

The Kingdom and the Power:

Lesson 2 – **“Should Christians Expect Miracles Today?”**

In this and the next few lessons, we will be examining some objections to whether the church should expect miracles in our day and some answers from the Bible.

Claims that we should expect the miraculous in our time have been made for many years by Christians within the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.

But other evangelicals differ with this claim and raise several objections.

Objections:

1. Doesn't Jesus say, **“An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah?” v. 4 - Matt. 16:1-4.**

Question: Does this mean that we should not seek miracles today – we should look to “the sign of Jonah,” which means the resurrection of Christ, and emphasize that when we talk about miracles?

The mistake of interpreting this scripture is in failing to understand the verse in the full context in which Jesus was speaking and the many verses of Paul, James, Luke:

- The context of Matt. 16:4 is when Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came “to test Him they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.” Matt 16:1.
- It was also the hostile scribes and Pharisees who came in Matt. 12:38-45.
- The Pharisees who began to argue with him “to test Him.” Mark 8:11-12.
- The skeptics who came “to test Him” and seek a sign from heaven in Luke 11:16.
- The only passage that doesn't specify that the comment was directed against hostile unbelievers is Luke 11:29, but Matt 12:38-42 does specify that it was specifically the scribes and Pharisees against whom this word was directed.

In every instance the rebuke for seeking signs is addressed to **hostile unbelievers.**

Jesus is rebuking Jewish leaders who had hard hearts and were seeking a reason for criticizing Him.

In none of the verses, is Jesus' rebuke addressed to genuine followers who sought a miracle for physical healing or deliverance for themselves or others, either out of

compassion for others or out of a desire to advance the gospel and see God's name glorified.

These warning verses, taken in their original contexts, apply to unbelievers, and to use them to apply to genuine Christians is an illegitimate application.

No New Testament passages warn against the use of miracles by genuine Christians.

It would seem from the New Testament that **we are encouraged** to believe God and seek answers to prayer in many ways, including miraculous answers to prayer:

Acts 4:30, 1Cor. 14:1[1Cor12:9], Gal. 3:5.

The pattern of the gospel proclamation with miraculous demonstration in evangelism carried out in Act. 3:6, 12ff, 4:29,30; 5:12-16, 20,21,28,42; 6:8, 10; 8:4-7, 12; 9:17,18;22:13, 34,35; 14:3,8-10, 15ff; 15:12,36; 18:5,11; 2Cor 12:12; 1Cor2:4,5; 19:8-12; Hebrews 2:4; James 5:13-18.

2. Doesn't Jesus warn us that in the end times false Christs and false prophets will work miracles, and they will be so deceptive, they "will deceive if possible even the elect?"

Therefore, isn't it dangerous to follow people who work miracles today? Could we be deceived into following a false prophet?

This objection is based on Mark 13:22 – "False Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect."

The reasoning for this is that some people might be concerned that false Christs will be so deceptive, they could not tell what was wrong anyway. So it would be safer to stay away from a church or a people where miracles are being done, just in case the church was deceptive and trying to lead people astray.

People may reason:

False Christs work miracles.

Miracles are occurring in church A.

Therefore, I will stay away from church A just to be safe [I really couldn't discern the falsehood anyway].

The New Testament doesn't speak that way.

- Jesus gives a test for false prophets: Matt 7:16 "You will know them by their fruits."

- The N.T. doesn't say false Christs and false prophets are so deceptive that even Christians cannot identify them.
- It doesn't say they will lead astray the elect; it just says that is the purpose that they will try to accomplish.
- The Greek says: "for the purpose of leading astray, if possible, the elect." Mark 13:22.
- But satan's purpose doesn't have to be accomplished – Jesus said: "You will know them by their fruits" Matt. 7:16, and John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."
- Peter gives many marks of doctrinal purity and life character that distinguish false prophets from true prophets – 2Peter 2:1-22.
- John tells us that false prophets bring false doctrine about Jesus Christ and their teaching is from the word, not the apostles.
1John 4:6 "By this we know the spirit of truth and spirit of error."

Scripture gives a much better way of being able to discern the false from the true than be giving a warning about miracles that will make people think they have no way of telling false Christs from the true.

- There are many cults groups that teach false doctrine about the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Pharisees [ancient and modern] oppose, and do not further the work of the Kingdom of God.
- False prophets bear evil fruit – "nor can a bad tree bear good fruit." Matt. 7:18.
- Kingdom churches who do not teach false doctrine, and further the work of the Kingdom, exalt Jesus Christ as Lord, and bear abundant good fruit in the lives of people, we should mark and know that these qualities are not deceptive works – they are the mark of true Christianity in the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. If we say that miracles should accompany the gospel today, doesn't this cheapen the gospel? Wouldn't this show that we don't think the gospel itself is powerful enough to save sinners – rather, we think the gospel of Christ is weak and needs help from miracles?

If this objection is correct, then the working of miracles must have cheapened the gospel when Peter preached the gospel as well, and when Paul preached and even when Jesus preached.

- Miracles must have distracted from the gospel when Stephen and Phillip preached [Acts 6:8; 8:6-8], and when Christians at Corinth and in the churches of Galatia worked miracles [1Cor. 12:28; Gal. 3:5]

- Did miracles cheapen the gospel in almost the whole of the preaching of the Early Church, and still the Church used them?
- This is an incorrect conclusion about miracles.
- IF miracles did not detract from the gospel in the repeated patterns we see in the New Testament, and if the working of miracles was given by God in all those cases, then this objection is not valid and we are right to seek God for the working of miracles along with evangelism today as well.
- The New Testament pattern is that present day miracles attest to the gospel and enhance the power of its proclamation – Rom. 15:18, 19 “For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient – in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”
- Paul says the signs and wonders demonstrate the power of the gospel but they have not weakened it.