

“Are “Miracles, Wonders and Signs” Performed Today?”

When Jacob stared at the blood stained coat of many colors which he had given to his son Joseph, he was convinced that the boy had died. He went into mourning, and did all that a man would do if the boy really were dead. Yet Joseph was not dead, he was in the house of Potiphar doing the work of a slave. One might wonder how those other sons could keep up the charade when they realized all the pain that it was causing their father, but such are the wages of sin.

Jacob illustrates a very important point that the Bible makes time and again. Man can be deceived, and when he is so deceived, there is little he can do to find the truth. Jacob was fortunate, before he died the truth was made known to him.

In doctrinal issues, man can also be deceived. Fortunately things are different in doctrine than they were for Jacob. The Bible always contains the truth and will show men their deception if they will seek for it.

There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. Pr. 14:12

This is armor for the heart of a Christian. One must arm themselves with the knowledge that we too can be deceived and that Scripture is the only hope of guarding us from such deception. Too many are content to accept what they hear and feel and not what the Bible plainly says. Carefully consider: “*there is a way that seems right*”. One may be absolutely convinced of the rightness of a certain course of conduct or belief yet be walking right into eternal death.

An Emotional Issue

Nearly everyone who believes miracles are still available today has a personal stake in it. Either a relative, friend or themselves has been healed, spoken in tongues or has experienced an event that “*proves*” to them that miracles are still being performed today. It is hard for such a one to admit that they are wrong in their assessment of miracles.

Like Jacob, they are emotionally convinced that what they believe is true. Yet when Jacob saw the evidence he changed his feelings and belief. If anyone loves the truth they will change their convictions to match Scripture and their own understanding.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. 8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. Pr. 3:5-8

What is a Miracle, Wonder or Sign?

It is important that we truly understand exactly what the Scriptures mean when they use the term “*miracle*.” Carefully consider what Peter said about Jesus.

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know Acts 2:22

The Holy Spirit was very clear and precise. A miracle, wonder, or sign is not answered prayer or God’s providence. It is not any act God Himself performed. Nothing is a miracle to God. He can suspend all natural law and intervene at any moment. But these acts do not fit under the category of miracles, wonders and signs. A true miracle, wonder or sign is done through a man.

But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5 For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’? 6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” — then He said to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” 7 And he arose and departed to his house. 8 Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men. Mt. 9:4-8

When God allowed a man to be the means by which these things are performed it was a miracle. When God did it himself without the agency of man, it is God’s providence, answer to prayer or intervention, but it was not a miracle, wonder or sign because it was not done through a man. The list of these things God gave man the ability to do are clearly revealed.

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak

with new tongues; 18 **they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.**" 19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, **the Lord working with them** and **confirming the word through the accompanying signs.** Amen. Mark 16:17-20

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given **the word of wisdom** through the Spirit, to another **the word of knowledge** through the same Spirit, 9 to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another **gifts of healings** by the same Spirit, 10 to another **the working of miracles**, to another **prophecy**, to another **discerning of spirits**, to another **different kinds of tongues**, to another **the interpretation of tongues.** 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 1Cor. 12:4-11

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

Although many are unaware of this truth, God has not always allowed miracles to be performed by men. During the entire account of Genesis no miracles performed by man are recorded. During Moses' life many miracles were performed, but the sick were not healed (except for those bitten by the fiery serpents, and Miriam's leprosy). Very few times in Scripture do we see God using men to work miracles through. Moses, Elijah and Elisha were the only ones in the Old Testament who are recorded to have performed many miracles, but even they did not perform them for the personal benefit of people as claimed today.

Jesus was clear that there were many needy widows and lepers during the days of Elijah and Elisha, but only leper and one wisdom were given a special sign.

But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; 26 but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." Luke 4:25-27

Even Paul did not use them for personal purposes.

...But Trophimus I left at Miletus sick. 2Tim. 4:20

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. 1Tim. 5:23

If miracles were simply God's method of alleviating Christians' illnesses, then why were Timothy and Trophimus left to deal with theirs through natural means? The facts revealed in the Bible clearly reveal the answer to this question.

In the very first use of miracles in the Bible, God clearly outlined what their purpose was. He also gave them a name which is self-explanatory as to their purpose.

*Then Moses answered and said, "But **suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'**" 2 So the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod." 3 And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail" (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), 5 "that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." 6 Furthermore the Lord said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom." And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. 7 And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again." So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh. 8 "Then it will be, **if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign.** 9 And it shall be, **if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice**, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land." Ex. 4:1-8*

When Moses came to God his request was for something that would cause the people to believe he was truly God's messenger. God gave him the ability to perform two miracles, and called them **"signs with voices"** which the people would see and would cause them to believe that Moses

really came from God. Hence, miracles were introduced as confirmation that those who could perform them were truly God's messengers.

This same understanding of the purpose of miracles continued throughout the Scriptures. When Nicodemus came to Jesus he makes the following statement in

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." John 3:1-2

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. John 20:30-31

Hence, all miracles from the time of Moses through to the end of Christ's public ministry had as their primary goal the proving that those performing them were approved messengers of God. At the conclusion of Mark, after Jesus promised the apostles the power to perform miracles, the Holy Spirit offered this explanation.

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen. Mark 16:19-20

While performing miracles at Iconium, the same truth was revealed.

Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. Acts 14:3

The purpose of miracles during the New Testament era was for to confirm. God was testifying that the words they were preaching were His.

This was the Holy Spirit's explanation of the purpose of miracles. There is a unity of purpose which spans the entire history of their being performed. From their beginning in Exodus to their end in the New Testament, they were to confirm the message of those preachers who came from God. They were their credentials, their calling card, their proof that only God could be the author of their message. They were performed when this was necessary, they were not performed when there was no need for any confirmation.

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? Heb. 2:1-4

God Warned of False Prophets and False Signs

From the moment that signs and wonders were introduced, God also warned that there would be counterfeits. That others would seek to use this as the means to convince God's people.

*"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' — which you have not known — 'and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for **the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.** 4 You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. 5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst. Deut 13:1-5*

Jesus and His apostles also warned against these false signs.

"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. 22 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 23 But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. Mark 13:21-23

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2Th. 2:9-12

Perhaps the most important warning Jesus gave to all disciples about these things was given in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Mt. 7:21-23

Even though these people were convinced that they were performing miracles, it was not enough. As God had warned Israel so does Jesus warn His disciples. The Word of God and the Will of God take higher precedence than miracles. The false and the true are too closely related to be confused. What God did through Jesus combined miracles with prophecy and signs with truth. When we add the number and quality of the miracles Jesus and the apostles performed, we know that the Scriptures teach the truth.

By themselves miracles prove nothing. Only when they are given to prove the veracity of God's word do they have power. Regardless of the miracles that are performed, every disciple is under the mandate to judge the miracles based on the will of God.

- ◆ We know that there will be false miracles and false prophets.
- ◆ We know God allows signs and wonders (He won't "strike dead" that man who says "may the Lord strike men dead if I am not telling you the truth") because He "tests us to see if we love Him with all our hearts.
- ◆ We know these signs are an attempt to deceive even God's elect.
- ◆ We know Jesus will tell "**many**" thinking they performed miracles, "***I never knew you.***"
- ◆ We know these miracles are a sign of the lawless one and become part of the strong delusion God allows to see if we will love the truth.

With all these warnings it is sheer folly to take any miracle at face value and follow the one who performed it. The miracle may reveal great power, but unless it is accompanied by the teaching of the truth, it has not power and should be rejected.

One of the greatest indictments of the miracle workers of today is the amazing diversity of teaching. When Catholics, Pentecostals, and other denominations all perform the same miracles and speak in the same tongues but have no unity in their teaching it is obvious there is a serious problem that must be carefully investigated. It is impossible for the same Holy Spirit to be validating the teachings that conflict and contradict Scripture. With Jesus warning that God's will take precedence over miracles. It is folly to blindly follow these blind guides.

Are “Miracles, Wonders and Signs” Performed Today - 2?

God’s Word is ALWAYS Higher

Another terrible example of the consequences of believing a lie with special circumstances was the young prophet who had been directed by the “*Word of the Lord*” to prophesy against Jeroboam’s altar in Bethel. Though inspired by the Holy Spirit and even given the power to perform a sign, he was still responsible to submit to God’s Word and not be influenced by false words or other signs. He should have known it was a “*lie*” because it was different than what God had directly told him. He had disobeyed a direct command which he knew came from God with no greater authority than that of a man who claimed to have a message from an angel. This ought to warn one to be extremely cautious in taking any step or holding any doctrine without consulting God’s word and seeing if God will truly be honored and obeyed.

For so it was commanded me by the word of the Lord, saying, ‘You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came.’” 10 So he went another way and did not return by the way he came to Bethel. ... 18 He said to him, “I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.’” (He was lying to him.) 19 So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water. 1Kgs. 13:8-10; 18-19

This was not new! God had already addressed this with His people. He placed his word higher and more trustworthy than any sign or wonder! If God’s word is ever contradicted by those using “*a sign or a wonder*,” “*God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*” (Deut. 13:1-5). Because the young prophet failed to place God’s word above the “*words of an angel*,” as the old prophet had affirmed, he was killed by a lion.

Paul used similar language to warn those who have accepted the gospel not to be led away from it by the teachings of men or angels.

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. Gal 1:6-9

No sign or wonder is going to change this! Anyone who sets aside God’s word is wrong. No matter what excuse is offered it will always lead to the same end.

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 2Jn. 9-10

It is imperative that we see that God’s word is always reliable and anything that leads us away from that word is false, a lie, or a deception. No matter how powerful the sign or how convinced we are in its power. It never justifies disobedience. If someone performing miracles ever teaches anything contrary to the Word of God, it must be rejected.

How the Apostles Received the Power to Perform Signs

Since a sign is God working His power through a man. How did God make those decisions? In the first century. Did everyone perform miracles? Before Jesus died, He gave certain promises to the apostles. While both Matthew and John give the number of people with Jesus that night, John simply records the words spoken to them.

Promises given to the apostles”

*Now when evening had come, **He was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples.** 21 And as they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” Matt 26:20-21*

*And when it was evening **He came with the twelve.** 18 And as **they were reclining at the table** and eating, Jesus said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me — one who is eating with Me.” 19 They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, “Surely not I?” 20 And He said to them, “**It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.** Mark 14:17-21*

2 And **supper being ended**, ... 5 After that, He poured water into a basin and **began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.** John 13:2, 5

Only the twelve apostles are with Jesus at this time and so it is only to the twelve that the promises spoken in John 13-17 are given.

