

## **“THE SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE”**

**2Cor.12:12**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The N.T. teaches that others, in addition to the Apostles, possessed miraculous powers; but, there were certain powers of the Spirit which were peculiar to the apostles.
  - a. These constitute what the apostle Paul in 2Cor.12:12 identifies as “the signs of an apostle,” or powers of the Holy Spirit, which identify the one who possesses them as an Apostle of Jesus Christ; or their seal of apostleship.
2. 2Cor.12:12 necessarily implies that these “signs” or powers (plural) of the Holy Spirit, whatever they were, belonged exclusively to the apostles – they were miraculous powers of the Spirit possessed by no one except the apostles of Jesus Christ.
3. The purpose of this study is to identify these signs of an apostle.

### **II. DISCUSSION**

#### **A. THERE ARE TWO SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE, OR TWO POWERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT BELONG EXCLUSIVELY TO THE APOSTLES OF JESUS CHRIST.**

1. One is the ability of power to receive, reveal, deliver, and miraculously confirm all truth directly from God in heaven by means of the Holy Spirit, Jno.14:16,25,26; 15:26,27; 16:7,13-15; 17:8,18; Lk.24:44-49; Ac.1:1-8; 2:1-4; 1Jno.1:1-5; Rom.10:11-15; Mk.16:15,19,20; Heb.2:3,4.
  - a. This promise was made to the Apostles and to them only.
  - b. The only way others received this revelation was by hearing or reading what they received, preached and wrote in the N.T.
  - c. See Lk.1:1-4; Rom.10:8-17; 1Cor.3:6; 7:1; 2Tim.2:1,2; Eph.3:1-5.
2. Another is the ability or the power to lay hands on baptized believers and impart unto them miraculous spiritual gifts, plainly by Ac.8:17-19; 19:5,6; 2Tim.1:6; Rom.1:11.

- a. It's necessarily implied that only the apostles had the power to impart spiritual gifts to baptized believers.

**B. EACH CASE STUDIED IN CONTEXT PROVES THAT ONLY THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST POSSESSED THE POWER TO IMPART SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO BAPTIZED BELIEVERS.**

- 1. The case of this apostolic power and the baptized believers at Samaria, Ac.8:14-19.
  - a. Vv.5-8 tell us who went where and did what.
  - b. Vv.9-11 tell of their previous deception by one Simon, the sorcerer.
  - c. In V.12 we learn of the conversion of the Samaritans.
  - d. Then V.13a declares that Simon himself believed also and was baptized, i.e., he, too, was converted. Cf. Mk.16:15,16.
  - e. V.13b tells us of what Simon continued to do following his conversion.
  - f. From Vv.14-16 we learn what the apostles in Jerusalem did and why they did it upon learning that Samaria had "received the word of God."
  - g. V.17 reveals how they imparted the power of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans.
  - h. Vv.17-19 leave no doubt that the Holy Spirit, or this power or gift of the Holy Spirit, was given to them "through the laying on of the apostles' hands."
    - (1) What power was manifested or demonstrated as a result of this action that enabled Simon to "see" "that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given"?
    - (2) The answer is found in Ac.19:5,6, as well as Ac.10:45,46.
  - i. Philip, who could and did work miracles among them (Vv.6,13) was still present. Why didn't he impart the Holy Spirit to these baptized believers? Why was it necessary to send apostles all the way from Jerusalem to do it?
    - (1) Answer: Obviously, Philip didn't have the power or the authority to do so! Only the apostles could!

- (2) This is an example where the law, or the principle of parsimony, sometimes called the “principle of divine economy,” is applied or at work; where the idea that entities or supposed existences must not be multiplied in a theory beyond what is strictly necessary; thus proving that only the apostles could impart miraculous gifts to baptized believers.
  - (3) Since God does not do anything unnecessary and the apostles were directed by God under inspired apostles at Jerusalem to go to Samaria, it must have been necessary for them to go to accomplish this necessary work.
  - (4) The apostles Peter and John had been sent by the other apostles to accomplish a necessary work, which proves this is a work of the apostles as apostles of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
  - (5) Now, if they only did what was necessary, to accomplish a work necessary for baptized believers, why was it necessary for them to go to Samaria?
  - (6) Obviously, it was necessary for them to go to Samaria because they were needed to do something that Philip (the miracle working evangelist) could not do; did not have the power to do.
  - (7) The only plausible thing is that they (the apostles) alone could impart miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands.
  - (8) There was no other way, no other means, by which it could be done!
2. The case of this apostolic power and the baptized believers at Ephesus, Ac.19:5,6.
    - a. These Ephesians, though, after the death of Christ, had been baptized previously “unto John’s baptism” (Vv.1-3), a baptism valid before the death of Christ, but not valid after his death.
    - b. According to V.4 Paul further explains John’s baptism to them as to its time and purpose.

