

## 1 Peter 4:10

**1Pe 4:10 (NKJV) As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**

As we continue addressing the so-called “sign gifts” and “miracle gifts”, I want to go back and look specifically at how the biblical terms for these phenomenon are actually utilized in the New Testament. Unless we obtain an overview of these miraculous kinds of occurrences in the New Testament, we will not be able to come to the correct conclusion. There are four specific terms that need to be identified in this discussion - “**signs**”, “**mighty deeds**”, “**wonders**”, and “**miracles**” – all of which are different, but basically synonymous at the same time.

The first is the word “**signs**” and is the Greek word “*semeion*”. It is a word that clearly involves what we would call the “supernatural”. Dr. Zodhiates says that it is a miracle with a spiritual end and purpose and that “**signs**” are what indicate the power and presence of God operating. In the book of John, for instance, this word is **ONLY** used of signs, miracles, and wonders performed by Jesus and His apostles in the proof and furtherance of their divine mission.<sup>1</sup> [Mark 16:20](#) speaking of the apostles, says,

**Mk 16:20 (NKJV) And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.**

[John 2:11](#), speaking of the first sign of Jesus in turning the water into wine says,

**Jn 2:11 (NKJV) This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.**

[John 3:2](#) tells us what Nicodemus said,

**Jn 3:2 (NKJV) This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."**

[John 12:37](#) and [John 20:30](#) say,

**Jn 12:37 (NKJV) But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him,**

**Jn 20:30 (NKJV) And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;**

Many of the known signs that Jesus did were very obvious - feeding the five thousand, raising the dead, healing the sick and the lame, giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, healing lepers, casting out demons, calming the sea and walking on water. Now, what is important to appreciate at this point relative to the word “**signs**” is that it is used 28 times in the Gospels and Acts, or what we call the historical narratives. However, it is only used four (4) times in all of the epistles and only four (4) times in the Book of Revelation from [Revelation 13 – 19](#) during the Great Tribulation. All of the references in [Revelation](#) are to the anti-Christ and demons performing signs. Of the four (4) instances in the epistles, two of them are Paul authenticating his ministry. [Romans 15:19](#) and [2 Corinthians 12:12](#) say about Paul,

<sup>1</sup> Zodhiates, *semeion*, 1286.

Ro 15:19 (NKJV) **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.**

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

[2 Thessalonians 2:9](#) is speaking of the anti-Christ and says of him,

2Th 2:9 (NKJV) **The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,**

Then finally, [Hebrews 2:4](#) is speaking specifically of those in the early church and says,

Heb 2:4 (NKJV) **God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?**

The point is that there is no actual doctrinal teaching on “**signs**” or that anyone today even performs signs, but simply historical narratives of the life of Christ and the early church and apostles – all of whom were performing signs to validate their ministry. I have taught you for years that we do not generally develop doctrine from the historical narratives, but that they simply support doctrine. What Jesus taught in the Gospels can be considered doctrine, but He only gave power to His disciples to perform signs and wonders – not just anyone. In [Luke 10](#) when he sent out 70 of his disciples, He gave them power “**over the enemy**” (v19-20), but it says nothing about power to perform miracles or wonders. In [Acts 2:22](#), Peter said this about Christ,

Ac 2:22 (NKJV) **"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--**

[Acts 2:43](#) says,

Ac 2:43 (NKJV) **Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.**

[Acts 5:12](#) says,

Ac 5:12 (NKJV) **And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.**

Now, it is very critical to observe that as we get closer to the Second Coming of Christ that there will be many false Christs and false prophets who will appear to do miraculous things. For instance, [Matthew 24:24](#) says,

Mt 24:24 (NKJV) **For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.**

The second term is “**mighty deeds**” and this term and translation is only used once in the New Testament in [2 Corinthians 12:12](#).

