to display His miraculous power through us in order to assist us with these efforts (Mark 16:15-20). Look at some examples of this in Scripture:

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city (Acts 8:5-8)

And there they preached the gospel. And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a

cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, 10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked (Acts 14:7-10)

Paul would later confirm, “*Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ*” (Rom. 15:9). Paul said that it was through miracles and God’s power that he preached the gospel. This is in contrast to John Calvin who wrote, “[The] gift of healing, like the rest of the miracles, which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the preaching of the gospel marvelous forever...”<sup>1</sup> Cessationists like Calvin taught that the gospel no longer needs the miraculous. If Paul, whose intellectual ability to expound the truth of the gospel exceeds our own capabilities, wouldn’t we need the same power that he had? We certainly need the miraculous to proclaim the *evangel* (gospel) just as Paul did. God desires the salvation of souls and is willing to display His power to make this happen.

### **In Obedience to God for Specific Tasks He has Commissioned**

One thing we must always remember is that when we are commissioned by God to perform any task in His Name, He will back us with His power. In Mark 16, God not only promised the apostles that signs would follow their preaching, the Holy Spirit records the fulfillment of this promise:

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. (Mark 16:19, 20)

Specific details are recorded throughout the book of Acts concerning the Lord’s backing of His obedient servants with mighty power. As we turn back to the Old Testament we see that God worked through Moses, Joshua, many of the judges, and numerous other prophets. He has never left His obedient servants at the mercy of their

own limited abilities. We can be confident that any task that God calls us to do will be backed by Him.

However, we should make sure that we are not taking upon ourselves some pet project of our own and then asking Him to justify it through a miracle. God has no obligation to support our personal projects that He did not commission. On the other hand, God has covenanted with us to work with us when we are obeying Him in performing those tasks He has commissioned us to do.

### **To See God Glorified**

Another right motive for desiring miracles is for God to be glorified. As we stated in the last chapter, to ascribe glory to God is to ascribe unto Him characteristics and attributes that are praiseworthy. If our desire is to “make God big” rather than ourselves, then God is willing to work through us.

God is not an egotist. If He were then He would simply come to the earth and do all of the miracles Himself and draw attention to Himself. However, He chooses to honor us by working His miracles through us. Nonetheless, God also knows the danger of pride which has a tendency to bring destruction into our lives if we fall into it (Prov. 16:18; 1 Tim. 3:6). Therefore, assuring that our willingness to be instruments for God has its motives in giving Him full credit for His work through us is for our own protection. When we glorify God, He will honor us by allowing us more and more opportunities for service and more power to help others.

### **To Help Others**

This brings me to another righteous motive for miracles, which is to help others who are hurting. Love must be the motivating factor in all that we do for God as stated in 1 Cor. 13. We should want to pray for the healing of others because it pains us to see them in pain and not because it may earn us a reputation as great men or women of God. The same is true with giving someone a personal word of knowledge, wisdom or prophecy. Some of our Lord’s ministry of miracles was done in private (Mat. 8:22-26; John 4:5-19).

Regardless of whether a miracle-ministry is done privately or publicly, it should be done for the purpose of helping others and not for self-exaltation (1 Corinthians 14:12). God’s desire is to help people and our desire should be His desire.

## **To Claim Bible Promises that Require Supernatural Intervention**

Receiving answers to prayer often requires the miraculous (Mark 11:22-24). God is pleased to supernaturally intervene in response to faith in His promises. We should be sure to pray His promises with godly and reverential motives.

God has promised personal help and assistance to His children and is willing to give it to us. He has promised to meet our physical and spiritual needs. It is not selfish to desire such things as they are needed in order to continue to serve the Lord in vigor and vitality. A healthy body, a healthy mind, and a joyful spirit is needed if we are to give the Lord our best. If sickness and oppression is finding its place in our lives then it is difficult and nearly impossible to serve the Lord in the manner in which he is worthy. Therefore, our gracious God makes numerous promises of miraculous assistance available that can be claimed and we are only fools if we refuse to partake of them. Even worse, we insult the death and shed blood of Jesus as it was He who died and rose again in order that these promise might be guaranteed to us (2 Cor. 1:20).

We must learn to differentiate between selfishness and enjoying personal benefits that God has provided for us. Selfishness is seeking God for things with no goal in mind to serve Him with them or to help others. The selfish person is only thinking about what will benefit him and him alone. He has no concern for those that are hurting and those that are lost and going to hell. He has no concern for God's agenda and His divine plans. The selfish man's prayers are all about *him*. He does not want to suffer pain and he does not want to be deprived. He does not care if others are in pain or are deprived as long as he isn't.

The godly Christian who avails himself of God's benefits is doing so in gratitude for what Jesus sacrificed in order to make them available. The godly Christian is seeking to serve the Lord and knows that if he is lacking then he has nothing to give to others. If he is in health then he has sufficient faith and energy to pray and see others healed. If he has abundance then he can be generous and share with others. If God's gives him assignments then he is equipped with the power of God to fulfill them. If he has the joy of the Lord then he is better able to minister to the worried, the discouraged, the depressed, etc. When the godly Christian has received forgiveness for his sins and is not under the weight of satanic accusation and condemnation, he is better able to minister to those who have fallen. When he is walking in

the victory over sin that can only come from the supernatural power of God's Spirit, he is better equipped to minister boldly to those who are destroying themselves through addictions and vices.

The deceived Christian is one who is unable to differentiate between the two. He thinks that humility comes from denying himself of God's assistance even though it is available. He has been deceived into thinking that, though God may heal, provide, and bring joy when needed, this is not His best and is only available to the weak Christian. He believes that God's best is in our suffering and enduring pain. While we are taught to suffer persecution with joy and to endure hardships that come with ministry, we are never told to sit idly by and accept the majority of the circumstances that come from direct satanic assaults. On the contrary we are told to stand against them. Sickness, demonic oppression, poverty, lack, psychological dysfunction, condemnation, and other areas which God has promised to relieve should not be accepted. If we are to endure hardships and persecutions, aren't these better endured when we are healthy, full of joy, walking in holiness, and free from condemnation?

### **To See the Devil Defeated In Our Lives and the Lives of Others**

One last motive for wanting miracles is for the purpose of having *experiential* victory in our lives and the lives of others. Jesus has already given Satan a legal defeat through His death, burial, and resurrection (Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8; Col. 2:14-15). Those who are "in Christ" share in that victory. Yet, experientially speaking, many Christian do not seem to walk in light of this victory. Many of us still live defeated lives of sin, sickness, and failure. Due to our own defeated lives we are unable to help others who are in bondage to the devil.

The body of Christ must grasp the essential truth that Satan is a defeated foe and that we have Jesus' blood bought authority over him. However, in order to exercise authority over the devil, we must accept the truth that miracles have not passed away but are still for the modern church. Jesus equated exercising authority over the devil with miracles:

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which

shall do a **miracle** in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me (Mark 9:38-39)

Jesus also told His disciples that “casting out devils” is a miraculous sign: *“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils”* (Mark 16:17a). To bring defeat to the devil in our lives and in the lives of others often takes God’s miraculous intervention.

We must also grasp the truth that Satan is the source of all of the misery that we face in life, especially sickness and disease (Job 2:7; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38). Jesus told the Pharisees that if He casted out demons by the finger of God then the kingdom of God has come unto them. This means that the devil, who also has a kingdom (Col. 1:12-14), has been defeated. To bring healing and deliverance to ourselves and others is, in essence, bringing an experiential defeat to the enemy.

Is it any wonder why the devil would spread the horrendous lie that God no longer works miracles today? Cessationists do not seem to have any idea how their doctrine has been a tool in the hands of the devil to bring defeat to the majority of the church. To keep the church ignorant of the power that is available to it has allowed Satan to oppress many inside and outside of it freely without being challenged too often.

