

45. A wicked and adulterous generation

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Out of all the TV evangelists, I dislike one particular person more than all the rest of them combined. His name is Benny Hinn. It is because his flamboyant prophecies never came true, nor have any of his miraculous claims been proven to be true. Am I saying that no one at his so-called Miracle Crusades received healing from the Lord? No. People actually got healed, not because of Benny Hinn, rather the Lord extended His mercy to those desperately needy people.

At his crusades, he employs a couple of screeners who would decide which person can go up to the stage to be prayed by Hinn. If a person who wants to be healed has an obvious physical disability, that person gets pushed out of the line, but the ones without any visible disability is allowed to go up. This kind of incident was well-documented by the secular TV network crews.

In April 2001, HBO aired a documentary entitled "A Question of Miracles" that focused on Hinn. Hinn offered full access to their events to the documentary crew, and the documentary team followed seven cases of "miracle healings" from Hinn's crusade over the next year. The film's director, Antony Thomas, told CNN's Kyra Phillips that they did not find any cases where people were actually healed by Hinn. Thomas said in a New York Times interview, "If I had seen miracles [from Hinn's ministry], I would have been happy to trumpet it... but in retrospect, I think they do more damage to Christianity than the most committed atheist." Horrible witnessing to the unbelievers, I might add.

Unfortunately, Hinn's 30 minute TV program, "This Is Your Day" still is among the world's most watched Christian programs, seen on various Christian television networks.

The late pastor Chuck Smith, the founder of Calvary Chapel once said that he even doubted that Benny Hinn has ever been saved. I don't know about Hinn's salvation, but the fruit of his salvation does not show well to me. In my opinion, he is nothing more than a con artist who is going after the gullible viewers' pockets with what they want to see.

If you've been following Benny Hinn, you are about to ring my neck now. But hear me well, please. Miracles alone are not proof that a person is truly sent of God, because satan can enable his false ministers to do amazing things. Today we must test a person's ministry by the truth of the Word of God.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

We need to remember that as much as we long for miracles, however, they are not a cure-for-all. Remember what happened to Peter during Jesus' trials? He had witnessed Christ perform hundreds of miracles, including His incredible Transfiguration. If glimpses of the supernatural strengthen faith, Peter's should have been ironclad. Yet, when he denied the Lord three times, his faith folded like a house of cards.

This morning we are going to see several cases of genuine miracles by Jesus. But the Jewish religious leaders were asking for more. Jesus had a direct answer for them and those who are looking for miracles only over the miracle Giver.

A. THE HEALING OF A DEAF AND MUTE MAN

Mark 7:31-37 Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. 32 Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. 33 And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. 34 Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. 36 Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. 37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

The region of Decapolis which means "ten cities" was located in Gentile territory.

Jesus used many different ways of healing. He healed with a word, healed without a word; healed in response to one's faith; healed in response to the faith of another; healed those who asked; and He healed those He approached. Jesus didn't want to create a magic formula that we would try to imitate and end up in a wrong way. It should never be about a formula. It should be about Jesus and relying on Him. He is God and He does whatever He wants, in whatever way He chooses.

B. FEEDING FOUR THOUSAND

Matt. 15:32-39 Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." Then His disciples said to Him, "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?" Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few little fish." So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala.

This is not the same miracle recorded in the last chapter. The feeding miracle in the last chapter was done for mainly for the Jewish people and they were with Him only one day, but this one is basically for the Gentiles and they were with Him for three days.

It was a Déjà vu. By now, His disciples should have this thing down. They should get excited about people gathering up all over, because they could be the part of another great miracle and get to see how Jesus performs another miracle.

But the question of the disciples to Jesus revealed their spiritual ignorance once again. They flunked again. But let's not look down on them. How many times do we make the same mistakes over and over? They were no different than us. I am sure that you've noticed that the Bible is a repetitive Book. It is not because God ran out of things to say, but to remind us and to reinforce the truth.