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

It is the word “*dunamis*” which is a very common New Testament word, but in this particular context it simply means miraculous power, or a worker of miracles.<sup>2</sup>

The third term is “**wonders**” and is the Greek word “*teras*”. It refers specifically to that which happens and due to its extraordinary power it is observed and kept in the memory. It is actually a miracle that is regarded as startling, imposing, and amazing. In the New Testament it is used of the miracles of Moses, Christ, the apostles, as well as false prophets and teachers.<sup>3</sup> Once again, and especially in the Book of Acts, “**wonders**” are associated with “**signs**” and confirmed the authority of the apostles.<sup>4</sup> As previously, the vast majority of the uses are in the Gospels (4X) and the Book of Acts (12X), and only five (5) times in all of the epistles. Once again, there is no doctrinal teaching regarding “**wonders**”.

The last term is “**miracles**” and it is the same as two of the Greek words that we have already studied – “*semeion*” and “*dunamis*”. So, it is simply another definition of those two terms and is translated as “**miracles**”. It is translated this way nine (9) times in the Gospels and Acts and five (5) times in the epistles. Same exact pattern we have seen with the other three words – absolutely no doctrinal teaching on any of these words, but simply examples provided in the Gospels and Acts.

Now, without me overstating the issues, the majority of these terms are generally listed together more than being listed individually. I.e., Christ and the apostles all performed these miraculous deeds and wonders. However, today we do NOT see anyone doing all of these at one time – never, and for the most part, after around 70AD, we have not seen them all operating in any one person. Paul was probably the last. We do see charlatans fleecing the flock and calling themselves healers, but as far as I understand the New Testament they are simply deceivers and fakes who are getting rich at the expense of naïve Christians.

The great teachers, preachers, and missionaries of the past were never known to be performing signs, wonders, mighty deeds, and miracles in any way that approximated what was demonstrated with Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament. The list of these men is endless. Just to name a few are Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, George Whitfield, CT Studd, William Carey, David Livingstone, Lottie Moon, and Hudson Taylor. These are great Christians who were never known to perform one miracle, but they were men of faith and deep courage who believed and trusted God and took Him at His Word. I have stated it often, but if I never see a miracle or a wonder or a mighty deed, it will not impact my personal faith in Christ or my trust in God the Father.

So, the general conclusion is that once the validation of the apostles writings had been confirmed and accepted by the early church that the necessity of the erroneously called “*sign gifts*” was no longer necessary and ceased in their initial function in the New Testament church. This was a very unique period in the life of the church, and therefore God was working in ways that are not as necessary as it was then to confirm the authenticity of His Word. However, I do not believe that the manifestations listed in [1 Corinthians 12](#) actually ceased “permanently” – which is the issue for the cessationists. That is why MacArthur is called a cessationist. I believe (and I think that MacArthur does as well) that God still heals, still performs miracles if He chooses, and may in His sovereignty choose to do wonders, and

<sup>2</sup> Strong, *dynamis*, #1411, ep.

<sup>3</sup> Zodhiates, *teras*, 1377.

<sup>4</sup> Harris, *teras*, #4907, ep.

that there is nothing in the Scriptures to dispel that belief or position. I would not pray for many people if I did not believe that God still heals and performs mighty deeds on people's behalf. The issue is that generally He chooses not to do it in the same way as Christ and the apostles performed signs, wonders, mighty deeds, and miracles in the Gospels and Acts. Please appreciate that all of the epistles are virtually silent on these issues. If it was to be a primary focus of the New Testament church, then it is only reasonable to assume that there would be detailed teachings on it in the New Testament – but that simply does not exist, not anywhere in the New Testament.

So, what is the issue? Well, the issue is whether or not the so-called “*sign gifts*” are valid spiritual “**gifts**” for today. My understanding is that first of all they were never called “**gifts**”, but are clearly referred to as “**manifestations**”. That is very important and cannot be dismissed. How we use these words have a significant bearing on how we interpret a passage. Stated another way, and contrary to those who may claim they have these as spiritual gifts, I do not believe that there are people today with the gift of miracles or the gift of healing. Those terms do not exist in the Scriptures. If it was not referred to as a “**gift**” in the New Testament, then there appears to be no basis for calling them that today. There is the term “**gifts of healings**” used as “**manifestations**” in [1 Corinthians 12](#), but not the term “gift of healing”. Listen very carefully. I believe in healing, but not in healers. We are told to pray for healing and to anoint the sick with oil, and we should, and we all believe that God is able to do the supernatural. Every single person that I have ever researched that was involved in these kinds of “miraculous” ministries all the way from Oral Roberts to Kathryn Kulmann to Benny Hinn and beyond to those in Africa such as T.B Joshua, Enoch Adeboye, Rev. Oyedepo, Pastor Mboro , and Shepherd Bushiri have all been individuals who have fleeced the flock for millions and millions of dollars. They have made fortunes off of their “faith healing”. These are all spiritual con men simply because the idea of modern faith healing is a scam and an enormous business enterprise. Does God heal people? Absolutely, but not through these thieves!