Too many cessationists believe that we can simply defeat the devil by having an intellectual knowledge about him. Certainly people must be taught Biblical information about the enemy and his tactics, but we must also keep in mind that Satan’s evil power in the lives of those who he oppresses must be matched with supernatural power from God (Acts 10:38).

If we love God then we will naturally love people and want to set them free. We will hate what the devil is doing just as much as God does and we will want to see the victory of Jesus manifested in the lives of the oppressed. Therefore, to desire to work miracles in order to bring about experiential victory over Satan in the lives of those that are oppressed is a right motive.

## **Conclusion**

Do not let the cessationists lead you to doubt God’s desire and promises to empower His people with supernatural abilities. However, as we grasp this truth we must always do a self examination to ensure

that our motives are correct in embracing that which God has for us. We serve a loving and compassionate God who wants to do many things for us and through us. He only asks that we believe Him and that we remain compassionate towards the hurting and lost around us. May God bless you as you reach out to Him in fervent faith to be one of His mighty miracle-workers during these end-times.



# Notes

## Introduction

1. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible

## Chapter One

1. Phillips, John **Exploring 1 Corinthians: An Expository Commentary** (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), p. 266
2. Walvoord, John F. **The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit** (Zondervan, 1991), p. 179
3. For example, one Baptist theologian wrote, "In considering this question, then, let us remember that the miracles even of our Saviour were not wrought whenever his enemies chose to ask them ; and that the apostles did not have the gift of miracles with them at will." *Remarks on the Ministerial Commission*, published in **The Baptist Memorial and Monthly Chronicle**, Volume 1 (New York: J. R. Bigelow, 1842), p. 319
4. Interestingly enough, John MacArthur, one of the most well known advocates of cessationism in our day, does not seem to agree with the idea that the word "perfect" in 1 Cor. 13:10 is in reference to the "complete New Testament," though he does not repudiate it either. See MacArthur, Jr., John F. **Charismatic Chaos** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), p. 389.
5. Pyle, Hugh F. **The Truth about Tongues and the Charismatic Movement** (Mursfreeboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 89
6. Barnett, Donald Lee; McGregor, Jeffrey P. **Speaking in Other Tongues: A Scholarly Defense** (Seattle, WA: Community Chapel Publications, 1986), pp. 220-224. The authors quote from numerous well known Evangelical scholars who believe that 1 Cor. 13 is clearly a reference to Christ's second coming.
7. Pyle, *Charismatic Movement*, p. 89
8. *Ibid.*, p. 88. Pyle's book is also published by the same publishing company which was founded by Dr. Rice.
9. Rice, John R. **The Charismatic Movement** (Mursfreeboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1976), p. 180
10. *Ibid.*
11. Meloon, Wilfred C. **We've Been Robbed** (Plainfield, NJ; Logos International, 1971), p. 38. After quoting from an author that advocated this cessationist theory, Meloon writes:

Does this author think that just because the canon of scriptures was completed that everyone *had* the scriptures to read and ponder? It was not until around 1500 years *after* Christ that the printing press was invented. Therefore there were no books, not even the Bible, that anyone could read and study. People did not even know how to read, for there was little purpose in learning to read since there were no books. Only a few scribes had a precious few manuscripts, papyruses or scrolls; nothing existed for the

common people. Alas, they still did not have the Word of God, even though the canon was complete at about 100 A.D.

Gutenberg did not come along to change that situation until some 1400 years later. And it was many years after Gutenberg before any significant percentage of the people learned to read. We can safely say that it has been only in the last 300 years that the people have actually “had” the Bible. Can it thus be reasoned that the *written* word was completed, and they no longer needed miracles, signs, and wonders?

Further, we might be surprised to find out how many homes even now do not have a Bible in them.

12. Vincent, Marvin R. **Vincent’s Word Studies**
13. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible
14. Freedman, David Noel (editor) **Dictionary of the Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), p.1386
15. Vine, W. E. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*
16. Online Hebrew Dictionary at <http://www.studylight.org> (Last Accessed: Jan. 25, 2010)
17. Simpson, Albert B. **Seeing the Invisible** (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1994), p. 110
18. Vincent, *Word Studies*
19. Online Greek Dictionary at <http://www.studylight.org> (Last Accessed: Jan. 25, 2010)
20. Phillips, John **Exploring the Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary** (Kregel Publications, 2001), p. 386
21. Online Greek Dictionary at <http://www.studylight.org> (Last Accessed: Jan. 25, 2010)

## Chapter Two

1. John Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 4, Chapter 19, Section 6
2. Warfield, Benjamin Breckinridge **Counterfeit Miracles** (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1918), p. 6
3. Lockyer, Herbert **All the Miracles of the Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1988), p. 19
4. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 141
5. *Ibid*, p. 143
6. MacArthur also acknowledges this. In criticizing a vision given to well-known Pentecostal Prophet and Bible teacher, Kenneth E. Hagin, Sr., where Jesus identified to him that Paul was the author of Hebrews, MacArthur acknowledges that Scripture does not identify the author and that students of this book have never been able to pinpoint the author. See *Chaos*, p. 98.
7. *Ibid*, p. 143
8. A. T. Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament
9. Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary of American English

10. Achtemeier, Paul J. (Editor) **Harper's Bible Dictionary** (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 716

### Chapter Three

1. Warfield, *Counterfeit*, p. 21

2. Ibid, p. 23

3. Deere, Jack S. **Surprised by the Power of the Spirit** (Grand rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1993). This book relates how Deere, a cessationist theologian who taught this doctrine, was awakened to the Biblical truth that God does signs and wonder in our day. However, Deere and I disagree on a number of points.

4. Edgar, Thomas R. **Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit: Affirming the Fullness of God's Provision for Spiritual Living** (Kregel Publications, 1996), p. 248

5. Hanegraaff, Hank **Counterfeit Revival** (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1997), pp. 187, 188 According to some sources, Hanegraaff claims to be a Charismatic. Yet, the arguments and proof-texts in this book are clearly cessationist.

6. Ladd, George Eldon **A Theology of the New Testament** (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), p. 581. Ladd writes, "The question as to whether all the *charismata* should be normative for the life of the entire church receives different answers. Since the gifts of apostleship and prophecy were given for the founding of the church (Eph. 2:20), it is possible that the distinctly supernatural gifts belong primarily to the apostolic period."

7. Wiersbe, Warren W. **The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament: Volume 2** (David C. Cook, 1992), p. 37. Notwithstanding his cessationism, I have enjoyed the practical insights I have derived from reading Dr. Wiersbe's commentaries. Sadly, it is because Dr. Wiersbe is an otherwise excellent exegete of Scripture that his cessationism can be so easily embraced by his readers. This is the very reason that these erroneous teachings must be confronted and refuted. Cessationist teachings has caused much division and and has rendered major portions of the church virtually powerless.

8. Warfield, *Counterfeit*, pp. 21, 22

9. Ibid, p. 23

10. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 146

### Chapter Four

1. Larkin, Clarence **Rightly Dividing the Word** (Philadelphia, PA: Clarence Larkin, 1921), p. 296

2. Ibid.

3. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 146

4. There are some who dispute the authenticity of this passage and argue against the belief that it is canonical. We will deal with this issue in the next chapter. To his credit, MacArthur does not use this particular argument against the use of this passage. However, he does argue against claiming its promises (see *Chaos*, pp. 121-124). We will examine his arguments later.

5. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 245. MacArthur writes, “Miracle powers, then, were limited in scope and restricted to apostolic ministry. They were not given to the average Christian (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4)” On p. 275 MacArthur writes, “The disputed text of Mark 16:17 simply mentions tongues as an apostolic sign.” In spite of the context of the passage, MacArthur believes that the promises in Mark 16 were only for the apostles.

