

In starting chapter 14, let me remind you, we are in the middle of Paul's first missionary journey. Beginning with chapter 13, Paul and Barnabas were sent out, by the church in Antioch. They first sailed south to Cyprus, north to Perga, and then traveled by land to Antioch of Pisidia (pee-sidia). There as we saw over the last two weeks, Saul preached in the synagogue, and then ministered to a larger crowd the following week. This led the envious Jews to stir up the leaders of the city, who eventually banished them from the region. This leads us to chapter 14, and the fact that Paul and Barnabas, travelled east to Iconium.

- I. The Nature of Signs and Wonders
- II. The Purpose of Signs and Wonders
- III. The Cessation of Signs and Wonders

I. The Nature of Signs and Wonders

1. Verse 1—"Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greek believed."
2. As mentioned, Iconium is a city about 50 miles east of Antioch of Pisidia (pee-sidia), and like Antioch, had a large Jewish population.
3. This led the apostles, to go together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed.
4. Remember, because these cities were under Roman rule, they were populated by many Gentiles (who spoke Greek).
5. Many of these Gentiles, for various reasons, converted to Judaism, and bound themselves to OC laws (including worshipping in synagogues on the Jewish Sabbath).
6. V2—"But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren."
7. That is, unbelieving Jews stirred up other Gentiles, so that they would not believe and join the brethren.
8. By "brethren" I understand the newly saved Jews and Gentiles mentioned in v1—"a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed."
9. And so, now the unbelieving Jews (likely those in leadership), sought to hinder any further Gentiles from believing.
10. Luke says—"poisoned their minds"—literally they caused them to become "imbittered" or "against them."
11. This necessitated that Paul and Barnabas remain in Iconium a "long time"—"speaking boldly in the Lord (that is, by His might and in His authority)."
12. Now, as I intend to return to v3 in a moment, I want to briefly skip ahead to v4 and the response of the multitude.
13. V4—"But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles."
14. This means, the entire city was divided—a part of the city sided with the unbelieving Jews, whereas, the other half sided with Paul and Barnabas.
15. Verses 5-6—"And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abode and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region."
16. Both Lystra and Derbe were twin cities, located next to Iconium, and basically similar in size to it (Iconium).
17. They not only fled to Lystra and Derbe, but also to the surrounding region, v7—"And they were preaching the gospel there."

18. And so, having become privy to an attempt to stone them, they fled to the nearby cities of Lycaonia, and there they resumed their missionary endeavors.
19. Now, what I want to do at this point is, provide a brief apology (defense) for what I am about to do in the remainder of this sermon.
20. It's my intention to spend the remainder of our time limiting our focus to v3 and the subject of signs and wonders (and so, I want to provide three quick reasons for taking an hour to reconsider this topic – as you might remember, we've discussed it before on several occasions).
21. Reason 1—Because it's a dominant point of our text and the book of Acts—remember, it was the Holy Spirit who inspired Luke to record what he did.
22. And so, it was the will of the Holy Spirit to describe the ministry of the apostles in Iconium as preaching and performing signs and wonders.
23. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit had Luke record the performance of signs and wonders at least nine times in the book (2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12).
24. Why did the Holy Spirit have Luke describe the early church nine times, as performing signs and wonders.
25. I suggest, the repeated repetition underscores their importance—remember, Scripture doesn't contain any filler.
26. And so, it's my intent this morning to address the subject of signs and wonders because it's again in our text.
27. Reason 2—Because it's a common point of debate and confusion in our day—ignorance on this issue, has created havoc in many churches.
28. Entire denominations have been created that believe they've resurrected revelatory gifts accompanied by signs and wonders.
29. In fact, many of these denominations refer to themselves as Full Gospel in contrast churches that don't have revelatory gifts accompanied by signs and wonders.
30. According to these Christians, they alone have the Full Gospel as they have prophets, apostles, and miracles.
31. They believe that the Full Gospel includes such things, whereas other churches (referred to as dead churches) don't have prophets, apostles, and miracles.
32. And thus, out of love for such brethren, the truth needs to be told, that they are not teaching the Full Gospel, and are in many cases, teaching a false gospel (one that has been highjacked by false prophets and apostles).
33. Reason 3—Because it's a wonderful subject that validates the gospel of God—as we shall see, miracles were intended to bear witness to the word of His grace (and thus, a right understanding of the purpose of miracles is essential).
34. (1) They were obvious—Luke describes these miracles as "signs and wonders"—the first word is sometimes translated "miracle" and the second always "wonders."
35. In fact, the Greek word renders "wonders" is used sixteen times in the NT, and always in the phrase "signs and wonders."
36. In the Biblical sense a "sign" is a miracle that points to something, and a "wonder" is a miracle that creates awe.
37. Thus, the phrase "signs and wonders" is a technical phrase, that is always and only used to describe miracles.
38. Thus, we can say, a Biblical miracle is a sign and/or wonder—or else, signs and wonders are miracles.
39. It's for this reason they were obvious or manifest for all to see—they were always done in openly and publicly.
40. A primary purpose for miracles, as we shall see, was to display God's power and vindicate the prophet or apostle.

