

## WHAT ABOUT SIGNS AND WONDERS TODAY?

**Q.** Does the Bible teach that signs, wonders and miraculous healings are a work of God today as they were in the times when the Bible was written?

**A.** There are some verses which would appear to teach this but we must look at ALL of the Bible to see what God says about these things. First, we must understand their purpose. Then we must look to see if the Scripture reveals that these things were purposed for the true believers until the end of time, or up to a certain time during the New Testament period. Our answers must come from the Bible alone (Isaiah 8:20, 2 Tim. 2:15, 3:16).

**Q.** Why would signs, wonders and miraculous healings not be for today since they were performed by the apostles (2 Cor. 12:12), the church of Corinth (1 Cor. 12) and the Lord Jesus Himself (Mark 1:34, Luke 6:18)?

**A.** When we read of signs and wonders in the New Testament, we read that they confirmed the ministry or preaching of the Lord Jesus and the twelve disciples (Mk. 16:20, John 3:2, 4:47, 6:14, 10:19-25, Acts 2:22, 4:29,30, 10:38-42, 14:3 and 1 Cor. 1:19-23). Apart from the Lord Jesus and the disciples, we read of five others: Paul, Barnabas, Peter, Stephen and Philip who performed signs and wonders in the book of Acts. Miraculous healings which are often associated with signs and wonders are mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:12. They were only performed by some in the church. Other than these, we read of no other signs and wonders performed by the church in the New Testament. There is no command to perform signs and wonders. As a matter of fact, Jesus said, "***an evil and an adulterous generation seeks after a sign.***" (Matt. 12:39). Those who have been forgiven of their sins are to walk by faith (trusting the Bible alone as the Word of God) and not by sight (2 Cor.

5:7, Rom. 10:17). We read in 2 Cor. 12:12 and Heb. 2:3,4 that signs and wonders performed in the past bore witness to the Word spoken by the Lord. Since the Bible has been completed (2 Tim. 3:16, Rev. 22:18,19) there is no need for signs and wonders to confirm that the Bible is the Word of God. The Bible confirms itself (Jer. 23:29, Ps. 119:11, 1 Cor. 14:24,25, Heb. 4:12, Eph. 6:17). Since 1 Cor. 12:7,10 lists healing and miracles along with the gift of tongues, they were temporary (see the tract "What About Speaking In Tongues?"). There is nothing in the Bible that says that their purpose was other than to confirm recent revelation from God (what we have today as the Bible).

We also must note that signs were a form of communication (message- divine revelation) from God as is mentioned in Exodus 4:8 (the voice of the sign). This is referring to the Lord's voice or statement of His authority over the earth and mankind. Signs and wonders today would also be divine revelation from God if they were happening and should be added to the Bible (see John 20:31). Yet the Bible is complete (2 Timothy 3:16,17, Revelation 22:18,19) and we are warned not to add to the Bible, God's Word.

**Q.** Doesn't Mark 16:17,18 teach that all Christians will be able to take up serpents, drink any deadly thing and cast out devils without being harmed?

**A.** There is no one who can do these physical things today without being harmed by them. If this would be happening today, it would be known (**Lk. 4:37, Acts 4:14-16,5:38,39, 8:6-8, 9:34-42**). We can understand that this may have been true for the apostles, the Lord Jesus and a few others, but it is not mentioned later in the New Testament as being among believers or the church (Rom.12: 5-8, Eph. 4:11,12). Healings and works of God's power were only performed by some, not all, in the church of Corinth (1 Cor. 12). However, we can understand that the "deadly thing" which a believer will not be harmed by is that of the Devil (Gen. 3:1-7, 2 Cor. 11:3, Rev. 12:9, 20:2) and that the true believer has been cast out of the kingdom of Satan (Acts 26,18, Eph. 2:1-6). Nothing will separate us from the love of God if we have truly become one of His (forgiven of our sins - Romans 8:33-39).

**Q.** Are not signs and wonders which are performed by or upon someone, an evidence of someone who is truly forgiven of his sins?

**A.** In the Bible, we read of ten who were healed of their sicknesses by Jesus and only one came back to give thanks to God (Lk. 17:12-19). Someone who is truly saved will glorify God by doing good works and giving thanks (Ps. 34:14, 136, Prov. 11:30, Matt. 5:16, John 15:8, 1 Cor. 6:20, Eph. 2:10). We also read of the twelve disciples (Luke 9:1) who were given power to heal people of their sicknesses and cast out devils. One of them (Judas) betrayed the Lord Jesus and it was said that it would have been better that he had never been born (Mk. 14:21). Judas was never saved (Psalm 109:6-8>Acts 1:20). He hung himself from a tree (Matt. 27:5) which is a picture of being under the curse of God (Deut. 21:23). At the time when Jesus went to the cross, people wanted Him crucified, yet they were amazed with His miracles (Luke 19:37). In the Old Testament, the Israelites walked through the Red Sea, ate manna from heaven and defeated people who were stronger than them in battle by the power of God. A whole generation of Israelites did not enter into the promised land of Canaan because of unbelief (Num. 14:22-24, 32:11, Josh. 5:6, Heb. 3:19).

Signs and wonders confirmed the ministry and Word which the Lord had given through the Old and New Testament writers (Joshua 2:10,11, Matthew 11:4,5, Hebrews 2:3,4). These signs were not an evidence of salvation.

