Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Does God Do Miracles Today?
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-56

In our ongoing study of the Charismatic movement today, I wanna jump right in to a subject that I know I can't completely cover, but I want you to learn to think biblically about this because I'm very concerned about it. Today, we hear an awful lot of talk about miracles, somebody says, "I had a financial need and a miracle happened. The mailman came and in the mail was a check for just the amount of money I needed. It was a miracle." Or you hear someone say, "I went to the mall and there was a parking place right by the entrance. It was a miracle." Or a mother might sense something wrong in an adjoining room and investigate just in time to stop her little toddler from putting a paper clip into an electrical outlet, and say, "It's a miracle." Or maybe you were thinking and praying for somebody and just seemingly at the time you were doing that, the phone rang and it was the very person you were thinking about, and they were right there to be encouraged and you say, "That was a miracle." Well, we call those things miracles, but they're not miracles. A miracle is a supernatural event which has no human explanation. More than that, a miracle is a supernatural event which suspends natural law. In other words, natural law stops and is suspended while God acts, moves back out and then the natural course continues. When you find a place to park at the mall or when you catch your little toddler just at the right moment, or when you get a check for what you needed, or when a friend calls at precisely the right moment in time, those would be acts of providence, those would be acts whereby God is simply orchestrating natural events, not suspending the natural, but controlling the natural so that it does what He wants it to do.

A miracle then is an extraordinary event wrought by God that cannot be explained by any natural means. That would be the technical definition. It might sound something like this. A miracle is an event in nature so extraordinary in itself and so coinciding with the prophecy or command of a religious teacher or leader as fully to warrant the conviction on the part of those who witness it, that God has wrought it with the design of certifying that this teacher or leader has been commissioned by him. Now, that takes us to another dimension, and I wanted to read that. That's from Augustus Strong written way back in 1907, and what he is saying there is that anytime a miracle occurs, it is associated with the certification of a teacher or a leader commissioned by God.

Theologians prior of course to the Charismatic movement, the Pentecostal movement and this century, were united in the understanding that miracles did not happen randomly, they did not happen through history in a willy-nilly sort of way. God did not do them capriciously or whimsically. There wasn't a continual flow of miracles at all times and places through church history, but rather, miracles, that is God stepping in to the natural world, suspending natural law, doing something that had no

natural explanation, pulling back out again and letting natural law then run its course, did that only in certification of especially commissioned teacher.

In fact, miracles in Scripture, all the way from Exodus through Deuteronomy to Nehemiah through the Psalms, Jeremiah, Daniel, into the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, John, Acts, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Thessalonians and Hebrews, miracles are called signs and wonders. They are signs, and what are signs for? A sign is to point to something, and what were they signs of? They were signs authenticating a divinely commissioned teacher. When God supernaturally, superhumanly suspended natural law and acted in human history, He did so as a sign to point to a teacher who was speaking for Him.

I've collected through the years a very large file of supposed miracles. They range all the way from 1977's newspaper article about Maria Rubio of Lake Arthur, New Mexico who was frying tortillas in her kitchen. She noticed that one of them seemed to have the likeness of a face etched in the burn marks. She concluded that it was Jesus and even built a crude shrine to the tortilla. Thousands of people visited the shrine of the Jesus of the holy tortilla and concluded it was indeed a miracle. "I do not why this has happened to me," Mrs. Rubio said, "but God has come into my life through this tortilla." From the Chicago *Tribune*. In 1980, in Deptford, New Jersey, Bud Ward, the town's fire department photographer was driving with his wife when he accidentally took a wrong turn. Noticing flames in an abandoned chicken coop behind the Naples Pizzeria, he pulled into the parking lot and began taking pictures. When the slides came back from Kmart, Ward's nine year old daughter noticed what seemed to be an image of Christ in one of the photographs. Word of this discovery spread and soon people from all over New Jersey were talking about the pizza Jesus of Deptford Township. Several people knelt and prayed under the image projected from the slide and others asked that the image be projected onto their chests. Hundreds believed it was a true miracle. Again, according to the *GloucesterTimes.*

Such apparitions are seen as miracles. In August of 1986, in Postoria, Ohio, the image of Jesus seemed to appear every night in the shadows and rust marks on the side of a soybean oil storage tank. Hawkers sold thousands of, "I saw the vision," t-shirts and coffee mugs to those who came to see the miracle. Nearly a year later, Arlene Gardner of Estill Springs, Tennessee, noticed that when her neighbors turned on their porch light, the image of a face appeared in the glow reflected off her freezer. She believed it was the face of Jesus, although several observers said it looked more like Willy Nelson. Arlene and her husband were so convinced it was a true miracle they quit the church when the pastor expressed skepticism.

