EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH – Dec. 2026
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HERE A MIRACLE, THERE A MIRACLE, EVERYWHERE A MIRACLE?

Preoccupation with the "miraculous" abounds in modern-day Christendom. People constantly claim the miraculous. People claim they can do miracles. Certain groups claim to be able to teach people to do miracles (for a fee, of course). People tell story after story of the miraculous! But what does the Bible say?

A true miracle in the Bible is undeniable and supernatural, as it bypasses the normal laws of nature. Providence is God sovereignly orchestrating events and timing within the normal laws of nature in just such a way that it is clearly a "God-thing" (see Esther). Much of what people call miracles is actually divine providence. Providence is no less a God-thing! Someone has said: "*A miracle is when God signs His signature to it, while in providence God remains anonymous!*" Many claim the "miraculous" is normative, but in truth, in the whole of redemptive history, "sign-miracles" have rarely been "the norm." Providence is NORMATIVE; the miraculous in terms of "sign-miracles" is NOT! Spiritual miracles in regeneration are normative in salvation, but not physical sign miracles!

From the time of the Fall until the miraculous removal of Enoch (Gen. 5), almost 1000 years transpired without record of any other sign-miracle. Then almost another 700 years passed before the miracles related to Noah. About 300 years later, God confused the language at the Tower of Babel. Sign-miracles during the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) were rare. Down in Egypt for 400 years, the Jews did not witness sign-miracles. Then an outpouring of sign-miracles happened in conjunction with the ministry of Moses, Israel's greatest OT prophet (Deut. 34:10). A few then happened in the days of Joshua. During the dark time of the Judges (300 years), they were sporadic. David saw a few sign-miracles, but Solomon saw almost none. Then about 100 years after David, there was a sudden flurry of sign-miracles up north during the time of Elijah and Elisha. Then not much for 300 years until the prophet Daniel. After Daniel, there followed 400 years of silence with no sign-miracles to round out OT history. CLEARLY, taken as a whole, sign-miracles were never the norm in the OT.

Suddenly, surrounding the birth of Jesus, there was an outburst of "sign-miracles." But then for 30 years NOTHING. All the while Jesus was growing up and living at home – NOTHING! John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, being in the greatest position of all people (Mt. 11:11), never performed any miracle (Jn. 10:41). Then at age 30 (Lk. 3:23), as Jesus entered into His public ministry, He performed His first "sign-miracle" by turning water into wine (Jn. 2:11). Thus the ministry of Jesus was marked by "miracles, wonders, and signs" (Acts 2:22). And the purpose of these sign-miracles was to demonstrate Who Jesus was as the Christ, the Son of God (Jn. 20:30-31). As an extension of His ministry, the apostles were uniquely gifted in terms of "sign-miracles" (2 Cor. 12:12).

The ministry of miracles, signs, and wonders served to verify the NEW REVELATION that was being given forth. This was true in relation to Moses, the prophets, as well as Christ and the apostles. Their message was verified with sign-miracles (cf. Heb. 2:3-4). Jesus told Thomas, "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"* (Jn. 20:29), which would be normative! And then John said Jesus did many other signs, but these were **WRITTEN** that you might believe (Jn. 20:30-31). Through the apostles, God gave us NT revelation, but once it was completed, the emphasis became what is **WRITTEN**. All the truth was given through the apostles (Jn. 16:13). We now believe *"through their word*" (Jn. 17:20). Thus, the apostles and their close associates (prophets) laid down the revelatory foundation which the church thereafter builds upon (Eph. 2:20). There are no more apostles, no more new revelation, and no more sign-miracles. All has already been confirmed as documented in what is **WRITTEN**. Faith comes by hearing the word of God once for all delivered to the saints through the apostles (Rom. 10:17; Jude 3, 17). To insist on sign-miracles is a denigration of the completed and all-sufficient Word of God!

As the Church Age developed and more and more NT revelation came forth through the apostles, the ministry of sign-miracles began to diminish. Whereas earlier God worked unique miracles through Paul (Acts 19:11), later he could not heal the very sick Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-27). He told Timothy to take a little wine for his frequent infirmities (1 Tim. 5:23), and he left Trophimus at Miletus sick (2 Tim. 4:20). And sadly, Paul could not even do anything about his own torturous "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7-10). But in that context, Christ showed him what is normative in the Church Age, namely that His strength is made perfect in our weakness and that His grace is sufficient. What is normal is a death experience in our bodies so that the life of Jesus may be powerfully on display (2 Cor. 4:10-11; Phil. 3:10). In this body we groan, waiting for mortality to be swallowed up by life in glorification (2 Cor. 5:2-5). Only in eternity will pain, crying, sorrow, and death be categorized as "the former things" (Rev. 21:4). For now they are very much PRESENT as we await the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23).

Thot: *God sovereignly works His will in answer to prayer, but the purpose of sign-miracles in this age has ceased!*

Earnestly Contending, Pastor Dwight J. Oswald