

In India, Book of Acts-Style Miracles Still Happen

It has become common for Reformed and fundamentalist Christians to deny the miracle-working power of God. Known as cessationists, these people insist that the gifts of the Holy Spirit immediately stopped after the Bible was canonized. They believe God pulled the plug on New Testament miracles.

Cessationists proclaim that Christians only need the Bible, not supernatural experiences. That's why they are antagonistic toward charismatics or Pentecostals who claim to have heard God's voice, sensed His guidance in a dream, seen an angel, experienced a healing or witnessed a miracle.

Most cessationists teach their doctrines in the closed, sterile environment of the American church. They don't get out much. If they visited thriving churches in developing countries they would quickly realize that God's New Testament power is alive and well overseas.

I was reminded of this recently when I met my new friend Ratna Sajja, pastor of Messiah Fellowship in Vijayawada, India. A dramatic healing that happened to him when he was a boy has resulted in the conversion of hundreds of Hindus in his nation.

Born in 1964 in a rural area of Andhra Pradesh, Ratna suffered from a terrible fever when he was a baby. The sickness paralyzed his legs so that he couldn't walk. By age 3, he was using a tiny wheelchair.

Ratna's Hindu parents were desperate. His father, Gowthameswara, took Ratna to several Hindu temples to find healing. Gowthameswara made ritual sacrifices, gave money to various holy shrines and even shaved Ratna's head to rid him of any evil curses. But the boy remained crippled.

When Gowthameswara sought a medical solution, a doctor told him that his son would never walk. But soon Ratna's mother heard about Jesus, the God of the Christians. She took her son to a church, and an itinerant Pentecostal evangelist anointed him with oil and said, "Jesus is going to heal your son and give him a worldwide ministry."

Ratna's father was resistant to Christianity at first, but his wife became a believer after visiting the minister. For three months she anointed Ratna's crooked feet daily with the oil that the evangelist gave her—and she started noticing improvements. Then one day when Ratna was six years old, he got up out of his wheelchair. He has walked normally ever since.

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"After my father saw the miracle he was astonished," Ratna says. "Medicine didn't help me. Hindu gods didn't help me. They knew it was a miracle."

After his son was healed, Gowthameswara had a dramatic conversion to Christianity, and he changed his name to Eliazer. In 1972 he started a church in Vijayawada, and many people from Hindu backgrounds were saved. Ratna ended up going to Bible college in India, and then he attended a seminary in the United States. Afterwards he worked for 13 years at Charles Stanley's In Touch Ministries in Atlanta—fulfilling the prophecy that he would have a worldwide ministry.

In 2015, Ratna and his wife, Jyothi, returned to Vijayawada and began pastoring his father's church. It has now grown to more than 1,200 in weekly attendance—and thousands more curious seekers watch services on YouTube. Ratna has also planted 12 satellite congregations of Messiah Fellowship in nearby towns.

It isn't rare for a new convert at Messiah Fellowship to testify of a healing or some other miracle. Just last week a man with an incurable skin disorder was healed, after doctors told him they had no medical solution for his condition. Over the past several years, the church has recorded regular instances of supernatural healings.

In Vijayawada, India, the book of Acts is still relevant. Miracles still happen there. And the Holy Spirit still uses miracles to spread the gospel in a nation dominated by Hinduism. I hope the American church will learn from our Indian brothers that we need both God's Word and His supernatural power to reach this generation.

You can access Messiah Fellowship's YouTube Channel at {eoa}

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