C. NOT THAT KIND OF MIRACLES

Matthew 16:1-4 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said

to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.

Matthew chapter 16 is the turning point in Jesus' ministry. From now on, Jesus openly talks more about His death and resurrection. He is focusing on what is going to happen to Himself soon.

The Jewish religious leaders desired to silence Jesus, and this motive had caused the two opposing religious parties – the Pharisees and Sadducees to unite. Jesus had done many miracles, but they remained unconvinced. They looked for a miracle from heaven, such as, calling down fire from heaven, preferably against a Roman legion. They were not impressed by the signs "on earth" Jesus had done. Because their silly tradition held that a sign done on earth could be a counterfeit from satan, but signs done from heaven were assumed to be from God.

Many people are still looking for miracles more than the Savior. Miracles do not convict people for their sin or give a desire for salvation. Miracles will give confirmation where there is faith, but not where there is willful unbelief.

The sign of Jonah is the message of the Gospel for the unbelievers. What the church around the world need is the steady diet of the word of God, not looking for fancy miracles. As I mentioned, many people flock down to those TV evangelists' healing crusades to have more miracles. They may get their emotional hypes during the crusade, but when that is over, they are still spiritually starving, because they didn't have the Bread of Life which is the Word of God. It would be like giving a can of "Mountain Dew" to a young child instead of a glass of milk.

D. BE AWARE OF FALSE TEACHING

Matthew 16:5-12 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Jesus emphasized the importance of being on guard against false teaching. Here as always, leaven is a picture of corruption in the Bible.

Just a reminder for all of you: Just because somebody is standing behind a pulpit and teaching, it doesn't mean that we should trust everything from that person's teaching. Rather, we should compare what they teach against the Word of God in context.

E. HEALING A BLIND MAN

Mark 8:22-26 Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. 23 So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. 24 And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." 25 Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. 26 Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."

Jesus had many unique ways to heal people as we have learned. Can you imagine this blind man hearing Jesus clearing His throat and spit on his eyes? OK, enough of that. But the former blind man now sees. He didn't mind.

F. FOUR THINGS WE MUST NOTICE

2 Kings 4:1-7 A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves." 2 So Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, 1) what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil." 3 Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—2) empty vessels; 3) do not gather just a few. 4 And when you have come in, 4) you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones."

There are four things we must notice in God's miracle:

1) God often begins His miracle with what we already have.

Moses had a rod in his hand, and the Lord used that to accomplish great things. Jesus used a child's lunch to feed 5000 men and their families. All that this poor widow had was a little oil in a jar. But with God, a little is enough to do wonders.

2) God pours out His blessings of miracles to the ones who are empty to receive.

The vessels had to be empty before they could be filled with oil. It did no good for the widow to bring full vessels. When we are full of ourselves, we cannot be filled with the Spirit of God fully, because we get in His way.

3) God delivers His miracles to His servants in ways that they exercise their faith.

If the widow and her sons thought they only needed 10 Tupperware containers, those were the only things they would get filled. God is more than willing to fill us to the brim with His blessings, but it is us who often limit Him with our unbelief.

4) God's miracle is not a show or circus.

Some TV evangelists make so-called 'Miracle Crusades' as promotions for their own ministries with selfish fame and monetary gain in their hearts. If the truth be known, they really cannot show that it was the Lord who genuinely performed miracles. God alone should receive all the glory through His miracles, no one else.

God's miracles often divide people according to their deepest mindsets. In other words, their true hearts toward God surface to the top.

So does it mean that we, at Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita, don't believe in God's miracles? Yes, we do believe them wholeheartedly. God still does impossible things. But we are careful with the messengers and their messages. We compare what they claim against the Word of God.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Don't believe that every miracle comes from the Lord. If it brings glory to Him alone and no one else, it is from Him.
- 2) After the Lord brings a miracle to us, don't even entertain a thought that it had anything to do with us.
- 3) Don't look for signs, wonders, or miracles only. Rather, look for the miracle Giver.