6. Warfield, Benjamin B. *Counterfeit Miracles*, p. 168

7. As promised, I will deal with Warfield’s erroneous assumption in great detail in the next chapter.

8. MacArthur, *Chaos*, pp. 123, 124

7. Wade, Herbert Treadwell **The New International Encyclopedia, Volume 15** (New York: Don, Meade, and Company, 1930), p. 768

8. Greville, Charles Cavendish Fulke **The Greville Memoirs. A Journal of the Reigns of King George IV and King William IV, Volume 1** (Adamant Media Corporation, 2006), p. 365. Greville writes, “We believe that miracles ceased with the Apostles, and we pronounce all that are alleged to have happened since to be fictitious.”

9. Smith, William George; Cheetham, Samuel (Editors) **A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities** (London: John Murray, 1880), p. 2042

10. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 131

11. For example, read pages 86 to 88 concerning his treatment of Montanism. He appeals to this fringe group and makes an attempt to link them to the current Charismatic movement. But, as Don Williams (who agrees with MacArthur that Montanism was heresy) wrote, “MacArthur’s attempt to make the Charismatic movement ‘the spiritual heir’ to Montanus falls on the evidence—the Charismatic movement, at its best, instead is the heir of the orthodox Early Church Fathers.” See *Following Christ’s Example: A Biblical View of Discipleship in The Kingdom and the Power*, edited by Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer, Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993, pp. 186, 187).

Nevertheless, historians can be quite bias in their depiction of any fringe movement within Church history. For example, Tertullian (who MacArthur cites as one of his witnesses) was a part of this movement. Yet, he held to what some considered to be “orthodox” doctrine. He was instrumental in formulating the doctrine of the Trinity and rejected infant baptism. Since it was opposed to Roman Catholic doctrine, Montanism was pegged as “heretical.” In his article on the subject, Robert I. Bradshaw summarizes, “Having traced the history of the movement, and discussed its teachings it is not easy to discover any one reason why they were considered heretics at the time. In doctrine they were orthodox, yet their over-emphasis of certain aspects of the Faith proved too much for the Catholic Bishops.” (*Montanism: Heresy Or Healthy Revival?* [http://www.earlychurch.org.uk/article\\_montanism.html](http://www.earlychurch.org.uk/article_montanism.html), last accessed: 30 Dec., 2009).

Furthermore, the great evangelist and founder of the Methodist church, John Wesley, while returning from a journey wrote, “By reflecting on an odd book, which I had read in this journey, “The General Delusion of Christians with regard to Prophecy,” I was fully convinced of what I had long suspected; (1.) That the Montanists, in the second and third centuries, were real scriptural Christians.” (Moore, Henry **The Life of the Rev. John Wesley** (London: John Kershaw, 1825), p. 151)

However, in our times, Montanism is disparaged by Church historians because it did not embrace cessationism. One major historian, Philip Schaff, writes, “Montanism, in the first place, sought a forced continuance of the miraculous gifts of the apostolic church, which gradually disappeared as Christianity became settled in humanity, and its supernatural principle was naturalized on earth.” (*History of the Christian Church*, [http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/2\\_ch10.htm](http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/2_ch10.htm), last accessed: 30 Dec., 2009). The fact that Schaff would claim that seeking the continuance implies this is “forced” demonstrates a cessationist bias.

Therefore, we must conclude that MacArthur’s case against the doctrine of miracles in this present day is based on ignoring legitimate Church history while grasping at straws by looking for fringe groups within Church history reported by bias cessationist historians.

12. **Dialogue with Trypho**, Chapter LXXVI

13. *Ibid*, Chapter XXX

14. Irenaeus **Against Heresies**, Book II, Chapter XXXII, Paragraph 4

15. *Ibid*, Paragraph 5

16. Tertullian, **The Apology**, 23

17. **Origen against Celsius**, Book II, Chapter 24

18. NPNF, Vol. 8, *The Book of Saint Basil on the Spirit*, Chapter 29, Section 24. As quoted in Doles, Jeff **Miracles & Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the History of the Church** (Seffner, FL: Walking Barefoot Ministries, 2008), p. 32. I highly recommend purchasing Jeff’s book if you want a thorough history of the continuation of the Charismata in the church.

18. *Life of Antony*, as quoted in Doles, *Manifestations*, p. 75

20. Jerome, *The Life of St. Hilarion*, section 43

21. Warren, Col March 2001 “Freedom Life Center” Newsletter quoting W. J. Kooiman, *By Faith Alone: The Life of Martin Luther* (1954), p. 192; letter to Pastor Severin Schulze, June 1, 1545, *Luther Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (1955), pp. 51f.

## Chapter Five

1. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles*, pp. 167, 169

2. Lange, John Peter (Schaff, Philip; Translator) **Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical Commentary, Mark-Luke** (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1866), pp. 158-159. As quoted in Snapp, Jr., James Edward **The Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20**, 2007. Found at <http://www.textexcavation.com/snapp/PDF/snappmark.pdf> (Last Accessed: March 1, 2010)

3. Robinson, Maurice A. *The Long Ending of Mark as Canonical Verity in Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 Views*, Edited by David Alan Black (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2008), p. 77. The expression “LE” is a reference to the *longer ending* of Mark vice an alleged short on that either ends at verse 8 (which is ridiculous) or another ending which was supposedly lost.

4. Burgon, John W. **The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to Mark**, p. 156

5. *Ibid*.

6. Bengel, John Albert **Gnomon of the New Testament, Volume 1** (Philadelphia, PA: Smith, English, and Co., 1860), pp. 575, 576

7. Wesley, John, (Nicholson, William; Editor) **The New Testament, with Explanatory Notes** (London, Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1869), p. 138
8. Farmer, William R. **The Last Twelve Verses of Mark** (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 65
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Robinson, *The Long Ending of Mark*, pp. 54, 55
12. Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses*, p. 168
13. Justin, *First Apology*, 45
14. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3:10:5.
15. Ibid, 2:32:4
16. A Chronological Catena of Ancient Fathers and Councils on the Doctrine of Spiritual Regeneration in Holy Baptism (London: J. H. Parker, 1850), p. 18
16. Aphrahat, **Demonstration 1 (Of Faith)**, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/370101.htm>
17. Ibid.
18. See pages 8-10 of “The Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20” James Snapp, <http://www.textexcavation.com/snapp/PDF/snappmark.pdf>
19. Ambrose, *The Prayer of Job and David*, 4:1:4.
20. Ambrose, *Concerning Repentance*, 34-36
21. Fragments of Papias, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.vii.i.html> (Last Accessed: 1 March, 2010)
22. Acts of John, [http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical\\_studies/noncanon/acts/actjohn.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/acts/actjohn.htm) (Last Accessed: 1 March 2010)
23. Jude, whose epistle is canonized Scripture, quotes from the apocryphal Book of Enoch (Jude 1:14, 15). While scholars have difficulty determining what they believe is consistent with Biblical truth from the Book of Enoch, the fact that Jude quoted from it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16) tells us that we can derive Biblical truth from *some* (obviously not all) of these apocryphal books.
24. Luther, Martin; Tappert, Theodore G. **Selected Writings of Martin Luther, Volume 1** (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 185
25. Luther, Martin **Luther's Explanatory Notes on the Gospels** (York, PA: F. Anstaut & Sons, 1892), pp. 173, 174
26. Hippolytus, **Apostolic Tradition**, <http://www.bombaxo.com/hippolytus.html> (Last Accessed: 5 March, 2010)
27. Kelhoffer, James A. **Miracle and Mission: the Authentication of Missionaries and their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark** (Mohr Siebeck, 2000), See pp. 446-448
28. McConnell, C. Douglas **The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics** (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), p. 73
29. Ibid.
30. Schaub, Leon **The Authority of Jesus' Name**, Sermon accessed at <http://www.covenantlifenj.org> (Last Accessed: March 3, 2010)
31. Edwards, James R. **The Gospel According to Mark** (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), p. 506
32. Schaub, *The Authority of Jesus' Name*, <http://www.covenantlifenj.org> (Last Accessed: March 3, 2010)