Well, evidently, skepticism is a rare commodity these days. People's hunger for the mysterious and the astonishing and phenomena is a little unsurpassed in the history of the church. It's pretty popular stuff in the secular world and it's found its way into the church. Eager to witness miracles, many people seem willing to believe that almost anything unusual is a genuine heavenly wonder. The

problem with that is it poses a severe danger for the church because it plays right into the hands of Satan, doesn't it? False wonders and false signs, false miracles, extremely believable ones, the Bible tells us will be the primary tool of Satan in the end times. Jesus said, "False Christ and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead if possible even the elect." Then He added as if knowing that many would ignore the warning, "Behold, I have told you in advance," Matthew 24:24-25.

Surely, in the light of the warning of Jesus and the warnings of the apostle Paul in the New Testament, we should have a healthy skepticism on the part of these supposed miracles. Now, I want you to understand. I am not by nature a skeptic. I am not a naturalist and a humanist and an anti-super naturalist. I believe in miracles, and I believe that every miracle recorded in the Bible literally happened exactly as the Bible described it. I believe, for example, that Moses and the Israelites actually walked through the parted Red Sea and didn't get their feet wet or muddy. I believe that Elijah raised a widow's young son from the dead and that fire called down from Heaven was actually heavenly fire and consumed water. I believe with absolute conviction that Elijah made an axe head float, an iron axe head. I believe that all the healings, miracles, signs and wonders attributed to Jesus and the four Gospels happened exactly and precisely as they are recorded there, and I believe the apostles literally performed all the miracles which the New Testament described. That's not all. I believe God can still do miracles. I believe all things are possible with God, as Matthew 19:26 says. "His power has not diminished in the least since the days of the early church."

But even though I believe all of that, and I believe that if God chooses to do something miraculous, He can do it. I am convinced that most of the miracle signs and wonders, if not all, being claimed today in the Charismatic movement, have nothing in common with what we know about Biblical miracles. They do not fit the Biblical criteria. And I am persuaded by both Scripture and history that nothing like the New Testament gift of miracles, noted in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 is operating today. The Holy Spirit has not given any modern day Christians miraculous gifts comparable to those He gave the apostles.

Now, in spite of that, many Charismatics are making quite remarkable claims. Oral Roberts, for example, speaking at the Charismatic Bible Ministry Conference in 1987 said, and I quote, "I can't tell you about all the dead people I've raised. I've had to stop a sermon, go back and raise a dead person." No less in authority than Dr. C. Peter Wagner, professor of church growth at Fuller Seminary, School of World Mission, believes such things do happen, and I quote him, "I too, now believe that dead people are literally being raised in the world today. As soon as I say that some ask if I believe it is normative. I doubt it would be normative in any local situation, but it probably is normative in terms of the universal body of Christ. Even though it is an extremely uncommon event, I would not be surprised if it were happening several times a year," end quote. John Wimber of the Vineyard lists raising the dead as one of the basic elements of any healing ministry.

