

Characteristics of New Testament Miracles

By Mark Mayberry

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Introduction

In this lesson, let us consider the characteristics of New Testament miracles. Our study will show that the miracles of the Bible were undeniable, instantaneous, complete, diverse, unstaged, and open to investigation. They supported truth, and not error. Furthermore, the victims were not blamed in the case of failure. The miracles of Jesus are genuine, assuring us that He is the Son of God. The miracles of the apostles and prophets are authentic, confirming their message and ministry.

All this stands in stark contrast with the so-called miracles of modern-day faith healers. The miracles of contemporary “slap-em in the head, slay the Spirit, cure Aunt Sally of consumption” Charismatics are bogus. An examination of the evidence reveals that the Leroy Jenkins, Peter Popoffs, Ernest Angleys, and Oral Roberts of this world are impious frauds. Their ministries cannot withstand open scrutiny. Their alleged miracles are but a pale imitation, a fraudulent replica, and a counterfeit reproduction of what we read of in the Bible.

They Were Undeniable

New Testament miracles were undeniable. Open minded individuals could clearly see the hand of God at work (John 3:1-2). Even the enemies of truth were forced to acknowledge the reality of these signs. This was evident when Jesus healed the blind man (John 9:16), when he raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:46-47), and also when Peter and John healed the lame man (Acts 4:14-16). In contrast, contemporary miracles are often questionable, doubtful, and dubious. Independent examination frequently exposes the fraudulent claims of faith healers.

John 3:1-2 ... 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; 2 this man came to Jesus 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.” (NASB95)

John 9:16 ... 16 Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, “This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” But others were saying, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And there was a division among them. (NASB95)

John 11:46-47 ... 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. 47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. (NASB95)

Acts 4:14-16 ... 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. 15 But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another, 16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. (NASB95)

They Were Instantaneous

New Testament miracles of healing were instantaneous. Included were the miraculous healing of blindness (Matt. 20:30-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43), deformity (Luke 13:11-13), leprosy (Matt. 8:1-3; Mark 1:40-42; Luke 5:12-13), hemorrhaging (Matt. 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-29; Luke 8:40-47), lameness/ paralysis (Luke 5:17-25; John 5:1-9), sickness (Luke 4:38-39), and even death (Mark 5:35-42; Luke 8:49-55). The only possible exception to this pattern was the blind man at Bethsaida, but even here, complete healing was accomplished in a matter of minutes (Mark 8:22-25). New Testament miracles did not require time for nature to take its course; rather, the effects were immediate. In contrast, modern-day faith healers often say, "You should expect gradual recovery."

Blindness

*Matthew 20:30-34 ... 30 And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" 31 The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" 32 And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 33 They said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened." 34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and **immediately** they regained their sight and followed Him. (NASB95)*

*Mark 10:46-52 ... 46 Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here. "So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you." 50 Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. 51 And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!" 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." **Immediately** he regained his sight and began following Him on the road. (NASB95)*

Luke 18:35-43 ... 35 As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. 36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was. 37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came

near, He questioned him, 41 “What do you want Me to do for you?” And he said, “Lord, I want to regain my sight!” 42 And Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” 43 **Immediately** he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God. (NASB95)

Deformity

Luke 13:11-13 ... 11 And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your sickness.” 13 And He laid His hands on her; and **immediately** she was made erect again and began glorifying God. (NASB95)

Leprosy

Matthew 8:1-3 ... 1 When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. 2 And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing, you can make me clean.” 3 Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And **immediately** his leprosy was cleansed. (NASB95)

Mark 1:40-42 ... 40 And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, “If You are willing, you can make me clean.” 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” 42 **Immediately** the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. (NASB95)

Luke 5:12-13 ... 12 While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, you can make me clean.” 13 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And **immediately** the leprosy left him. (NASB95)

Hemorrhaging

Matthew 9:20-22 ... 20 And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; 21 for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.” 22 But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” **At once** the woman was made well. (NASB95)

Mark 5:25-29 ... 25 A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, 26 and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse — 27 after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. 28 For she thought, “If I just touch

*His garments, I will get well.” 29 **Immediately** the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. (NASB95)*

*Luke 8:40-47 ... 40 And as Jesus returned, the people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. 41 And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus’ feet, and began to implore Him to come to his house; 42 for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him. 43 And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, 44 came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. 45 And Jesus said, “Who is the one who touched Me?” And while they were all denying it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You.” 46 But Jesus said, “Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.” 47 When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been **immediately** healed. (NASB95)*

Lameness/Paralysis

*Luke 5:17-25 ... 17 One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. 18 And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. 19 But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. 20 Seeing their faith, He said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.” 21 The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” 22 But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts? 23 “Which is easier, to say, “Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, “Get up and walk’? 24 “But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,” — He said to the paralytic — “I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.” 25 **Immediately** he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. (NASB95)*

