

Apostolic Miracles

[Acts 5:12-16](#)

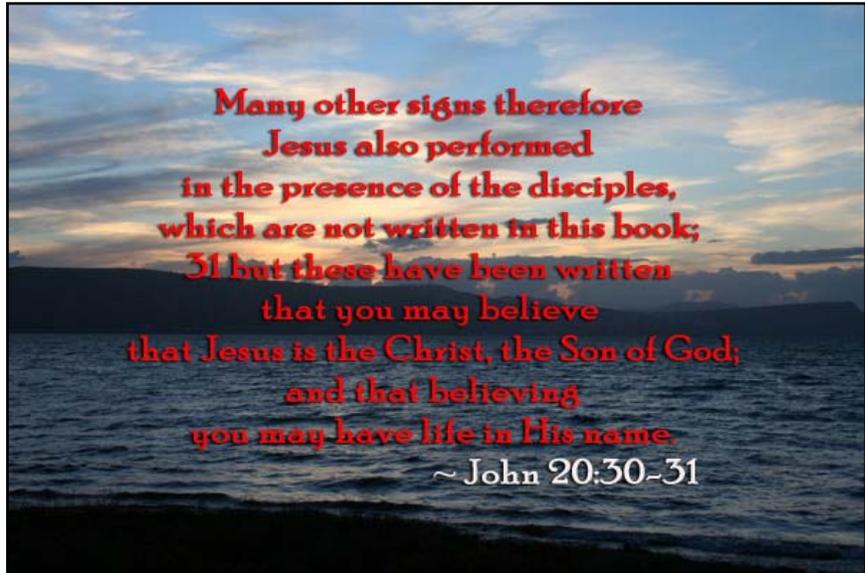


We are continuing our study of the book of Acts, but before we look at our text for this morning I want to back up a bit and go over something that we missed. I have stated that the theme of this book is about the **“Redemption of Israel.”**

When I say that the book of Acts is about the "Redemption of Israel," I am saying that it is about God fulfilling His promises to "true Israel" in bringing them into His presence through Jesus Christ. As we study Acts we will see that God keeps His word; He fulfills His promises! This book is about the faithfulness of God!

As the Gospels end, Jesus has been rejected by the Jewish leadership, they have put Him to death. They killed their Messiah, so now what happens to all the promises made to Israel? Does God stop with Israel and

turn to the Church, as the [Dispensationalists](#) teach? No! Physical, national Israel was a type that found its fulfillment in Christ. The shadow is gone, the reality is here. Thus the nation Israel, the Jewish people, has no special significance in God's plan or purpose. It is all about Jesus and those who trust Him. Believers, we are true Israel and inheritors of all of God's promises. The Church is the Kingdom of God.



With that said, look at Acts 4:34:

For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, (Acts 4:34 NASB)

We talked about this verse a couple of weeks ago, but I think there is something more here than what we have seen. I just had a nagging feeling like there was more to these verses, but I couldn't figure out what, and I wasn't sure how they fit into the theme of this book. So I called [Don Preston](#), and he gave me some insight into these verses that I had missed.

We see in our text that Israelites (who had been saved) were selling their land. We see the spiritual lessons here, but we have to understand the culture to get the whole picture. There is a Biblical violation in this verse—do you know what it is? Israelites were not allowed to “permanently” sell their land, because it was not really theirs, but God's:

'The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me. (Leviticus 25:23 NASB)

The land was not supposed to be sold to strangers at all. When land was sold, it was to be sold on the basis of the Year of Jubilee, and, ideally, it was to be sold only to a family member (Leviticus 25). The “land” belonged to Yahweh, who let the Israelites use it as long as they were obedient to Him.