41. (2) They were supernatural—by this I mean, by definition a miracle is beyond the normal way things work.
42. It's not that they are contrary to nature, as much as above and beyond it—they are uncommon and unexplainable.
43. Walter Chantry—"Miracles are the extraordinary works of God's power which demand the awed attention of men."
44. For example, it's not common that blind people see, deaf people hear, lame people walk, and dead people live.
45. (3) They were performed by men, v3—"the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, (and) granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands."
46. Here we find two agents in production of miracles—God was granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands."
47. The ultimate source of the miracles was God, who brought about the miracles through the hands of men.
48. And this is very important to notice—God always brings about signs and wonders through human agency.
49. As God gave the gift of prophecy to some people, He gave the gift of miracle-working to the same people.
50. And so, as we come to the topic of signs and wonders, we come to the gracious gift of working miracles.

II. The Purpose of Signs and Wonders

1. V3—"Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands."
2. Notice Luke says—the Lord bore witness to the word of His grace, through the signs and wonders (miracles).
3. In other words, Luke makes very clear, that a primary purpose of miracles is to confirm the word of His grace.
4. Now, as we read the rest of Scripture, it becomes apparent there are additional purposes for miracles.
5. For example, they are displays of God's goodness and compassion—as people are physically made whole.
6. And, they are also pictures of salvation, as physical healings picture or foretell spiritual healings (salvation).
7. But, first and foremost, signs and wonders (miracles), were intended to bear witness to the word of His grace.
8. (1) What is meant by the word of His grace? Well, this obviously has reference to the word of God, which testifies of His grace.
9. That is, it's within the word of God that we learn about the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
10. You've heard it said that God speaks to us from two books—the book of creation and the book of Scripture.
11. And this is true—and we learn about God's power, wisdom, and general (universal) good from creation.
12. But we only learn about His amazing grace in Christ, from the Holy and sacred Scriptures—the word of His grace.
13. Now, remember, at this point the apostles were merely preaching the OT Scriptures, which, when rightly understood, tell of His grace in Christ.

14. We saw this back in chapter 13, when Paul preached the gospel of Jesus Christ from the OT Scriptures.
15. But the apostles were also providing new revelation, as the Spirit was enabling them to speak without error.
16. Perhaps we can say, the apostles were infallibly interpreting the OT Scripture, as they applied it to Christ.
17. This means, they were not merely quoting the OT, but they were interpreting and applying it as well.
18. This again can be illustrated by Paul's sermon in chapter 13—he quoted, interpreted, and applied Scripture.
19. And this is what they were doing in Iconium—they went to the synagogue and spoke as Paul spoke before.
20. Thus, we have to remember something here—the word the apostles spoke was also the word of His grace.
21. That is, the word that they spoke, was similar to the OT Scriptures—they both bore witness to His grace.
22. Simply put—by the word of His grace is meant the holy and sacred Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments.
23. (2) What is meant by bearing witness to the word of His grace? To "bear witness" is to provide testimony.
24. Through the signs and wonders, God was testifying or confirming, that the word they spoke was His.
25. He was testifying, that the speaker had been commissioned by Him, and thus, spoke in His authority.
26. And so, signs and wonders were means whereby, God bore witness to the speaker, and thus, to His word.
27. Perhaps we can say, signs and wonders were the preachers' credentials, that he spoke in the name of God.
28. Thus, signs and wonders were never done apart from the word—preaching and miracles always went together.
29. Perhaps said another way—only prophets in the OT performed miracles and only apostles (and two associates called evangelists) performed miracles.
30. Nobody was just given the ability to perform miracles, outside of them being a messenger from God.
31. Ex.4:1-5—"Then Moses answered and said, 'But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.' So the LORD said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' He said, 'A rod.' And He said, 'Cast it on the ground.' So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Reach out your hand and take it by the tail' (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.'"
32. As Moses was the first prophet, so he was the first miracle-worker—he was given power to perform signs and wonders.
33. In fact, he's given two signs to perform—a rod (vv1-4), and his hand (vv6-9)—these are expressly called signs (vv8-9).
34. They were signs or miracles, whereby or through which God bore witness to the words of His prophet.
35. Walter Chantry—"Miracle-working powers were credentials to prove that Moses was a prophet sent from God with a divinely-revealed message. The wonders were God's testimonies that Moses

indeed spoke the word of truth. This principle universally applies to OT miracles. Only those who were inspired of God to speak His Word were wonder-workers. It was a gift exclusively held by prophets."