*"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach **you** all things, and bring to **your** remembrance all that I said to **you**."* Jn. 14:26-27

*"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to **you** from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, 27 and **you** will bear witness also, because **you** have been with Me from the beginning."* Jn. 15:26-27

*"I have many more things to say to **you**, but **you** cannot bear them now. 13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide **you** into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to **you** what is to come. 14 "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to **you**."* Jn. 16:12-15

Again, all these promises were only given to the apostles. They were never given to all Christians. For a Christian to take these words and apply them to themselves is a terrible misuse of Scripture. After His resurrection, Jesus continued working with the apostles.

1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 until the day in which He was taken up, **after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments TO THE APOSTLES WHOM HE HAD CHOSEN**, ... 4 And being **ASSEMBLED TOGETHER WITH THEM**, He commanded **them** not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "**YOU** have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but **you** shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ... 8 But **YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME UPON YOU**, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. ... 12 Then **THEY** returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. 13 And when **they** had entered, **they** went up into the upper room where **they** were staying: **PETER, JAMES, JOHN, AND ANDREW; PHILIP AND THOMAS; BARTHOLOMEW AND MATTHEW; JAMES THE SON OF ALPHEUS AND SIMON THE ZEALOT; AND JUDAS THE SON OF JAMES.** 14 **THESE ALL** continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. 26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And **HE WAS NUMBERED WITH THE ELEVEN APOSTLES.** 1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, **THEY** were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where **THEY** were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to **THEM** divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of **THEM.** 4 And **THEY** were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 1:1-2, 4-6, 12-14

But Peter, **STANDING UP WITH THE ELEVEN**, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. Acts 2:14-15

Then fear came upon every soul, and **many wonders and signs were done THROUGH THE APOSTLES.** Acts 2:43

And **THROUGH THE HANDS OF THE APOSTLES MANY SIGNS AND WONDERS WERE DONE AMONG THE PEOPLE.** And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Acts 5:12

Any honest person reading these words is forced to conclude that both the promises and the actual baptism of the Holy Spirit were given only to the apostles. Since only the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they were the only ones who received the divided tongues on each one of them. The apostles alone were speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave the apostles utterance. We know this because Peter stood up only with the eleven and many wonders and signs were done only through the apostles.

The only logical conclusion would be that the baptism Peter commanded in that first gospel sermon could not be the same "baptism in the Holy Spirit" that the apostles received because no one but the apostles were promised it or received it. This conclusion is also validated by the fact that only the apostles were performing signs or speaking in tongues. These verses prove conclusively that the early disciples did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

It is therefore important that we understand which baptism was administered to those who were

pricked in their hearts and gladly received their words. While the apostles were told they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Peter did not offer the same words to those who were cut to the heart. This baptism was not to confer power, but the remission of sins. This was not being baptized with the Holy Spirit, it was being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Are they the same or different?

*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be **baptized in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ... 41 Then **those who gladly received his word were baptized**; and that day **about three thousand souls** were added to them. Acts 2:37-38, 41*

Baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ

What is the **baptism in the name of Jesus Christ** Peter commanded and plainly stated would bring remission of sins and also give the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins; and you shall **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. Acts 2:38*

Although baptism in the name of the Jesus Christ gave "**the gift of the Holy Spirit**" it did not give the power to perform miracles. We already saw that only the apostles were doing the signs and wonders among those who had been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

In Samaria, when the Holy Spirit was given in a way that gave the ability to perform miracles, signs and wonders, it was not through "**baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus.**" After they were all baptized Luke made it clear the Holy Spirit had not fallen on any of them even after they had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Using Scriptural logic, the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ brought the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit but baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus did not give the Holy Spirit in the special way the apostles could after being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

*But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **both men and women were baptized**. 13 Then **Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized** he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. ... 15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For as yet **He had fallen upon none of them**. They had **only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**. Acts 8:12-13, 15-16*

When Peter was sent by God to the Gentiles, God intervened at nearly every point. First, an angel was sent to Cornelius to send for Peter who would preach words by which he would be saved. Second, God gave Peter a vision about all meat being cleansed to show that portion of the Law of Moses had been removed. Third, the Holy Spirit told Peter to go with the men sent by Cornelius. All of this was done to prove to Peter and all Israel that the Gentiles would be saved in the same way they had.

The fourth thing God did was allow the Gentiles to speak in tongues in exactly the same way as the apostles had. The Holy Spirit fell on these Gentiles and they began to speak with tongues.

*While Peter was **still speaking these words**, the **Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard** the word. 45 And **those of the circumcision who believed were astonished**, as many as came with Peter, because **the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also**. 46 For they **heard them speak with tongues and magnify God**. Acts 10:44-46*

These Gentiles received this power before Peter had finished his sermon and before they had been baptized. Later as Peter defended himself, he told them he had just began to speak when the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning.

*And **as I began to speak**, the **Holy Spirit fell upon them**, as upon us at the beginning. 16 Then I*

remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 **If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us** when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, **who was I that I could withstand God?**" 18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then **God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.**" Acts 11:15-18

This forced Peter and all Israel to understand God's intent to grant Gentiles repentance to life. They recognized that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been given to the Gentiles for a single purpose. Since it was the same gift given to the apostles in the beginning, Peter could not withstand God. The power of the evidence was too overwhelming to deny. Allowing these Gentiles to speak in tongues was the sign and wonder God used to prove it was from Him. As they understood the voice of this sign they knew God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life.

