

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Differences in Modern "Miracles" and Bible Miracles!

While Jesus was on earth he made some very startling claims. He claimed to be divine, and the Jews so understood him (Jn. 5:18; 10:33). He claimed to be the Son of God (Jn. 10:35-37). He claimed to be the Messiah (Jn. 4:25-26) and the Savior of the world (Jn. 14:6). But anyone could make these claims. We were on a call-in radio program where a man would occasionally call denying that Jesus was the Messiah, and claiming instead that he was the Messiah. However, Jesus did more than simply claim to be the things noted, he proved that claim by the miracles he performed. Let's consider these.

1. Power over nature. He stilled a storm (Matt. 8:26-27).
2. Power over material things. He fed 5,000 men with a few loaves and fishes (Luke 9:10-17).
3. Power over all manner of diseases (Matt. 8:16).
4. Power over the spirit world (Matt. 8:16).
5. Power over life and death (Jn. 11:14-44).

These are not merely powers, but ones performed in a confirmation of his claims (Jn. 20:30-31).

The apostles, too, were able to perform miracles, not to prove that they were divine, etc. - for they never claimed such but, in fact, they denied it (Acts 14:11-15). Their miracle-working power was given to them to confirm the word which they were preaching. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation; which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness

with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:34). The Bible shows that after the apostles received the commission to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15), they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mk. 16:20).

From these facts and many more, it may be safely concluded that there is no need for miracles today. The Bible has sufficient proof in writing that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Jn. 20:30-31), and the word of God having been adequately confirmed is sufficient. Anything we need to know about life and godliness is furnished completely when we take all the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Although this is true, it does not keep many people from claiming to perform miracles today. But there is a vast difference between what is done in our day and the miracles performed by Jesus and the apostles. Let us consider some of these differences.

1. The miracles of the New Testament were not limited to healing. As already noted, there was power to still the tempest. Yet in 1950 a storm blew Oral Roberts' tent down injuring 50 people, most of whom were treated at local hospitals, not by Roberts. Where have you heard reliable evidence of turning water into wine? Not even A. A. Allen, noted healer, could have done this, though he died of acute alcoholism. Who today is feeding 5,000 men with a few loaves and fishes? For the most part, today's "miracles," in sharp contrast to these, are limited to "healings" and these are not of any organic illness. We are told by those who are supposed to know that most of these illnesses are in the mind, so when Roberts or others convince those who think they are ill that they are not sick, they are "healed" but not miraculously.

2. The apostles were not "selective" in their miracles or in their healings. An advertisement for an Oral Roberts campaign states "Prayer Cards Given Out at Afternoon Service ONLY" (emphasis his, HH). Anyone who has attended such services should know why this is done - to screen out the undesirables. Whoever read where those who were healed by the apostles needed a prayer card?

3. Miracles in the New Testament were not conditioned on the faith of those being healed. How much faith did dead Dorcas have (Acts 9:36-40)? The lame man who was healed by Peter in Acts 3 was not even expecting to be healed, much less believing that he would be. Yet today, those who are not healed are told that they do not have enough faith. What a compound tragedy this is! The sick are not only left with their sickness, but are made to feel guilty because they are the ones to blame for lacking in faith!

4. As in Acts 3:7 the lame man was healed "immediately." If you have attended many "healing" campaigns, no doubt you have witnessed people, being "worked into a lather" with much emotion, exertion, and sweating over the ones to be healed. Not so in that done by the apostles.

5. The miracles of the New Testament were so powerful that even the enemies of the apostles admitted "that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest unto all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:16). In our day, numerous ones could deny the "miracles" that were supposed to have been wrought, and they have denied them and that publicly. From the Alabama Baptist (9/12/74), there is this headline: "Noted Surgeon Follows Up Reports on Faith Healings, Says He Found None." The article tells how Dr. William A. Nolen of Litchfield, Minn., noted surgeon and author of the book, Healing: A Doctor In Search of a Miracle, wrote, "After following up on the cases of 26 patients who thought they had been 'healed' at a famous faith healer's religious service here, says he couldn't find a single cured patient in the group." The book is even more extensive than that with the same results.

At various times some of our brethren have offered high financial rewards for proof of any genuine healing of organic illnesses. To my knowledge, they have never had to pay off.

6. After the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit, there were no failures. Acts 5:16 is typical, "they were healed every one." Instances could be multiplied where Oral Roberts and others failed frequently, some even dying after they had been pronounced "healed." Jack Coe had an ingenuous reply to this. He claimed that he had healed many people who did not know they had been healed for they still had the same symptoms!

7. No collections. One of the most obvious differences between today's "healing campaign" and those in the Bible has to do with money. One does not read in the New Testament where the apostles or others took up a collection as a part of their "healing campaign." (In fact, one does not read in the New Testament of "healing campaigns" with all the self-produced publicity and high-pressure propaganda that is so characteristic of today's "miracle worker"). If memory serves me correctly, several years ago I attended one of these and, before the meeting was over, collections were taken-up 9 times! On the other hand, the Bible tells us that Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none" (Acts 3:6), but he did not follow it up with a collection. Quite a contrast.

8. In the New Testament the apostles performed miracles which confirmed that their teaching was God's revelation. I have never heard a modern miracle worker claim that his teaching is a new revelation that is to be considered as a part of the word of God. But if they are doing what the apostles were doing or if they believe that they are doing what

the apostles were doing, their teaching should be considered as much a part of the Bible as that which John or Paul wrote. In this case we would need a "loose-leaf Bible" to which we would continue to add their revelation. After all, Paul is emphatic when he says, "the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).

From these considerations and many more, it can be readily seen that when today's miracles are compared with what we read in the Bible, there is no comparison.

- Hiram Hutto, via Guardian of Truth, XXXV: 8, pp. 240-241, April 18, 1991

The Maturation of Time

"Why does the Lord not bring judgment to those who stand in strong opposition to His will? Why does He not just condemn them and be done with it!" A strong emotional sentiment, wouldn't you agree? The Scripture actually tells us why. In the context of Paul's response to the hypocrisy of some in the church in Rome, Paul said this: "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4, ESV, italics added).

This can be a tough pill to swallow, but to the Lord, it is important that we understand a particular point. God is not justifying deeds done that are in opposition to Him—only that is not his desire to destroy that which He loves (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4). While an evildoer presumes on the Lord's will, the Lord is allowing the maturation of time to register with the evildoer, helping him see the light that he will see soon enough if he does not change his ways.

There is coming a day when the Lord will bring all the works of man to the light. If the impenitent does not change his way, the Lord will address his refusal then (and Paul makes this clear in Romans 2:5-11). I think all of us are grateful for the Lord's slow response with regard to self. In the meantime, let us be mindful of why the Lord is "slow", and seek to do what we can to encourage others to hear His saving message.

- Ron Thomas

> "Jesus teaches that a man's attitude toward the Kingdom of God is revealed by his attitude toward his property!"

> "The dawn of opportunity does not come twice to awaken a man!"

- > "The elder commented the other day that times certainly have changed. It was once the custom to take a bath weekly and religion daily!"
 - > "Some neighbors will borrow everything from you except your troubles!"
 - > "A person who leads a double life often gets through it in half the time!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Divine Impartiality!*" (Text: Rom. 2:9-11);
Sunday evening: "*The Love of God!*" (Rom. 5:6-8).