John 5:1-9 ... 1 After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. 3 In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; 4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] 5 A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, “Do you wish to get well?” 7 The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I

*am coming, another steps down before me.” 8 Jesus said to him, “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.” 9 **Immediately** the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. (NASB95)*

Sickness

*Luke 4:38-39 ... 38 Then He got up and left the synagogue, and entered Simon’s home. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her. 39 And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she **immediately** got up and waited on them. (NASB95)*

Death

*Mark 5:35-42 ... 35 While He was still speaking, they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?” 36 But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid any longer, only believe.” 37 And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James. 38 They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He saw a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing. 39 And entering in, He said to them, “Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep.” 40 They began laughing at Him. But putting them all out, He took along the child’s father and mother and His own companions, and entered the room where the child was. 41 Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, “Talitha kum!” (which translated means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). 42 **Immediately** the girl got up and began to walk, for she was twelve years old. And **immediately** they were completely astounded. (NASB95)*

*Luke 8:49-55 ... 49 While He was still speaking, someone came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore.” 50 But when Jesus heard this, He answered him, “Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well.” 51 When He came to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl’s father and mother. 52 Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, “Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep.” 53 And they began laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. 54 He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, “Child, arise!” 55 And her spirit returned, and she got up **immediately**; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat. (NASB95)*

Exception?

Mark 8:22-25 ... 22 And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him. 23 Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?” 24 And he looked up and said, “I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around.” 25 Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. (NASB95)

They Were Complete

New Testament miracles of healing were complete. Whatever the malady, no matter how serious the illness or infirmity, the person that was healed was made whole (Matt. 12:9-13; Acts 3:6-10, 16). Yet, today those who are “healed” often manifest only a slight momentary improvement, and frequently experience serious relapses. Consider the case of Ernest Angley, a faith healer from Akron, Ohio. Angley, a flamboyant actor with a flair for the dramatic, normally puts on a good show, but even the best performers have off nights. On one occasion, Angley was trying to heal a man who was hard of hearing. He stuck his fingers in the man’s ears, twisted them around a few times, and then prayed that the man’s hearing might be restored. When Ernest was finished, the man’s wife whispered, “Honey?” into one of his ears. The man said, “Yes.” Then she whispered in his other ear, “Baby?” Once again, the man replied, “Yes.” Filled with amazement and bliss, Ernest Angley lifted his eyes toward heaven, and cried with a loud voice, “Hallelujah!” The man then looked at Ernest with a quizzical expression and replied, “Not bad, How are you?”

Matthew 12:9-13 ... 9 Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. 10 And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” — so that they might accuse Him. 11 And He said to them, “What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 “How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” 13 Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. (NASB95)

Acts 3:6-10 ... 6 But Peter said, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene — walk!” 7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. 8 With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God; 10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. (NASB95)

Acts 3:16 ... 16 “And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. (NASB95)

They Were Diverse

In the New Testament, all kinds of miracles were performed (Matt. 4:24; 8:16; 9:35; 15:30). Jesus and the apostles healed those who were blind, deaf, and mute. They cured deformity, paralysis, lameness, leprosy, all manner of sickness, disease and even death. Jesus demonstrated His power over every sphere of nature. Compare His accomplishments to those of modern-day miracle workers. Can they calm the winds or walk on water? Can they feed 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fishes? Can they heal all manner of sickness? Can they raise the dead? Of course not!

Matthew 4:24 ... 24 The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. (NASB95)

Matthew 8:16 ... 16 When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. (NASB95)

Matthew 9:35 ... 35 Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. (NASB95)

Matthew 15:30 ... 30 And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them. (NASB95)

The current crop of faith healers limit their practice to internal maladies, headaches, sinus trouble, and psychosomatic illnesses that respond to suggestion, etc. Several years ago, Lewis Grizzard, the well-known syndicated newspaper columnist, wrote an article entitled “*Miracles Are Few, But Laughs Are Many*” in which he poked fun at today’s faith healers.¹ Grizzard said, “The first time I became suspicious of faith healers was when Brother Roy Dodd Hembree came to my hometown with his faith healing tent ministry. One year, Miss Inez Pickett, an old maid school-teacher who had been plagued with kidney problems her entire life, decided to see if Brother Roy Dodd could help her.” “Brother Roy Dodd grabbed Miss Inez, proceeded to beseech the Almighty to try and remove her malady. With a great, joyous cry he proclaimed Miss Inez healed, and she commenced to jump around on the platform in her newly found healthy state. She became so excited, however, that she fell off the platform and broke her leg.” “*Somebody call an ambulance,*” said the first one to reach her. “*No need for that,*” someone cried, “*just get Brother Roy Dodd to heal her.*” However, Brother Roy Dodd declined. “*I don’t do broken bones,*” he said, “*Just vital organs.*”

They Were Unstaged

New Testament miracles were unstaged. Those healed were well known to the audience (Acts 3:1-10). Their illness was a matter of public record (Mark 5:25-29). Today it is not the same. Sometimes the sick show up in town about the same times as the healers. If you pay close attention to some groups, you will find that some of those healed ride the bus out of town with the healing evangelist. They travel with him to the next town, where the so-called “miracle” is repeated.