But what Peter did immediately after he saw these amazing things is of the greatest importance. Though they had received this power from the Holy Spirit, they still needed to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The baptism Peter commanded in his first gospel sermon he commanded again. What God gave them at the beginning of the sermon did not save them. It only proved they could be given the same command that would save them.

*Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, **who have received the Holy Spirit** as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be **baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.** Acts 10:47-48*

Although they were uncircumcised Gentiles, it was obvious God considered them equal to those who were circumcised. So Peter asked the question to the other Jews who were present. Can anyone forbid the water that these should not be baptized. Being "**baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**" is in water. They already had the Holy Spirit as a sign. But the voice of that sign told Peter he needed to baptize them in the name of Jesus Christ. That baptism is in water and gives remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

While only the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and only the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius were given the same gift as he gave them, everyone was given the command to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. It is evident that for a short time there were two baptisms. The baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and the baptism with the Holy Spirit. But less than 25 years after this event, one of these baptisms ceased and only one remained.

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Eph 4:4-6*

Since the last baptism described in the book of Acts is baptism in water(Acts 10:47-48) and Peter again used water in the context of baptism in his letter many years later.

eight souls, were saved through water. 21 There is also **an antitype which now saves us — baptism** (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1Pet. 3:20-21

It is clear evident that Holy Spirit baptism was never intended by God to remain through the centuries. Today there is only one baptism and that baptism is in water for the remission of sins, not in the Holy Spirit to perform signs and wonders.

Are “Miracles, Wonders and Signs” Performed Today - 3?

How the Disciples Received the Power to Perform Signs

Although the baptism of the Holy Spirit was never given to everyone many disciples were given the power to perform signs and miracles. Stephen was doing great wonders and signs before he was stoned to death.

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Acts 6:8-9

Later, Philip was also performing miracles, signs and wonders.

*when **they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ**, both men and women were baptized. 13 Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, **seeing the miracles and signs which were done.** Acts 8:12-13*

Although some assume it was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the author of Acts(Luke) made it very clear how this power was conferred to them. Before either Stephen or Philip performed any miracles one important thing occurred.

*And **they chose Stephen**, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, **and Philip**, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, 6 whom they set before the apostles; and **when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.** Acts 6:5-6*

Before Stephen or Philip performed miracles the apostles laid their hands on them. This is how the Holy Spirit was given to them.

The Laying on of the Apostles Hands

While Luke only stated that the apostles hands were laid on these men and then later they were doing signs, he is much clearer about how those in Samaria received this ability. First, when the apostles heard Samaria had received the word of God they sent Peter and John to them.

Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, Acts 8:14

Second, when Peter and John arrived, they prayed that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Luke then again makes the distinction between baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit in a way that would give them the power to perform miracles.

*who, when they had come down, **prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.** 16 For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then **they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.** Acts 8:15-17*

It was only after Peter and John laid hands on them that they received the Holy Spirit. As Luke recorded the account for us, he used what Simon saw to express exactly how the Holy Spirit was conferred.

*And when **Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given**, he offered them money 19 saying, **“Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”** 20 But Peter said to him, **“Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!** Acts 8:18-19*

It was only through the laying on of the apostles hands that the Holy Spirit was given. The only exceptions were the apostles at the beginning and the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius. Everyone else received the power to perform miracles and speak in tongues through the laying on of the apostles hands.

And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Acts 19:6

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 2Tim. 1:6

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established Rom 1:11-12

Throughout the remainder of the lives of the apostles these gifts were given through the laying on of the hands of the apostles. After Paul laid hands on the Corinthians, he reminded them of what had occurred. As Paul laid hands on each Christian, the Holy Spirit was **“distributing to each one**

individually as He wills.”

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 1 Cor 12:7-11

Yet Paul also made it clear that not everyone received these gifts and abilities. Just as not everyone was an apostle or prophet, not everyone was a worker of miracles or spoke in tongues.

And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 1 Cor 12:28-31

Those claiming they have these powers must first prove how they received them. The baptism of the Holy Spirit ceased with the writing of Ephesians and only one baptism now exists. After the death of the last apostle, means to gain access to the ability to perform these signs and wonders was removed. There is only water baptism today and there are no apostles to lay hands upon us. There is no other method revealed in the New Testament Scriptures to receive these powers and abilities. The apostles have all died and left the earth and God gave no instructions or plans for successors. Since the method of receiving them has ceased. Miracles, signs and wonders also ceased.

Miracles, Signs and Wonders in the Early Church

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians offers the most information we have about miracles, signs and wonders in the early church. There are three chapters on the power the Holy Spirit gave the early disciples in the first century. In chapter twelve, Paul revealed the different things disciples could do after the apostles laid their hands upon them.

