

“These Signs Shall Follow”

And if not...why not?

(Mark 16:17-18)

Jesus said...

“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:17,18).

I believe, so should I be (1) casting out devils, (2) speaking with new tongues, (3) handling deadly serpents, (4) drinking deadly poison, and (5) healing the sick? The verse above is plain. Jesus said, “these signs shall follow them that believe.” **That is a very plain statement. Should I be doing these things, and if not why not?**

Basic Rules of Bible Study

First, we must determine who is speaking, and to whom is he speaking? Then, we need to understand what the speaker is saying.

If we keep this portion of Scripture in its context, we see that Jesus was speaking about the need to believe something. The question is, **who** needed to believe, and **what** did they need to believe? The context is clear, the problem Jesus was confronting here had to do with His unbelieving apostles.

- **Verse 14**, “He appeared unto the eleven...and upbraided them with their unbelief.”
- **Verse 11**, “And **they**, (His apostles) ...believed not.”
- **Verse 14**, because **they** believed not.”
- **John 20:25**, “I (Thomas) will not believe.”
- **John 20:27**, “Thomas...be not faithless, but believing.”



Mark 16:17,18 is not referring to unsaved people believing the Gospel, it is referring to the fact that Christ’s disciples were refusing to believe Him. When they decided to believe we read,

Verse 20, “And **they** (His apostles) went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.”

Mark 16:17 says, “these signs shall follow them that believe.”

The Signs of An Apostle

Second Corinthians 12:12

“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you.”

In this portion of Scripture Paul is reminding the people at Corinth, that when God used him to start the church there, that the “signs of an apostle” were evidenced among them. The purpose of a sign is to influence someone in a particular direction. **The signs of an apostle were obviously reserved strictly for the apostles.**

What Is An Apostle?

1. An apostle was someone who had to have seen the resurrected Christ.
 - First Corinthians 9:1**, “Am I not an apostle?...have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?”
2. An apostle was someone who had received instructions directly from Christ.
 - a. The twelve spent 3 1/2 years with Christ.
 - b. The eleven were instructed by Christ for forty days after the resurrection (Acts 1:3).
 - c. Paul met with Christ for specific instructions following his conversion (Galatians 1:17).

Who Were The Apostles And What Were Their Signs And Wonders?

We need only to look to Matthew chapter ten to know who the apostles were.

Matthew 10:1,8, "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, (there were only twelve disciples who were later called apostles) he gave **them** power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." They could, Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils" (v.8).

To be sure we got it right, God recorded their names.

Matthew 10:2-4, "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him."

Acts 2:43

"Many wonders and signs were done by the (twelve-v.2) apostles."

Acts 5:12

"And by the hands of the (twelve-v.2) apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people."

"Signs" Were For Israel

Ezekiel 4:3 - "A **sign** to the house of Israel."

Exodus. 31:17 - "It is a **sign** between me and the children of Israel."

Exodus. 4:30 - "Moses, did the **signs**."

Exodus. 4:8 - "The first **sign**...the latter **sign**."

Exodus. 4:9 - "These two **signs**."

Exodus. 4:17 - "Thou shalt do **signs**."

Exodus. 4:28 - "All the **signs**."

Exodus. 7:3 - "Multiply my **signs**."

Exodus. 8:23 - "Shall this **sign** be."

Exodus. 10:1 - Shew these my **signs**."

Exodus. 10:2 - "My **signs** which I have done."

Exodus. 13:9 - "It shall be for a **sign** unto thee."

Exodus. 31:13 - "It is a **sign** between me and you."

Deuteronomy 4:34 - "By **signs**, and by wonders."

Deuteronomy 6:22 - LORD shewed **signs**."

Deuteronomy 11:18 - "Bind them for a **sign**."

Joshua 4:6 - "That this may be a **sign** among you."

First Samuel 10:7 - "**Signs** are come unto thee."

Second Kings 19:29 - "A **sign** unto thee."

Isaiah 7:14 - "The Lord...shall give you a **sign**."

Isaiah 38:7 - "And this shall be a **sign** unto thee."

Isaiah 38:22 - "What is the **sign**?"

Ezekiel 20:12 - "My sabbaths, to be a **sign**."

Ezekiel 20:20 - "A **sign** between me and you."

Matthew 12:38 - "Master, we would see a **sign**."

Matthew 24:3 - "what shall be the **sign**?"

Hebrews 2:4 - "God also bearing them witness, both with **signs** and wonders."

Acts 2:22 - "Israel...miracles and wonders and **signs**."

Romans 4:11 - "And he (Moses) received the **sign**."

First Corinthians 1:22 - "For the Jews require a **sign**."

"Signs And Wonders" Were For Israel

Deuteronomy 6:2 - "And the LORD shewed **signs and wonders**...before our eyes."

Nehemiah 9:10 - "And shewedst **signs and wonders**."

Jeremiah 32:20 - "**Signs and wonders**...hast made thee a name, as at this day."

Daniel 4:2 - "I thought it good to shew the **signs and wonders**."

Daniel 6:27 - "He worketh **signs and wonders**."

John 4:48 - "Except ye see **signs and wonders**, ye will not believe."

Acts 4:30 - "**Signs and wonders** may be done."

