

Miracles in the Early Church

Intro: The miraculous claims made by charismatics today must be tested by the teaching of the Scriptures, not by feelings or appearances.

1. The Apostles: Special Men, Special Purpose, Special Power

A. Promises and instructions: Jn 14:16-17, 25-26; 16:12-13; Lk 24:46-49; Ac 1:4-8.

1. The signs of an apostle - 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Cor 2:4.
2. As original revealers of the new covenant, the miracles were the apostles' credentials that their message was from heaven - Ac 2:42-43; 3:6, 14-15; 4:4, 16, **29-30**, 33; 5:12, 20, 28, 42.
3. Thus, the gospel was confirmed before men - Mk 16:19-20; Heb 2:3-4.

B. Thus, apostles are said to be:

1. Ministers of the new covenant - 2 Cor 3:6.
2. Given the ministry of reconciliation - 2 Cor 5:18.
3. Ambassadors for Christ - 2 Cor 5:20.

C. Thus, all those who claim spiritual gifts must first acknowledge that *"the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord"* (1 Cor 14:37).

2. A Limited Extension of Apostolic Power

A. A certain measure of apostolic power was conferred upon select individuals:

1. Ac 8:14-20 - The Samaritan converts and Simon.
2. Ac 19:1-6 - Baptized in water, apostolic transmission of gifts, tongues/prophecy.
3. Rom 1:11 - Paul desired to further establish them with spiritual gifts though they possessed some already (Rom 12:3-8).

B. This transference of power was limited in various ways:

1. By the agent of transmission: apostles.
 - a. A man or woman would have to be present with an apostle to receive gift.

- b. Gifts would not survive past lifetimes of those given gifts by apostles.
- 2. By the degree of power - An apostle had more credentials than anyone else due to his unique commission and purpose. See 1 Cor 14:18-19.
- 3. By purpose - Where direct revelation was needed in the absence of written epistles and documents.
- C. Those who claim gifts today have no scriptural foundation of how they got such power and why they have been given it.

3. Differences Between 1st Century Miracles and Modern Day Gifts

- A. Gifts today are claimed upon basis of baptism in the Spirit - See McAr - p 250. The baptism in the Spirit was promised to the apostles only and fulfilled on Pentecost.
- B. Signs in the first century verified **one** gospel, but today different groups who teach vastly different doctrines all claim powers of the Holy Spirit.
- C. Tongues are said to be a personal affirmation of salvation and reception of the Holy Spirit. But 1 Cor 14:22 expressly says that they are a sign to unbelievers.
- D. Tongues were languages (Ac 2:4-11). Today, they are jibberish, and tongue speaking is coached and taught.
- E. Tongue-speakers in the first century had control of their faculties and bodies - 1 Cor 14:27-28. They were to speak in an orderly fashion - one at a time.
- F. Healings in the NT were organic, immediate, permanent, indisputable. Today, they are vague, internal, psychosomatic, delayed, unreliable, unverifiable. Failures are put off on God - “not His will” or the patient - “not enough faith.”
- G. Healing is **sold** today - See McAr - p 247. It is hyped and marketed for the profit of the faith-healers just like snake oil and elixir in the wild west.
- H. Paul had the power to **afflict** as well as heal - Ac 13:10-11 (Elymas).

Conclusions

- 1. The issue is not “limiting God.” The issue is, “Did God **intend** to use miracles/gifts throughout the entire Christian dispensation?”
- 2. The experiences that so many are eager to label “miracles” must be examined in light of what the Bible teaches. This is the only sure guide amid the deceptions and selfish enterprises running rampant in our society.