

- If you have been doing the daily bible reading that I have been pushing and promoting for the members here to be involved in this year, then you are just about done with the book of Mark. This week we are scheduled to read the last chapter of Mark and there is a very interesting section of Scripture that came to the attention of the national media almost exactly a year ago.
- On Saturday February 15, 2014, Jaime Coots was bitten by a poisonous snake and later than night he passed away. This is relevant to our text of **Mark 16** because at the end of the chapter (**vv.17,18**), Jesus speaks of some powers that those who believe would possess. Mr. Coots was the “pastor” of the Full Gospel Tabernacle in Middlesboro, Kentucky and this church was famous for being a snake-handling church. Mr. Coots believed, and his congregation and other congregations believe that those who anointed by God will have special protection from God against deadly snakes, and even if they are bit, they will not die from the poison. I am not here to degrade Mr. Coots or others (I greatly respect the fact that they are actually willing to back up their faith in such an extreme way), but I am interested in studying to see if Mr. Coots correctly applies this passage as being a promise to all believers of all times. So let’s study this text of **Mark 16:14-20** and see exactly how this verse should be treated by believers, today.

I. Jesus made these promises to His handpicked Apostles as protection.

- A. It is always important for us to know the context of a passage of Scripture.
 1. Without knowing who is talking, who they are talking to, where they are talking, or when they are talking about, we can get ourselves in a bit of trouble when applying the text.
 2. Without knowing context, we might open up the Bible to just any page and think that the teachings of it apply to us.
 3. For example, if you opened up your Bible to the Old Testament and began reading in certain places, then you would run across prohibitions against: Eating of any animal that doesn't have both split hooves and chew cud (**Lev. 11:3-7**). This would mean that we can’t eat rabbit or pig. I eat pork. In fact, I love pork. Bacon makes everything better! I would be worried, but the context helps out when I read **v.2**.
 4. We could look to many examples of the Old Testament to make this point: requirement of circumcision, not wearing clothing that had more than one piece of fabric on it, not cutting the hair on the sides of your head or clipping the edges of beards.
 5. We must do our due diligence to understand the context of a text of Scripture so we do not misapply it to ourselves or to others.
- B. This passage is Jesus speaking directly to His Apostles who were to help establish and lead the church after His ascension.
 1. Going back to **vv.6,9**, we can determine that this was Jesus who was speaking to the Apostles by following the pronouns.
 2. Jesus was speaking to His Apostles directly and only. (**v.14**)
 3. He said that these signs would follow those who believed and the signs would confirm the word.
 4. We can also infer that these signs were given to the Apostles specifically so they would be protected against harm while they were doing the work of the Lord.
 5. We see this protection against snakes being put to use by the Apostle Paul while he was on the island of Malta. (**Acts 28:1-6**)
 6. We have no examples of Christians behaving as the people of the snake-handling churches do in regard to their theatric handing of snakes. This promise was not made to Jaime Coots or others today.

II. Miracles were performed to confirm the message as being from God.

- A. The purpose of miracles was NOT:
 1. To show that someone was saved.
 2. To be used as a means of profit making.
 3. To show off the spirituality of the individual.
 4. As a means to tempt God by doing foolish things.

- B. Miracles were given to reveal the Gospel and to confirm the Gospel.
1. The Holy Spirit gave the Apostles power so they could preach the Gospel in **Acts 2**.
 2. The household of Cornelius was given power to speak in tongues to show that they were Gospel subjects. **(Acts 10:45,46)**
 3. Peter recognized that they were candidates to receive the Gospel based up the signs he saw. **(Acts 10:47)**
 4. The Hebrew writer acknowledged the purpose of the miraculous gifts. **(Heb. 2:1-4)**
 5. Miracles were not performed for the betterment of mankind. **(John 6:26)**
 6. Which of these purposes was Jaime Coots fulfilling?

III. The message of God is now confirmed through the Bible.

- A. The purpose of the miracles is now accomplished through the reading of God's Word.
1. The completely New Testament was not available to the early church. That made the miracles necessary.
 2. As time went on, the letters and writings of the New Testament were made available to the Christians and they were able to rely on these writings as the inspired revelations from God.
 3. The miracles would last until the complete revelation of God was made available to all people. **(I Cor. 13:8-13)**
 4. We now have that which is perfect or complete. It is the perfect law, the law of liberty. **(James 1:25)**
 5. The Apostles were given all things pertaining to life and godliness and those things have been passed on to use through their writings. **(II Pet. 1:3)**
- B. The means of receiving these miraculous gifts are not longer available.
1. Holy Spirit baptism was never promised or commanded to anyone except the Apostles. **(John 14-16)**
 2. Holy Spirit baptism was only shown twice in the New Testament. **(Acts 1:8; 2:4; 10:45,46)**
 3. The Apostles were the only ones that could lay on hands and pass the gifts of the Spirit. **(Acts 8:14-17)**
 4. Without the Apostles and with no promise of Holy Spirit baptism then the means of miraculous gifts is not available and they are not needed.
 5. From what we can tell in the New Testament, I don't know how Jaime Coots would be saved through miraculous means.

The death of Jaime Coots is such a sad story for so many reasons. Children lost their father. A wife lost her husband. A man spent his life putting himself in danger for not reason. Let us not make the same mistakes as Mr. Coots and not understand biblical context when making application. If we are not careful then we could find ourselves misapplying commands and principles that are not meant for us. May God help us to be diligent studiers of His Word so that we might rightly divide it in all that we do.