Acts 3:1-10 ... 1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. 2 And a man who had been lame from his mother’s womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. 4 But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, “Look at us!” 5 And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, “I do

not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!” 7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. 8 With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God; 10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. (NASB95)

*Mark 5:25-29 ... 25 A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, 26 and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse — 27 after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. 28 For she thought, “If I just touch His garments, I will get well.” 29 **Immediately** the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. (NASB95)*

O.J. Willis of Groveton, Texas told the story of an old-time faith-healer who came to town, promising to raise the dead. At the front of the big tent, the “deceased” was stretched-out in a coffin, pale and gray, looking bereft of life, and asleep in Jesus. Before the services, crowds passed by the coffin, quietly viewing the body, until the unexpected happened. It seems some of the local boys were determined to follow 1st John 4:1, which says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” As one of these young whippersnappers passed by the casket, he produced a long straight-pin, which he proceeded to poke in the side of the prostrate body. Commotion and bedlam ensued, as the lifeless man was prematurely, unexpectedly, and violently raised from the dead! (Another variation of this story says that the man who welded the pin was one John O’Doud, a gospel preacher of yesteryear.)

Peter Popoff, a squeaky-voiced TV faith healer from Upland, California, was able to fool millions, until foiled by debunker James Randi. This particular charlatan was noted for “calling out” members of the audience and then healing them. While on stage, Popoff would call out the names and addresses of individuals to whom he had not spoken, identify their specific ailments, and then allegedly heal them. How was he able to know such details? Was this the voice of God? Not hardly. Investigators discovered that prior to the show, Popoff’s staff subtly and shrewdly would gather information (names, address, ailments) on individuals in the audience. Popoff wore a tiny hearing aid in his left ear, connected to a high-frequency receiver tuned to 39.17 megahertz, a short-wave band. His wife, Elizabeth, broadcasting to Peter from backstage, transmitted the needed information to Popoff, and directed him to the right people. Thus he was able to exercise the “gift of knowledge,” identifying them by name and affliction.ⁱⁱ

They Were Open To Investigation

New Testament miracles were verifiable. Their legitimacy was confirmed and substantiated by the evidence. Jesus made the dumb to speak, the blind to see, and the lame to walk. The effects were manifest to all. In contrast with the New Testament example, today faith healers will not submit to verification, certification, or testing. They refuse to submit their ministries to public scrutiny, and become indignant when questioned, examined or interrogated. In contrast with such

stonewalling techniques, the Bible affirms the value of open investigation (Acts 17:11; Rom. 16:17-19; 1 Thess. 5:21-22; 1 John 4:1; Rev. 2:1-3).

Acts 17:11 ... 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. (NASB95)

Romans 16:17-19 ... 17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. 18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. 19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. (NASB95)

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 ... 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil. (NASB95)

1 John 4:1 ... 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (NASB95)

Revelation 2:1-3 ... 1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 2 "I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. (NASB95)

Furthermore, neither Jesus nor his apostles ever said it was impossible to perform a miracle because unbelievers were present. However, this dodge is often used by modern-day faith healers who know that critics are in the audience. Jesus was not swayed just because his opponents were watching. In fact, he relished the opportunity to prove his message (Mark 3:1-5).

Mark 3:1-5 ... 1 He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. 2 They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. 3 He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" 4 And He said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. 5 After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. (NASB95)

They Supported Truth, Not Error

New Testament miracles supported truth, not error (Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4). Even the inspired message of the apostle Paul was compared to previously revealed truth (Acts 17:11). We must study to present ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15), examining everything carefully, and holding fast to that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21).