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: ... 4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 1Cor. 12:4-11

There were diversities of gifts, differences in ministries and diversities of activities all directed by the same Spirit, same Lord and same God. The manifestations of the Spirit were given to “each one” for the profit of all. Paul then lists the spiritual gifts and strongly implies that only one was given to each Christian with the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

Each For the Profit of All

*8 to one is given **the word of wisdom** through the Spirit,
to another the **word of knowledge** through the same Spirit,
9 to another **faith** by the same Spirit,
to another **gifts of healings** by the same Spirit,
10 to another the **working of miracles**,
to another **prophecy**,
to another **discerning of spirits**,
to another **different kinds of tongues**,
to another **the interpretation of tongues**.*

*11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things,
distributing to each one individually as He wills.*

1. the word of wisdom
2. the word of knowledge
3. Faith
4. Gifts of healings
5. Working of miracles
6. Prophecy
7. Discerning of spirits
8. Different kinds of tongues
9. The interpretation of tongues

From this passage we learn that there were nine different spiritual gifts. Everyone of them was given by the same Spirit and distributed “to each one individually” as the Holy Spirit willed. These gifts were given for the profit of the many in the church. It was made clear to the Corinthians that each Christian was given one of these gifts and that no one had any control over which gift they were given.

Paul then used the working of a human body to illustrate how these spiritual gifts were to be used in the church. It is evident from the illustration that the real problem over these gifts was jealousy on one

side and false pride on the other. Some gifts were seen in Corinth as being more important than others. So Paul revealed that the human body has many different body parts with a variety of functions but all of them are important and necessary for the proper working of the body. He used the hand and foot, the ear and eyes, and seeing and smelling to show them the folly of their own attitudes toward spiritual gifts.

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 1 Cor 12:15-19

Some felt less because of what they did not have and others felt superior because of the gifts that had been given to them. Paul uses the human body to show the folly of both attitudes. With the various needs of the body, various members were created and with the needs of the church various gifts were given. Paul concluded this section by again describing how God created the human body with the purpose of illustrating how God was then creating the body of Christ(the church).

But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 1Cor. 12:24-26

The Problem in Corinth

As we assess Paul's words in the Fourteenth chapter it is clear that the central problem was with speaking in tongues. Those who could speak in tongues felt superior to all others and especially to those who could prophesy. These two gifts shared one thing since both allowed one to preach by inspiration. With no written word until the first book was written nearly 20 years after the church was built, early Christians relied on the apostles and prophets to reveal God's word to them. Although those who spoke in tongues were inspired, no one could understand them so their value was limited to those in the church. So he who prophesied was greater than he who spoke in a tongue.

Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. 3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. 4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. 5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. 1 Cor 14:1-5

Paul told the Corinthians not to speak that if they all spoken in tongues in the assembly people would think they were mad, but if all prophesied it would convict and convince them.

Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. 23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. 1Cor. 14:22-24

Therefore in the assembly, tongues were only used if someone could interpret. If there was no one to interpret, then the one who could speak in tongues was to remain silent. All spiritual gifts were regulated since they were prone to abuse.

If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. 30 But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. 32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. 1 Cor 14:27-33

The More Excellent Way

So the gifts in the early church did not keep them from falling short, making mistakes, and even sinning. They were useful, but had only a limited use. In between the twelfth and fourteenth chapters, Paul showed a more excellent way.

And yet I show you a more excellent way. 1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 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, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. 1 Cor 12:31-13:3

Although most of us only see the Thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians as a chapter on love, it is

actually there to reveal the more excellent way than spiritual gifts as they were given in the first century. Tongues, prophesy, knowledge and faith were all spiritual gifts listed in the previous chapter. Tongues(#8), prophesy(#6), knowledge(#2), and faith(#3) were gifts distributed by the same spirit. Paul revealed that these gifts had no real value without love. Even Paul himself as an apostle understood that spiritual gifts were only the means to an end and not the end in themselves. If a man had love, that love itself would make him a useful servant to God. But the gifts themselves would not.

1. If Paul could speak in every tongue both of men and angels, without love it would only be noise.
2. If Paul had the gift of prophesy, understood all mysteries and all knowledge, and had all faith, so that he could remove mountains, without love he would be nothing.
3. If Paul gave all his possession away and died the death of a martyr, without love it had no profit.

In the context of this chapter, he was not speaking only of *agape love*, but *agape love* in the context of spiritual gifts. The Corinthians had the wrong ideas about spiritual gifts. They had given them greater value than they truly had. These gifts had no real value without *agape love*. We know this is true because Paul makes that application.

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 1Cor. 13:8

Again Paul refers back to the previous chapter. Tongues(#8), prophesy(#6), and knowledge(#2), will fail, cease, and vanish away, but love will never fail. The terms fail, cease, and vanish away are important for our understanding.

Love never “fails”

The first term “fail” is used of love for it will never fail. This term is used of something that has fallen down or dropped from a higher to a lower place. It is also used of things that perish, come to an end, disappear or cease. Finally it is used of things that lose authority or no longer have force and are thus without affect.

“pipto... to fall; used 1. Of descent from a higher place to a lower; a. Prop. To fall (either from or upon... to fall from or down... 2. Of descent from an erect to a prostrate position... a. to fall down... b. to be prostrated, fall prostrate... g to prostrate one’s self, used now of suppliants, now of persons rendering homage or worship to one... d. to fall out, fall from... e to fall down, fall in ruin: of buildings, walls, etc. B. metaph a. to be cast down from a state of prosperity... b. to fall from a state of uprightness, I. e. to sin... g to perish, i.e. to come to an end, disappear, cease... of virtues, I Cor 13:8; to lose authority, no longer have force, of sayings...” (Thayer, p. 510-511; 4098)

“ekpipto... to fall out of, to fall down from... 1. properly... to fall off... 2. metaph. a. ... to fall from a thing, to lose it... b. absol. to perish; to fail, (properly to fall from a place which one cannot keep, fall from its position)... to fall powerless, fall to the ground, be without effect...” (Thayer p. 198; 1601)

Prophecy will fail and knowledge will vanish away.