## Chapter Six

1. Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 1, Chapter 13, Section 13
2. Peloubet, Francis Nathan **Select Notes on the International Sunday School Lessons** (Boston, MA: W. A. Wilde company, 1882), pp. 38, 39
3. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 260
4. Hanegraaff, Hank **Christianity in Crisis** ((Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), p. 141
5. Hobbs, Herschel H. **An Exposition of the Four Gospels** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 47
6. Another test of genuine Christianity versus a cult is the affirmation or denial of the Holy Spirit as a genuine person. Most cults either do not acknowledge the Holy Spirit or look at Him as only a “power” or a “force.” True Christians recognize Him as a true person just as they would the Father and Son, and they recognize Him as the third member of the triune godhead.
7. Hanegraaff, *Crisis*, p. 140
8. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown **Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible** (1871)
9. Clarke, Adam **Adam Clarke's Commentaries**
10. Barnes, Albert **Barnes New Testament Notes**
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Meyer, F. B. **Devotional Commentary on Philippians** (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1979), pp. 85-87
14. This should help us to see certain things such as Jesus seeing Nathaniel under the tree and knowing so much about him even before he had ever met him (John 1:47-50), or Jesus knowing that Zacchaeus was in a sycamore tree (Luke 19:1-8) as Him operating in the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1-12). This should not be seen as a demonstration of His omnipresence as some cessationists would lead us to believe. Certainly our Lord possessed this attribute before His incarnation and after His resurrection (Matt. 28:20) but while He was on earth He was in a human body and could only be in one place at a time (John 11:1-6, 32).

## Chapter Seven

1. Greene, Oliver B. **The Gospel According to John, Volume II** (Greeneville, SC: The Gospel Hour, Inc., 1966), p. 369
2. Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible
3. Rice, The Charismatic Movement, p. 164
4. Ambrose, **Concerning Repentance**, Book I, Chapter 8 (section 34)
5. Baxter, J. Sidlow **Divine Healing of the Body** (Garnd Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 33
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid, p. 34
8. A sermon by Martin Luther taken from his Church Postil, 1523, as quoted in Doles, *Miracles*, p. 136
9. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 94. MacArthur appeals to and quotes Luther favorably as one who was a strong adherent to the Word of God. After esteeming Luther so highly, MacArthur writes concerning Charismatics, “Extrabiblical revelation always

leads to error!” As the reader will observe, Luther and MacArthur differ vastly on the understanding of John 14:12. One would hope that since MacArthur esteems Luther as a man faithful to Scripture, that he would not be as staunch a cessationist as he is. Perhaps MacArthur is unaware of Luther’s anti-cessationist teachings.

10. A sermon by Martin Luther taken from his Church Postil, 1522, as quoted in Doles, *Miracles*, pp. 135, 136

11. Gordon, Adoniram J. **The Ministry of Healing** in *Healing: The Three Great Classic on Divine Healing*, Graf, Jonathan L. (Editor) (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1992), p. 177

12. Boys, Thomas **The Suppressed Evidence: or, Proofs of the Miraculous Faith and Experience of the Church of Christ in All Ages** (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1832), pp. 165, 166

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 249, 250

14. Murray, Andrew **With Christ in the School of Prayer** (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1981), pp. 141, 142

15. Bounds, E. M. **The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds on Prayer** (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2000), p. 495

16. Meyer, F. B. **Gospel of John** (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1970, 1988), p. 224

17. Meyer, F. B. **Great Verses through the Bible: A Devotional Commentary on Key Verses** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966, 1980), p. 400

18. Torrey, R. A. **The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), p. 97

## Chapter Eight

1. Gaebelein, A. C. **The Annotated Bible: The Holy Scriptures Analyzed and Annotated** (New York: Publication office “Our hope”, 1913), p. 227

2. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 152

3. Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible

4. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 152

5. *Ibid.*, p. 127. See also Hetherington, William Maxwell **The Apologetics of the Christian Faith** (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1867), pp. 316, 317. Hetherington advocated a similar view to that of John MacArthur, Jr.

6. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 127

7. Rice, *The Charismatic Movement*, p. 164

8. Luther, *Explanatory Notes*, pp. 347, 348

8. Murray, *Prayer*, p. 142

9. Bounds, *Complete Works*, p. 16

10. *Ibid.*, p. 69

## Chapter Nine

1. Morgan, G. Campbell **The Practice of Prayer** (Greenville, SC: Emerald House, 1995), p. 21

2. Smith, Alfred Emanuel; Walton, Frances (Editors) **The Outlook, Volume 114** (New York, 1916), p. 411



3. McGarvey, John William **The Four-Fold Gospel**, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/mcgarvey/gospels.ix.iv.html> (Last Accessed: Mar. 11, 2010)
4. Blanchard, Charles **Getting Things from God** (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1915, 1934), p. 246
5. *Ibid*, p. 173
6. Willis, David **Daring Prayer** (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1977), p. 120. As quoted in Grenz, Stanley J. **Prayer: the Cry for the Kingdom** (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), p. 40
7. Hanegraaff, Hank **The Prayer of Jesus** (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), p. 10. It is worth noting that Mr. Hanegraaff is an ordained minister of Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, California. He was ordained by the founder, Chuck Smith himself. Yet, when it comes to the subject of prayer, Hanegraaff and Smith appear to be at odds with one another. One example is found in the statement below by Chuck Smith:
 

Many prayers are ineffective, they seemingly, produce nothing. They go up and yet they bring nothing down. God does answer prayer. That's the inspiration behind all prayer; for if God never answered prayer, no one would be praying anymore. - Smith, Chuck **Effective Prayer Life** (Costa Mesa, CA: The Word For Today, 1979, 1980, 1996, 2000), p. 21
- While Hanegraaff seems to shun the desire to see us “fixated on our outwardness” and believes that “Communing with God in prayer is itself the prize,” his pastor, Chuck Smith, believes that there should be some visible, tangible result to prayer. He is right since Jesus Himself said, “*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly*” (Matt. 6:6).
- Another irony is that the whole basis of Hanegraaff's book is in repudiating another book teaching that the prayer of Jabez is a valid Biblical model of prayer for today. Nonetheless, Hanegraaff's pastor, Chuck Smith, in contrast to Hanegraaff, teaches extensively that Jabez's prayer is one that can be modeled in our present time (see *Effective Prayer Life*, pp. 87-98).
8. Blanchard, *Getting Things*, pp. 58, 59
9. *Ibid*, p. 197
10. Goodwin, John W. **The Secret Place of Prayer** (Kansas City, Mo: Nazarene Publishing House, 1928)
11. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 141
12. *Ibid*.
13. *Ibid*.
14. Rice, John R. *Charismatic Movement*, p. 163
15. Bloesch, Donald **Essentials of Evangelical Theology** (Harper & Row, 1978, vol. 2, p. 57, and Vol. 1, p. 31), as quoted in an online article “On Providence and Prayer” by Jack A. Keller, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=331by> (Last Accessed: 12 March 2010)
16. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 131

17. Swindoll, Charles R. **Chales R. Swindoll: The Inspirational Writings** (New York: Inspirational Press, 1994), p. 266. Barnhouse was quoted favorably by Swindoll.
18. McLaren, Alexander **Expositions of Holy Scripture: Isaiah and Jeremiah**, [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/macLaren/isa\\_jer.ii.ii.xii.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/macLaren/isa_jer.ii.ii.xii.html) (Last Accessed: 11 March, 2010)
19. Nee, Watchman **Sit, Walk, Stand** (Victory Press, 1957), pp. 58-63
20. Houlihan, Robert W. **Signs and Wonders in Mission**, [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199801/056\\_signs\\_wonders.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199801/056_signs_wonders.cfm) (Last Accessed: 17 March, 2010)
21. Though I understand that an edition under a different title which was a little more sympathetic had been published. However, I had not heard of it and probably would not have read it at that time if I had known about it.

