

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Are there Miracle Workers in the Church of Christ Today? John 14:12

This weekend we will seek to answer the question: “Is God doing miracles today?” And why are we seeking to answer this question? First, we are seeking to answer this question because it has become a very controversial question in the present day church.

But in addition to this we are seeking to answer this question because it flows out from the passage that we began to examine last week. Or in other words, it flows out from **John 14:12-15**.

So what was Jesus trying to accomplish in **John 14:12-15**? Jesus was attempting to help His disciples to understand what their lives were going to be like after He left them to go back to His Father’s house.

And how did Jesus go about doing this? He began by giving them a promise in **John 14:12**. Let me read this promise for you, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father."**

So in light of these words what should those who believed in Jesus expect after He went back to His Father’s house? Should they have expected that their lives would be lived pretty much as their lives had been lived prior to meeting Him or should they expect something different? Clearly from this verse they should expect something considerably different than what they had lived before they had met Christ. In fact, based on this promise, the best days of their earthly lives were still ahead of them.

So what exactly had Christly promised them? Or in other words what exactly had Christ promised those who believed that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, the only way to the Father and His Father’s perfect manifestation to this world? This is what He promised them.

First of all He promised them that they would be performing miraculous works that were similar to His. Where did we see this? We saw this in the very first part of the verse when He said, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also."** And was this actually fulfilled? And the answer is yes! In the early church not only did the apostles, like Christ engage in miraculous activity but others within the early church did so as well.

But this was not all that was promised in respect to works. He also promised that they would do even "greater works". Let me once again read **John 14:12** but this time I will read the entire verse, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father."**

So what exactly did He mean by "greater works?" He did not mean "greater" in terms of more spectacular and neither did He mean "greater" in terms of more in number but rather He meant greater in terms of "significance."

Why would they be performing more significant works? They would be performing more significant works because they would be performing works that were associated with the great

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harvest of souls that was about to be reaped based on His death, burial and resurrection. Or in other words the great harvest of souls beginning on the day of Pentecost which was only weeks away.

This is what Jesus meant by the greater works! From the perspective of Christ there were no works that were of greater significance than those works that contributed to the harvest of souls.

So hopefully we now understand what Christ promised to those who believed in Him in **John 14:12**.

But where do we as Christians in the 21st century stand in respect to Christ's promise in John 14:12? Does this promise apply to us or did it only apply to those who were a part of the early church?

My hope this weekend after we finish this message is that not only would be able to give an answer to this question but that you would even be able to confidently defend that answer. So where do we begin in respect to this promise?

First of all, 21st century Christians should not expect their churches to be characterized by miraculous activity based John 14:12.

Why? Why shouldn't 21st century Christians have this expectation for their churches? 21st century Christians should not expect their churches to be characterized by miraculous activity because the purpose for miracles in the 21st century no longer exists.

So what is the purpose of miracles? The purpose of miracles based on the biblical record is to confirm a particular revelation is from God or a particular messenger is speaking for God in a period of major transitional revelation.

But how can we know this is true? We can know that this is true because when the biblical record is examined, significant miraculous activity only took place when God was revealing a major course correction in terms of how He was going to be working amongst His chosen people and with mankind in general.

So how many periods of major transitional revelations were there? There were three major periods of transitional revelation.

So what was the first period of major transitional revelation that was characterized by miraculous activity? The days of Moses and Joshua were the first period of major transitional revelation characterized by miraculous activity recorded for us in the scriptures. It was a period of major transitional revelation because God through Moses was giving His Law to the nation of Israel. He was no longer speaking to an individual or to individuals from time to time as He had done in the past but rather He was now speaking to the children of Abraham through Moses.

But how could the children of Abraham or in other words the Jewish people know this? The way that the Jewish people were able to confirm that Moses was speaking for God, when he gave them the Law, was by the miracles he and Joshua performed. In other words apart from the miracles that both Moses and Joshua performed during this period of major transitional revelation the children of Israel would never have been convinced that Moses and Joshua were speaking for God when the

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Law was being given to them.

So what happened after the Law had been delivered and Moses and Joshua passed off the scene in terms of further revelation and miraculous activity?

After Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt and recorded the first five books of the Law and after Joshua had led the children of Israel into the promised land and had recorded the book that bears His name, other books of the Bible were added intermittently after the time of Moses and Joshua. Samuel probably wrote Judges and 1,2 Samuel. David wrote Psalms, Solomon penned most of the wisdom literature. But those books were not accompanied by a great outpouring of miracles that characterized the days of Moses and Joshua. Why?

This was because they were simply building on what God had revealed earlier through Moses and Joshua. Therefore since these writers did not represent a period of major transitional revelation their words and works did not need to be confirmed through miracles.

But now let us go on. What is the second period of major transitional revelation that was characterized by miraculous activity recorded for us in the Scriptures?

The days of Elijah and Elisha were the second period of major transitional revelation characterized by miraculous activity recorded for us in the Scriptures. So what brought about this second period of major transitional revelation characterized by miraculous activity subsequent to Moses and the giving of the Law?

Following Solomon's reign the nation of Israel divided into the northern kingdom, Israel; the southern kingdom, Judah. The northern kingdom quickly deteriorated because of idolatry and hit a low point under King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. At that time God raised up two spokesmen, Elijah and Elisha to call His people to repentance in light of their total disregard of the Law that had been given to them through Moses.