Although our translations use “fail” and “vanish away,” they both come from the same Greek word.

“katargeo... 1. to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative: ...to deprive of its strength, make barren... to cause a person or thing to have no further efficiency; to deprive of force, influence, power, [A.V. bring to nought, make of none effect]... 2. to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish...” (Thayer, p. 336; 2673)

This is the word Greeks used to speak of something that had been working with power, but now was rendered idle, unemployed, inactive and inoperative. Thus prophecy and knowledge would be deprived of strength and made barren. They would both be deprived of their force, influence and power. They will cease, ended, done away, annulled and abolished. It is clear from these terms, that while love would never suffer any decrease in importance and usefulness, prophesy and knowledge would come to an end both in power and in usefulness.

Tongues will “cease”

While love will continue to have great power in the lives of a Christian, tongues would cease and desist. They will no longer be found because they have come to an end.

“pauo,... to make to cease or desist:... to restrain [A. V. refrain] a thing or a person from something... to cease, leave off,... the action or state desisted from is indicated by the addition of a present participle...” (Thayer, P. 496-497; 3973)

Miracles, Signs and Wonders were to be Done Away

With the above words it is evident that God wanted his people to understand that a time would come when all spiritual gifts would be done away, cease, desist and be put to an end. After this occurred, only love would continue on, and from that time on, anyone claiming to be performing miracles would be among those described by Jesus in Mt. 7:21-24

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Mt. 7:21-23

When will this time arrive? What information do we have to consider that will help us draw the right conclusion? Look again at the verse we just considered placed next to the time when it would occur.

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. 1 Cor 13:8-10

While love never fails, prophecies tongues, knowledge and all other spiritual gifts would cease. While the spiritual gifts brought knowledge and prophesy to the early disciples, God did not plan for them to continue. They would be done away with when "that which is perfect is come."

This is a prophecy. It described a future event and gives the time when it would occur. During the time of the apostles, all spiritual gifts were operating. At some future time, those spiritual gifts would cease operating. This would occur when what was in part ceased and what was perfect came.

We know in part and prophesy in part

So what is the perfect thing that would come in the future? Something was coming that would form that transition between "in part" of the spiritual gifts to the perfect that would remove their need and replace it with something perfect. As we consider the definition we get a clear sense of the direction the "in part" and "perfect" will take.

meros ... denotes (a) "a part, portion," of the whole, ... "a part" as opposite to the whole, (Vine's NT:3313)

meros... one of the constituent parts of a whole; a. universally: in a context where the whole and its parts are distinguished, ... 1 Cor 13:9,12; tou ek merous (opposed to tou teleion) (A. V. that which is in part) imperfect ... (Thayer NT:3313).

The in part is the "portion" or "part" that forms "one of the constituent parts of a whole." In this "context where the whole and its parts are distinguished." Hence whatever the part, it is a portion of what the whole is. The knowledge(of God's word) in part and the prophecy(preaching God's word by inspiration) in part are "the constituent parts of a whole." Then the perfect is come, and all the constituent parts of a whole are completed, the in part will be done away.

The most logical interpretation perfectly fits together. As we saw earlier, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come upon the apostles and would teach them as they were able to bear it until he had taught them all things and they would have all the truth.

*"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach **you** all things, and bring to **your** remembrance all that I said to **you**. Jn. 14:26-27*

*"I have many more things to say to **you**, but **you** cannot bear them now. 13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide **you** into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to **you** what is to come. 14 "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to **you**. Jn. 16:12-15*

They were "guided into all truth," but they were guided part by part. Revelation of God's word was not given all at once on the day of Pentecost. It was given in part. Each sermon and each book giving more and more constituent parts to the whole which was to be "All truth." When Peter said:

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38-39

Peter was actually revealing that the Gentiles(those afar off) were also to receive the promise.

*Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh — who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands — 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus **you who once were far off** have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ. ... 17 And He came and preached peace to **you who were afar off** and to*

those who were near. 18 For **through Him we both have access** by one Spirit to the Father. Eph. 2:11-13, 17-18

While Peter clearly stated what Paul later revealed, he didn't understand it at the time. It took slow and careful "part by part" in Acts 10 to bring Peter to a perfect understanding of the truth. It took an angel appearing to Cornelius, a vision and direct revelation to Peter, and the Holy Spirit coming on the Gentiles to prove what Peter had already said. This is one of many things God revealed in this manner. The Holy Spirit revealed truth through knowledge and prophecy part by part by part. These "constituent parts" would continue until there was a whole.

Did God complete his revelation? Jesus promised the apostles that the spirit of truth would lead them into all truth. Clearly that promise was fulfilled before the apostles died. The apostle Peter and the prophet Jude both revealed that this was the case.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 2 Peter 1:2-3

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. Jude 3-4

When that which is perfect is come

By the time the apostle John died all the books of the New Testament were completed and they had been given all the truth. At that time "that which is perfect" had come.

