

# The BEACON



---

Published by the Newton church of Christ  
Meeting at: 656 St. James Church Rd.

---

Vol. 26, No. 11

November 2012

---

## The Duration of Miracles

That Christ and the apostles possessed miraculous powers is admitted freely by every Bible-believer. That many first-century Christians had supernatural gifts through the laying on of apostles' hands is admitted, also. (Acts 8:-

14-17; 19:1-6; Rom.1:11.) Were these spiritual endowments intended for Christians in all generations, or were miracles to be performed for a limited period only? Not all are in agreement on this question.

The subject of spiritual gifts is treated rather fully in the first Corinthian epistle. Three chapters are devoted to the matter and may be outlined as follows:

1 Cor. 12—Variation of Gifts.

1 Cor. 13—Duration of Gifts.

1 Cor. 14—Regulation of Gifts.

Paul's purpose in chapter 12 is to show the diversity of supernatural powers. ("Spiritual" gifts are of two kinds—ordinary and extraordinary. Paul focuses attention here on the extraordinary.)

In the church at Corinth some had one gift, and some another. Certain individuals were being elevated above their fellows because they had the more popular gifts. The apostle shows that all of these endowments are from one Spirit, and each has its peculiar purpose. "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."

It was proper that miraculous gifts be desired, yet it was important to understand that a somewhat popular gift might not be the most important. (This thought is further emphasized in chapter 14.) So Paul concludes, "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." Supernatural gifts were not the most excellent things to desire. What could be better?

Chapter 13 points to love as the "more excellent way." In the first three verses it is urged that love is superior to all such gifts as tongues, prophecy, and miraculous knowledge. After elaborating on the excellence of love, Paul continues: "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." Supernatural gifts are transitory. Love abides. "Prophecies," "tongues," and "knowledge" (miraculous) were among the "best gifts"; notwithstanding, all such would fail, cease, and 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." (13:9,10.) The knowledge of the early Christians, even men like Paul, was limited—restricted to what was made known by inspiration. Thus miraculous gifts were "in part," or "imperfect." "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." This clearly establishes the time for the expiration of supernatural endowments.

Miraculous gifts were to be bestowed until the coming of "that which is perfect," THEN, they were to be "done away."

Some say "that which is perfect" has reference to the Lord and His coming. If Paul had intended to convey that idea, he would have said, "he who is perfect," not "that which is perfect."

True enough, Christ is perfect, but the apostle is not talking about Christ and His coming. What is "that which is perfect," in contrast to the imperfect knowledge

that men had in the apostolic age? James refers to the gospel, the full revelation of God's will, as "the perfect law of liberty." (James 1:25.) The gospel was preached in the first century, God's will was revealed, but until the New Testament scriptures were written men did not have access to the full, final, complete, perfect revelation of God. The scriptures are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness: "That the man of God may be perfect ..." (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) When the church was in its infancy Christians were limited in their knowledge; when the church reached

maturity Christians had access to perfect knowledge through the completed volume of inspired writings. That Paul had this very point in mind is borne out by his illustrations. "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." (13:11.) Many things are essential in childhood that are not essential in adulthood. Spiritual gifts were necessary for the confirmation of the word when the church was in its infancy, but when Christianity reached maturity by the completion of the New Testament scriptures, spiritual endowments were not necessary. Scaffolding is necessary in constructing a building, but when the building is finished the scaffolding has served its purpose and is taken away. The early Christians had a need for the exercise of miraculous powers that was supplied by the completion of divine revelation, therefore supernatural gifts were to be done away when "that which is perfect" came.

"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." (13:12.)

Here Paul projects himself into the position of the Corinthians, and Christians in general. At that time they saw things obscurely. When the perfect revelation of divine truth was recorded all would be able to see clearly, as "face to face."

If we keep in mind that miracles were performed for a definite purpose, namely the confirmation of the word (Mk. 16:20), we should be able to see why they would cease with the completion of the New Testament scriptures. Once a thing is confirmed and the confirmation properly recorded, there is no need for reconfirmation year after year. For example, if a jury confirms a man's innocence and the case is made a matter of public record by the court, it would not be necessary for the court to reconvene year after year as long as the man lives and reconfirm his innocence. If anyone ever questioned his innocence in the thing for which he was tried, he could simply point to the court records as adequate proof. The gospel plan of salvation "was confirmed" (Heb. 2:3,- 4) by miraculous manifestations, then the recorded testimony of that confirmation was left us, so all we need today in the way of proof is the documentary evidence—the written revelation of God's will.

(February 1960 Apostolic Doctrine)

**"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing,  
but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matt. 7:15.)**

# Ten Commandments

*Were the ten commandments for the Jews only? (Anon.)*

Yes. The commandments as recorded in Ex. 20 are prefaced by a reminder that God had brought the people "out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Ex. 20:2.) God gave these commandments to the people whom He delivered from bondage in Egypt. Other verses of scripture show with equal clarity that the commandments were for the Jews, not all nations. The ten commandments are repeated in Deut. 5, and here it is emphasized that they were for the Jews and the Jews only.

"And Moses called all ISRAEL, and said unto THEM, Hear, O ISRAEL, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with US in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with US, EVEN US, WHO ARE ALL OF US HERE ALIVE THIS DAY." (Deut. 5:1-3.)

The remainder of Deut. 5 explains that covenant as the ten commandments. Such language cannot be misunderstood without help.

The preamble (introduction) to the Constitution of the United States indicates to whom this constitution applies. In like manner the introduction to the ten commandments indicates to whom they were given. -I.H.-

We need to realize that all but the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is stated as part of the Law of Christ, the New Testament. - R.H.-

**CHRIST ESTABLISHED HIS CHURCH TO SAVE  
SINNERS, NOT SERVE DINNERS.**

**□ YOUR SOUL IS IMPORTANT TO US □**

**If you would like to set up a study, or if we can help you in any way,  
please contact us.**

**We meet at 656 St. James Ch. Rd. in Newton,  
NC  
Join Us**

**Sunday  
Bible Study - 9:30 AM  
Worship - 11:00 AM**

**Wednesday  
Bible Study - 7:00 PM**

**Website:  
[www.WORDANDSWORD.com](http://www.WORDANDSWORD.com)**

**contact@wordandsword.com  
Phone:  
(828) 465-3009**

**The Newton church of Christ  
P.O. Box 893  
Newton, 28658**