Now, with the supposed large number of people being raised from the dead, you would imagine that somebody could manage to come up with one who could give testimony to the validity. But not one modern occurrence of raising the dead can be verified. Say, what about Oral Roberts' claim that he's raised many people? Well, he was challenged to produce the names and addresses of the people he raised, and he balked. Later, he recalled only one incident more than 20 years before when he had supposedly raised a dead child in front of 10,000 witnesses, "During healing service," he recalled, "a mother in the audience jumped up and shouted, 'My baby's dead.'" Roberts said he prayed over the child and, "It jerked, it jerked in my hand." Roberts conceded that neither that child nor others he said he had brought to life had been pronounced clinically dead. "I understand," he hedged, "there's a difference in a person dying and not breathing and a person being clinically dead." Well, what are we supposed to make out that confusion? It's certainly a far cry from Jesus raising Lazarus who had been four days in the grave. And if this Dr. Wagner supposes dead people are literally being raised several times a year, wouldn't it be reasonable to expect that he would bring one along so we could meet him or her. The truth is those who claim miracles today are not able to substantiate their claims. And like the miracles in the New Testament which were usually done with large crowds of unbelievers watching who would be skeptical, modern miracles typically happen either privately or in some religious meeting where there are a lot of people who are in a wild kind of frenzy expecting a miracle where it's a lot easier to fabricate one in the imagination.

And the types of miracles that are being claimed today are absolutely nothing like New Testament miracles, absolutely nothing like them. In fact, the types of miracles today could be distinctly seen as different than New Testament miracles. Jesus and the apostles instantly and completely healed people born blind, a paralytic, a man with a withered arm. All obvious and disputable miracles, even Jesus' enemies didn't challenge the reality of His miracles that He had the people there to verify them. He raised the dead, of course, as we well know. They never did a miracle that was slow, they never did a miracle that took time, they never did a miracle that was less than permanent. By contrast, most modern miracles are partial, gradual, temporary, sometimes reversed, and almost impossible to verify.

And the only instant miracles today seem to be those that deal with psycho-somatic diseases. People with visible disabilities are rarely if ever helped at all by modern faith healers. I recently watched a televangelist interview a man he had supposedly healed of lameness. The man said he was free from his wheelchair for the first time in several years, however, the man was walking with crutches and had heavy braces on his legs. That's not a miracle at all like any in the Scripture. No modern miracle worker claims the kind of unequivocal success seen in the ministry of Christ and His apostles.

Now, there are some in the Charismatic movement who try to defend the supposed miracles which are not verifiable by saying that Jesus Christ is same yesterday, today and forever, so it's the same

Jesus today. The Holy Spirit is still with us today and therefore, with Him, we have the age of miracles. David Du Plessiswho is sort of the patriarch of the movement, who has been called Mr. Pentecost, believed, he's dead now, that the age of miracles never ended and that we're still in the age of miracles, and that he said that the miracles and events described in the book of Acts should be normative throughout the church's history. And it is that view that most Pentecostals and Charismatics hold. That whatever the Holy Spirit did in the past, He is still doing now; that miracles go on and on as long as there is the Holy Spirit. They say the Holy Spirit never changed. They say the early church changed. It became doctrinal, it became formal, it became ritualistic, and so the Holy Spirit pulled back His power and now after nearly 2,000 years, He's released it again. The thing that always amazes me is if the Holy Spirit were going to release His power, why would He release it to authenticate the people who teach bad theology? If He wanted to authenticate anybody with miracles, you could be sure it would be those who were the truest and the purest and the most profound and Biblical and the most skilled and dedicated teachers of the Word of God who were teaching the truth.

Many Pentecostals and Charismatics talk about the restoration of the New Testament Holy Spirit power through their movement. They say they're doing again what the apostles did in the first century. Is that true? If so, why do modern revelations, visions, tongues, healings and miracles differ so dramatically from those done by the apostles? And why is it that they're associated with people who do not understand properly the truth of God? And if miracles and signs and wonders are so vital, then why is it that for nearly 2,000 years the Holy Spirit didn't do any? You mean there weren't even a few people around who would have been worthy of such? Should Christians today expect miracles? Is Oral Roberts right when he says, "Everyone of you out there should expect your miracle today"? Are we supposed to be able to do miracles, heal people, raise the dead?

Well, in answer to all of this, we need to take a look at Scripture and I wanna give you just a fast look, overview at this matter of miracles that I think will set your thinking in the right frame. Most Biblical miracles happened in one of three relatively brief periods of Biblical history. You need to note this. Most Biblical miracles happened in three relatively brief periods of Bible history, the days of Moses and Joshua, during the ministries of Elijah and Elisha and thirdly, in the time of Christ and the apostles. None of those periods lasted much more than 100 years. Each of them, each of the three experienced a proliferation of miracles unheard of at other times in God's redemptive history. But even during those three times, miracles were not just normal, every day occurrences that happened to anybody and everybody. The miracles that did happen in the time of Moses and Joshua involved Moses and Joshua. The miracles that happened in the time of Elijah and Elisha happened around the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. And the miracles that happened to Christ and the apostles and through them, happened through their ministries. There weren't just miracles happening all over everywhere to all kinds of people.

