

THE GIFT OF M I R A C L E S - A SIGN GIFT

TEXT: I Cor. 12:10,28

EXPLANATION

I. WHAT WAS INVOLVED IN THIS GIFT

- A. This gift is the God-given power to perform an act which is contrary to natural law. It has been defined as "an event of supernatural power, palpable to the senses, accompanying the servant of the Lord to authenticate the divine commission."
- B. This gift is associated with three distinct terms which demonstrate three different aspects which are involved in its exercise.
 1. First of all a miracle is associated with ,supernatural power. • It involves God stepping into His universe and setting aside the ordinary laws of nature to do something extraordinary. For example to raise the dead is a miracle because it is contrary to natural laws but an answer to prayer would not be unless this were the case. Super-natural power over natural laws is what the Lord Jesus demonstrated in walking on water, multiplying the loaves and the fishes, and stilling the storm.
 2. Secondly a miracle is palpable to the senses meaning it causes ,wonder • of amazement when it occurs. Wonder or amazement was the outcome of Bible miracles. (Mk.2:12; 6:51; Luke 5:9).
 3. Thirdly a miracle is a ,sign • that authenticates the doer as a divinely commissioned servant of the Lord and validates his message. The apostle Paul referred to this fact when writing to the Corinthian believers (II Cor. 12:12). Note also Rom. 15:18,19.

EXERCISE

II. HOW THIS GIFT WAS EXERCISED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The purpose of miracles, to authenticate the message and the messenger, is seen in the miracle-working ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 20:30,31).
 - 1. When Jesus performed His first miracle at Cana His disciples "believed" in Him (Jn. 2:11).
 - 2. When Jesus fed the 5,000 those who witnessed it declared "this is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." (Jn. 6:14)
- B. This gift was exercised by certain apostles to authenticate them and their message so others would believe on the Lord.
 - 1. When Peter raised Dorcas from the dead Many believed in the Lord (Acts 9:42).
 - 2. When Paul pronounced blindness upon Elymas, the deputy believed (Acts 13:12).
 - 3. When the apostles were sent out to preach they exercised this gift of miracles so that others would believe on the Lord (Matt. 10:7,8).
 - 4. It should be noted that this sign gift bore a special testimony at the beginning of the church age and it served to authenticate the words of the apostles until the New Testament was written.

EXTENT

III. HOW THIS GIFT OPERATES AND APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALS IN OUR DAY

- A. The gift of miracles was used in the early church to authenticate the message and the messenger as being from God.

After the revelation of God was completed there ceased to be a need for this gift. Today the ministry of the Holy Spirit is sufficient as the Scriptures are preached (Jn. 17:17; 16:13; II Tim. 3:16,17).

- B. This gift should not be confused with remarkable answers to prayer, God meeting our needs, and a host of other wonderful things which God does in the believer's life.
- C. This gift could be demonstrated today if conditions were similar to the early church and God's message and messengers needed to be authenticated. Such a case seems to have appeared in 1965-66 on the mission field in Indonesia. But after the new converts got into the Scriptures the miraculous events diminished. It should be noted that the gift of miracles authenticated the apostolic message and if God chooses to use this gift today it would only occur on a mission field setting where He would demonstrate His power over heathen idols.

ERROR

IV. HOW THIS GIFT CAN BE MISUSED AND MISAPPLIED

- A. Some claim to possess the gift of miracles and they peddle their claims to entertain or to draw crowds for material and financial reasons.
- B. Some may suppose that this gift is operative in our day and be drawn to so-called "miracle workers" for help.
- C. Some promote the miraculous as the determining factor of what is spiritual. These fail to see that Satan uses such means to ensnare and condemn the undiscerning

(II Thess. 2:9,10; Rev. 13:12-15).

- D. Some may take Mark 16:17-20 out of context and use it as a means of proving one's faith but these promises were fulfilled in the miracles of apostolic days (Heb. 2:3,4).