Acts 5:12 - "And by the hands of the apostles (twelve - Matthew 10:2) were many **signs and wonders** wrought among the people."

Acts 14:3 - "Granted **signs and wonders** to be done."

Romans 15:19 - "Through mighty **signs and wonders**, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

Second Corinthians 12:12 - "Truly the signs of an apostle (twelve - Matthew 10:2) were wrought among you in all patience, in **signs and wonders**, and mighty deeds."

Hebrews 2:4 - "God also bearing them witness, both with **signs and wonders**, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

Paul The Apostle - Book of Acts

1. **Chapter 13** - Healed a blind man.
2. **Chapter 14** - Healed a cripple.
3. **Chapter 19** - Cast out a demon
4. **Chapter 19** - Healed the sick.
5. **Chapter 20** - Raised the dead.
6. **Chapter 28** - A snake did not hurt him.
7. **Chapter 28** - Healed a man.

Signs And Wonders Ceased

Second Corinthians 12:12 - Past Tense

"Truly the signs of an apostle were (past tense) wrought (carried out) among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."

Notice, they "were wrought," (past tense) they were not *being* wrought.

Trophimus was sick but not healed.

Second Timothy 4:20

"Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."

Timothy was sick but not healed.

First Timothy 5:23 refers to Timothy's "often infirmities."

Why did Paul give Timothy medical advice and why was "Trophimus left sick," if the Apostolic Signs were still in effect? The fact is, the signs were no longer in effect because they were only needed in the early ministry of the apostles for the purpose of confirming the truth to Israel.

Hebrews 2:4, referring to signs and wonders also refers to them as being in the past tense.

*"God also bearing **them** (Israelites) witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."*

The theme of Hebrews was to confirm to Jewish Christians that Judaism had come to an end. It is very important to understand that God can work miracles today and heal anyone He chooses; however, we must not confuse answered prayer with Apostolic Signs and wonders.

Concerning Tongues

People spoke in tongues in Acts chapter two on the Day of Pentecost and a few other times in the early days of the local church; however, even a casual study of the subject will reveal the following facts.

1. **Tongues was strictly a sign to convince the Jews that God was accepting the Gentiles.** The only bona fide times when tongues was used in the Scriptures, Jews were present and their response was they acknowledged the fact that God had a plan for Jews and Gentiles together. We read in Acts 11:18 that they "glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

2. **Tongues was an understood language.** In Acts chapter two, sixteen nations gave testimony to the fact that "every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6).

In The Last Days False Prophets Will Arise Promoting Signs And Wonders

Matthew 24:24

*"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great **signs and wonders.**"*

Mark 13:22

*"For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew **signs and wonders.**"*

In recent years we have been plagued with false prophets who promote signs and wonders, live in mansions, drive fancy cars and beg people for money.

The Reason Behind Accepting The False Doctrine Concerning Signs And Wonders



All Christians are commanded to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (Second Timothy 2:15). Today, most professed Christians would rather watch television.

The Greek word translated “rightly dividing” is *orthotomeo*. It is used only this one time in the Scriptures. It means to cut straight or to make true and accurate divisions.

This is very important because unless we understand how to rightly divide the Word of truth, Second Timothy 2:15 tells us that we will be “ashamed.” The Greek word translated “ashamed” is *anepaischyntos* and is also only used here. To be ashamed is to be “embarrassed because of one's actions, or associations.”

In Our Text Jesus said...

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they (twelve apostles - Matthew 10:2) cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17-18).

1. They would cast out demons.

- a. **Question:** Why is nothing mentioned about casting out demons following the Book of Acts? Why are there no instructions about it in all the church Epistles or pastoral Epistles?

2. They shall speak with new tongues.

- a. **Question:** Why is nothing mentioned about speaking in tongues in all of the Epistles except First Corinthians, where the carnal, immoral, Corinthians are rebuked for their abuse of speaking in tongues?

3. Serpents or deadly poison will not harm them.

- b. **Question:** Why is nothing mentioned about this after Acts 28?

4. They will have power to heal the sick.

- a. **Question:** Why were Timothy and Trophimus not healed from their sickness? Why were not instructions given about healing anyone in all of the pastoral Epistles?

Again, it is important to remember that James tells us that “*The prayer of faith shall save the sick*” (James 5:15); however, we must not confuse answered prayer with the signs of an Apostle. Even then, it is interesting to note that this verse was written to “*the twelve tribes scattered abroad*” which were all Jews.

The Refusal To Rightly Divide The Word of Truth

The refusal to understand the true teaching of dispensations has resulted in many false cults. All cults are started by taking Scripture out of context.



A final word to those who want the signs and wonders for today.

Be sure to take the whole package. Those of you who want to speak in tongues, what are you going to do about drinking deadly poison? If you want to heal the sick don't forget the part about raising the dead. You could put the funeral homes out of business. Just park in their lot, pray the prayer and watch the dead come forward.

The funeral director will probably be upset; however, there will be a lot of family members happy. You could build an instant church with them. Maybe you could call it the “Snake Handling, Signs And Wonders Church.”

A better plan is to learn to - “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (Second Timothy 2:15).

First Corinthians 12:1

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.”

First Corinthians 14:38

“But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.”