And aside from those three intervals, the only other miracles recorded in Scripture are very, very isolated events. It is true in the days of Isaiah, the Lord miraculously defeated Sennacherib army, then healed Hezakiah and turned the sun's shadow back, 2 Kings 19:20. It is true in the days of Daniel, God miraculously preserved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the furnace, Daniel 3. But those are very uncommon and very unusual. It is true that God did miraculously preserve Jonah in the belly of a great fish. But for the most part, those are very isolated, and miracles that those didn't happen to God's people as a course of life.

Now, God of course, at any time can inject Himself into the human stream supernaturally and do a miracle. But He chose to limit Himself primarily to three periods of history, and very rarely will you ever find a miracle in the times in between. The rest of the time, God just works through providence, doesn't need a miracle, He can work through providence. The reason He did a miracle is because a miracle can only be attributed to God. It can only be explained supernaturally and there were times when that was crucial.

Let me give you some points. Three characteristics of the miracles in Scripture will help you understand this. One, miracles introduced new eras of revelation. Miracles introduced new eras of revelation. All three of those periods of miracles were times when God gave His written revelation. Moses and Joshua, the time of the giving of the law. Elijah and Elisha introduced the prophetic office, the prophetic age, and all of the books of prophecy, major prophets and minor prophets. The New Testament obviously, Christ did miracles, the apostles did miracles. That introduced the era of the New Testament revelation. So, whenever God was going to pour out His Word, He wanted to certify certain prophets and teachers of His Word, to authenticate them.

Moses was given the power to do certain miracles that people might know he spoke as God's spokesman. There was no other way to explain what God used him to do other than God was doing it and therefore, this was God's man and when he spoke, he spoke for God. And the same was true in Joshua's case when he wrote his book.

You come to Elijah and Elisha and the miracles that attended their ministry as they were the prophets of God, and they were introducing a very long era of prophetic literature. As God revealed through the prophets of which really they were sort of the introducers. And even if those rare miracles that occurred in other eras involve people who were used by God to write Scripture. Hezakiah's healing involved Isaiah. The three men in the fiery furnace involved Daniel. Those two were what we call major prophets who spoke and wrote for God. Moses performed many miracles in an attempt to convince Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go, to convince Pharaoh that this was not some normal man. This was not some natural man, but this was God's man who spoke for God.

Miracles seem to accompany the Israelites on the their journey out of Egypt and miracles came in their journey through the wilderness to remind the people of God that God was their God and that

Moses was God's spokesman. How else would they know who to listen to? They certainly didn't want to listen to Aaron or anybody else. And even when God gave His law to Moses on the mount, Moses' encounter with God was accompanied by signs so dramatic, fire, smoke, a trumpet, a thundering voice, that even Moses himself knew it was the voice of God and Hebrews 12 says he was fearful. And thus began the first period of revelation. And Moses recorded the truth of the Pentateuch, the five books, and Joshua wrote the book that bears his name.

Other books were added intermittently after the time of Moses and Joshua, Samuel probably wrote Judges and 1 and 2 Samuel. David wrote the Psalms, Solomon penned most of the wisdom literature, but those books were not accompanied by the great outpouring of miracles that had distinguished the days Moses and Joshua. They were kind of a continuation in some ways of that revelatory era.

Second major cluster of miraculous events accompanied a new era of Biblical revelation, the age of the Old Testament prophets. Following Solomon's reign, a nation of Israel divided into the northern kingdom Israel, a southern king of Judah. The northern kingdom quickly deteriorated because of idolatry and hit a low point under King Ahab. You remember his wife Jezebel. At that time God raised up two spokesmen, Elijah and Elisha. The prophetic office in their lifetime was marked by dramatic miracles to certify them as the spokesmen for God and to call back the people to God. The prophets that followed them were the continuation of that era.