Mark 16:17-20 ... 17 “These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” 19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.] [And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.] (NASB95)

Hebrews 2:1-4 ... 1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 how will 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 testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (NASB95)

Acts 17:11 ... 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. (NASB95)

2 Timothy 2:15 ... 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (NASB95)

1 Thessalonians 5:21 ... 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; (NASB95)

In the Old Testament, the apparent miracles and message of prophets were to be tested. If their message was false, they were to be rejected, despite their apparent miraculous power (Deut. 13:1-5). In like manner, saints of the New Testament era are warned against the lying wonders of lawless men (2 Thess. 2:7-12). We must test the spirits because many false prophets have gone forth into the world (1 John 4:1). God would never empower false teachers who teach destructive heresies (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 ... 1 “If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,’ 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 “You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. 5 “But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you. (NASB95)

2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 ... 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (NASB95)

1 John 4:1 ... 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (NASB95)

2 Peter 2:1-2 ... 1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; (NASB95)

They Didn't Blame The Victim For Failure

When modern-day faith healers are unsuccessful, they typically blame the sick person for not having enough faith. However, in the New Testament, the ability to perform miracles was dependent upon the faith of those who possessed the gifts of the Spirit. In the New Testament, failure to perform a miracle demonstrated a lack of faith on the part of the healer (Matt. 17:14-21).

Matthew 17:14-21 ... 14 When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16 "I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." 17 And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." 18 And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" 20 And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. 21 ["But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."] (NASB95)

Faith was often manifested by those who sought healing. In a few cases, it is specifically mentioned as playing a significant role (Matt. 9:20-22; Mark 10:51-52). Sometimes a lack of faith caused Jesus to limit His ministry in certain areas (Matt. 13:58; Mark 6:5). However, in other cases the person healed demonstrated no faith at all. This is certainly true of the lame man whom Peter and John healed in the Temple. Notice, that it was the faith of Peter and John, not the lame man, that brought about the miracle. The lame man was simply asking for money from the apostles, not realizing who they were (Acts 3:1-6). As J. W. McGarvey says, "He showed no

faith either in Jesus, or in the healing power of the apostles, until he found himself able to stand and walk. The faith, then, was that of Peter; and this accords with what we learn in the Gospels, that the working of a miracle by those possessed of spiritual gifts was always dependent on their faith.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Matthew 9:20-22 ... 20 And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; 21 for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.” 22 But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” At once the woman was made well. (NASB95)

Mark 10:51-52 ... 51 And answering him, Jesus said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” And the blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!” 52 And Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road. (NASB95)

Matthew 13:58 ... 58 And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief. (NASB95)

Mark 6:5 ... 5 And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. (NASB95)

Acts 3:1-6 ... 1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. 2 And a man who had been lame from his mother’s womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. 4 But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, “Look at us!” 5 And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene — walk!” (NASB95)

Conclusion

As we have seen, the miracles of the Bible were undeniable, instantaneous, complete, diverse, unstaged, and open to investigation. They supported truth, and not error. Finally, the victims were not blamed in the case of failure.

All of this stands in stark contrast with the work of modern-day faith healers. Their miracles are dubious and doubtful. Long periods of time are often necessary to affect a complete recovery. Modern-day miracle workers perform only a select few types of miracles, and the vast majority of their healings cannot be perceived by the senses. Preliminary inquiries are often used to weed out the hard cases. Most healings are psychosomatic in nature. Success requires a highly-emotional, almost hysterical atmosphere, that exerts a powerful psychological effect upon those seeking a miracle. Services are often staged. Charismatic leaders avoid the light of open, unbiased investigation. False doctrines are commonly taught. Failure is common. Tragically, if

the faith healer is unsuccessful, he often blames the sick person for not having enough faith. What an unmitigated travesty!

In January of 1978, Ernest Angley was holding a “miracle and healing rally” in North Carolina. He announced that he would pray for everyone with heart problems. One woman with chronic heart trouble had come to seek Angley’s blessing. During the services, she slumped to the floor. The ushers, who believed the woman was simply overcome with spiritual ecstasy, turned away offers of help for about 20 minutes. Afterwards, the victim was taken to the hospital and pronounced dead. How did the great faith healer respond to this tragic news? Said Mr. Angley: “Church is a wonderful place to go to heaven from.”

Compare this cop-out to the example of Paul at Troas. On the first day of the week, the saints assembled in an upper room, where the apostle preached until midnight. A young man named Eutychus, sitting on the windowsill, fell asleep as Paul spoke, and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. Did the apostle Paul say, “Church is a wonderful place to go to heaven from.” No. The text says, Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, “Do not be troubled, for his life is in him.” Afterwards they took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted (Acts 20:7-12).

Acts 20:7-12 ... 7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. 9 And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. 10 But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, “Do not be troubled, for his life is in him.” 11 When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left. 12 They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted. (NASB95)

ⁱ Lewis Gizzard, *The Register and Tribune Syndicate, Inc.*, Denver, CO., Date Unknown.

ⁱⁱ James Randi, *The Faith Healers*, (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1987), p. 139-181.

ⁱⁱⁱ J. W. McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, (1892; Reprint ed., Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Foundation, n.d.), p. 56.