"teleios,...prop. brought to its end, finished; lacking nothing necessary to completeness; perfect... substantively, that which is perfect consummate human integrity and virtue... of men, full-grown, adult; of full age, mature,... the perfect, i.e. the more intelligent, ready to apprehend divine things... of mind and character, one who has reached the proper height of virtue and integrity..." (Thayer, p. 618; 5046)

In Greek thought and usage teleios often means "totality" ... (TDWNT NT:5046)

teleioo "to bring to an end by completing or perfecting," is used (I) of "accomplishing" (see FINISH, FULFILL); (II), of "bringing to completeness," (Vine's NT:5048),

teleios... pertaining to that which is fully accomplished or finished - 'complete, finished.' (Lou & Nida NT:5046)

When the "in part" was "brought to its end, finished, lacking nothing necessary to completeness" that which is perfect had come. When the truth which was being revealed part by part was brought "to its end by completing or perfecting" that which is perfect had come. When the truth revealed part by part was "brought to completeness" that which is perfect had come. Since "teleios" pertains to "that which is fully accomplished or finished - complete." Hence they would "know in part and prophecy in part" until it was fully completed and at that moment, that which is perfect had come.

James makes this conclusion Scriptural when he used this term to describe the Scriptures.

*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness **the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.** 22 But be doers of **the word**, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of **the word** and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into **the perfect law of liberty** and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. James 1:21-25*

The word that will save our souls is the gospel and the gospel is the "perfect(teleios) law of liberty." Hence when the gospel was fully revealed and the apostles were lead into all truth as Jesus had promised, that which is perfect had come and "that which was in part was done away." When the last Scripture was written we had all Scripture and everything was complete. The faith was delivered once for all and never needed to be done again as it was perfect, complete and finished. At this moment, Paul's words were fulfilled in their greatest sense.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2Tim. 3:16-17

Once the final word of the final letter of the Scriptures was written we all Scripture had then been given by the inspiration of God. At that moment, the man of God was complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work. There was no more need for the "in part." There was no further purpose for prophesy, knowledge or the other miracles and signs given to prove that what was being revealed was from God. Now it has been revealed.

how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and

wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? Heb 2:3-4

When I was a child

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 1Cor. 13:11-12

Although most commentaries want this to be a comparison between Paul' being a child in this world and being an adult in the world to come, it just doesn't fit into the context. Being a child is part of the knowing in part and being grown up part of that which is perfect. The comparison is between the more excellent way of the adult and the less perfect way of the child. The less perfect way of spiritual gifts giving part by part and the perfect law of liberty where all is complete.

Now we see in a mirror, dimly

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. 1Cor. 13:11-12

Again, most scholars have understood Paul to be speaking of his knowledge in this life and his knowledge in the life to come. Although it might apply to that time, it is not what Paul had in mind here. He had spoken of the knowledge that is in part that was to continue through the first century as the Holy Spirit guided them into all truth. At this time, Paul had only written the first and second letters to the Thessalonians. As far as we know no other books had yet been written and so the revelation of the truth was still in it's early stages. He was receiving his revelations one part at a time. They were being guided into all truth part by part and step by step. Although it sounds so wonderful and mystical to apply this to the world to come, it plays no part at all in what Paul was seeking to accomplish here.

Paul likens the manner in which the apostles and prophets were being given the truth as seeing in a mirror dimly. It was not the best way and it had its limitations. Rome had no spiritual gifts yet so they were seeing in a mirror dimly. The Corinthians did not have the full picture so they too were seeing in a mirror dimly. Even Paul did not have a complete picture yet. It was an ongoing process that he described to the Ephesians.

how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, Eph. 3:3-7

Before the apostles it had not yet been made known. As the apostles began to do their work, more and more knowledge was being given to them. In this comparison what the apostles were receiving from the Holy Spirit was seeing in a mirror dimly compared to what would be available once the Scriptures were fully revealed and the man of God was complete, thoroughly furnished for every good work. As we compare these words to Peter in his first sermon, to the Peter at the Jerusalem conference and the Peter who was carried away at Antioch, we can see how he was seeing in a mirror dimly.

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. 13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?" Gal 2:11-14

Their conduct was just not in step with the truth of the gospel yet. As time passed they saw it more and more clearly until the time when they would know as they were known.

He was revealing a more excellent way than the spiritual gifts that they were struggling to properly use. The gifts were a portion of childhood, a portion of knowing in part. But when the perfection truth and scripture occurred, the difference would be like a child and an adult, or in seeing in a mirror and seeing face to face.

Now Abide

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. 1 Cor 13:13

Both the "now's" in the previous verse are "arti." This "now" emphasizes "strictly present time, just now, this moment."

arti ... denoting "strictly present time," signifies "just now, this moment," in contrast (a) to the past, (Vine's NT:737)

arti ... 1. in Attic "just now, this moment (German gerade, eben), marking something begun or finished even now, just before the time in which we are speaking" ... according to later Greek usage

universally, **now, at this time**; opposed to past time ... opposed to past time: John 9:19,25; 13:33; 1 Cor 16:7; Gal 1:9, **opposed to future time: ... of present time most closely limited, at this very time, this moment: ...** (Thayer's NT:737)

[SYNONYMS: *arti, ede, nun*... Roughly speaking, it may be said that *arti* ... **just now, even now, properly marks time closely connected with the present; later, strictly present time** (see above, and compare in English just now i. e. a moment ago, and just now (emphatic) i. e. at this precise time). ***nun* now, marks a definite point (or period) of time, the (object) immediate present. ...** (Thayer's NT 737)

