

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES OF HEALING

(Part One)

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

One can believe in the genuine miracles of the Bible without having to believe fraudulent claims of some today who say they work miracles of healing. However, if miracles, signs, and wonders are being done today, these should be like those worked by Christ and His apostles. If they do not compare favorably with New Testament miracles, one should not claim that they are from God. If the Scripture that says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever," means that Jesus has to be working miracles today through His disciples, then those miracles should be like the ones of the first century as performed by Christ and the apostles (Hebrews 13:8). Otherwise, how would men know that these workings were from God? Remember that Pharaoh's magicians could seemingly do some of the same kinds of miracles as Moses and Aaron (Exodus 7:20-22; 8:5-7); that Simon the sorcerer of Samaria had "bewitched" the people of that city into thinking that he had the great powers of God, until the people and Simon saw real miracles worked by Philip (Acts 8:5-13); and that Paul warned the Thessalonian Christians about "lying wonders" and those who work unrighteous deception (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Also, if John 14:12 means that believers today can work "greater" miracles than Christ did, can we not compare what is being claimed today with the New Testament examples? If we find today's so-called miracles to be less impressive than those given in the New Testament, should we attribute them to Christ or classify them as "lying wonders"? What follows is a comparison of the supposed miracles of today with the teaching of the New Testament on how miracles were performed by Christ and His apostles/disciples. These thirteen points do not exhaust the effort to compare New Testament miracles with fake miracles of

today, but they are enough to demonstrate that the claims made for miracle-working power of today fail to match, let alone exceed, the miracles of the New Testament.

Modern Miracles Compared to New Testament Miraculous Healings

1. **Today** - *Most so-called healings are slow and gradual. They amount, in many cases, to nothing more than people getting better by natural means. In many cases the patient who is supposedly cured "miraculously" has had surgery, medicine, or other medical procedures.*
New Testament - Healings in the NT were **immediate** (Matthew 8:3, 15; 9:27-30). In the only case where a "second touch" was given, the man was healed in the same moment, before he ever left the presence of Jesus (Mark 8:22-24).

2. **Today** - *So-called "healers" often say that one who is not healed simply does not have enough faith to be healed, even blaming the lack of healing in little babies upon the failure of faith in the parents.*
New Testament - In the healings given in the NT, **faith was not always required of the one being healed** (John 5:1-15, especially verse 13). Some were healed because of the faith of others, even when they were not present before the one doing the healing (Matthew 8:5-13).

3. **Today** - *The so-called healings of today are often invisible ailments, those which cannot be seen to know if they are truly healed. Fake healers will not usually even try to heal those with visible health problems, like being paralyzed or having a withered or missing limb. Of course, healers can fake a healing of an invisible ailment, if they can convince the person desiring to be healed that he/she must believe (really pretend) that one is healed, even if the symptoms (or visible evidence) of the ailment remains.*
New Testament - In the NT **all kinds of healings were done without partiality**, not just those

possible of being faked. Note that those healed were **blind** (Matthew 9:27-31; Mark 7:22-26); **dumb** [not able to speak] (Matthew 9:32-33; Mark 7:31-37); **dropsy** [swelling with bodily fluids due to heart, kidney, or liver disease] (Luke 14:1-6); **lepers** (Luke 17:11-19); **severed ear restored** (Luke 22:5-51); **fever** (Matthew 8:14; John 4:46-54); **palsy** [paralyzed, severe loss of power of motion] (Matthew 8:5-7; 9:2); **withered limbs** (Matthew 12:10); **internal bleeding** (Matthew 9:20); **halt and maimed** [crippled] (Matthew 15:30); **demon possessed** (Luke 8:26-39); **raised from the dead** (John 11:39-44; Luke 8:40-56); **some were immune to poison and poisonous snakes** (Mark 16:17; Acts 28:3-6). Remember too that all of these healings were instant and complete!

4. **Today** - *Many who claim to have been healed today show evidence of only partial healing, if they show any supposed proof at all. People who claim to have had cataracts miraculously healed still wear glasses; those who are supposedly healed of deafness and inability to speak are told that they will have to be taught how to speak properly; and those allegedly healed of crippled conditions still walk with a limp; and so on.*
New Testament - People who were healed in the NT examples were made **completely whole, perfectly well of their ailments**, not just partially better. The palsied man of Mark 2:1-12 "immediately... arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." The man "lame from his mother's womb... immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked... walking and leaping and praising God... and they (the people who had know him) were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him" (Acts 3:1-10). He didn't have to be taught how to walk. See also Matthew 12:13; 14:35-36; 15:21-28, 30-31; Acts 3:16; 4:9 ("this perfect soundness... made whole").