Before the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a pandemic, one Nigerian faith healer said that he would go to China and spiritually destroy the virus. He decided not to go, and since the virus came to Nigeria, nobody has heard from this so-called prophet of God. He must be socially distancing himself to avoid being infected! All acclaimed faith healers have been suspiciously quiet. Imagine that, the celebrity faith healers have gone underground!<sup>5</sup>

There are many testimonies of how God is currently and miraculously reaching people throughout the world. For instance, in China, which is the fastest growing church in the world, there are many documented testimonies of supernatural physical healings that have been occurring in that country for many years, and in each case it leads to someone's salvation. I.e., it has a purpose other than money. God is supernaturally reaching people in Muslim countries through “visions”. All of this is well documented. These are just two ways that God is manifesting Himself to people who need Him. Many of them are without the Word of God and have never even heard of the Bible and God is doing supernatural things to reach them. When I was in Jayapura, Indonesia several years ago, both Dr. Ildefonso and I saw a documented film of a woman who had been raised from the dead. She had been dead for nearly 4 hours, and was made completely whole when she was raised. We met and spoke

<sup>5</sup> Igwe, ep.

personally with the actual pastor in West Java where this miracle took place. This is a pastor that lives in the most populated Muslim area of the world, and where former Muslims are being killed for their conversion to Christianity. His life and his family's life are in constant danger every day.

Now, the conclusion of all of this is simple. If we are going to handle the Scriptures properly, we should be careful to use Scriptural terms and not make up a new set of terms that are not identified in the Bible itself. This is really a huge theological and hermeneutical issue. If we use unbiblical terms such as “the gift of healing”, the gift of miracles” “the gift of tongues”, and “the gift of the interpretation of tongues” to establish our doctrine, then we will quickly and inevitably develop incorrect doctrine. Today we have so many false teachers and false healers and bogus workers of miracles that it is mind-boggling to me personally. All of the so-called workers of miracles that I have researched are all demonically possessed. There is no question of that in my mind – none whatsoever.

Listen to these two verses from [Matthew 24:24](#) and [2 Thessalonians 2:9](#) speaking specifically of what will take place as we get closer to the end. I believe that both of these verses are talking specifically about that period of time that we know as the Tribulation, but there is certainly a kind of spiritual “build-up” to this time.

**Mt 24:24 (NKJV) For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.**

Obviously, the power to do this is demonically derived, but it will all be done through people coming in the name of Christ and using the Scriptures to support what they are doing.

**2Th 2:9 (NKJV) The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,**

This is a verse speaking of the actual anti-Christ, and he too is trying to duplicate what God did in the early New Testament church as a means of validating his work. He too is demonically possessed.

So what is my conclusion, and as your pastor I hope is yours as well. It is very, very simple so please listen very carefully. I deeply believe in a supernatural God who heals, does wonders, and performs miracles, and He does so to both glorify Himself and His divine purposes for our lives. He calls on us to pray for the supernatural outpouring of His work in our lives and for us to place our faith in both Him and His Word. I believe that God can and does use Spirit controlled believers through whom He often performs His supernatural works in people's lives and for His glory. However, I do not believe in these fake healers and workers of miracles who claim to have supernatural powers at their immediate disposal, but believe them all to be workers of iniquity and demonically controlled deceivers of the worst kinds, and my encouragement to you is to stay completely away from them, do not read their books, and do not watch their programs. If you do, then you as one of the elect may find yourself being deceived with many others.

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