

# Uncommon things commonly believed among us

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Many people believe that miracles occur today. For example, numerous television and radio programs with a religious emphasis will very matter-of-factly teach that miracles are an active part of Christianity today. But in Churches of Christ we commonly believe that miracles no longer happen. Given the difference between what we believe and so many others believe, we will explore why we hold this uncommon view.

We believe miraculous gifts have ended (*I Corinthians 13:8-13*)

## ***Some Clarification***

- We believe that God continues to work in the world (*Romans 8:28*).
- We also understand that, according to English dictionaries, the word “miracle” can refer to highly unusual events that are not supernatural.
- But we do believe that the word can speak of God acting in a way that is above or outside of nature, something supernatural, which we call a “miracle.”
- We believe that, while God can still perform miracles, He has revealed that He would not do so in post-apostolic times.

## ***The Evidence for Our “Uncommon” Belief***

- Jesus said the Holy Spirit, to whom miraculous gifts are tied, would lead the Apostles into “all things” and “all truth” (*John 14:16-18, 26; 16:13*).
  - This promise included that the Apostles would not forget what Jesus had personally said to them (*John 14:26*).
  - “All things” and “all truth” therefore came during the lifetime of the Apostles.
- The Apostles’ ministry contributed to the foundation of the Church Age (*Ephesians 2:20*).
  - They were told to wait for the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem and then preach the gospel throughout the world (*Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5, 8; 2:1-4*).
  - Their Spirit-filled preaching presented to people the teachings and ideas central to the church (*Jude 3*).
- The miracles that occurred during the Apostles’ lives were a special sign to confirm their message (*II Corinthians 12:12; cf. Romans 15:18-19; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4*).
- God included in their confirming gifts the ability to give others miraculous gifts.
  - For a time the Apostles were the only ones performing miracles (*Acts 2:43; 3:1-10; 4:33*).

- When Philip the evangelist, a man the Apostles imparted gifts to (*Acts 6:5-6*) preached in Samaria he worked miracles (*Acts 8:5-6, 13*), but he had to call on Apostles to impart them to others (*Acts 8:15-17*).
- Simon, the one-time sorcerer, saw that it was through the Apostles hands that miracles were bestowed (*Acts 8:18; cf. 19:6; Romans 1:11*).
- Once the Apostles completed their job, miraculous gifts ended (*I Corinthians 13:8-13; Ephesians 4:11-16*).
  - In his discussion about miraculous gifts in I Corinthians chapters twelve and thirteen, Paul wrote that love surpasses miraculous abilities because “love never fails”, implying an end to miraculous gifts (*I Corinthians 12:31; 13:8*).
    - Miraculous abilities would all end when they completed their work (*I Corinthians 13:9-10*) – the presentation of the teachings of Jesus (*John 14:26; I Corinthians 2:6-16*).
      - Paul describes the completed presentation of Jesus’ teachings as the “perfect”, the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to His disciples in *John 14:26; 16:13*.
      - The gifts were part of a process that went from a partial knowledge to the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (*Jude 3*).
    - In contrast love, as an ongoing command and requirement for our relationship with God (*Matthew 22:34-40*), will not end (*I Corinthians 13:8a*).
  - In Ephesians, Paul revisited this idea, writing that when the “unity of the faith” was realized, the miraculous work of the Apostolic Age would cease (*Ephesians 4:13*).
    - This statement must refer to a first-century event since the church was to be given no additional instruction beyond the “all things” and “all truth” given the Apostles.
    - Paul speaks to this first-century time frame when he wrote that the Scriptures supply everything we need to do every good work (*II Timothy 3:16-17*).
    - The Bible has long since been complete – since the first century.
- The ending of miraculous abilities should emphasize the importance of the Bible and our need to study it and apply ourselves to its teachings.

Many people claim miracles continue to occur. But the teachings of the New Testament clearly indicate that miraculous abilities had a limited timeframe and specific purpose, both of which were realized during the lives of the apostles. We may therefore confidently ask those who believe otherwise to offer proof; where, for example, are the large-scale, undeniable miracles? Where are the resurrected dead people?