***"...and he said unto them, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead'"*** (Lk. 16:31)

***"But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him" (Jn. 12:37).***

There will be many on the last day who will claim to have performed mighty works and cast out devils in Jesus' name and will be cast into eternal damnation (Matt. 7:22). Signs and wonders, except for what will happen at the end of time (Matt 24:29) and in heaven (Rev. 12:1,3, 15:1-8) is always attributed to Satan (Matt. 24:24, 2 Thess. 2:9, Rev. 13:13,14, 16:14, 19:20).

**Q.** Isn't Jesus the same yesterday, today and forever? Since He performed miracles during His ministry, isn't He ministering to the church in the same way today?

**A.** Jesus lived on earth as eternal God in the form of a man (John 1:1,14, 1 Tim. 3:16). Being God, He always has been God and will always be the same yesterday, today and forever. Today, He sits at the right hand of God the Father (Eph. 1:20, Col. 3:1, Heb. 1:3, 1 Pet. 3:22) and indwells the true believers (Gal. 2:20, Rom. 8:9). He no longer is on the earth in the form of a man (Matt. 24:23,24). God's method of bringing the gospel to the world varies as He chooses throughout time (Rom. 16:25,26, Col. 1:26), but salvation has always been the same (Gen. 6:8, Hab. 2:4, Rom. 1:16,17, chap. 4, Gal. 3).

**Q.** Doesn't James 5:14,15 teach that the elders of the church can perform miraculous healings?

**A.** The word for "sick" in verse 14 can mean physically sick (Matt. 10:8, Acts 9:37) or spiritually sick (weak in faith - Rom. 4:19, 14:1,2,21, 1 Cor. 8:9,11,12, Heb. 12:3). The word "sick" in verse 15 is used only three times in the New Testament and is always used in the context of being spiritually sick, not physically sick (Heb. 12:3, Rev. 2:3). This passage is speaking about those who are either physically sick or spiritually sick in the congregation in which the prayer of faith (which is Christ's prayer - John 17) would save the spiritually sick one. In other words, the elders are to pray for those in the congregation who are unsaved or are unsure of their salvation and anoint them with oil (which is another phrase to mean "bring the gospel") and God will save the person if He will (John 6:37,44, 1 Cor. 3:7, Rom. 9:16). Oil is used as a symbol for the gospel or the fuel that gives light for salvation (Ps. 23:5, Matt. 25:1-12, Heb. 1:19).

**Q.** How is the gift of healing in 1 Cor. 12:9 to be understood? Is this not for today?

**A.** When we look at God's Word to understand the context of this verse we see that signs, wonders and miraculous healings were associated with the gift of speaking in tongues (vs. 30, Mk. 16:17,18). Tongues would cease when the Bible was completed which we have today as the Bible (1 Cor. 13:8, 14:5,6, 2 Tim. 3:15,16, Rev. 22:18,19). Signs confirmed that the Bible was given by God Himself. There is no command to

continue to confirm this. When we read Heb. 2:3,4 ...

***"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to His own will?"*** we can understand that these signs and wonders were performed by those whom God intended; the Lord Jesus, the apostles, (Mark 16:20) a few mentioned in the book of Acts and some in the church of Corinth. These are no longer mentioned as a work of the New Testament church today (Rom. 12:3-21, Eph. 4:11). The gift of healing along with the gift of speaking in tongues confirmed that the New Testament church (Christians/ Nazarenes - Acts 11:26, 24:5) would be God's corporate church instead of the physical nation of Israel (Matt. 21:43, 1 Cor. 14:21 > Deut. 28:47-49, Is. 28:11, John 3:2).

**Q.** Didn't Jesus teach that true believers will do greater works than what He did (John 14:12)?

**A.** The greater works that He is speaking of is to bring the gospel of the Bible, which God will use to convict men of their sin, their need of salvation and give assurance of it. God uses men to do this (Matt. 28:18-20, Rom. 10:14,15). When a person becomes saved, this is the greatest miracle on earth (Ps. 16:11, John 3:3,7, 11:1-25, Eph. 2:1-10, 1 Pet. 1:2-9). This is performed by God Himself from beginning to end (Matt. 19:25,26, John 6:29, 19:30, Rom. 5:8,9, 10:17, 1 Cor. 3:7). The gift of miraculous healings was a picture of the healing of the sin-sick soul (Matthew 9:5,6).

**Q.** Doesn't God heal today?

**A.** God performs healing today whereby He has designed us with a body which will live at an average of seventy or eighty years on this earth (Ps. 90:10) and has provided us with physicians (Gen. 50:2, Matt. 9:12, Col. 4:14) to help us with our physical diseases. God gives them the knowledge to do so, but no one can prevent death (Heb. 9:27), which is a result of mankind's fall into sin (Gen.3:19, Rom. 6:23).

Miraculous healings performed by the Lord Jesus and others in the Bible were special signs that are no longer being performed by the true church today. Otherwise, why are there so many hospitals and sick and diseased people in the world in our day? Why are people not lined up for miles from all over the world to be healed by professing Christians from their illnesses?

The true miracle of "healing" which the Lord performs today is that of a new heart (Ezk. 36:25,26). This is the forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38, Eph. 1:7), the healing of our sin-sick souls (Ps. 41:4, 1 Pet. 2:24), the indwelling of God (Rom. 8:9, Gal. 2:20), the assurance that we are loved by Him in a way that we will never be separated from Him (Rom. 8:38,39) and the knowledge and understanding that this world is not our home (Philippians 3:20), but heaven itself.

*"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."* (Job 19:26)

*"...for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."* (Philip. 4:11)

*"For we walk by faith, not by sight."* (2 Corinthians 5:7)

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen...But without faith, it is impossible to please Him..."* (Hebrews 11:1, 6a)

*"...and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing."* (1Corinthians 13:2b>Ephesians 3:19)

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