Then when that era closed out and the Old Testament was done, there was a 400 year period of silence in which no prophet spoke for God and no miracle is recorded to have occurred. Then came the New Testament and the first miracle was a virgin birth, and then the miracles began to flow out of the life of Christ, and then began to flow out of His apostles. Why? Because it was a new era of writing the revelation of God, the New Testament. Always, the miracles were associated with a certification of those who were giving us God's revelation.

Second point, and that is the point we just led into. Miracles authenticated the messengers of Revelation. They only happened in three eras and they authenticated the messengers of Revelation. Elijah raised the widow's dead son and what was the widow's reply? Verse 24 of 1 Kings 17, she said, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the Word of the Lord in your mouth is truth." That's a very important verse. That's the whole purpose, so that anybody listening to Elijah would know this man is a man of God and in his mouth is the Word of the Lord and it is true.

You come into the New Testament of John 10, Jesus having a confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders. They challenged Him. "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you're the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus said, "I told you and you don't believe. The works that I do in my Father's Name, these bear witness of Me." He was saying, "The miraculous works that I do authenticate Me and My message as being from God."

In his Pentecost sermon, Peter told the crowd that Jesus was a man attested to them by God with miracles, wonders and signs. And the same kind of power belonged to the apostles. You'll remember that on Paul's first missionary journey, he and Barnabas were ministering in Aconium and it says they were speaking boldly with reliance on the Lord who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands. The love of that is always the intention of the miracle. God does not need to do miracles for everybody to accomplish His will. He does not need to do miracles for every Christian every day to prove His love. He does not need to do miracles every day to make people believe He exists. He only authenticates the Word and when the authenticated Word is revealed, there is no need any longer to authenticate a preacher. You can find out whether he speaks for God by comparing him with this.

And God can still control everything without ever doing a miracle through providence. It's foolish to assume that everybody should be able to do a miracle, that we can go to a seminar in four days and learn how to do miracles. It's equally foolish to assume that God's gonna do miracles for you every day. People who keep saying they saw this miracle and that miracle have got caught up in the fact that everything is a miracle and their definition of miracles lacks greatly Biblical parameters.

The apostles performed miracles, signs and wonders in Acts 5. Why? To call attention to the fact that they were supernatural servants of the living God who spoke the truth. In Acts 15, it says the whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. These things that mark an apostle, signs and wonders and miracles, Paul said to the Corinthians, were done among you. They mark an apostle.

Moses, Joshua introduced an era of revelation. Elijah, Elisha introduced an era of revelation. Jesus and the apostles introduced an era of revelation and with all the spokesmen and no written Word, with all the spokesmen, God had to authenticate the right spokesman and so He gave them the power to do supernatural things in order that people might know this is no human, mortal teacher. This is a man of God who speaks the truth.

Thirdly, and tied right in with the others. Miracles are designed to call attention to the revelation. Miracles are designed to call attention to the revelation. God did the miracle so the people would listen to the Word and see it as His truth. The miracle didn't stand alone, that's the point. God doesn't do miracles for miracles' sake. The purpose of the miracle was the effect of the miracle. For example, the miracles Moses did in Egypt were meant to enlighten two groups, the Israelites and the Egyptians. In Exodus 7, we read about Moses' first miracles and it was then that the Israelites started to believe in the power of their God. Pharaoh was a hard case. He didn't believe until the tenth miracle, the death angel. Then he finally let them go. But the purpose of the miracle was not just to stand on its own, but the purpose of the miracle was to get people to understand that God had

something to say.

The miracles of Elijah and Elisha were effective in convincing both believers and unbelievers that what these men spoke was the Word of God and graphic illustration of that can be seen in 1 Kings 18 where Elijah defeated 400 prophets of Baal before a large crowd of Israelites and the Scripture says, "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, they said, 'The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God.'" They believed.

In the New Testament, miracles and signs were again used to confirm believers and convince unbelievers. John said the miracles of Jesus were done so that, "You might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and believing you might have life in His Name." And the same was true with the apostolic miracles.

