

Prophecies concerning the End of Miracles, Signs, and Wonders

Introduction

A miracle occurs any time God alters the way things would have turned out if left untouched. We pray and ask God to do things. If God responds actively to our requests, then He is doing miracles. If God is not doing miracles any more, then there is no point to our supplications. God told various prophets about the termination of certain types of miracles, not all types of miracles.

Daniel 9:24-27 (~536 BC)

When Daniel wrote, Jerusalem was in ruins, having been destroyed by the Babylonians. The decree to begin its rebuilding would be issued shortly after. Daniel gave benchmarks for this period of 70 weeks, at 7, 69, 69.5, and 70 weeks. The events were (7) the decree to rebuild, (69) the death of the Messiah, (69.5) the second destruction of the Temple, and (70) the destruction of the one who destroyed the Temple. The time periods do not seem to be proportionate, but approximate. Many applications have been made to many periods of time. One event anchors the correct understanding in history, the death of Jesus. The death of the Messiah is described in the same way in Isaiah 53:8. Jesus quoted this prophecy and applied it to Himself (Matthew 24:15), and included two additional details: that the gospel would go to the whole world first (Matthew 24:14) and that it would take place before the people of that time all died (Matthew 24:34). Some have tried to apply Matthew 24 to the end of time, claiming that the gospel has not gone to everyone, or there would be no need for missionaries. But Paul claims that the gospel had gone to the whole world by 62 AD (Colossians 1:23). Luke's parallel description of the destruction of Jerusalem removes the figures of speech used by Matthew and makes it quite literal (Luke 21:20). As a part of this sequence of history, Daniel prophesied the end of vision and prophecy in connection with the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

Zechariah 13:1-6 (~520 BC)

The first verse sets the time frame for the accomplishment of this prophecy, in the time of the Messiah. Three types of power will end at that time: the power of pagan idols, prophecy, and demon possession. Until that time, God allowed Satan to give some sort of power to some pagan gods (*e.g.*, Exodus 7:11, 7:22, 8:7; Revelation 13:13). After that time, God will send no more prophets. And demon possession, described so often in the Gospels and Acts, will not be allowed.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10

Those who desire to retain prophesy, tongues, and miraculous knowledge apply this passage to the end of time. If that were true, the description becomes useless. Paul does not need to tell us that prophecy, tongues, and miraculous knowledge will not be used in heaven. When Paul wrote this letter, the whole message of God had not yet been delivered. Paul wrote many letters after this one that contained more, new information. So did Peter and John. The 'perfect' is the completed gospel, the crowning event of which was the destruction of Jerusalem (or perhaps the fall of the destroyer of Jerusalem).

Ephesians 4:11-16

Paul listed five classifications of people who were “given” by God, implying that all of them were specially appointed, miraculously. This was certainly true of apostles and prophets. The only evangelists of whom we have knowledge were miraculously appointed. At least some pastors and teachers received miraculous wisdom or knowledge, as described in 1 Corinthians 12:8. These special appointments had a termination date, specified in verses 13 - 16. Jesus prayed (John 17:20 – 24) that unity, perfection, and glory (godly character) be a sign to the world that He was truly from the Father. If Ephesians 4:11 – 16, which uses the same descriptions, takes place only at the end of time, then Jesus’ prayer failed and He is not the Messiah. Further, suggesting that evangelists, pastors, and teachers are with us still would require that we have apostles and prophets until the end of time. Zechariah and Daniel described the end of prophecy in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem. Only a few groups today claim to have apostles. Therefore, Paul must be describing the time when the gospel was to be fully revealed, after which time church leaders must obtain their wisdom and knowledge through prayer (James 1:5-6) and study (2 Timothy 2:15) with the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Revelation 11:1-13

The miraculous powers entrusted to these two witnesses would leave them “when they have finished their testimony.” At that time, their enemies would be able to destroy them. (An interesting sidelight is the statement that they would be resurrected and would ascend to heaven in the sight of unbelievers. No inspired writer recorded the accomplishment of this prophecy, probably because they had all died.) This scene certainly happens before the end of time, since there are survivors. It cannot be a future sign of the end times because there will be no signs (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, 2 Peter 3:9-10, Mark 13:32, Matthew 24, 36, 24:44).

Conclusion

Miracles still happen. However, these miracles are no longer performed by God as proof of His messengers or His message. We have the promise of God that He will respond to our prayers. He has, in the past, changed the course of human events on the basis of a request by one of his friends. Today, when we ask God to do a miracle, we have no visual or measurable evidence that He has done anything. We cannot tell whether God did it or whether it would have happened anyway. We cannot point to a current event and say confidently that God caused it. God has not provided that evidence. We simply trust that He has done and will continue to do what is in our best interests, including miracles. We walk by faith, not by sight.