5. **Today** - *The so-called healings of today are not witnessed by the general*

(Continued on page 2)

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public and said by them to be **genuine, immediate, and complete**. If these miracles of today were authentic, as those described under the "New Testament" sections of this article, the public would testify to their reality. No such testimony is offered today for modern miracles.

New Testament - The public population in the NT did admit to the reality of the miracles of the Lord and His apostles (Matthew 12:9-14; Acts 3:1-16, especially verses 8-10; Acts 4:21; 9:32-35). Even the **enemies of the Lord and His church had to admit genuine miracles were being done** (Matthew 12-13-14; Acts 4:16), although they attributed them to an evil power. In looking at what is being done today, would we be just like the Pharisees and other wicked Jewish leaders if we said such miracles were done by an evil power? **No, we would not be like the wicked Jews in Matthew 12:22-24, if we could show that today's miracles are not equal to those done by the Lord and His apostles in the New Testament.** We know that the Lord has all power and authority on earth and in heaven. Therefore, we would not expect any so-called miracles done by the lesser power of the Devil to be equal to those done by the authority of Christ. New Testament miracles stand head and shoulders above any of the so-called miracles of today. Therefore, we can know that whatever power is behind any claimed miracles of today, such miracles are not from God!

6. Today - Fake healers today will often say that they cannot heal or do miracles

when unbelievers are present. We might ask, "Is the power of unbelievers greater than the power of God?" Can unbelieving men halt the power of God's Holy Spirit?

New Testament - There are many examples of Christ healing in the presence of those who did not believe in Him (Mark 3:1-6; Matthew 12:22-28; et al.). Mark 6:1-6 is sometimes given as proof that one cannot work miracles in the presence of unbelievers. However, the people in Jesus' own "country" did not believe in Him even after they had seen Him work miracles (Mark 6:1-4). **Note that Jesus did heal a "few sick folk"** (verse 5). The unbelievers in these verses did not hinder the power of Christ; they simply did not believe in Him. Consequently, they did not come to Him to be healed as others did in various places (Matthew 4:24-25; 14:35-36; et al.). "He could do there no mighty work" because the people did not come out to hear Him nor to be healed, not because unbelievers hindered His power. Their unbelief thwarted His purpose in preaching and healing, but not His power. Fake healers cannot even heal "a few sick folk" when they say unbelievers are present, but other times they claim to be able to do "greater works" than Jesus did, citing John 14:12. **Not so!**

7. Today - So-called "faith healers" today often fail in their attempts to even make it **appear** that they have healed someone. Their failures are evidence of their lack of power, but they always try to blame others for these failures, telling them that they do not have the "faith" to be healed (see #2. above). At other times fake healers will blame the presence of unbelievers for not being able to heal. Some even blame God as being capricious, saying, "I don't know why the Lord has chosen not to heal some of you people," and then turn right around and say that everyone can be healed. **New Testament** - The Lord never failed to heal anyone when He tried to do so, and the only time the apostles ever failed the Lord blamed the lack of faith on them, **the healers**, not on the person wanting to be healed and not on the parents of the sick child (Matthew 17:14-21, especially verse 20). Faith in Jesus as God's Son or faith in the ability of Jesus and the apostles to heal **is not a part of the pattern of NT healings, though such faith was often present**. At other times it was not (see #2. above). There is no NT authority for blaming others for not being able to heal.

8. Today - Many so-called healers will not let certain people with obvious serious illnesses come up on their stage or even be seen by their audience or television cameras. These phonies know that they cannot heal (or even make people think they can heal) serious visible diseases, so these people are never brought forward. Most fake healers have people working for them that have preliminary interviews before they select those who will supposedly be "healed." **New Testament** - **Jesus healed all people** who came out to be healed by Him of **every kind of disease**. He never refused to heal anyone and He never shuffled off the hard cases to the side. There were no failures and no excuses. Matthew 4:23-25 mentions that they "brought unto him **all sick people...** with divers diseases and torments... **and he healed them.**" See also Matthew 14:34-36. If so-called faith healers today have the same or greater power than Jesus, **why isn't it evident?** Just compare and see that there are no miracles today that closely match those of the New Testament.