"When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land,

and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger,²⁶ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you shall surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly destroyed. (Deuteronomy 4:25-26 NASB)

The land was Yahweh's, and He let Israel dwell in it as long as they lived in obedience to the [Mosaic covenant](#). We see the significance of the land in Jeremiah 32. Just prior to the Babylonian captivity God tells Jeremiah:

'Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle is coming to you, saying, "Buy for yourself my field which is at Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to buy it.'" (Jeremiah 32:7 NASB)

Why was Jeremiah to buy land when Israel was about to be destroyed and taken into captivity by Babylon? Jeremiah tells us in verses 14-15:

'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Take these deeds, this sealed deed of purchase, and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, that they may last a long time."¹⁵ 'For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.'" (Jeremiah 32:14-15 NASB)

Jeremiah was to buy land because God was going to bring Israel back into her land after the [Babylonian captivity](#).

Now, in Acts we see a very similar situation. Jesus had taught His disciples that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed within their generation.

"Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. (Matthew 24:34 NASB)

The disciples of Jesus knew that Jerusalem and Judea were going to be destroyed! They knew that the Romans were going to desolate their city and lay their land waste. But this had happened before, **Jerusalem was desolated in 586 B. C., and the Jews didn't sell their land at that time.** Jeremiah even bought land. So why sell it now?

In Jeremiah we find the promise of restoration to the land, but in the New Testament we do not have the promise of Israel ever being promised to return to the land! The type of "the Land" was now being fulfilled in the [anti-type](#)—the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our inheritance. The land no longer had spiritual value, so the believers were free to sell it. In Don Preston's article, The Land is mine, he writes:

The land of Israel today has no special meaning. It is no longer "the holy land," and the people inhabiting the land are not Biblical Israel. The land never belonged to them exclusively in the first place. It belonged to God as a "loan" to them until His determinative purpose for the Messiah was fulfilled. The Jerusalem Christians knew that God was fulfilling His promises, and those promises are spiritual, not earthly. If they were so willing to abandon their physical birthright in the capital city of Jerusalem, they surely believed that they were now about to receive the fulfillment of God's promises concerning the heavenly city and country ([Hebrews 11:13f](#)). The fact that Acts records that the Christians in Jerusalem were willing, so gladly, to sell their land allotments can mean only one thing, they knew that literal city was doomed, and they also knew they were now citizens of a greater, heavenly Jerusalem.

So they were selling their land, which pictured their understanding that the old was passing away, the [New Covenant](#) was about to be consummated. They were moving on with Christ to the New Jerusalem—the New Covenant. In contrast to this, [Ananias, and Sapphira](#) were hanging on to the old and thus received judgment. This pictures the judgment that was soon to come upon all who clung to the earthly Jerusalem.

Now after the death of Ananias and his wife Sapphira, we see another glowing status report of the Church. In verses 12-16 we see that the Kingdom of God is being revealed as a present reality in great signs and wonders:

And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. (Acts 5:12 NASB)

These signs and wonders were important as evidence to all that the Kingdom of God was here, and that the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord promised by Isaiah had come:

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah. (Isaiah 35:5-6 NASB)

We are going to talk about these signs and wonders in more detail after verse 14. Acts 5:12b-14 forms a parenthetical comment, so we'll deal with it first and then come back to the apostles.

The end of verse 12 says, ***“and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.”*** [Solomon's portico](#) had not been built by Solomon, but was only named after him. It was to the Temple Mount what the Washington Monument is to the Capitol. Located in the outer court—the Court of the Gentiles—it consisted of a series of great massive pillars and covered areas which surrounded the temple structure.



The ***“they”*** here is a large crowd made up of Christians. They have come to a greater appreciation of the holiness of God due to the deaths of Ananias and his wife Sapphira, and they are gathered together for worship and teaching.

What is interesting is the believers were meeting in the very place where the Sanhedrin had arrested Peter and John and commanded them not to speak in Jesus' name. Yet here is the Church openly, boldly meeting to worship Jesus in defiance of the orders of the Sanhedrin.

Verses 13 and 14 describe two results of this demonstration of signs and wonders:

But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. (Acts 5:13 NASB)

Boy, there is much debate as to who the “rest” are. This is a difficult verse.