## Chapter Ten

1. for an excellent historical analysis on the struggles between early Pentecostalism and dispensationalism, see the online article **The Conflict Between Dispensationalism and Early Pentecostalism and the Emergence of the Latter Rain Motif** by William Sloos, <http://www.zimbio.com/Evangelicals/articles/64/Conflict+Between+Dispensationalism+Early+Pentecostalism> (Last Accessed: 23 March, 2010)
2. Meloon, *Robbed*, p. 13. See also Scofield, C. I. **Scofield Reference Bible**, 1909, 1917 (notes on John 1:17 sec. 2), p. 1115.
3. *Ibid*, p. 12
4. *Ibid*, p. 13
5. Rice, John R. **The Power of Pentecost** (Mursfreeboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 2000), p. 166
6. Rice, John R. **We Can Have Revival Now: Soul Winner's Fire** (Mursfreeboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 2000), pp. 27, 28
7. For a better grasp of the origins of dispensational theology, its foundations in cessationist theology, and its effects upon revivals see DeArteaga, William **Quenching the Spirit: Discover the Real Spirit Behind the Charismatic Controversy** (Charisma House, 1996)
8. MacArthur Jr., John **Bible Questions and Answers, tape GC 70-13** (transcribed), <http://www.biblebb.com/files/macqa/70-13-9.htm> (Last Accessed: 23 March, 2010). As you read further down you will find that MacArthur and I do not agree on much of anything else since he also embraces some form of dispensationalism, particularly an argument that undergirds his cessationist viewpoint.
9. For example, compare Eph. 6:1-3 to Exodus 20:12; 2 Cor. 9:6-11 to Psalm 112:9; Heb. 13:5-6 to Joshua 1:5, Deuteronomy 31:6 and 8, Psalm 27:1 and 118:6; 1 Pet. 3:8-12 to Psalm 34:12-16; James 5:14-16. For a complete explanation of the relevancy of the Old Testament, it's promises and commands to today's believer, see my book, **The Goodness of God** (Central Falls, RI: Victorious Word Christian Fellowship, 2006), pp. 95-114.
10. Dods, Marcus **On the Incarnation of the Eternal Word** (London: R. B. Seeley, 1831), p. 555
11. Lockyer, Herbert **All the Miracles of the Bible** (Zondervan, 1988), p. 260

12. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, see pp. 33, 71, 151, 168-172, 205
13. *Ibid*, see pp. 173-185
14. Bullinger, Ethelbert William **The Foundations of Dispensational Truth** (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2007), p. 255
15. establish. Dictionary.com. Dictionary.com Unabridged. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/establish> (accessed: March 24, 2010).
16. MacArthur, *Chaos*, p. 136. Jack Deere has already done an excellent job in refuting MacArthur on this by citing numerous Biblical references demonstrating the error of MacArthur's position (as well as others who adhere to this line of thinking). See *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 253-266. Nevertheless, I will be refuting this idea from a slightly different angle.
17. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 173
18. Wiersbe, Warren W. **The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament: Volume 1** (David C. Cook, 1992), p. 481
19. Hebrew dictionary at <http://www.studylight.org>
20. Strong's Concordance defines the word "generation" in Matthew 17:17 as, "a generation; by implication an age (the period or the persons): - age, generation, nation, time." Basically it is similar to how theologians understand the word "dispensation."
21. Habershon, Ada R. **The Study of the Miracles** (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press LLC, 2008), p. 239

## Chapter Eleven

1. Moore, Henry **The Life of the Rev. John Wesley** (London: John Kershaw, 1825), p. 151
2. Matthew, David **Church Adrift: Where in the World Are We Going?** (United Kingdom: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott Ltd., 1985), see pp. 55-73. I have found this to be one of the easiest books to read on church history. It is probably the only book on the subject that I have read all the way through, from beginning to end, more than once. Another interesting book to read on this subject is MacNutt, Francis **The Nearly Perfect Crime: How the Church Almost Killed the Ministry of Healing** (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2005).
3. Boys, *Suppressed Evidence*, pp. 97, 98
4. Wesley, John **The Works of the Rev. John Wesley** (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), pp. 26, 27
5. MacArthur, Jr., John F. **Charismatic Chaos** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), p. 131
6. Gaffin Jr., Richard B. *A Cessationist View*, in **Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views** (Wayne A. Grudem, General Editor) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), p. 42
7. Pink, Arthur W. **Faith to Work Miracles**, [http://www.eternallifeministries.org/awp\\_miracles.htm](http://www.eternallifeministries.org/awp_miracles.htm) (Last Accessed: 15 February 2010)
8. Bengel, John Albrecht **Bengel's New Testament Commentary**, as quoted in Boys, *Suppressed Evidence*, p. 255
9. Pink, *Faith to Work Miracles*.
10. Hanegraaff, *Crisis*, p. 205

11. Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, pp. 190, 191. This and other statements by Mr. Hanegraaff reveal his strong cessationist tendencies. No doubt that if he limits the visions of the Lord to the apostles, then he certainly does not believe that present day believers can operate in the authority of faith that Jesus promises in Matthew 17.
12. *Life of Antony*, p. 218, as cited in **2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity**, by Eddie L. Hyatt (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House Publishers, 2002), p. 41
13. *Ibid.*, p. 44
14. Chant, Ken **Faith Dynamics** (Ramona, CA: Vision Publishing, 1989), p. 79
15. *Ibid.*
16. Murray, Andrew **Divine Healing** (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), p. 139

## Chapter Twelve

1. Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, p. 241
2. Koch, Kurt E. **Occult ABC** (Kregel Publications, 1978), p. 31
3. Phillips, John **Exploring the Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary** (Kregel Publications, 2003), p. 126
4. Phillips, John **Exploring the Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary** (Kregel Publications, 2001), p. 386
5. Owens Robert, *The Azusa Street Revival: The Pentecostal Movement Begins in America* in Synan, Vinson **The Century of the Holy Spirit** (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), p. 54. The accusation that Pentecostalism was “the last vomit of Satan” is attributed to the Fundamentalist leader, G. Campbell Morgan.
6. See *Counterfeit Revival*, pp. 125-129 for Hanegraaff’s unfavorable description of this revival.
7. Koch, *Occult*, p. 34
- Rice, *The Charismatic Movement*, p. 148. Rice quotes from a number of books by men who are supposed experts on the relation of the gift of tongues with the demonic.
8. Pyle, *Tongues*, p. 141
9. MacArthur, *Chaos*, pp. 202, 203
10. Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, p. 52
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. Smith, Chuck **Living Water: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Life** (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), p. 96
14. Houlihan, Robert W. **Signs and Wonders in Mission**, [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199801/056\\_signs\\_wonders.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199801/056_signs_wonders.cfm) (Last Accessed: 14 April, 2010)

## Chapter Thirteen

1. For example, what “doctrine” does the cessationist want Charismatics to embrace? Cessationism is found among those who embrace Reformed, Arminian, Dispensational, and Covenant doctrine. On the other hand, Charismatics are found among those who embrace all of the above. Usually, when a cessationist claims that a Charismatic is more concerned about experience than doctrine, it either means that the Charismatic is not concerned about the critic’s particular brand of doctrine or that

they are so busy doing miracle-ministry (helping others through the power of God) that they do not have time to engage in the endless and fruitless doctrinal disputes among the intellectual Christians.

