

Question:

Does "lack of faith" prohibit miracles from being performed today?

Answer:

There are many "apostolic" groups who claim they can perform miracles today. However, whenever such a miracle cannot be faked they claim it is due to a "lack of faith." A childhood friend of mine, who lives in Illinois, was born deaf. When he was a boy, his father took him to a "faith-healer" who was visiting in town. After several attempts, the "faith-healer" told the boy he could not heal him due to "lack of faith." How hurtful! My friend, now a man, is still deaf today. Was it really his fault, as the "faith-healer" claims?



A couple of passages are commonly used to justify this practice. For example, some will refer to Matthew 15:58 which says of Jesus, "Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." First, notice that Jesus did do some "mighty works" there. If unbelief prohibits miracles, why could Jesus do any miracles? Look at the parallel account in Luke 4:16-31. It is there we learn that as Jesus taught, "those in the synagogue...were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city..." (4:28-29). The text later states they planned to kill Jesus but He escaped from them. So, why was He limited from doing "many mighty works?" Yes, it was unbelief. More precisely, it was an unbelief so strong the people kicked Jesus out of their city! It is tough to perform miracles when you are kicked out of town!

Another proof text used is in Matthew 17 where some of the apostles could not cast out demons. Jesus tells them in verse 20 it was, "Because of your unbelief..." Think about this passage very carefully. This is not talking about the demons' unbelief. After all, James says, "even the demons believe—and tremble" (James 2:19). Instead, it was the disciples' unbelief that hindered them. The same case exists as Peter began to sink (Matthew 14:31)? These passages do not demand faith in the one upon whom the miracle is performed, but upon the one performing the miracle!

If faith is a necessary prerequisite for a miracle, how does one explain the dead son of the widow at Nain (Luke 7:11-16), the man with the 38-year infirmity at the pool of Bethesda who did not know Jesus (John 5:1-13) or the lame man at the Gate Beautiful (Acts 3:2-5) or Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:28-30)? How do we explain miracles performed on objects incapable of faith like water, bread and fish?

The cessation of miracles is predicted in God's Word (1 Corinthians 13:8). God has chosen, in this age, to establish faith by His confirmed word (Mark 16:20; Rom. 10:17; Jude 3).

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