The “now” here is “*nuni*” which has a subtle but important difference.

nuni ... indicates present reality in contrast to a past (or future: Rom 15:25) reality. **In the eschatological context of Rom 3:21 it is used of the present situation created by the Christ-event in contrast to the past under the law** (cf. 7:6). **The aeon has been realized** (6:22; Eph 2:13; Col 1:22) and is to be put into effect (Col 3:8) in baptism. (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament NT:3570)

nun... **By nature nun is a limiting concept. It is the limit between past and future** which is sharp, but which cannot be grasped because it is always fleeting, It is thus the boundary a. at the end and b. at the beginning of specific periods. ... *nun* as a Period of Time. In the case of *nun*, however, **the concept of a temporal limit may be extended until it is a concept of temporal duration**. The point becomes a line. That is, *nun* in the NT may denote not merely, a decisive point of time but also the present second of eternity ... **The most important and frequent use of nun in this way is for the period between the comings**. If on the one side, as indicated above, *nun* is in some Synoptic verses the starting-point of this time, on the other it embraces in its fulness the whole of the period, **THIS NOW SUMS UP THE GOSPEL AGE. IT CONTRASTS THE PAST WHEN THEY KNEW IN PART WITH THE PRESENT WHEN THEY HAVE THAT WHICH IS PERFECT.** (Kittel TDWNT NT 3570)

Although these definitions are complicated and difficult, they are extremely important to understand. When Paul said “*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully,*” he was stating that “*just now at this present moment,*” or “at this very time, this moment: ... “strictly present time.” Paul is contrasting the present moment in which he is now living with the future moment when the perfect has come.

With the second “now,” he sums up the gospel age. **“The most important and frequent use of nun in this way is for the period between the comings.” THIS NOW SUMS UP THE GOSPEL AGE. IT CONTRASTS THE PAST WHEN THEY KNEW IN PART WITH THE PRESENT WHEN THEY HAVE THAT WHICH IS PERFECT.**”

During the period that would begin when the perfect had come, faith hope and love would abide. The term abide also helps.

“*meno*... *to remain, abide*; ... I. intransitively; in reference 2. to TIME; *to continue to be*, i.e. *not to perish, to last, to endure*: of persons, to survive, live... of things, *not to perish, to last, stand*...of purposes, moral excellences,.. Heb 13:1...” (Thayer, p. 399; 3306)

The basic meaning of *meno* as an intrans. verb is remain, continue, (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament NT:3306)

meno to continue to exist - 'to remain, to continue, to continue to exist, to still be in existence.' (Lou and Nida NT 3306)

What will abide during the gospel age is “*faith, hope and love.*” They will “continue to be,” “*last, endure,*” “*remain continue,*” “*still be in existence.*” When the “in part” ceases, and the perfect has come, faith hope and love will continue throughout the gospel age.

By using “faith and hope,” Paul makes certain that this can only be the gospel age.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb. 11:1-2

For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Rom. 8:24-25

Faith and hope both cease at the second coming of Jesus. Since faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen there will be no more need of them when we see what was unseen. Hope will also cease because again, hope that is seen is not hope. No one hopes for something he already has in his possession. We can only hope for what we do not see.

So even the terms themselves compliment how we have seen in the definition of now. Now represents the gospel age and faith and hope can only exist during the gospel age.

Miracles, signs and wonders have ceased.

1. The purpose for miracles was to confirm the word. Once the word has been completed and confirmed there is no longer any need for them. Therefore they ceased.

2. Spiritual gifts were conferred on the apostles with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But Peter commanded water to be used to baptize into the name of Jesus Christ. This is the baptism that confers remission of sins. After Ephesians 4:4, there was only one baptism. Hence the baptism in the Holy Spirit ceased. Since it ceased, no one can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit today so miracles have ceased.

3. Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Spirit was given. Throughout the period of time while the apostles were alive, all Christians received the ability to perform miracles and use spiritual gifts were conferred through the laying on of the apostles hands. Now that the apostles are dead there is no way to receive spiritual gifts, so miracles have ceased.

4. The nine spiritual gifts described in 1 Corinthians 12 were all used to bring the gospel truth into existence part by part. All these gifts were done away when the perfect came. At that time they ceased, were brought to an end, *rendered idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative* and *God caused them to cease, put an end to them, did away with them, annulled and abolished* them. Therefore miracles have ceased.

Conclusion

For a time true miracles were set against false miracles in such a way that there was no comparison. So it was with Moses and the Magicians and with Phillip and Simon the Sorcerer.

Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast. 19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had said. Ex 8:18-19

But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." 11 And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. 13 Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. Acts 8:9-13

Today only false miracles remain. They are part of the lying wonders that have led those who do not love the truth into error. Just as the occult is built on lies yet has convinced multitudes, so also have spiritual gifts today. Jesus warning is clear. With the perfect come and all Scripture here, those who do not do the will of the Father will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Yet with all these warnings and all the truth, many still are not listening.

Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Matt 7:22-23

Don't be deceived. All that is in the Scriptures denies their existence. Hold fast to the truth and do not allow those who dream, prophesy and do mighty works to draw you away after them. Never forget God's warning to His people:

*"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' — which you have not known — and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for **the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.***