2. Saint Chrysostom: **Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians**, Phillip Schaff, 1889. Homily 36, NPNF 219-220

## Chapter Fourteen

1. For an excellent theological discussion about God's "perceptive will" (what He desires to happen and desires to miraculously bring about) and God's "permissive will" (what He allows but may not want to happen, but He honors free will), see Lewis, Gordon R and Demarest, Bruce A. **Integrative Theology, Volume One** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), pp. 317-319

2. Atkinson, David **The Message of Job: Suffering and Grace** (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1943, 1991), p. 25

3. Twopeny, Richard **Dissertations on Some Parts of the Old and New Testaments which have been Supposed Unsuitable to the Divine Attributes** (London: C & J Riverton, 1824), p. 19

4. Kaiser, Jr., Walter C. **Toward Old Testament Ethics** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), p. 256

5. In his commentary on the Bible, Adam Clarke writes, "And have seen the end of the Lord - The issue to which God brought all his afflictions and trials, giving him children, increasing his property, lengthening out his life, and multiplying to him every kind of spiritual and secular good. This was God's end with respect to him; but the devil's end was to drive him to despair, and to cause him to blaspheme his Maker. This mention of Job shows him to have been a real person; for a fictitious person would not have been produced as an example of any virtue so highly important as that of patience and perseverance. The end of the Lord is a Hebraism for the issue to which God brings any thing or business."

6. For example, here is a note from the well-know *Life Application Bible* on Job 42:10-11: Would the message of Job change today if God had not restored to him his former blessings? No. God is still sovereign. Jesus said that anyone who gives up something for the Kingdom of God will be repaid (Luke 18:29, 30). Our restoration may or may not be the same kind as Job's, which was both spiritual and material." – **Life Application Bible** (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988). First, Jesus was speaking about voluntarily giving up things for God's Kingdom. Job did not "give up something for the Kingdom of God." Everything he had was forcefully and unwillingly stolen from him by the devil. We should not confuse the two. Second, if the Lord did not want us to trust Him for a material restoration of our health and possession after being confronted with similar trials, He would not have had this passage recorded. He records these incidents in order to build our faith. Reinterpreting the passage to fit a cessationist mindset is not "life application" but "faith obliteration" which leaves us with a fatalistic attitude. It distorts the character of a loving God who is made to seem uncaring about our physical well being, which as we will see, is repudiated by Jesus' demonstration of God's character.

7. Vine, W.E. **Vine's Expository Dictionary Of Biblical Words**, Copyright (c) 1985 by Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers.

8. Ibid.

## **Chapter Fifteen**

### 1. Calvin, *Institutes*

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[http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical\\_studies/noncanon/acts/actjohn.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/acts/actjohn.htm) (Last Accessed: 1 March 2010)

Ambrose, **The Prayer of Job and David**

Ambrose, **Concerning Repentance**

Aphrahat, **Demonstration 1 (Of Faith),**  
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/370101.htm>

Atkinson, David **The Message of Job: Suffering and Grace** (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1943, 1991)

Barnes, Albert **Barnes New Testament Notes**

Barnett, Donald Lee; McGregor, Jeffrey P. **Speaking in Other Tongues: A Scholarly Defense** (Seattle, WA: Community Chapel Publications, 1986)

Baxter, J. Sidlow **Divine Healing of the Body** (Garnd Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 33

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## Short Glossary of Terms

**Asceticism** – The belief that one can become pious and spiritual by denying oneself material possessions and luxuries. It is also a belief that sickness and hunger is a form of piety. Many early Christians adopted this ideology due to the worldliness that had crept into the church in later centuries.

**Calvinism** – A system of theology that adheres to the teachings of the 16<sup>th</sup> reformer, John Calvin. Another name for this is “Reformed theology.” The basic premise of Calvin’s teachings and those who follow them is an idea of God’s sovereignty in which He ordains all that happens in this life, be it accidents, sickness, death, rejection of salvation through Christ, etc. One who follows this system is often referred to as a *Calvinist* though many prefer to simply call themselves “Reformed.”

**Canon** – Paul said that all Scripture was given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16). The canon consists of the books and writings that the church considered to be truly inspired by God. These books and writings are compiled together to form the Bible that we have today. There were many other books (referred to as “the apocrypha”) that were excluded because the church did not consider them inspired by God for various (and legitimate) reasons.

**Cessationism** – A system of theology that believes that the Lord intentionally chose not to work miracles some period in history after the church was established. Those who follow this system are usually referred to as *cessationists*. There is no single period or reason for this idea that cessationists can agree upon. We discuss most of them in this book.

**Charismata** – A Greek word used in reference to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit as outlined in 1 Corinthians 12:1-12 and other places in the Bible.

**Charismatic** – A Christian movement that incorporated various denominational and non-denominational churches outside of the Pentecostal movement that received the same supernatural miraculous gifts and experiences that the Pentecostals received.

**Church Fathers** – Theologians and writers in the first centuries of the church who lived not too long after the apostles and prophets that

established it. These men produced a number of writings that defended the church against attacks from both within and outside of it, especially in the areas of Christ's deity and humanity, His resurrection, and other important areas. Their writings are often referred to in order to get a perspective of how the church taught and operated during post-biblical times.

**Continuationist** – One who believes opposite from the Cessationist in that God never intentionally decided to cease working miracles after a certain period. Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Third Wavers are considered to be “continuationists” though this group is not limited to them. There are a number of Evangelical Christians who don't practice “miracle ministry” but have an intellectual affirmation of the continuation of miracles and fall into this group.

**Covenant** – A binding agreement between two or more people that can only be broken through death. This was usually done by mingling the blood of two representatives together. A covenant consisted of one or more promises that the parties were obligated to keep. God is mentioned throughout Scripture as a “Covenant Keeping God.” Furthermore, the word we use as “testament” to describe the division between the “old” and “new” in our Bibles is actually the word “covenant.” Marriage is likened unto a covenant which demonstrates to us that a “covenant” is something stronger than a mere “contract.”

**Dispensationalist** – A system of Bible interpretation that believes in dividing the Scripture into separate time periods (dispensations). God is said to have dealt with His people in different ways in each time period. There is no concrete agreement on how many dispensations the Bible supposedly teaches. Depending on the writer it can be anywhere from seven to nineteen dispensations. This system became popular with the *Scofield Study Reference Bible* and is one of the most prominent systems of interpretation in the Evangelical church.

**Evangelical** – Protestant Christian movement that emphasizes the Bible as the true Word of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, the need for a new birth, Jesus being the only way to receive salvation, and other important doctrines. Most people who believe in present day miracles are “Evangelical” in their beliefs, but due to the majority of cessationists who are considered “Evangelical” there has been a tendency in the past to separate “Evangelicals” from “Charismatics” and “Pentecostals.”

**Fundamentalist** – A movement similar to Evangelicalism (most “Fundamentalists” are “Evangelical” and vice-versa) that emphasizes that the Bible is infallible and without error. They rightfully teach that the Bible is the only infallible authority for Christian faith and practice. Fundamentalism is often in opposition to “Liberalism” which rejects such truths as the infallibility of Scripture, the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, Christ being the only way to salvation, etc. Sadly, the greatest opposition against the present day belief in miracles has come from this group.

**Gnosticism** – From the Greek word “gnosis” which means “knowledge.” Those who followed Gnosticism were known as “Gnostics.” Gnostics believed that they could attain to superior or special knowledge which would release them from this material world. Many of them taught that Jesus did not resurrect in a physical body. The early church spent much time battling against this heresy.

**Heresy** – A word used once in Acts 24:14. It refers to an idea or teaching that is different from the established doctrine within the church. Sometime after the apostles, many doctrines that were taught were forgotten. It took centuries to rediscover them. For example, Martin Luther discovered that God gave His righteousness to people by faith rather than by works and monetary gifts that the established church demanded. Later, other Biblical teachings were rediscovered such as baptism by immersion, missions, holiness, etc. Whenever a new teaching was discovered, the established church referred to it as “heresy” and condemned the advocate as a “heretic.” This has been true as well for those who discovered that God desires to perform miracles in this present dispensation. The terms “heresy” and “heretic” are often used derisively by those castigating the individuals propagating “new” teachings.