Only three eras always to authenticate those who spoke the revelation of God and always with the purpose of pointing to the revelation so that it is the revelation that is the important thing. Beloved, I submit to you that if you have this book in your hand, you have what is the end product of God's miraculous intervention. This is the purpose for which He did the miracles. You posses this, you don't need the miracles. You have what God intended them to produce, and that is why Jesus said it as simply as it could be said, "If they do not believe Moses and the prophets," that is Scripture, "they will not believe though someone be raised from the dead." You must remember the people of Israel who saw the miracles of Moses, the whole generation died in the wilderness in what? Unbelief. You must remember that the people who heard the prophets speak for God for the most part refuse to believe. One whole kingdom apostatized, the northern kingdom, and in the southern, only a remnant. All those who saw the miracles of Jesus did not believe. Only a small group, and when it came down to it in the book of Acts, there were 120 of them dedicated enough to believing the Lord that they were waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Miracles have never produced wholesale belief. They can't. They are intended to point to the truth and it is the truth which produces faith. Of course, as the Spirit energizes it. Now the question comes, are miracles necessary today? When the Old and New Testament were completed, God's revelation was finished. Through many signs and wonders, He has authenticated the voracity of this book. Anybody who reads it can see that it's true.

Does God have to keep doing miracles? Is there a need for ongoing miracles to substantiate the Bible? Should everybody with faith claim a miracle? Does God do miracles on demand? Are the phenomena that are occurring today hail to signs and wonders and healings really necessary and authentic? The answer to all those questions is no. Nothing in Scripture indicates that the miracles of the apostles' age were meant to be continuous. You keep reading in the book of Acts and you'll get to the part in the book of Acts where you finally say to yourself, "I haven't read a miracle in a long time," and you'll finish the whole book and never see another one. They had begun to cease even

during the book of Acts.

Charismatic believe that the spectacular, miraculous gifts were given for the edification of believers. Does God's Word support that? No. They were not given for the edification for believers. They were not give to edify Christians. They are a sign for those who do not believe, for those who need to see that this is God's Word. Whether you're talking about tongues or healings or miracles, they served as signs to authenticate an era in which God was giving new revelation and people needed to listen. B.B. Warfield, that great Presbyterian professor, a past generation, writing in 1898, said, "Miracles do not appear on the pages vagrantly, here, there and elsewhere indifferently without a signable reason. They belong to revelation periods and appear only when God is speaking to His people through accredited messengers, declaring His gracious purpose. Their abundant display in the apostolic church is the mark of the richness of the apostolic age in revelation." You realize, don't you, that between 36 and 95, all 27 books of the New Testament were written and so there was a proliferation of authentication because of the vast volume of literature being revealed in a brief period of time. Warfield goes on, "When this revelation period closed, the period miracle working had past by also as a mere matter of course. God the Holy Spirit has made it His subsequent work not to introduce new and unneeded revelations into the world, but to diffuse this one complete revelation through the world and to bring mankind into the saving knowledge of it."

Abraham Kuiper, B.B. Warfield actually wrote in 1918, Kuiper wrote this in 1898. Abraham Kuiper, the Dutch theologian writes, "It has not been God's way to communicate to each and every man a separate store of divine knowledge of his own to meet his separate needs, but He rather has spread a common board for all and invites all to come and partake of the richness of the great feast." I wanna stop in that quote to say that is such a very important rebuke to the contemporary Charismatic movement which assumes that God talks to everybody individually, has special revelation for everybody, separate information for everybody to meet everybody's individual need. That is not the case. Abraham Kuiper is right when he says, "He has spread a common board for all and invites all to come and partake of the richness of the great feast. He has given to the world one organically complete revelation, adapted to all, sufficient for all, provided for all, and from this one completed revelation, He requires each to draw His whole spiritual sustenance. Therefore, it is that the miraculous working which is but the sign of God's revealing power, cannot be expected to continue and in point of fact, does not continue after the revelation of which it is the accompaniment has been completed." Great statement, great statement.