“But” here is a contrast to the believers in verse 12; ***“None of the rest”***—those in the temple who were not believers. Then verse 14 goes on to say, ***“believers in the Lord...were constantly added to their number.”*** In the light of the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira, those who didn't believe stayed away:

And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it. (Acts 5:5 NASB)

Everyone who heard about this feared—this would include unbelievers.

The Greek word translated ***“dared”*** in verse 13 is [tolmao](#), which has the idea of ***boldness or courage***. But none of the rest had the “courage” to associate with them.

The Greek word for “*associate*” in verse 13 is *kollao*. This word is used 11 times in the New Testament and in all but two instances ([Romans 12:9](#); [1 Corinthians 6:17](#)), the word implies *a forced, unnatural, or unexpected union*:

"And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. (Luke 15:15 NASB)

This was an unnatural and forced union of a Jew with swine.

The “rest” would include the different sects of the [Pharisees](#), [Sadducees](#), and [Herodians](#). I think that “all” the unbelieving Jews steered clear of the Christians because of the Jewish leaders' opposition, and because of the apostles' power.

Isn't this strange, a Church that unbelievers wouldn't dare to attend! These early saints had not been to a modern “Church Growth Seminar” to learn about making the Church user-friendly for outsiders! And yet their Church was growing by leaps and bounds!

But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. (Acts 5:13 NASB)

But “*the people*”—the mass of the people held them in high esteem. They honored them; regarded them with reverence and fear.

And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number; (Acts 5:14 NASB)

“*Believers*”—this is the name by which Christians were designated, because the main thing that distinguished them was that they believed that Jesus was the Christ. They had faith in Jesus.

“*Multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number*”—from its inception the Church grew rapidly and now there are too many to even count.

And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people... ¹⁵ to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets, and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. ¹⁶ And also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits; and they were all being healed. (Acts 5:12b,15-16 NASB)

The words “*signs and wonders*” are words used in Scripture for miracles. This sounds like an exciting place to be; many miraculous things were happening.

The first thing I want you to notice here is who it was that were performing these miracles? “*At the hands of the apostles*”—it was the “twelve,” “the apostles” that were doing this. Keep this in mind because we'll come back to it later.

The Greek word used for **sign** is *semeion*, which means: “*a mark, an indication or a token.*” It can also mean: “*an event that is an indication or confirmation of intervention by transcendent powers or miracle.*” It is used of miraculous acts as tokens of divine authority and power.

The word “*wonders*,” is from the Greek word *teras*, which underscores its effect on those who are witnesses. It is used to indicate *the astonishment that the work produces upon the beholders*. On many occasions, the crowds were amazed and astonished by the miracles the apostles were doing.

We see these same words used in 2 Corinthians:

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. (2 Corinthians 12:12 NASB)

Notice that these signs indicated that someone was a true apostle. The most pregnant term used with reference to a miracle is "sign," which focuses upon the deeper meaning of the miracle. A sign is a miracle that conveys a truth about our Lord Jesus or the apostles. A miracle is usually a sign, but a sign need not always be a miracle (cf. [Luke 2:12](#)).

Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;³¹ but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30-31 NASB)

The purpose of the signs was that *"you may believe that Jesus is the Christ."*

Several purposes emerge from the Scriptures for the exercise of miracles by our Lord and His apostles. I want to focus on just a couple of them.

1. They accredited Jesus and His apostles.

It was expected that when Messiah came, He would be accredited by miracles. When our Lord presented Himself at the synagogue in Nazareth, He quoted a passage from [Isaiah, chapter 61](#):

And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written,¹⁸ "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN,¹⁹ TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." (Luke 4:17-19 NASB)

The people expected Messiah to present Himself by signs:

But many of the multitude believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ shall come, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?" (John 7:31 NASB)

Jesus performed signs to demonstrate who He was and so did His apostles:

how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,⁴ God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (Hebrews 2:3-4 NASB)

God bore witness to them with the signs and wonders.