**LE (Longer Ending)** – The debated “Longer Ending” of Mark 16 which is verses 9 to 20. Some say that Mark 16 ended at verse 8 (shorter ending) or its original ending was lost and replaced by the current verses in our present day Bibles. We believe for the reasons stated in chapter five that this could not be. We support what is known as the “LE” or “longer ending” of mark.

**Liberal Christian** – One who claims to be a Christian but denies the supernatural elements of the Bible such as the virgin birth, the resurrection of Christ, and all of the miracles recorded in Scripture.

Many in this group believe that the Bible *contains* the Word of God but does not believe that the Bible *is* the Word of God. This is normally the opposite of the “Fundamentalist” or “Evangelical” positions.

**Manichaeism** – A Pseudo-Christian cult founded by a man named Manichæus who lived from 215 to 275 AD. One of the most peculiar teachings of this cult was that Satan and Yahweh were equals. They also taught reincarnation. Saint Augustine was a member of this cult before converting to Christianity. Some historians believe that Augustine's Christian theology maintained some of the Manichaeist peculiarities.

**Manuscript (MSS)** – A reference to an original writing or writings of a particular book or books in the Bible.

**Noncessationist** – See *Continuationist*.

**Noncessationist cessationist** – A phrase I use to describe those who claim that they are not cessationists. They claim to believe that the gifts of the Spirit are for today but continually argue against nearly every manifestation of them, often using the same logic applied by cessationists.

**Objective Value of Prayer** – The Biblical belief that prayer actually changes us but can also move God to change circumstances and do things he would not normally have done if prayer had not been offered. This is the type of prayer actually taught in Scripture.

**Orthodoxy** – What is supposed to be the common beliefs and practices of the church. Occasionally used to test and judge doctrines that are inconsistent with the standards that men have stated to be “orthodoxy” or “heresy.”

**Open but Cautious** – Those who take this label do not accept cessationist theology. Most of them believe that the gifts of the Spirit are for today but they are skeptical of many of the things seen and experienced in Pentecostal and Charismatic settings. There are some who truly are open to the moving of the Spirit but my experience has been that many in this group are more “cautious” than “open,” and will even admit to it.

**Pentecostal** – A Christian movement from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that rediscovered the Biblical truth that God still baptizes His people with



the Holy Spirit in this age, enabling them to speak with other tongues and empowers them to work miracles.

**Psychosomatic** – Used by cessationists to implicate the idea that modern day “miracles” are not from God but are psychologically influenced emotional disorders that lead to physical reactions. No doubt that some ministers are using psychological tricks to influence a reaction that appears “miraculous” but some cessationists would lead us to believe that this is always the case.

**Reformer** – A group of men from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries that opposed the Roman Catholic Church and its doctrines in an attempt to restore Biblical Christianity.

**Revivalist** – To revive something is to renew it or “bring life” back into it. Quite often the church becomes stagnant and begins to separate itself from the life of God. God will commission an Evangelist or another minister to “revive” His people. This person will conduct a series of meetings or crusades usually called “revivals.” Thus, the person conducting these meetings is called a “revivalist.”

**Scholasticism** – The theological and philosophical teachings from the middle ages influenced by the church fathers and secular philosophers such as Aristotle.

**Stoicism** – A system of philosophy that emphasizes the need to repress emotions. Its adherents were taught to be indifferent to pleasure or pain. This philosophy has crept into the church in some form or another in past ages. One of the most prevalent results of this philosophy was the teaching that God was “impassible”- without feeling, emotion, or any type of passion. It does not take much reading of Scripture to discover that this is a false teaching.

**Subjective Value of Prayer** – The unbiblical belief that prayer’s primary intent is to change a person and make them better on the inside. Those who hold to this belief say that prayer can help one to become pious and humble but it has no value as far as changing any situations or moving God to bring any miraculous results. This is a false teaching and cannot be found within the pages of scripture. Yet it is advocated today by a number of Evangelicals.

**Third Wave** – A movement that came sometime after the Charismatic movement among a group of Evangelicals who believe in the present

day miraculous interventions of God, but do not want to be classified as Pentecostal or Charismatic.

**Word-Faith Movement** – A Pentecostal/Charismatic movement in which God’s Word is emphasized to impart faith to the believer to claim God’s promises. While many of its critics focus on some of the teachings on health and financial prosperity, the movement has also emphasized receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit by faith rather than tarrying, how to hear from God, who we are in Christ, being released from condemnation, victory over sin, and our authority over the devil.

## Invitation and prayer for salvation

To become a TRUE Christian One must be born again -1. John 3:1-7

We must be born of the water and the Spirit. This water is not speaking of water baptism but of the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 4:15; Eph. 5:25-27).

There is only ONE avenue into heaven and that is to be born again. Water baptism, church membership, religious duties, giving to the poor, living a moral life, taking the Lord's supper, being a member of a denomination, or an INTELLECTUAL reception (vs. a heart reception) of Jesus Christ cannot save you. You must be born again.

Are you born again? If you are not you will not spend eternity in heaven with Jesus Christ but instead you will enter into eternal damnation. I urge you to consider accepting Jesus Christ as your savior.

To be born again is very simple. You need only accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. Why not give your heart to Him today. All you need to do is ask Him to come into your life. If you are not sure of how to do this here is a simple prayer to pray:

Lord Jesus

*I ask you to come into my heart right now. You said in your word that if I confess you with my mouth and believe in my heart that God raised you from the dead then I will be saved (Rom. 10:9). I recognize that I am a sinner and I need your forgiveness and a change in my nature. I repent of all my sin. I know that all that come to you, you will not reject (John 6:37). Thank you for your dying for me so that I can be born again. Thank you Father for Jesus. Thank you Holy Spirit for coming in to my life. AMEN.*

You are now born again. It's that simple.

By the way, welcome to the family!

## Invitation to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit

What Is This Baptism? He is a Gift to be given to the believer - Acts 2:38. Every born again Christian has the Holy Spirit in them but not every Christian has received the BAPTISM (immersion) with the Spirit.

He is also a PROMISE that can be claimed - Acts 1:4 A promise implies something that one has a legal right to claim. You need not beg, plead, and do things to earn this blessing. He is a gift so it's free. He is a promise that is claimed by faith. He can be received AFTER one is born again - Acts 19:1-6.

Though it is better to ask God for this baptism in your own way, below is a prayer that may help you if you are at a loss as to how to ask:

*Heavenly Father*

*The Lord Jesus promised that I can receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking with other tongues. You promised that if I ask then I would receive exactly that which I have asked you for. Father I thank you in the name of your son Jesus and I yield myself to you Holy Spirit. Thank you for baptising me with Your Spirit.*

Now just lift your hands and receive. Don't forget to share this blessing with others.

## Prayer for Bodily Healing

It is always God's will to heal and that healing should be expected when we ask Him. You can also cry out to God expect Him to answer you. Below is a sample petition you can use in seeking God's healing:

*Dear Father*

*You stated in your word that you are the Lord that heals (Exodus 15:26). Lord, I understand that in the Hebrew this comes from a compound name, "Jehovah-Rophe" which means that you are a covenant healer and that it is your nature to heal. Lord, you promised that if I served you, you would bless my bread and water and take sickness away from the midst of me (Exodus 23:25). You also promised that the prayer of faith will save the sick and that you would raise them up (James 5:14-16).*

*I know that my Lord and Savior, Jesus the Messiah, has paid the purchase price for my healing by His death and resurrection (Isa. 53:4, 5; Matt. 8:16, 17; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 8:11). I believe that all of my sickness were laid on Him and I do not need to bear them. So I declare that according to your word and the promises that you have given that I receive healing by the stripes of my Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 2:24; Mark 11:24).*

*Father, based on the authority of your work I speak to my body and I command the sickness to leave in the Name of Jesus (name what the sickness is). I claim healing and health for my body and emotions and I thank you for it Father. Hallelujah!*

**Note:** Sickness is not always due to personal sin. However, if the Lord should reveal to you that your sickness may be the result of personal sin, then take the time to repent and ask Him to forgive you. He is loving and compassionate and quick to forgive.

