Miracles, Wonders, and Signs

Acts 2:22–24 (NKJV)
22"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—
23Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;
24whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

- ***As Peter began to preach on the day of Pentecost, the first evangelistic message in history, he introduced Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, the Messiah with the words, "a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know."***

- ***The Greek word translated as "attesting" means "to cause something to be known as genuine, to make clearly known."***

- ***As Jesus Christ ministered to the people for three and a half years, as He taught about God, and the way of salvation, He proclaimed the Good News. It was the miracles, wonders, and signs that proved His message was genuine.***

John 7:31 (NKJV)
31And many of the people believed in Him, and said, "When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?"

- ***The miracles, wonders, and signs caused the people to ask,* "When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?"**

- ***The message was not the miracles, wonders, and signs, but they were the things God employed to prove the genuineness of Jesus' message and to confirm that He was in fact the One they had been waiting for, the Son of God, the Messiah, their Saviour.***

John 10:37–39 (NKJV)
37If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me;
38but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."
39Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.

- ***The miracles, wonders and signs do not guarantee that everyone will believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour, but it does mean they have come face to face with the power of God and that they now have a choice to either believe in Him or reject Him.***

- ***Some chose to believe while others chose to reject Him and "sought to seize Him" in order to kill Him.***

- ***There can be two extremes in the Body of Christ; one is to say God no longer heals and does miracles, while the other extreme focuses on the miraculous as if the miracles themselves were the message.***

- ***These three words, "Miracles, Wonders and Signs" are frequently found together in the New Testament.***

- ***The meanings of these three words are different, but because they are so often used together sometimes people mistakenly believe their meanings are interchangeable.***

- ***While "miracles, wonders, and signs" speak about three different aspects of the nature and power of God, their functions are complementary, and together the full impact of who God is and what He does is manifest.***

- ***The Greek word translated as "miracles" is* δύναμις *(dynamis) and it means "a deed manifesting great power with the implication of some supernatural force." Sometimes it is translated in the New Testament as "power, mighty works, and strength."***

- ***From the Greek word* δύναμις *(dynamis) we get our English word dynamite.***

- ***The Greek word translated as "wonder"* is τέρας *(teras) and it means "marvel, wonder." It speaks to the wonder or awe that is produced in those who witness the miracle, the* δύναμις *(dynamis).***

- ***The Greek word translated as "sign" is* σημεῖον *(sēmeion) and it means "a sign, a mark; that by which a person or thing is distinguished from others and is known; an event which is regarded as having some special meaning; not simply a miraculous event but something which points to a reality with even greater significance."***

- ***When the disciples asked Jesus when He would return and when the end would come they asked,* "Tell us, when will these things be? And <u>what will be the sign</u> of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" *(Matthew 24:3).***

- ***When the disciples asked how they would know when the end of the age would be, they asked for "the sign" using the definite article "the" and signifying the uniqueness of the sign, implying that it would be unmistakable.***

- ***The concept of the word "sign" means much more than a symbol. The word embodies a sense of something unique in what it points to, so there is no ambiguity in what is being represented.***

- ***A sign is infinitely more than a symbol.***

- ***A symbol has no unique inherent connection with what it is symbolizing. For example, the maple leaf is a symbol of Canada, but since maple trees grow in countries other than Canada, it is not a sign, because the maple leaf is not unique to Canada.***

- ***Therefore we can see a miracle as the supernatural power of God being manifest in the natural realm; the wonder is the awe that it produces in the hearts of the people as they witness the miracle; but the sign points to God and His very nature and character.***

- ***All three together, miracles, wonders, and signs give a complete revelation of the supernatural and cause our hearts to be drawn to God.***

- ***An example of miracles, wonders, and signs is when God supernaturally heals someone.***

- ***The miracle is God healing someone; the wonder is the awe that fills our hearts as we witness someone being healed; but the sign points to God's character of love and faithfulness as He reveals how much He cares for us.***

2 Corinthians 12:12 (NKJV)
[12]Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

- ***The signs of an apostle were manifest in Paul's life and ministry, not only through the miraculous, but through his godly character as he ministered to them with "all perseverance" and patience.***

1 Corinthians 2:4–5 (NKJV)
[4]And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
[5]that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

- ***Miracles, wonders, and signs were an important part of Paul's ministry, so the people's faith was not based on "persuasive words of human wisdom," but by personally encountering the realty and power of God.***