2. They reveal God.

The miracles of Jesus and His apostles were not merely deeds to authenticate the message, but were a vital part of that message. **The miracles not only revealed the power of God, but His person.** In the miracles of Jesus and His apostles, we see the sympathy and compassion of God. They were deeply moved by human suffering and need.

After seeing the miracles that the apostles did in the name of Jesus Christ, the people were open to hearing about Him. Those miracles verified the apostles' message.

The miracles in Acts 5 were in answer to the prayer of the apostles. Remember, in Chapter 4, Peter and John had been brought before the [Sanhedrin](#), and when they came back to the others they prayed together, and this was their prayer:

"And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence,³⁰ while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus." (Acts 4:29-30 NASB)

That is what they asked God to do, and that is what He did. These signs and wonders were done for the apostles. They constitute, therefore, what the Apostle Paul later on, in Second Corinthians 12, calls "the **signs of a true apostle.**" He said to these Corinthians, "You are questioning my apostleship. You're asking if I really am an apostle because I'm not one of the twelve. Well, let me ask you this. Have you not seen the signs of an apostle that I have done among you?" These signs you see were specifically to accompany the ministry of the apostles to whom was assigned the task of laying the foundations of the Church, of giving the Scriptures upon which the Church must rest.

to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets, and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. (Acts 5:15 NASB)

Peter's powerful influence reminds us of Jesus' influence during the early days of His Galilean ministry when all Capernaum gathered at His door:

And when evening had come, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed.³³ And the whole city had gathered at the door.³⁴ and He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was. (Mark 1:32-34 NASB)

What Jesus began to do, the apostles were carrying on.

The apostles are held in such high esteem that people began to bring their sick and lay them where Peter's shadow could pass over them. Please notice that the text does not actually say that any were healed in this way. But the belief was that the shadow of a good man could pass on some of his goodness and, they no doubt hoped, some of his healing power.

Even today some people in the Orient superstitiously believe that a person's shadow carries his power. Eastern parents have pulled their children away from the shadow of a wicked person and thrust them into the shadow of an honored individual.

A Roman Catholic writer, assuming that the shadow of Peter actually cured all on which it was projected, argues from this parlous principle in favor of the wonderful efficacy of relics! He writes, "If the shadow of a saint can do so much, how much more may his bones, or any thing that was in contact with his person, perform!" This is nonsense; all this verse is really telling us is that Peter was held in very high esteem.

And also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits; and they were all being healed. (Acts 5:16 NASB)

The streets of Jerusalem were an incredible sight. Everywhere there were beds occupied by rich and poor alike, all waiting for the apostles to move through town. People were placed at all of the likely places where the apostles were likely to pass by. This phenomenon was not merely a local one. Word got out, so that people from surrounding towns and villages began to congregate in Jerusalem.

The doctor reports that ALL were healed, and there were no failures. There were no excuses and blaming of others for lack of faith here. Here was clear evidence that the [Kingdom of God](#) was present exactly as promised by the prophets.

A question that we need to answer is, **Can We Expect Miracles Today?** Do God's representatives still do signs and wonders today?

[David duPlessis](#), a recognized leader in the Charismatic movement, says, "*The New Testament is not a record of what happened in one generation, but is a blueprint of what should happen in every generation.*" This reflects the view of the majority of Charismatics: What happened during the New Testament times should be the norm throughout the Church's history. Many state that everything in the New Testament that was miraculous, remarkable, and characterized by supernatural manifestation should be normative for all of the Church age, including today. But I think the text teaches us otherwise.

There are several Scriptures that hint at the fact that the signs and wonders were temporary:

how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, ⁴ God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (Hebrews 2:3-4 NASB)

And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed. (Mark 16:20 NASB)

In both Hebrews 2:3 and Mark 16:20, the main verb is past tense and the participle is relative in time to the main verb, "*was confirmed.*" In both cases the signs, wonders, and miracles are referred to as being in the past—at the time of the writing. All this was past at the time Hebrews was written. *([Mark 16:9-20](#) may not be part of the original text—See sermon "[A Questionable Ending](#)").