9. Today - If fake healers of today are asked to heal someone to prove that they are sent by God, they say that we are "tempting God" and that they will not tempt God by doing a miracle at our request. There is a difference, however, in refusing to do a "sign" that would be tempting God and refusing to try to perform a healing because one knows he cannot do it by the power of God. **New Testament** - Neither Christ nor the apostles had to be asked to do miracles; **they did them freely and abundantly** (Matthew 10:8; Acts 2:22). In Matthew 12:38-39 Jesus did refuse to give a sign to some who had just witnessed other signs (verses 22-24) and had accused Him of working miracles by the power of Satan. Certainly I believe in Christ's power through the Holy Spirit to work miracles. This entire article testifies to that. However, I have no reason to believe in the power of the so-called faith healers of today. This is especially true since no miracle or healing they have done measures up to the type of wonders worked by Christ and the apostles.

10. Today - Many "healers" of today brag about their supposed powers and abilities, claiming that they have a special relationship with God that no one else (or at most, only a few) can claim. You repeatedly hear these people say, "God spoke to me and told me this or that; God showed me that I should do this or

that you should do that; or God worked in me in a mighty way with the anointing of His Spirit." **New Testament** - The miracles in the NT always glorified God and Christ, not the ones doing the healing (Acts 3:6, 8; 4:7-12; 14:8-14). Also, Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came the Spirit would glorify Christ, not the Spirit Himself (John 16:13-15). Furthermore, the apostles were guided into "all truth" (John 16:13). There is nothing left for God to speak directly into the ears of those who make such claims today (Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:2-4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

11. Today - Catholics, Mormons, Pentecostals and other Protestant groups, who teach all kinds of different and conflicting doctrines, claim powers to heal miraculously. Even mystics and people who have no faith in God, Christ, or the Bible claim healing powers and all offer the same kinds of alleged proofs. Is God revealing and confirming a contradictory message? If God is not working through all of these religious and non-religious groups, do any of them stand out above all of the others? Do any work miracles and healings like those in the New Testament? **New Testament** - No one could work NT miracles but those to whom God gave the power to reveal His Word and to confirm that they were messengers for God by showing God's power in the miracles they performed (Mark 16:20; Acts 14:3; Hebrews 2:2-4). This has been God's way since the beginning, as shown in the early example of God's use of Moses (Exodus 4:1-17, 29-31). The Lord would not give people power to confirm conflicting and confusing doctrines of the denominations named above! If it cannot be proved by the Scriptures, it is not of God! That is why we insist you compare the supposed miracles which you claim against the NT ones of the Lord and the apostles. However, the Lord does permit those who do not "love the truth" to be deceived by "lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). This includes the false belief that some have that they and others today can still work miracles. Read carefully Matthew 7:21-23 and note that those who were rejected by Christ also claimed to "prophecy... and cast out demons... and do many mighty works." Claims and pretensions are not always valid and we can even deceive ourselves.

12. Today - So-called healers of today advertize "Special Healing Services," "Holy Ghost Miracle Rally," etc., with loud bands, shouting, hand-clapping, and

emotionally charged productions designed to prepare people for the healing service. Everything is styled to set the mind of the audience to expect blessings which the healing performers fake, but cannot really produce. **New Testament** - You simply cannot find such gimmicks or promotions anywhere in the NT. Christ and the apostles went about doing good and healing without all of the fanfare and theatrics that accompany the fake healers of today. In the NT the people who were healed created all of the stir and promotion as others witnessed and noticed that these healings were genuine (Matthew 4:24; 9:26, 31; 14:1 et al.). Another thing for sure; Christ never advertised a miracle healing service and then sent many away not healed, but such is true of every so-called miracle healing service today!

13. Today - The whole aim of the healing business of today is MONEY! These fake healers usually take up several collections at each healing service. Their gimmickry of "special offers" on television and radio is limited only by their imagination, selling healing cloths and anointing oil, as well as their "inspired" books and tapes (video and cassette). They make people promises of great health and wealth which they do not and cannot deliver, duping people out of hundreds of millions of dollars every year. The more popular of these televangelists take in enough money to buy mansions, expensive cars, summer homes, yachts, and every luxury neither Christ nor any of the apostles ever would have had. Many of these men could be shown on Robin Leach's "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous," but they shy away from such publicity of their lavish living. Other fake healers make just enough to get by. Both types are wholly unlike the preachers of the New Testament. **New Testament** - The Lord Jesus Christ told the apostles to give others the benefit of their miraculous powers "freely" (Matthew 10:8). They were to perform miraculous healings liberally and without charge. Although they were very poor, they never charged nor took money for the healing services they did (Acts 3:1-6; 5:12-16). Imagine the apostle Paul riding a Rolls Camel or a Mercedes Donkey, all the while begging the people for money to do the Lord's work, while he was really pocketing large sums for himself, to keep his mansions and servants and high living paid for. Such men are false teachers and charlatans of the worst sort. Those who support

such men are gullible, although they may just desire blessings that God has not promised in this life, namely, God has not promised us untold wealth and perfect health in this life.