But again how could the Jewish people know that Elijah and Elisha, were in fact speaking for God when they called them to repentance in respect to the Law that had been given to them by Moses? The way that the Jewish people could confirm that Elijah and Elisha were speaking for God when they called them to repentance was by the miracles they performed.

We find an example of this in **1 Kings 17:24**. In this verse Elijah had just raised a widow's son from the dead. What did she say to Elijah after he had performed that miracle? She said, "**Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.**" Pretty incredible wasn't it? It certainly would have been very difficult for her to believe anything else other than what she stated in light of the miracle that she had personally witnessed.

But then what happened after Elijah and Elisha? Other prophets of God followed Elijah and Elisha issuing the same call to repentance. But even though they were issuing the very same call to repentance, which is recorded for us in the prophetic books that they themselves wrote, they performed very few miracles. In fact during the prophetic period apart from the miracles of Elijah and Elisha miracles were relatively rare.

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Why? Why would miracles be so rare amongst the prophets that followed Elijah and Elisha? The reason why they would have been so rare was because the message that they were giving was simply building on the earlier message of repentance that Elijah and Elisha had given. What they were sharing in essence was nothing new. Therefore there was no need for their message to be confirmed as having come from God because that message of repentance had already been confirmed as having come from God through the earlier miracles of Elijah and Elisha.

And then what happened in terms of revelation and miraculous activity after several centuries of prophets being sent to Israel and Judah calling them to repentance? Everything ceased for 400 years. There was no further revelation and there were no miracles at all. But this is not the end of the story in terms of revelation and miraculous activity. This brings us to the third period of major transitional revelation. So what was that period?

The days of Christ and the apostles was the third period of major transitional revelation characterized by miraculous activity recorded for us in the Scriptures. This was a period of major transitional revelation because God was now revealing to His chosen people and to the world in general His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who through His death, burial and resurrection would open a door to heaven through which any person desiring to be set free from their sin and its consequences could enter and be saved by a simple act of faith or in other words God was during this time delivering the good news of the gospel to a world that was drowning in sin and facing certain judgment.

But how would people be able to confirm what Jesus said about Himself and His work? And how would people be able to confirm what the apostles said about Christ and His work? And in other words how could people confirm the truthfulness of the gospel of Christ. It was through their miracles.

Wasn't this what Jesus said? What did He tell the Jews in **John 10:25**? This is what He said, "**Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me."**

Isn't this also what the apostles said about the Miracles of Christ? Listen to **John 20:30-31** "**Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; (31) but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."**

And what about the apostles? How would people be able to confirm what they said about the person and work of Christ was true? Wasn't it also through their miracles? Of course it was through their miracles. Isn't this what the writer of Hebrews tells us. Let me read for you **Hebrews 2:1-3**, "**For this reason we must pay close attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (2) For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, (3) how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation: After it was at first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard (or in other words the apostles), (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."**

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So how were people able to confirm what Christ and the other apostles told them was true? The way that people confirmed that what Jesus and the apostles were telling them was true was through the miracles they performed (John 10:25, 20:30,31; Hebrews 2:1-3).

So now let me ask you this question based on everything that we have so far considered: If what Christ and His apostles revealed about Christ's person and work has already been confirmed through miracles then is there any further need for those truths to be confirmed again? And what is the answer! Absolutely not! At least based on the biblical record.

Therefore should we expect churches in the 21st century to be characterized by miracles? No, we should not expect it. Why? Miracles did not occur to simply display the power of God or bolster the faith of the faithless but primarily to confirm a major transitional revelation through His messengers.

Does this mean that God cannot perform miracles? No, this is not what I am saying. Certainly with God, the Bible tells us, that all things are possible. But I am saying, based on the biblical record that our church should not expect miracles as an every day common occurrence and neither should we expect any other church to experience miracles as an everyday common occurrence. And if you hear of a church that in fact testifies that they are experiencing such a display of miraculous power you need to see it for what it is. And what would that be? You need to see it in the best-case scenario as a naïve display of ignorance of what truly constitutes a biblical miracle or in the worst case scenario a conscious attempt to deceive in order to achieve their own fleshly ends.

So how does the 21st century church stand in respect to the promise of Christ to His disciples in John 14:12? In respect to His promise of future miraculous activity for those who believed in Him we should see this promise only extending to those who were a part of the first century church.

But what about the second part of the promise; how does the 21st century church stand in respect to performing the greater works that Jesus spoke of?

Though 21st century Christians should not expect their lives to be characterized by miraculous work they should expect their lives to be characterized by the "greater works."

And what again was the greater works? The greater works were the works associated with the harvest of souls that that was about to be reaped based on death, burial and resurrection of Christ or in other words, the greater works were the works associated with the harvest of souls that was about to take place through the proclamation of the gospel of Christ.

We are performing the greater works that Christ spoke of in John 14:12 when we do whatever we can to advance the cause of the gospel of Christ either directly or indirectly.

Where does the 21st century church stand in terms of the promise of Christ in John 14:12? In respect to the promise of miraculous activity this was not to us but rather to the first century church. But in respect to the greater works this promise of being participants in the greater works this was not only for those who believed in the first century church but for all who believe in Christ throughout the church age.

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May God give us the grace to appreciate and value the opportunity that Christ has afforded us through His redemptive work to rescue the souls of men in this present age.