Understanding Signs and Wonders Exodus 4:1-12

God promised Moses that He would perform many signs (4v8-9) and wonders (3v20, 4:21) through him.

Many today are fixated on signs and wonders, believing authentic Christianity must be accompanied by miracles. The argument is simple: since they happened in the Bible, and God is unchangingly mighty, surely they must still happen today. Yet many modern "miracles" lack real power and dramatic transformation. Instead of healing those paralysed for life, feeding thousands with a boy's lunch, or raising those certified dead for days, we hear of easing back pain, curing invisible ailments, or resolving psychological problems. "Deliverance ministries" also often fall into this trap, as people return repeatedly, week after week, for the same deliverance. Is that real power?

Miracles today also frequently serve the wrong purpose, elevating the miracle-worker's status, influence, or wealth, rather than saving sinners through the gospel; they are also tied to a false message, not Christ crucified and risen, but health, wealth, and success, conditioned on allegiance to the "man of God." So often, signs and wonders today lack power, serve selfish purposes, and proclaim a false gospel, thus doing more harm than good.

Yet we must affirm that true signs and wonders do have a place in God's redemptive plan. They appear throughout Scripture at key moments, and in the case of Moses, their power, purpose and proclamation are most clear.

1. Signs & Wonders: Real Power (v1-9)

At the start of Exodus 4, Moses is still before the burning bush, in the presence of the living God. Being summoned before the great I AM, he does not doubt God's power—he had seen His glory and heard His voice. But he doubted his own readiness and credibility as a leader. Memories of rejection in Exodus 2:14 still haunted him. Would the Israelites even believe him? It had been centuries since God had visited his people.

God answered Moses' doubt with three miraculous signs.

First, **power over Egypt's gods**. When Moses' staff became a serpent and then returned to a rod (v2-5), it manifested God's victory over Egypt's puny deities. Egyptian kings wore cobra-adorned crowns representing divine rule. The serpent represented the gods and sovereignty of Egypt—so God's control over it showed His supremacy. The rod, a simple shepherd's tool, despised by Egyptians, was now the symbol of divine authority through a weak man.

Second, **power over Egypt's diseases**. God gave Moses a sign with his own hand: made leprous and healed in an instant (v6-7). Leprosy was seen as both a physical curse and a sign of spiritual uncleanness. Moses now held the power to afflict and to heal by God's command.

Third, **power over Egypt's life**. The Nile was Egypt's lifeblood. Turning its water to blood symbolised divine control over life and death across the entire nation (v9). The staff Moses carried would soon strike Egypt and deliver God's people.

These weren't illusions or tricks. This was real, divine power—working through a man. The same was true of Jesus and His apostles. They exercised power over false gods (e.g., Paul

shaking off the serpent on Malta in Acts 28), over disease (Jesus healing countless lepers), and over life itself (both Jesus and the apostles raising the dead). These were public, undeniable acts, confirmed by both followers and enemies (John 3:2; Acts 4:16). As Romans 1:3–4 says, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power through His resurrection from the dead. That's **real power**—visible, unquestionable, divine.

2. Signs & Wonders: True Purpose (v1,5,8-9)

God gives miraculous signs to **authenticate messengers** who bring fresh revelation. Moses had a new word from God, so God gave him signs to confirm his authority. In Exodus 4:1, Moses asks, "What if they don't believe me?" God replies with the signs in verses 5, 8, and 9, each confirming that Moses speaks for God.

True biblical signs are **more than just supernatural**. God often acts supernaturally—healing sicknesses, intervening in human affairs, answering prayer—but unless done through a human agent, it's not a biblical miracle or sign. Not all supernatural acts are miracles. A miracle, properly defined, is a visible act that suspends natural laws, performed through a messenger to validate their divine message. That's why we expect God to intervene supernaturally today in answer to our prayers, but we don't look for "miracles" in the theological sense of signs and wonders, because revelation is complete with Christ and the apostles (Ephesians 2:20).

Why is this important? Because if anyone could perform miracles today, they would lose their function as authentication of fresh revelation. Miracles in the Bible could not be used to verify the truth of the Scripture. That's why miracles appear in clusters in redemptive history: with Moses (the Law), with Elijah and Elisha (the Prophets), and with Jesus and the apostles (the Gospel). These signs pointed to the authority of their message—John 5:36, John 20:30-31, Luke 7:22, and Hebrews 2:4 all affirm this.

It's vital to see that the resurrection of Christ is the **ultimate sign**—impossible, essential, and permanent—He is impossibly raised in victory over the curse of death to live forever in glory. It proves Jesus' authority over sin and Satan and darkness and death. Yet as Jesus said in Luke 16:19–31, even the resurrection won't convince some. Is that you? If you've heard the message of the risen Christ and still do not believe, there's no hope for you in yourself. Praise God for the hope of the resurrected Christ who is even able to raise the dead, like us!

3. Signs & Wonders: Right Proclamation (v9-12)

When God's messengers perform signs, they are not promoting themselves—they are **heralds of a message from heaven**. The power they display is from God, and so is the word they preach. Not a message of ease, success, or earthly prosperity—but one of **repentance and faith** in Christ alone. Moses preached God's message with power (Acts 7:22); Jesus preached it mightily (Luke 24:19); the apostles preached it with Holy Spirit boldness (Acts 4:29–31).

Today, that message is **complete**. The final sign—the resurrection—has been given. Christ is seated in glory, and the full word of God has been given to us (Hebrews 1:1-3). Now, our calling is to proclaim it. By the Spirit, we have all the power we need. We know our purpose. And we have been entrusted with the greatest message ever given.

So let us go, confident in our calling, clear in our message, and committed to proclaiming the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe (Romans 1:16).