

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 154  
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The Sermon: THESE SIGNS SHALL FOLLOW

Scripture: Mark 16:14-21

And (Jesus) said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

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Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

Christianity is a miraculous religion. Without the miraculous element, it makes no sense; its theology is nonsense, and its claims are ridiculous. But if Jesus was what he said he was -- the Son of God -- miraculously conceived and born, endowed with the powers of Deity, and miraculously restored to life after a cruel death, then Christian theology makes sense, and its claims are worthy of acceptance by every man who is concerned about the eternal welfare of his soul.

The ministry of Jesus was marked by certain signs, miracles, and wonders which were done to attest his Deity. He healed the sick; he cast out evil spirits; he restored men to sanity; he turned water into wine; he walked on the water; he produced a great draught of fishes for his disciples; he read men's thoughts; he foretold the future. John says near the close of his gospel, after recounting many of these things: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John, 20:30, 31).

Jesus never regarded his miracles as miracles. To him they were simply the operation of simple natural laws which were as yet unknown to man. To God there is no such thing as a miracle. Nothing can defy natural law; but a knowledge of natural law greater than the human mind has yet achieved can do things

which to the ignorant appear to be supernatural. With such knowledge, Jesus found it perfectly natural and reasonable to make this promise, which is found in John 14:12: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do ..." Notice that there is no time limit set on this promise, nor on another promise contained in John 15:7: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Mark records another promise of Jesus, given to the apostles just before his ascension: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ..... And these signs shall follow them ..... that believe ..." It is a matter of historical record in the book of Acts that these signs did follow the believer under the ministry of the apostles. Many incidents of healing, of casting out devils, of speaking in tongues, of receiving prophetic visions and directions for their ministry, are familiar to all Bible students. Acts 2:4 says: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:43 continues: "Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles." Acts 5:12 says: "By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people," and the 16th verse continues: "There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one."

A great many Christian sects today teach that these signs and wonders and miracles which followed the believer were to be manifested through the apostles only -- the men who had companied with Jesus and who were special witnesses of his divinity and of the signs attesting it. Others go a little farther and assert that the signs which were promised to follow the believer were confined to the apostolic age, but ceased with the death of the last of the original apostles.

Were these signs confined to the ministry of the apostles? No! The tenth chapter of Luke tells how Jesus sent out the seventy, and under what conditions. Verse 17 gives their report upon their return: "And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." Following this report to Jesus, the seventy were given further miraculous powers similar to the powers exercised by the apostles. Verse 19 says: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you." Stephen, so far as we know, was neither an apostle nor one of the seventy, but Acts 6:8 says: "Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." Ananias laid hands on Saul that he might miraculously recover his sight after the vision on the Damascus road. Paul, who was not one of the original apostles, says of his own ministry in II Corinthians, 12:12: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." In many of these "signs and wonders" Barnabas was associated with Paul. We have a record of several specific occurrences -- such as Paul throwing off the deadly viper without harm, and the healing of Publius' father. From these facts we may draw three conclusions: (1) that the original promise of signs following was not confined to the apostles alone; (2) that the promise was not withdrawn at the end of the apostolic age, but was to continue to the successors of the apostles until the end of the world; and (3) that therefore if the necessary prerequisites and requirements are met, the signs can and will follow the believer today.

The closing verses of Matthew's gospel records another promise of Jesus: "Lo I am with you alway," -- not unto the end

of the apostolic age, but "even unto the end of the world." How could he have been with the original apostles unto the end of the world, when every one of them save Judas was to suffer a martyr's death? The promise is to their successors, as well as to them. God and his promises are eternal, impartial, unchangeable. His laws are eternal and unchangeable. But his promises are never unconditional. The promise to be with them and their successors unto the end of the world was conditioned upon one thing -- that the apostles should always teach men "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." If the apostles forgot or changed or tampered with Jesus' teachings, or introduced teachings of their own wisdom, the promise was automatically revoked. And so when strange and pagan doctrines began to creep into the Christian church, spiritual gifts gradually died out because of apostasy and disobedience.

Those who believe that the signs no longer follow the believer have no faith; and without faith there can be no salvation and none of the signs that follow the believer. Those who believe that such spiritual gifts have ceased quote from the 13th chapter of I Corinthians; "whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease;" but they seldom go on to the next phrase: "whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." What Paul is saying is simply that "when that which is perfect is come," when Christ returns with his kingdom, there will be no further need for miraculous gifts of prophecy or tongues or knowledge. There will be no need for gifts of healing when men are resurrected in perfect, immortal bodies.

Until "that which is perfect is come," Jesus' promise still holds, that "these signs shall follow them that believe." The signs and miracles of Christianity come as the result of faith and obedience. They follow the believer; they do not come to convince him that he ought to believe. They are granted only to those who are prepared and worthy to receive and use them properly. They are one of the signs of life in the body of Christ -- his church. And to those who meet the requirement of teaching and observing all things that Jesus has commanded, the promise is still, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."