36. There's not a single example, in the entire OT, of any person doing a miracle that wasn't a prophet of God.
37. Mk.16:19-20—"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."
38. Notice, as the apostles went out and preached everywhere, Christ confirmed their word through the signs.
39. Heb.2:1-4—"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"

III. The Cessation of Signs and Wonders

1. The cessation or ceasing of signs and wonders is evident for this single reason—no new revelation from God is being given.
2. As miracles were intended to attest or confirm new revelation from God, the gift of miracle working ended with the close of the canon.
3. As we have seen in our study, only prophets, apostles, and evangelists (Philip and Stephen) performed miracles.
4. And they always performed miracles in connection to the proclamation of new and inspired revelation.
5. Thus, the question is not—Is the gift of miracle working still given in the church today, but, is new revelation given in the church today?
6. Are there prophets and apostles in the church today? And the clear answer is, no! Scripture is complete.
7. Thus, Scripture teaches that all of the revelatory gifts (gifts whereby special revelation was given), has ceased.
8. 1Cor.13:8-10—"Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect (complete or finished) has come, then that which is in part will be done away."
9. Here Paul is contrasting to forms of revelation—there's partial revelation that's given through prophecy, tongue-speaking (a form of prophecy), and knowledge (which refers to a special knowledge akin to prophecy), and there's perfect revelation—that which is perfect (that is, the completed canon).
10. Sometime Christians understand "perfection" as heaven but Scripture never refers to heaven as "that which is perfect."
11. Again "perfect" means complete or full and refers to the completed or full revelation of God in Scripture.
12. When the Scriptures are complete (perfect or full), there will no longer be any need for revelatory gifts.
13. And, when there's no longer any need for revelatory gifts, there will no longer be any need for signs and wonders.

14. Thus, the issue about signs and wonders is no small matter—it's actually about the nature of Scripture.
15. Is Scripture sufficient and/or complete, or else, is God still giving special revelation to His beloved people?
16. Signs and wonders (that is, Biblical miracles), were intended to confirm all new and special revelation.
17. All new revelation given through prophets and apostles, was conformed or bore witness to by miracles.
18. That was the primary purpose of signs and wonders—it was a means to bear witness to the word of His grace.
19. How were people assured that Moses, Paul, Barnabas, and Peter were sent by God and spoke His word?
20. Go back to the first century and the city of Iconium—why were these people to believe what Paul said?
21. How were they to know, they were apostles sent by Christ, who spoke the word of Christ with authority?
22. I mean, why believe Paul and Barnabas and not the unbelieving Jews who were trying to oppose them?
23. Why believe Paul and Barnabas and not the supposed wise men, who spoke in the name of pagan deities?
24. Well, here's why—because Paul and Barnabas performed miracles as the confirmation of their authority.
25. But, when the Scriptures were completed, after John died around AD90, no further revelation was given.
26. All that we need, has been given, and thus, all that's now needed is that teachers be judged by the Book.
27. I no longer need to know who is a mouthpiece of God, because God has said all He intends to say in Scripture.
28. Thus, if anyone claims to speak as a prophet or apostle, I close my ears and don't hear a word of what they say.
29. And, every preacher or teacher I test by the word of His grace—the sixty-six books of the Holy Bible.
30. This means, any movement that pretends to have new revelation from God, is without doubt, not of God.
31. Furthermore, any person who claims to perform signs and wonders, claims to have new revelation from God (because that was the purpose of signs and wonders).
32. And do you know what, this is exactly what people like Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copland, and Kenneth Hagin all confess.
33. Without exception, they all claim to reveal special revelation from God that's equal to the Holy Scriptures.
34. And, they all confess they perform signs and wonders as a verification they are commissioned by God (at least these men understand the basic purpose of miracles—to prove they are prophets and apostles).
35. But the reason there are no longer signs and wonders, because there's no longer prophets and apostles.
36. And the basic reason being—the Holy Scriptures are complete, sufficient, and all that Christians need.
37. Let me close reminding you, that through miracles (which are recorded in Scripture), God bears witness to the word of His grace.