Sometimes the reception of healing is warfare and one should be ready to fight. Nonetheless, if you should feel that your faith is lacking, we have resources available that will help you to build it. We love you and we want to help you to receive all that God has promised.

## Prayer for Victory over Temptation and Sin

Sin is not in the will of God for anyone and has never been a part of His plan. God knows the destructiveness of sin. God's love for you is so abundantly strong that he desires to protect you from anything that would harm you and destroy the joy and happiness he wants to provide you.

If you are constantly faced with temptations and/or you are in bondage to some type of sinful habit (pornography, smoking, drinking, lying, etc.) and you want to be free, God is more than willing to set you free from this entanglement. At VWCF we believe that the born again Christian can walk above sin and have complete victory over it in this life. Temptations will come (and being tempted is not sin because even our Lord was tempted, yet without sin) but you have the power to resist them.

A single prayer is not enough to walk in complete victory. You must exercise your power to resist. However, prayer to God is the BEGINNING because He will provide you with the supernatural ability to resist temptations of all kind and release you from any bondage that holds you. Below is a sample prayer that you can pray:

*Dear Father*

*First I ask you to forgive me for the times I have yielded to temptation and sin and made no effort to resist it. Father I receive this forgiveness based on the authority of your Word to me (1 John 1:9). My desire from this point on is to do those things that please you.*

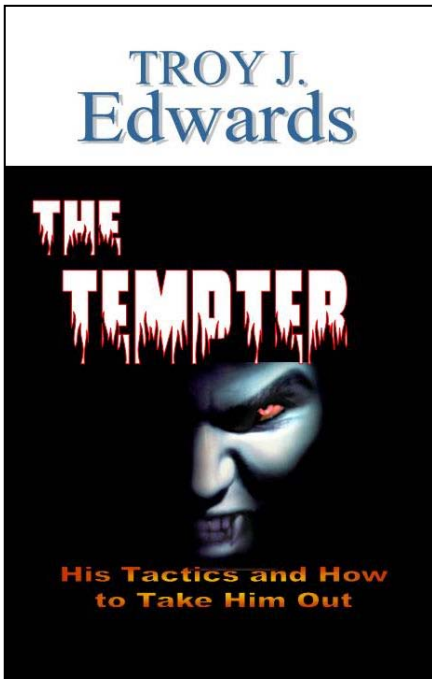
*I thank you for my Lord Jesus who came to deliver me from my sins (Matt. 1:21). I know that Jesus bore all of my sin on the cross and because of my identification with Him, I have died to sin. Therefore by faith in your Word, I declare myself dead to sin and freed from its bondage (1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 6:1-8, 22; John 8:31-36). Father, I now ask that by the power of the precious Holy Spirit that you will enable me to walk fully in Him so that I will no longer fulfill the desires of my flesh (Gal. 5:16). Lord, by your power and strength I choose to keep my body under subjection so that I will not fulfill carnal desires (1 Cor. 9:27).*

*I thank you Father for making a way of escape for me from all temptations that come my way (1 Cor. 10:13). Lord help me to quickly recognize the way of escape that you have made for me during those times of testing. Thank you for setting me free from temptation's power to pull me in and cause me to sin.*

*Satan, by the authority given to me over you through my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I resist you and every evil desire you attempt to bring my way (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9). I am no longer in your kingdom or under your control (Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 1:12-14) so you no longer have any authority over me. I command this sinful habit (name the habit/sin) be broken from me in Jesus' Name. I declare on the authority of God's Word that I am fully and completely free.*

From this point forward, trust in God's power to enable you to walk a free, clean, consecrated and holy life. He loves you and He will help you.

## Books By Pastor Troy J. Edwards



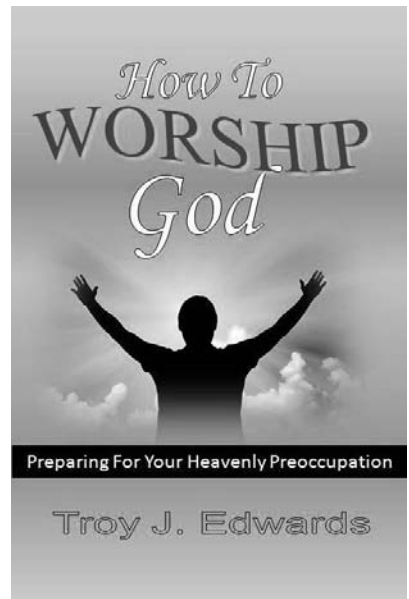
### **The Tempter: His Tactics and how to Take Him Out**

In *The Tempter: His Tactics and How to Take Him Out*, Pastor, Teacher and author Troy J. Edwards takes you through the Scriptures and exposes the Tempter's sinister and crafty attacks on man. You will learn how the Tempter has used so-called Christian theology to make God appear to be the author of sin. You will also learn why the Tempter tempts God's people and non-Christians into sin. Finally you will learn practical truths from Scripture on how to overcome this enemy.

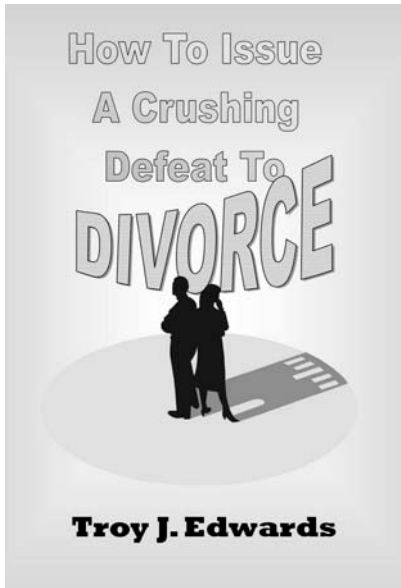
### **How to Worship God**

Did you know that God actually has to seek worshipers who will worship Him according to His standards? This means that such worshipers are not readily available. Furthermore are you aware of the fact that worshipping God in His prescribed way will not only bring you victory in spiritual warfare, but also enables you to receive answers to prayer that you would not otherwise receive?

In his book, *How to Worship God*, Pastor Troy teaches us how to worship God in His prescribed way.







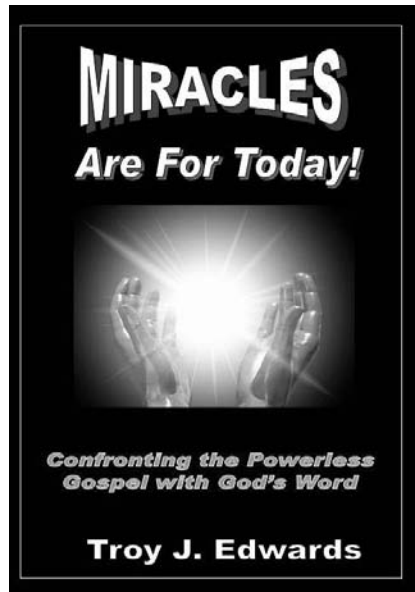
## How to Issue a Crushing Defeat to Divorce

God's children should hate what God hates. If God hates divorce then so should His children. Yet divorce is running rampant inside the body of Christ and many of God's people are simply turning a blind eye to it and making up excuses for it. While we should avoid being judgmental, we should also look to God's Word to discover principles that could destroy the power that divorce is having in the church.

**Miracles Are For Today: Confronting the Powerless Gospel with God's Word**

*Confronting the Powerless Gospel with God's Word*

In his book, *Miracles Are For Today*, Pastor Troy J. Edwards refutes the idea that God's miracles are only for a past generation and explains from Scripture how God's people can experience frequent miracles in their corporate worship as well as within their personal lives. Get ready to believe God for a miracle today.



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