

## **Introduction: Apologia**

A church-wide revival occurs after the shocking deaths of two wealthy liars, Ananias and Sapphira. Before we dive into what happened afterward, I want to backtrack to last week's message for a moment. Many of you wondered why God would take out Ananias and Sapphira for their seemingly small sin of misrepresenting their offering to the church. As I explained, God took such drastic action because the church is to mirror Jesus as "The pillar and foundations of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). If truth is to be found anywhere it is to be found in the church. If lying became the culture of the early church, the devil, "The father of all lies" (John 8:44) would have easily defeated it before the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

I want to add today that we need to remember that God is the Creator of Life, and as such he, and only he, is justified to take it whenever he sees fit. Only he knows the end from the beginning, all the causes and effects, and all the contingencies. Therefore, as Lord of the Church, he saw something so lethal going on in the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira that it necessitated their immediate transfer from this world to the one to come. Furthermore, Hebrews 12:6 tells us "God disciplines all that he loves and every child he receives" (Proverbs 3:12). As the Divine Father, he distributes discipline with the purposes of saving us, transforming us, and protecting his church. This is called biblical church discipline and although we may not like it much, it is prominent in the Scriptures. Now we might think tragic discipline of Ananias and Sapphira would stymie church attendance. "I'm not going to church because I might be participating in my own funeral." But just the opposite happened. Listen to Act 5:12-16

12 The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. 13 No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. 14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. 15 As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. 16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.

## **Signs and Wonders for the Church on Mission**

When the Church is spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ "signs and wonders follow them" (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:20). On four occasions in Acts we see the church performing "signs and wonders" while on God's mission (4:30, 5:12, 14:3, 15:12). What are "signs and wonders" and why should we desire them today? "Signs" are miraculous interventions that "point" to the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God (offensive arsenal). Jesus did many miracles to kick off his public ministry which he characterized as "signs" that the KOG is "present" and "has come to you" (Luke 11:20, 17:20). Of all the miraculous signs mentioned, I believe the greatest is the transformed heart!

"Wonders" include different kinds of supernatural phenomena, staple of which are the healing (all dimensions) and exorcisms. One of the most remarkable "wonders" happened at Solomon's Portico, the place of the church's first miracle, i.e., the healing of the crippled man. People were being healed whenever Peter's shadow passed over them. This wonder is reminiscent of the woman in the Gospels who was instantaneously healed when touching the hem of Jesus' garment (Matthew 9:21). The wonder of Peter's shadow healing people was as practical as it was amazing. So many people were flooding into Solomon's Portico that day that Peter, literally, could not get to them all. Thus, God empowered his shadow to multiply the healing ministry. Now that's a wonder I wonder about!

## **Ceased or Continued? That is the Question**

Whenever we read/hear about “signs and wonders” here, and in the rest of the New Testament, what is our reaction? Is it, “those biblical writers were smoking the ganga or inhaling mushrooms?” Do we think they were necessary to get the church off the ground, but afterward not so much? Or do we object,

No way Hosea! God is still God! He hasn’t changed and the church needs them operating today if it has any hopes to reach our post-church society!

Or maybe you’re not sure? The “cessationists” among us believe signs and wonders were just for the era of the apostles and are no longer applicable. The “continuationists” believe that miracles are indeed for today and if not, why pray or ask God for anything?

### **My Position**

Through personal experience and intense theological study, I boldly announce to you today that I am a loud and proud card-carrying continuationist. However, I believe miracles aren’t as prevalent today for two reasons: 1) We just don’t seek/believe God enough for them and although He hasn’t changed, we western rational naturalists, have, in terms of our expectations of him i.e., we only need to experience him after we die. 2) One of the most defining characteristics of the modern church is its inward focus, i.e., it exists for itself. The New Testament church had an outward focus meaning that it was missionary in its identity, outlook, and practice. Jesus’ great promise that “signs and wonders will follow you” was said in the context of the Great Commission. If we want to experience supernatural interventions, we need to engage his mission more (invite). And that’s starting to happen here at Bay Point. This past week our Tuesday morning prayer group reported the following:

Healed ankle. Employment opportunity out of nowhere. A weak faith made stronger. Peace during chaotic circumstances. A healing of a bad knee.

You can join the “You Version” Bible App and get weekly prayer updates. However, these miracles are proof that “signs and wonders” are still happening today. Before we continue let’s give a shout out to our prayer team that continually prays for us! When we believe that God IS the “God of the Impossible” then all things ARE possible (Mark 9:23).

### **Opposition Parties**

After this explosion of “signs and wonders” the authorities jump in to halt any further ministry expansion (v17,18)

17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.

These were the same authorities that previously arrested Peter and John for the high crime of healing the crippled man. Notice it says they were filled with jealousy (rage as well). Evil is always jealous of the good especially when the good is doing God’s good of alleviating suffering and reversing disease and decay. But while the apostles are in jail another “sign and wonder” occurs (v19, 20)

19 During the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 20 “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.”

An angelic prison break ranks very high on my all time “sign and wonder” list (and we’ll see it later as well)!

### **Conclusion**

If we want to be more of a Supernatural Church, we need to adopt the essence of two popular lyrics, “I want more, impossible to ignore” (Cranberries) and “I just can’t enough” (Depeche Mode). As continuationists, we must believe that every time we pray, no matter how dark, dour, or depressing the circumstances, that God is able and willing to intervene. Obviously, he is sovereign and wise and does everything according to his plan, but he loves it when we seek him and believe him for everything!

Who’s with me?