

Have the Sign Gifts Ceased Today?

Introduction:

1. The carnal Corinthian church had become enamored with the miraculous sign gifts. They are listed in 12:8-10. We defined each one of these gifts from the Scripture in past studies.
 - Sign gifts were miraculous demonstrations that communicated or confirmed truth. **Mark 16:17-20**
2. There are people today who claim to have spiritual powers to work signs, miracles, and wonders. Is God giving this power today to individuals? Does the body of Christ need the operation of sign gifts today?
3. The best way to answer these questions is to answer the simple question, "Why were the sign gifts given in the first place?"
4. If we can understand from the Bible why God gave these sign gifts, then we can discern readily if they are still needed and operative today.

The sign gifts were given to validate the apostles of Christ.

1. An apostle of Christ was a person who had actually seen the resurrected Christ. **1 Corinthians 15:4-8**
2. Not only this, an apostle's message had to be validated with undeniable miraculous sign gifts. **Hebrews 2:3-4; Acts 2:43, 4:16, 29, 30, 33; 5:12**
 - These signs would serve as a confirmation for their message. **Mark 16:20**
3. When Paul defended his apostleship, he reminded them of "*the signs of an apostle*" that were demonstrated by him. **2 Corinthians 12:11-12**
4. Christ is referred to as "*the Apostle*" in **Hebrews 3:1**. During Christ's earthly ministry to Israel, His Messiahship & message were validated by signs. **John 20:30-31; Acts 2:22**
5. But in the early church, there were already ministers of Satan that claimed to be the apostles of Christ who were "*false apostles.*" **2 Corinthians 11:13**
6. Today, many men claim to be apostles, but they are not. How do we know this? To be an apostle, you had to have seen the resurrected Christ in person, literally and physically.
 - No man knows Christ after the flesh today (**2 Corinthians 5:16**). Christ is not appearing physically and visibly to people.
7. Therefore, we know there are no apostles today; hence, there is no longer the need for the apostolic sign gifts.

The sign gifts were given to reveal, communicate, and confirm truth.

1. We read in **Mark 16:20** that as the twelve proclaimed the good news that Israel's Messiah was raised from the dead, God would confirm their message with miraculous signs. God did exactly that. **Hebrews 2:3-4**
2. All throughout the book of Acts, while the early church was taking shape, God was progressively revealing more and more truth.
 - When the apostles preached of Christ's resurrection and told Israel to repent and Christ would return (**Acts 3:18-20**), it was a miraculous sign that saved their skin (**Acts 4:16**), and confirmed their words (**Acts 4:29-30**).

- When Peter preached Christ's resurrection to Cornelius' house, it was a miraculous sign that kept him out of hot water with his Jewish brethren. **Acts 11:17-18**
 - God saved the apostle Paul and began to reveal to him truth that had been kept secret since the world began. Paul would desperately need the signs of an apostle to validate this new message that he proclaimed.
 - This new message involved the salvation of Gentiles apart from Israel, apart from the Mosaic Law, and apart from Israel's rite of circumcision. Gentiles could be saved by grace through faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ.
 - It was signs that confirmed and validated his Gentile message to the church at Jerusalem. **Acts 15:12-13**
3. As God revealed more and more truth to Paul, there had to be a way to keep the churches up to speed on this new revelation during this transitional period. God used sign gifts to do this, such as the word of knowledge, word of wisdom, prophecy, tongues, etc.
 - People in the church were given these supernatural gifts in order to communicate truth to their local assembly.
 4. This was necessary until all of God's truth could be given, written down, and preserved in a Book. Today we have that Book and it is called the Bible. God is not dispensing new truth today. We have it all, and God's Word is sufficient to furnish us unto all good works. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
 5. Today our job is not to pretend to be getting some new revelation from God, but to take God's completed Word and proclaim it to others. **2 Timothy 2:2, 4:2; Titus 1:9**

The sign gifts were given as a sign to Israel.

1. The nation of Israel was born through the use of miraculous signs. **Exodus 4:30-31**
2. **1 Corinthians 1:22** states, "*For the Jews require a sign...*" When Christ came to minister to Israel, He came with signs and wonders. **Acts 2:22**
3. **1 Corinthians 14:22** informs us that the gift of tongues was a sign to unbelievers. Paul clearly had Israel in mind because he quotes a prophecy concerning Israel from **Isaiah 28:11-12**.
4. The Corinthian church started right next door to the Jewish synagogue. **Acts 18:5-7**
 - As Israel observed these pagan Gentiles demonstrating **their** sign gifts, it was a testimony that God had left them and gone among the Gentiles.
 - It was physical, visible evidence (which the Jews required) that God was now among the Gentiles and judgment was imminent if Israel did not repent.
 - As they saw their spiritual possessions now going to the Gentiles, it was to provoke them to jealousy that they might come to Christ and be saved. **Romans 11:11, 13-14**
5. This explains why such a carnal church as Corinth had the physical, visible evidence of God's Holy Spirit at work through these miraculous sign gifts (1:6-7). It was to confirm the testimony of Christ to Israel next door (1:22, 14:22).
6. This provoking ministry to Israel ended in **Acts 28:25-28**. After this declarative statement of judgment, we note several important things.

- Soon after this, Jerusalem was sacked and destroyed by the Roman emperor Titus. The Jews were scattered among the nations.
 - The Word of God is completed through Paul's post-Acts books.
Colossians 1:25
 - Paul never mentions Israel again in any of his post-Acts books. There are no more verses like **Romans 10:1**. Paul refers to himself as the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. **Ephesians 3:1**
 - The sign gifts are never mentioned again in any of Paul's post-Acts books. No mention of healings, miracles, tongues, etc. Paul is in prison, and no Philippian jail experience occurred.
 - There is evidence of the sign gifts ceasing in Paul's post-Acts books.
2 Timothy 4:20; 1 Timothy 5:23; Philippians 2:25-27; 2 Timothy 2:15 (no miraculous word of knowledge)
7. In the gospels and Acts when Israel was still there and still an issue, we see the demonstration of miraculous signs. Once Israel was set aside nationally there was no longer a need for these sign gifts. Once Israel was no longer an issue, the sign gifts ceased.
 8. Christian, you do not need a miraculous sign today. You have God's completed Word, you are part of Christ's body (where there is no Jew or Gentile), and you are complete in Christ.
 9. Nowhere in the Bible are you told to seek a sign. In fact, Jesus said that a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. **Matthew 16:4**
 10. God gave to the apostles and early church miraculous signs, and we know why He did this, but there is no reason to be enamored with signs and wonders today. Be enamored with Christ and His Word.