In Acts 7, as Stephen preached his famous sermon, he talked about Moses who performed wondrous signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness and, "received living oracles to pass on to you," Stephen said. Know how God's Word draws the parallel between Moses' signs and the living oracles, the direct revelation from God which He was to pass on. Hebrews 2:3-4 confirms that the validation of the New Testament writers was purposed to cause folks to see them as the agents of God's revelation. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation after it was at first

spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard God bearing witness with them by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit." He was authenticating the apostles, the writers of Scripture.

Does God promise miracles for everybody? No, He never has; it's not their purpose. You hear Charismatics say, "God has a special miracle for you today." No, He doesn't. "You better be seeking your private miracle. If you're not getting it it's because you don't believe strongly enough." Not true. By the way, Jesus didn't do any private miracles. They were all public, and they were as I said, to authenticate the one who spoke for God.

There's so much more that can be said about this, and there'll be much more in the book, but I just wanna wrap this up in the last five minutes or so. If you're going to say that God is doing miracles today, then, and be Biblically consistent, you're going to have to say that God is also what? Giving what? Revelation. And if God is giving revelation, it will be coming through the people who are what? Doing the miracles. And I will say this for the Charismatics. They're at least logically consistent in that sense. They've got the whole package. God is giving revelation, He's still giving it. The people who are getting it have miracle power, in their view. And what is the next logical step? To call them apostles, and that's what they're doing.

We're now having a pretty common movement in the Charismatic movement, labeling people as apostles, Earl Polk, quite a prominent Charismatic, teaches that certain individuals have been called to be apostles. Jack Dear, former professor at Dallas Seminary, the chief theologian of John Wimber's movement, isn't certain the apostolic ministry is functioning today, but he told a workshop in Sydney, he is convinced that apostolic power is coming. Listen to this, "And the new apostolic age will be greater than the first."

We're gonna get the whole package back, new apostles doing new signs and wonders, receiving new revelation to produce a new Bible? You wanna look at this very carefully, beloved. This almost looks like a plot to deceive the whole church, doesn't it? The apostolic office isn't for today. The church was founded on the apostles. Ephesians 2:20, they were the foundation. You don't put the foundation on the 20thstory. The apostles were all eye witnesses to the resurrection, eye witnesses to the risen Christ. They were chosen personally by Jesus Christ. They were authenticated by miraculous signs. They had absolute authority, and they were given an eternal, unique place of honor. Revelation 21:14 says that, "Heaven, the city of the new Jerusalem, has a wall with 12 foundation stones and on them are the 12 names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb." There were only 12. You can argue who the 12thwas. Some say Mathias, some say Paul, Judas being excluded. You might wanna say Mathias, and Paul was an apostle in due time, kind of an addendum. But the point is, there are only 12 of those honored places. Each of them will rule over one of the 12 tribes of Israel in the kingdom. There's not room for more than 12, folks. They're a special breed, they had no successors. The age of apostles is over 'cause the age of authentication is over because the age of revelation is over.

You say, "Oh, MacArthur, you have a weak view of God." No, I don't. I have a strong view of God. I think He's consistent with Himself and I think He's true to His revelation. Jerry Horner, associate professor of Biblical literature, Oral Roberts said, "Who in the world wants a God that's lost all His zip?" Well, has God lost His zip? Has He done nothing significant in 2,000 years? That's hardly the case. He's got plenty of zip. In fact, He's able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all you can ask or think, according to the power that works in us. He had a special purpose for the eras of revelation. He has a different purpose now, just as powerful, just as wonderful. Don't buy into the deception that there's something beyond the Scripture because that's what this deception is saying. That there's somebody getting a revelation, that there's somebody with apostolic authority, that miracles are supposed to be happening all over the place. It's not true. It's not consistent with Scripture.

Father, we thank You that we can look at Your Word tonight and in just this brief time discern its truth again. Help us to have that discernment, and Lord, help us to believe that You don't have to do a miracle to show Yourself. Providence in many ways is a greater miracle than a miracle. It would be easier to do something supernatural than it is to orchestrate all of the infinite contingencies of life and make them work Your purpose, but You do it every moment of every day. Thank You for Your Word which needs no update for the authenticated messengers gave us the once for all delivered to the saints faith on which we rest. We ask, Lord, that You will keep us true to Your truth. Don't let us get led astray, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

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