- c. V.5 tells us of their immediate response to Paul's explanation about their previous Baptist, i.e., John's baptism.
  - d. V.6 reveals Paul's act with reference to these baptized believers, what came upon them as a result, and of the miraculous demonstration of power following.
  - e. Here again this case demonstrates the fact that the Holy Spirit, or that the power of the Holy Spirit, is imparted to baptized believers, not at the point of being baptized for the remission of sins, but after that by means of the laying-on-of the hands of an apostle of Jesus Christ.
    - (1) They didn't pray for it.
    - (2) It didn't come upon them in a direct manner.
    - (3) Cf. Ac.8:14-16,17.
    - (4) It was the power of the Holy Spirit, the power to speak in tongues and prophesy, they received – not the Holy Spirit himself; it was the gift of the Holy Spirit! See Ac.2:38b; 2:16-18.
3. The case of this apostolic power, Paul and the Roman saints, Rom.1:11.
- a. Here the implication is quite strong that only Paul, and apostle, could impart the spiritual gift.
  - b. If these gifts should be, could be, or would be imparted by a direct means of some kind, why did Paul need to go all the way to Rome to impart them?
  - c. It is to be necessarily implied, in the light of previous instances of such, that the gift would be imparted to the Roman saints by Paul laying his hands upon them, else why was it necessary for him to go to them, to see them (be bodily present) in order to impart "some spiritual gift" to them?
  - d. Also, from Rom.12:6 we learn some in Rome already possessed such spiritual gifts, which necessarily implies that they could not, any more than Philip at Samaria could, impart spiritual gifts to others.
  - e. In Rom.1:11 Paul spoke in a general way as to the spiritual gift to be imparted when he came; he said, "that I may impart unto you *some* spiritual gift." (emp. mine, ejd).

- (1) The reason for that was that, not the apostles, but the Holy Spirit determined what spiritual gifts were to be given to whom. See 1Cor.12:4-11 (emp. V.11); 12:28.
4. The case of this apostolic power, Paul and Timothy, the evangelist, 1Tim.4:14; 2Tim.1:6.
  - a. “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, *with (meta)* the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (the elders),” 1Tim.4:14.
  - b. In 2Tim.1:6 Paul stated, “wherefore, I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee *by (dia)* the putting on of my hands.”
  - c. Noting the difference between “*by*” (*dia*) in 2Tim.1:6, and “*with*” (*meta*) in 1Tim.4:14 is significant in order to recognize the harmony existing in the two passages.
    - (1) 2Tim.1:6: “*by*” (*dia*) “the putting on of my hands”
    - (2) 1Tim.4:14: “*with*” (*meta*) “the laying on of the hands of ...”
    - (3) 2Tim.1:6: ASV: “through” – “the means or agency by which an action is accomplished.”
    - (4) 1Tim.4:14: “*with*”, suggests “to the accompaniment of”
  - d. 1Tim.4:14 is not saying that the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (the elders) was the means by which the gift was given, but that the gift was given *together with*, or at the same time the elders laid hands on him.
  - e. “given by prophecy”, or for the sake of, or the purpose of one becoming a prophet.
5. The case of this apostolic power, Paul and the Corinthian saints, 1Cor.9:1,2; 2Cor.12:12; 1Cor.1:5-7; 1Cor.12-14.
  - a. 1Cor.12-14 prove the Corinthians had spiritual gifts.
  - b. 1Cor.1:5-7; 9:1,2; 2Cor.12:12 provide the evidence that the gifts came through the laying on of Paul’s hands.
  - c. He says, “for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord,” 1Cor.9:2b.
  - d. There is no indication that anyone at Corinth received any miraculous gift while Paul was away (absent) from Corinth.

- e. If the church received gifts apart from Paul's hands then his argument in his defense of his apostleship in that he imparted spiritual gifts to the Corinthians is destroyed.
- f. The chief argument of Paul in defense of his apostleship was that the church at Corinth had received spiritual gifts from him and from no one else.
- g. If one member could have received a gift from another person in Paul's absence (no other apostle visited Corinth), a false teach could have repudiated his apostolic claim based on their gift through his hand.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

1. Thus we have identified "the signs of an apostle," i.e., the certain powers peculiar to the apostles, powers possessed only by the apostles, which are two in number.
2. The apostles and only the apostles had the ability or the power to receive, reveal, deliver, and miraculously confirm all truth directly from God in heaven by means of the Holy Spirit.
3. The apostles and only the apostles had the ability or the power to lay hands on baptized believers and impart unto them miraculous spiritual gifts.
4. What they were promised by the Lord himself, i.e., the miraculous powers to receive and do, they received and did.
5. As a result, therefore, we have God's perfect plan revealed, confirmed and in written form, with the N.T. as our only rule of faith and practice, and which is all-sufficient thoroughly furnishing the man of God unto all good works.