2 Thessalonians 2:8–9 (NKJV)
[8]And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.
[9]The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

- ***The antichrist, by the power of Satan, will be working miracles, signs, and lying wonders.***

- ***People who are involved in the occult or witchcraft can testify to "supernatural" things happening.***

- ***It is interesting that it does not say "lying signs," but "lying wonders."***

- ***It says, "lying wonders," because the people had been fooled and deceived by a false awe.***

- ***People who have been captivated and deceived by demonic entities are drawn to and awed by the false miracles of Satan, but the godly are repulsed by them.***

- ***If one is spiritually discerning, then it can be said that the signs are not "lying signs," because the true nature of Satan is always manifest in the lives of those under his influence, because "every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit." (Matthew 7:17-18).***

- ***Since a sign always reveals the very nature of the source of the miracles, those who follow after demonic miracles and are awed by them will always demonstrate and manifest the signs of Satan in their lives which are fear, confusion, anger, perversion, bondage and self-destructive behaviors.***

Acts 8:5–13 (NKJV)
[5]Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.
[6]And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.
[7]For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.
[8]And there was great joy in that city.
[9]But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great,
[10]to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God."
[11]And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.
[12]But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.
[13]Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

- ***Acts, Chapter 8, provides a clear and stark contrast between the signs produced by the Holy Spirit and those produced by Satan.***

- ***There was a sorcerer, named Simon, who for a long time had performed miracles in a city in Samaria and had convinced all the people that he was "the great power of God."***

- ***Then Philip came to this same city and began to preach the Gospel and performed miracles, healed the sick, and cast out demons.***

- ***What is noteworthy in this story is that once Philip arrived and began to minister by the power of the Holy Spirit and preach the Gospel, the entire population of the city including Simon believed his message.***

- ***Both Simon and Philip performed miracles, so how was it that no one questioned which of the two was right? Everyone immediately knew they had been deceived by Simon's miracles and that Philip's message, ministry, and miracles were true.***

- ***The key to distinguish between one operating by the power of the Holy Spirit and one operating by demonic powers is found in the signs.***

- **"he (Simon) had <u>astonished</u> them with his sorceries for a long time" –** ***The only thing Simon's ministry produced was that the people were astonished by the miracles. They had no other effect.***

- ***In contrast to Simon's ministry the signs of Philip's ministry were*** **"unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed"** ***and*** **"there was great joy in that city."**

- ***Philip's ministry produced freedom, changed lives, and great joy, while Simon's ministry did not change lives for the better, but produced fear and uncertainty as the people looked on at his miracles and as the King James translation puts it, "bewitched the people."***

- ***Those involved in the occult, witchcraft, horoscopes, séances, Ouija boards and other demonic practices, who try to find out about or manipulate the future, experience fear, foreboding, and uncertainty. In contrast, those led by the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, experience wonderful peace, confidence, joy, and an unshakeable assurance in God who holds the future.***

Mark 16:17–20 (NKJV)
[17]And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;
[18]they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

[19]So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.
[20]And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

- ***The Gospel of Mark concludes by listing the five signs that are to follow or accompany believers.***

- ***These signs are to attend us and always be present with us.***

- ***These signs are important, because they are meant to confirm the message of the Gospel.***

- ***Anywhere we see the Gospel message growing powerfully there is a marvelous outpouring of the Holy Spirit with signs confirming the preaching of the Gospel.***

- ***China, North Korea, Muslim countries, India, and other places where Christians face great persecution, the Church is coming together irrespective of denominational lines and earnestly seeking God in fasting and prayer. The result has been an unprecedented level of unity and love among the believers.***

- ***As the Church is unified in love there is a great release of miracles, signs, and wonders with the result that many who have opposed the Gospel, some even violently, are coming to Christ in record numbers.***

- ***The great irony is that the places in the world where there is the greatest cost to being a Christian, even to the point of torture, imprisonment and martyrdom, is where the Church is growing the fastest and is the healthiest.***

- ***I believe one of the central reasons for such phenomenal growth where the Church suffers the greatest persecution is because believers seek God whole-heartedly with the result that signs accompanying them confirming the preaching of the Word.***

- ***The gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit must go hand in hand.***

- ***If one only has the gifts and the power, but lacks the fruit of the Spirit, the character, then one does not really possess the signs that will confirm the preaching of the Word of God.***

- ***Without the fruit of the Spirit, which is the character of Christ, our message is just "sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." (1 Corinthians 13:1).***

