

.... And These Signs Shall Follow

Tonight, we'll examine the scriptures regarding SIGNS that were to follow believers. Many people are confused about them today. Some people claim some of them, but not ALL of them but, in fact, they are a PACKAGE deal.

In the last chapter of Mark's gospel, Jesus commissioned His eleven disciples. He gave them orders to follow when He went away - back to Heaven:

Mark 16:14-20 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

15 And he said unto them,

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;

but he that believeth not shall be damned.

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe;

• In my name shall they cast out devils;

• they shall speak with new tongues;

18 • 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.

19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

The gospel that was being preached at that time was the same gospel that Jesus had committed to them when He initially called them:

Matt 10:1, 5-8 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

(Verses 2 & 3 list the names of the twelve apostles.)

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

8 • Heal the sick,

• cleanses the lepers,

• raise the dead,

• cast out devils:

freely ye have received, freely give.

It is also called the gospel of the KINGDOM:

Matt 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

It is the same gospel that will be preached in the time of Tribulation:

Matt 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Now, let's consider the SIGNS.

SIGNS are given to confirm or validate something
to be a proof of the reality of something.

Look WHO it is that needs signs:

1 Cor 1:22 For the JEWS require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

Prophetically, that was a reason God gave Christ and His 12 disciples to Israel:

Isa 8:18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

The 2 major signs of the kingdom were:

- healing physical diseases
- casting demons out of the country of Israel.

Mark 3:13-15 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.
14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,
15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

Mark 6:12-13 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.
13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

Let's look at both the 2 major signs in prophecy, and then see their fulfillment by Christ.

First, we'll see the promise that God would heal their physical diseases:

Isa 35:4-6 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.

- 5 • Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
• and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

- 6 • Then shall the lame man leap as an hart,
• and the tongue of the dumb sing:

for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

These signs were done by Christ:

Matt 11:2-5 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

4 Jesus answered and said unto them,

Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

- 5 • The blind receive their sight,
• and the lame walk,
• the lepers are cleansed,
• and the deaf hear,
• the dead are raised up,
• and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Secondly, we'll see the prophecy that devils would be cast out of Israel:

Zech 13:2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

That was the very request of the devils -- when Jesus cast them out of a MAN that He would not make them leave the land:

Mark 5:1-10 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And when he was come out of the ship,

immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs;

and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains,

and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs,
 crying, and cutting himself with stones.
 6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,
 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son
 of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.
 8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.
 9 And he asked him, What is thy name?
 And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.
 10 And he besought him much that he would not send them **away out of the country**.

So healing physical diseases and casting out devils were 2 important signs of the kingdom.

Another sign (in Matt. 10:8) was that the dead would be raised back to life.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead:

John 11:39, 43-44 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.
 44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Peter, one of Jesus' 12 apostles, raised a dead woman:

Acts 9:36-41 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

Signs were used by God to show His spokesman was authentic.

So it was with Jesus:

Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

Heb 2:3-4 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 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?

So it was with the 12 apostles:

Acts 2:43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

But God also warns that signs and wonders will be done by anti-christs in the last days:

Mark 13:22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

Deceiving signs will be used in the future by the Enemy to mislead people:

2 Thess 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

So, even though God showed His power by signs at various times in the scriptures, He cautioned His people in the end-time not to be fooled by false signs.

Now, let's go back and review individually the signs that would follow the believers:

Mark 16:17-18 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 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.

They Shall Cast Out Devils

Jesus cast out devils:

Mark 16:9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

Not only could Jesus' 12 disciples cast out devils --- but so could at least 70 others:

Luke 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

Luke 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

They Shall Speak With New Tongues

This happened at Pentecost:

Acts 2:1-8 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 ¶ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

They Shall Take Up Serpents

Jesus also gave power to the 70 to walk on snakes, and not fear harm:

Luke 10:19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

The verses we read at the beginning of this study (in Mark 16:17-18) specifically say "They shall take up serpents." The words "take up" mean "pick up." That is intentional.

Just like Jesus told the lame man to 'pick up' his bed and walk:

Mark 2:10-12 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

A charismatic man once told my wife that it would be 'tempting God' to handle poisonous snakes, like some 'back-woods' churches do. She told him that he didn't believe the verses!