The voice of history confirms the temporary nature of the signs. If the miraculous signs of the New Testament age had continued in the Church, one would expect an unbroken line of occurrences from apostolic times to present. The miraculous signs of the "last days" ceased when the last days ceased.

[Chrysostom](#), a 4th century theologian, testified that the miraculous gifts ceased so long before his time that no one was certain of their characteristics.

Are miracles the norm in Christianity? One Pentecostal pastor writes, "*The responsibility of the Church to serve others did not end in A.D.70, nor did its responsibility to reach others. A Pentecostal church ought to manifest the supernatural.*" Several years ago when we were on vacation, we visited a church, and the pastor said in his message, "*The Bible is a book of miracles from beginning to end; therefore, we should expect miracles.*" Are they right? Should the Church today manifest the supernatural, should we expect miracles? No! Miracles are not indiscriminately strewn over every page of Scripture. A study of Biblical history shows that there were basically only three periods where miracles occurred. There are large periods of history that are without recorded miracles. There are no miracles clustered around Abraham or David. John the baptizer did no miracle, even though Jesus said:

"I say to you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (Luke 7:28 NASB)

We find miracles grouped in three great periods of history. The periods of Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, and Christ and the apostles. There are gaps of hundreds of years between these periods where we see no miracles.

The introduction of a new revelation brought the need of miracles to authenticate the message and the messengers. Miracles were God's testimony that those bringing in the new revelations were indeed His official representatives.

Moses introduced the Law to the newly formed nation of Israel. Miracles were given to introduce this era and to codify these new revelations to Israel. Elijah and Elisha were God's special prophets for a day of decadence in

Israel's history. The worship of Baal had reached its peak. Elijah and Elisha stood for the revival of the prophetic era in an age of critical spiritual decline. Miracles such as [Mt. Carmel](#) were given by God to draw Israel back to the institution of prophecy. In Christ, God became man. Obviously proof was needed to substantiate that claim. The total New Testament hangs on Christ and the apostles. Thus, in the life of Christ and the apostles miracles heralded the new revelation.



this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." (John 3:2 NASB)

"Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves. (John 14:11 NASB)

By His miracles Christ informed the disciples who He was and the power He possessed. Miracles through the apostles proclaimed that the Almighty God was at work in the Church.

Some read this text in Acts and say, ***"What is wrong with the Church now? Why don't we have signs and wonders and mighty events like these taking place?"*** Do we need miracles today? Are they essential to faith? Some believers think that we need miracles in order to persuade people of the truth of the Gospel. They might ask, ***"How will people believe without miracles?"*** Jesus told a story to demonstrate that miracles have never been the issue for whether or not people believe:

"But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:31 NASB)

If they won't believe the Bible, then even a resurrection won't persuade them. Jesus did rise from the dead, and people still didn't believe. Miracles never were the reason people came to faith. People come to faith because God gives them new life. The apostles evangelized with miracles but not through. Evangelism was initiated through the preaching of the Word. The miracles only confirmed the Word. Once the Word was recorded, the miracles stopped because they had no reason for existing.

If we want hope, if we want an anchor, if we want something to carry us through life, it isn't miracles we need. What we need is the Scriptures:

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4 NASB)

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17 NASB)

Faith comes from the Word, not from miracles. Look what miracles do for those who are hardhearted:

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, ⁸ DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, ⁹ WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. ¹⁰ "THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART; AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS'; ¹¹ AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'" (Hebrews 3:7-11 NASB)

The Israelites saw plenty of miracles; they had the daily miracle of manna, and they still would not trust God. No

people ever saw more miracles than this people, and they still wouldn't obey Him. People who continually look for miracles don't have great faith, they have great doubt, and they are looking for proof.

This message was preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on September 14, 2008. Media #431.



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