- ***The five signs recorded in Mark 16 not only list the visible supernatural signs of the Holy Spirit, but they also can reflect the signs of the character of Christ that needs to be developed in each believer to make us effective witnesses for Jesus.***

- ***We are going to study these five signs that are to accompany believers focusing on how they apply to developing godly character, so they can impact our lives and our witness in a powerful way.***

- ***We are going to study these signs in reference to our five soul senses.***

- ***We have five physical senses that enable us to be conscious of the world around us, we have five soul senses to be conscious or aware of the condition of our own souls, and we have five spirit senses, so we are conscious or aware of God.***

- ***God wants to transform our memories, our reason, our conscience, our affections, and imagination, so that they each will be an unmistakable sign of the saving power of Jesus Christ.***

- ***The first sign deals with our memories.*** **"In My name they will cast out demons."**

- ***Jesus Christ has given those who believe in Him the authority to cast out demons.***

- ***The Greek word for "cast out" means, "to throw out, to expel in reference to invading enemies, to force to flee."***

- ***This sign is not limited to freeing people from demonic possession, but extends to being free from the demonic torment of the past that robs us of our peace and joy and drives us away from God's presence.***

- ***Many times, even Christians are haunted by their past, the wrongs they have done to others, and the wrongs others have done to them.***

- ***Their memories are filled with such negativity that the enemy has a heyday and uses those painful memories to hold us in bondage and in the same cycle of defeat.***

- ***A sign that always astounds the world is when a person who has suffered severe emotional trauma can live a life filled with the joy and peace of Jesus Christ, where the painful memories of their past are no longer painful nor haunting.***

- ***The demons of our past have been driven out and we are free from their control and torment.***

Isaiah 43:18–19 (NKJV)
[18]"Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old.
[19]Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert.

- **"Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old." –** ***God instructs us not to allow our painful past experiences to dominate or control us because*** **"Behold, I will do a new thing."**

- ***Not only does God take those painful memories and heal them, but He actually "makes a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." He uses them as a testimony to the power of Jesus Christ to save us to the uttermost.***

2 Corinthians 5:16–17 (NKJV)
[16]Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.
[17]Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

- ***We no longer know one another according to the flesh, our past failures or our old earthly identity. We now see one another as a new creation in Christ, with our new spiritual and heavenly identity, because "old things have passed away; behold all things have become new."***

- ***Having our memories healed and set free does not mean we no longer can remember our past, it means our past no longer brings us pain.***

- ***The second sign deals with our reason,*** **"they will speak with new tongues."**

1 Corinthians 14:2 (NKJV)
[2]For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

- ***Speaking in tongues is a physical manifestation of a spiritual experience and it is described as "one speaking to God."***

- ***Speaking in tongues is also described as spoken revelations that are not understandable to men, but in the spirit they are mysteries and secrets.***

- ***Some may ask why does God have believers pray in unknown tongues by the spirit when they have no idea what they are saying instead of only praying using their intellect in a known language?***

- ***The answer to that question is also a mystery, but I think part of it is that it reveals that we are not only physical beings, but also spiritual beings.***

- ***When we speak in tongues we are submitting our reason to the leading of the Holy Spirit and not requiring an explanation for everything the Word of God says but simply accepting and obeying it by faith.***

1 Corinthians 2:6–7 (NKJV)
[6]However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.
[7]But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,

- **"we speak wisdom among those who are mature" –** ***As we grow and mature in Christ then God transforms our sense of reason so that "we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory."***

- ***As we mature in Christ we are able to receive from God and to think His thoughts and see events from His eternal and heavenly perspective.***

1 Corinthians 14:24–25 (NKJV)
[24]But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.
[25]And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

- ***Through the gifts of the Spirit, God reveals to us secrets of people's hearts and as we share those things, people recognize they have just encountered God and they fall down and confess "God is truly among you."***

- ***As we yield our reason to the Holy Spirit, He reveals mysteries in His Word and the secrets of men's hearts, so our reason becomes a sign of the reality of God.***

- ***The third sign deals with our conscience,* "they will take up serpents."**

Revelation 12:9–11 (NKJV)
[9]So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

[10]Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.
[11]And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

- ***The great dragon, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan is described as the accuser of the brethren who ceaselessly accuses us before God day and night.***

- ***The wonderful news is that the serpent of old has been defeated and we have overcome his accusations by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony and by not loving our lives to the death.***