If They Shall Drink Any Deadly Thing It Will Not Hurt Them

These were the only 2 references I found regarding drinking something poison.

God turned water into blood by the hand of Moses in 'Times Past':

Psa 78:43-44 How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan:

44 And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink.

God will turn water into blood again in the 'Ages to Come' during the Tribulation:

Rev 16:4-6 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

They Shall Lay Hands on the Sick and They SHALL Recover

Jesus certainly did that:

Luke 4:40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

The apostles did, as well:

Acts 5:12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

Hopefully, you have seen the witness of scripture that those signs were fulfilled both during the earthly ministry of the Lord and by His apostles during their ministry then --- and into the book of Acts.

Next, let's investigate another person actually, a unique man, that God chose to represent Him. He became known as the apostle PAUL:

Acts 9:13-16 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Paul had the same powers that the 12 apostles did:

2 Cor 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

God confirmed Paul's ministry by signs and wonders also:

Rom 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.

Paul cast out an unclean spirit:

Acts 16:16-18 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

Paul also spoke in tongues:

1 Cor 14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

The apostle Paul was bitten by a poisonous serpent, but wasn't hurt:

Acts 28:3-6 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

Although that incident with Paul was accidental rather than intentional Vicki still thinks if the charismatic man were bitten by a copperhead, he would call 9-1-1 (or rush to the emergency room or at least try to suck the venom out)! He wouldn't just shake it off and go on about his business like Paul did!

Paul raised a dead man:

Acts 20:7-12 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

Paul laid his hands on the sick and they were healed:

Acts 28:8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

Those signs verified God's message and His messenger:

We've seen that with Jesus:

John 10:25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not:
the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

John 14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me:
or else believe me for the very works' sake.

We've seen it with Jesus' disciples:

John 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

The apostle Paul also had the 'signs of an apostle.'

Acts 19:11-12 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:
12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

Logical questions arise then What has happened to the signs?

Do we see signs from God today?

The answer is logical as well.

When the Prophetic Kingdom Program was rejected by Israel (after the stoning of Stephen) God set His favored nation 'on the back burner' and surprised the world with a Secret Program. He raised up a NEW apostle to communicate Mystery Revelation ('never-before-heard') to the Gentile nations.

While mankind only had partial revelation, God used signs to authenticate His prophets. However, after God's messengers died out (those men that both spoke the Word of God and wrote the scriptures), the 'signs' faded out with them.

1Co 13:8-10 Charity never faileth:

- but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail;
- whether there be tongues, they shall cease;
- whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come,
then that which is in part shall be done away.

The signs were replaced by the entire WRITTEN Word of God, which was completed by Paul.

Col 1:25-26 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

Though Paul experienced ACTIVE signs in his early ministry by his later years, the signs had disappeared.

One way we can tell that is because he was unable to heal people.

Timothy was sick ALOT:

1Tim 5:23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

Yet the cause of his sicknesses was NOT a 'lack of faith'. Timothy had plenty of faith:

2 Tim 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

When we read the list of compliments Paul gave his friend, Epaphroditus, we realize he was a work-horse. The scripture plainly tells us the reason he was sick --- he nearly worked himself to death, for the faith --- literally!

Phil 2:25-27, 30 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus,

- my brother,
- and companion in labour,
- and fellowsoldier,
- but your messenger,
- and he that ministered to my wants.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

The AMOUNT of faith they had was NOT the problem. (Today, people use the excuse that you don't have ENOUGH faith to be healed.) During Christ's earthly ministry, He tells them HOW MUCH faith was required in Luke 17:6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

Paul didn't heal another buddy that travelled with him:

2 Tim 4:20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

Paul's inability to heal disease is also apparent, in that he could not get rid of his OWN:

2 Cor 12:7-10 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, (Do any of us say that ????) in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Physical healing will 'start back up again' in the 'Ages to Come' as is evidenced in the epistle of James, which is prophetically written for a future age:

James 5:14-15 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15 And the prayer of faith SHALL save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Yes, God will fulfill all the covenants He made with Israel:

Exo 15:26 And said, IF thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.

.... And, God will fulfill the promises He made with the Church, the Body of Christ:

2 Cor 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

This is David Dowell, saying "Think about it!"