Conclusion

When someone claims to have seen a miracle healing or had a healing experience on his/her own self, ask them to consider the material in this article to compare that so-called healing with the ones given in the New Testament. **Some great and contradictory differences between the genuine of the NT and their experience should be obvious.** If these types of claims are investigated fully, one will always find the supposed miracle of today to be weightless when placed on the scales of New Testament truth. The next article will answer the question, "Does God intend for every Christian to be physically healthy and have financial prosperity in this present world?" We will also consider the purposes of Biblical miracles of healing.

THE CELESTIAL SURGEON

*If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious mourning face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; If morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain-
Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake.*

-Robert Louis Stevenson

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BACKSLIDING

by Bruce Stulting

As surprising as it may seem, many do not think that the term "backsliding" is a biblical term. In Old Testament times, backsliding was a continual problem of God's people as shown in Jer. 8:5, which states, "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return." To backslide is to turn away from God's truth and return to one's former wicked life.

There are many warnings in the Bible concerning the danger of backsliding. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 10:12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Even Paul himself wasn't immune to the danger of backsliding. In 1 Cor. 9:27, Paul wrote, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

In guarding against backsliding it is necessary to determine its cause. A little boy trying to explain why he fell out of bed said, "I just went to sleep too close to where I got in." This simple illustration helps explain why some fall away from Christ after becoming a Christian. Upon entering the kingdom, it is necessary that one grow spiritually. It is sad that many refuse to grow, but remain close to where they entered the kingdom. We are exhorted in Heb. 6:1 to "go on unto perfection." Likewise, we are admonished in 2 Pet. 1:5-7 to add to our faith: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. By growing in these qualities, we will guarantee that we will not "go to sleep too close to where we got in." In fact, 1 Pet. 1:10 states, "...if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

Many refuse to grow because they remain closely tied to things in the world. In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of some who allow the "cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches to choke the word, and he became unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). To avoid this, we must sever our ties to the world and turn our full attention to spiritual growth. By pressing on to perfection, we will not "slide back" into the ways of the world which we left when we became Christians.

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*Wisdom never pretends to be wise;
foolishness often does.*

**"This Jesus God Hath Raised Up"
- Acts 2:32**

by Ron Wilson

Almost 2000 years ago a Jewish male named Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem located in Palestine. The evidence of His existence as a historical character is too overwhelming to be denied. Even atheists divide history into two great periods: BC/AD. The very existence of a vast populace labeled "Christians" attests to the fact of someone named Christ. Whether one acknowledges the proper function of the Lord's Supper, or not, does not take away from the fact that this institution commemorates an act by a real person. The first Christians were devout members of the Jewish religion. These people throughout many ages have died rather than turn from their religion founded 1500 years before Christ. Why would devout Jews exchange Moses for someone else? Christians through the centuries have suffered the severest of persecutions and yet followers are continually added. The practice of baptism established in the first century AD is pure nonsense apart from the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

The prophecies of the Old Testament are meaningless apart from their fulfillment in the historical person of Jesus Christ. One prophecy in particular focuses attention upon the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Isaiah 7:14 related seven hundred years before Christ's birth that He would be born of a virgin and that He would be "God with us." The Hebrew word for virgin in Isaiah 7:14 cannot be accurately translated by any term that does not designate a woman who has never known a man. Such a declaration is utter absurdity apart from its fulfillment in Matthew, chapter one, of the New Testament. The term, Immanuel ("God with us") cannot be understood apart from John 1:1-3, 14 in the New Testament (Cf. also Psalm 22; Isaiah 53).

Jesus Christ was a real person in our human history. Not only this, He is a real person who is **ALIVE** today! If Jesus did not live, die, was resurrected, and lives today, we cling to a useless faith. As Paul said, "we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Our faith is based upon an actual living, breathing, flesh inhabiting personality who allowed Himself to be put to death on a cross for our sins and arose from the dead to be our High Priest in heaven.

If this Jesus Christ be not real, then we are butterflies dreaming we are people.

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**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP
- COLOSSIANS 3:17**

- LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
- GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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