- ***Satan continually tries to remind us of all our past failures and sins in order to heap condemnation and shame on us, so we would falsely believe that God does not love us.***

- ***However, because the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed us from all our sins, and because we have the testimony of how Jesus Christ saved us, and because we choose to no longer live for ourselves but for the glory of God, our consciences are free and pure.***

Acts 28:3–6 (NKJV)
[3]But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand.
[4]So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live."
[5]But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.
[6]However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

- ***Paul, after being shipped wrecked on an island, was helping to gather sticks to build a fire when suddenly a viper leaped out of the bundle of sticks and fastened on his hand.***

- ***The natives' response was immediate,* "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live."**

- ***At that moment many thoughts could have passed through Paul's mind of his many past transgressions and sins.***

- ***Paul even testifies in 1 Timothy 1:13 "I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man" and beyond that he had been responsible for the imprisonment of many believers. To top it all off he had been a witness and a protagonist at the murder of Stephen.***

- ***However, even in the light of all these accusations from the natives that he must have been a murderer, which in fact he had been, Paul's response was simply to shake the viper off into the fire.***

- ***Paul's conscience was clean and free from all the evil things he had done in the past and with a carefree gesture he simply shook that old serpent Satan into the fire where he belonged.***

- ***The sign of a good conscience is that we are no longer living under the shame, condemnation, and regrets of our past sins and failures, but we can with confidence walk with Christ knowing we are perfectly acceptable and pleasing to Him.***

- ***The world looks on in amazement that God can transform a defiled and guilty conscience into one that is free, clean, and upright.***

- ***The fourth sign deals with our affections,*** **"if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them."**

- ***Our affections are related to our emotions and our ability to love others.***

Acts 8:23 (NKJV)
[23]For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

- ***Simon the sorcerer's heart, like many in this world, was defiled and poisoned by bitterness. He had become a selfish greedy person with no regards for others.***

Matthew 24:12 (NKJV)
[12]And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

- ***In this world we will experience disappointments, betrayals, deception, and injustice to name only a few. All these things will want to cause us to be angry, resentful, vindictive, unforgiving, bitter and selfish.***

Luke 6:27–29 (NKJV)
[27]"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
[28]bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.
[29]To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

- ***However, the sign of a believer, is that no matter what bitter and deadly things they experience or are subject to, it will not harm them, because they will remain sweet, loving, forgiving, and even do good to those who have done evil to them.***

- ***When the world sees Christians who love their enemies and do not become poisoned with bitterness and resentment and do not retaliate, they have seen a sign that the world cannot reproduce – they have seen people who have drunk***

of the deadly poison of the bitterness of this world and it did not harm them or cause them to become bitter.

- ***Spirit led Christians drink in the bitterness of this world and respond with a heart filled with love, mercy and forgiveness.***

- ***The fifth and final sign deals with our imagination,* "they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."**

- ***We always pray for the sick, whether it is a physical malady, a spiritual one, an emotional one, or a relational one, because we look to God and believe they will recover.***

- ***Our imagination is not filled with images that things will never change or improve. We put our focus on God and place our hope in His promises.***

Luke 18:1 (NKJV)
[1]Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart

- ***No matter how difficult or impossible the situation is that we are facing or how hardened the person for whom we are praying, we are not to lose hope, but to persevere in prayer.***

Romans 4:18 (NKJV)
[18]who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."

- ***Abraham waited on God for 25 years to see the fulfillment of the promise that Sarah would bear him a son. While the years passed and the possibility of that promise being fulfilled seemed to grow more and more remote, he chose to hold on to the promises of God. Abraham became one "who contrary to hope, in hope believed" and he became the prime example of faith in the Bible.***

2 Corinthians 4:16 (NKJV)
[16]Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

- ***Although our outward circumstances may grow worse, God is doing a hidden work in our hearts that will last for eternity.***

- ***As we persevere in hope we will see the fulfillment of God's will and purposes for our lives.***

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)
[9]And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

- ***The Gospel is about our eternal hope in Jesus Christ. Therefore never losing hope is a key sign of the Church of Jesus Christ.***

- ***This is one of the reasons that the persecuted church is so powerful in winning souls to Christ. In the midst of impossible circumstances they continue to faithfully pray to God and their hope in Christ does not waiver.***

John 8:32 (NKJV)
[32]And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

- ***The signs of the Gospel are revealed as changed and redeemed lives where we walk in the freedom Jesus Christ has purchased for us.***