



From Inside Out to Outside In

Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; 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."

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. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed. — Mark 16:14-20a

While listening to a sermon covering the final chapter of Mark, it occurred to me that this particular passage provides a scriptural answer to why we see many of the things listed here so often faked and counterfeited within the walls of the Church. A year never goes by without at least one national news story involving a church service handling rattle snakes where participants were rushed to the hospital upon being bitten. And, of course, we not only have the "healing crusades" where real ailments are never actually cured and spurious claims made for resolving strange health issues such as one leg being shorter than the other. Sooner or later it is disclosed how those "healed" were actors or, worse still, believing themselves cured, cease their medical treatment and soon thereafter get much worse or die. And don't get me started on all the YouTube videos documenting false expressions of charismatic gifts in so-called "signs and wonders" services. All the fakery that has come to be commonly associated with Christianity is summarized here, and in among the details we are presented with the reason why, exactly, these public displays are unbiblical from the outset.

The context of what Christ is instructing is provided in His opening statement to the Eleven: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation". This is all being

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presented in the context of evangelism, of going **out** *“into all the world”* to share the Gospel, not providing what should be taking place within the walls of any given church. This is especially confirmed by the closing confirmation, *“And **they went out and preached everywhere**.”* What is being spoken of here is connected to going out into the world with the motivation of taking the Gospel to the unsaved, not conducting a show as a featured part of a church service. And this is particularly emphasized by the rest of that sentence, *“while the Lord worked with them, **and confirmed the word by the signs that followed**”*, Yes, just as every sign and miracle Jesus performed came about to confirm His accompanying message, so it is stipulated that there may be times in the course of taking the Gospel to the unsaved that these kinds of things may occur, but not to impress or amaze anyone, but to **confirm the word!**

The book of Acts documents these things taking place in the course of the Gospel’s spread to the unsaved world. A good exercise is reviewing Acts and seeing that Paul survived a deadly snake bite, healings took place, and even expressions of the charismatic gifts are likewise documented—all in the course of taking the Gospel to the unsaved world. If we were to survey the huge number of written biographies documenting the lives and ministries of missionaries from the Western nations over the past 200 years alone, we would come across plentiful examples literally fulfilling this list in Mark. They all have in common, of course, that they served to confirm the Word of the Gospel as it was taken **out into** the world.

As a teenager, our local pastor was healed of a terminal illness. At one time I could have introduced you to doctors and nurses employed at the local hospital who were witness to his supernatural recovery. He returned, having been instructed by Jesus that he was being “sent back” to continue preaching the Word. The remaining years of his life and that message, accompanied by the testimony of such an affirming miracle, had an untold impact on not just hundreds, but a rippling effect extending to thousands. But, to my knowledge, no one else was ever healed in the course of his ministry, and no one even toyed with the notion that this should be leveraged into a “healing crusade”. It really wasn’t about the miracle of the healing itself, but its empowerment of the accompanying message. Even the healed will eventually pass away, so the greater miracle of healing is acceptance of and living according to the Gospel so as to be permanently “healed” in eternity.

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This list specifies, “*they will speak with new tongues*”. At one time, before he went to be with the Lord, I could have introduced you to a pastor from a denomination that does not practice what is often described as the prayer language of tongues, and yet who experienced what is most likely being described in Mark. He was on a missions trip to Central America, and through a series of odd circumstances and separated from his translator, found himself with a group of native Indians who did not understand English any more than he could speak or understand their own native language. Supernaturally empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Gospel message was provided through him in their own tongue. It never happened to him again, and of course he never even considered that he should now start a ministry and travel the globe to supernaturally translate the Gospel. Literal fulfillments of what is listed in Mark have been documented in the course of taking the Gospel to the unsaved, which is what was stipulated at the time Jesus spoke these things.

But the problems so publicly and repeatedly documented with parallel fakes and counterfeits is precisely due to a 180 degree misapplication of the text. These things are brought *into* a church and turned into a public show for an audience who is supposed to already be saved. They are formed into the basis for a claimed a “ministry” which is designed to attract repeat customers just like any model for the retail industry. And worse yet, they’re publicly broadcast with a corrupted message like an advertisement for a product or service, “Yes, you can amaze your friends and family and do these same kinds of things if you’ll just join us!” Perhaps the greatest deception of the modern Church is the notion that through modern media and technology we no longer have to go out into the world and can just sit on our duff and bring the world to us.

And that is really the most common perversion of the Gospel message, that so many efforts at what is called “evangelism” make no pretense of even attempting to take the Gospel out into the world, but assume they can get the world to come to them. This is why we so rarely observe anything from this list authentically and biblically taking place; we have been seduced into producing “worshiptainment” for ourselves rather than heeding the call:

*but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and **even to the remotest part of the earth.**” — Acts 1:8*

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As with every false teaching or movement and their associated approach to things, it is on the one hand claimed to be sourced from the Word of God without being fully divulged that in the process it actually reverses the Word of God.

In Him,

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