

# Partnering with Messiah

Does Jesus still share His work, authority, and power?

## Explicit Scriptures

1. **John 14:12-14** – “Very truly I tell you, **whoever** believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”
  - a. The language here is very broad: literally, “the one believing in me”. Jesus was speaking to the Twelve (minus Judas) when he said this, but he did not limit this promise to them. It would not make sense for him to say that the one who believes in him would do greater things if he was speaking only to the men who clearly believed in him.
  - b. The switch in verses 13-14 is very important. For those statements he used the pronoun “you”, but for the declaration of verse 12, he used the very broad “whoever” or “the one”.
  - c. This broad term “whoever” or “the one” is used throughout John as Jesus made pronouncements that we all take to be generally available to all people:
    - i. **John 3:17-18** – “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **Whoever** believes in him is not condemned, but **whoever** does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”
    - ii. **John 3:21** - “But **whoever** lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.”
    - iii. **John 3:33-36** - :”He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. **Whoever** has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. **Whoever** believes in the Son has eternal life, but **whoever** rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”

- iv. **John 5:24** - “Very truly I tell you, **whoever** hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”
- v. **John 6:35-37** – “I am the bread of life. **Whoever** comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and **whoever** comes to me I will never drive away.”
- vi. **John 6:54-58** – “**Whoever** eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. **Whoever** eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but **whoever** feeds on this bread will live forever.”
- vii. **John 7:38** – “**Whoever** believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”
- viii. **John 8:12** – “I am the light of the world. **Whoever** follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- ix. **John 8:47** – “**Whoever** belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”
- x. **John 12:25** – “**The one** who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”
- xi. **John 12:44** – “**Whoever** believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.”
- xii. **John 13:20** – “Very truly I tell you, **whoever** accepts anyone I send accepts me; and **whoever** accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”
- xiii. **John 14:9** - “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”
- xiv. **John 14:21** – “**Whoever** has my commands and keeps them is **the one** who loves me. **The one** who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”
- xv. **John 14:24** – “**The one** who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.”
- xvi. **John 15:23** – “**Whoever** hates me hates my Father as well.”

- d. Many have said that the declaration in John 14:12 applies only to the Apostles because they were his immediate audience when he spoke the words. This is an inconsistent position because Jesus had a specific audience every time he made a “whoever” statement, but the statements were not limited to the immediate group he addressed at that time. If we cannot apply John 14:12 broadly to those who believe in Jesus, then we must reject all of the above statements that apply to “whoever”. If we conclude that the John 14:12 statement is limited in application, then we must somehow justify applying the statements in all the other verses broadly.
2. **Mark 16:15-18** – “He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”
- a. The promise stated here was spoken to the apostles, but they were spoken *about* “those who believe”. The distinction here is very clear: the apostles were going to go out and announce the gospel, and those who believed their message would have these signs accompany/follow them.
  - b. Many have said that this statement applied to the apostles, but the Jesus’ clear statement contradicts this idea. He explicitly identifies the ones whom the signs will accompany/follow: “those who believe”.
  - c. It is not clear from these words whether every single one who believes would have each and every sign accompany/follow them, but all of the signs mentioned should be expected to follow those who believe collectively. We can see in the book of Acts and some of the New Testament letters that these signs did accompany those who believed in the first generation of the church (with the exception of the poison scenario). Do we have any reason from the Scriptures to believe that Jesus’ statement only applied to the first generation of those who would believe? What benefit would there be to those first believers that would not be to later believers?
  - d. Some have argued (as I used to) that this passage of Mark is not reliably a part of the Scriptures because it is not present in “the earliest manuscripts”, as the NIV publishers indicate in their note to the readers. This portion was known to and quoted by many early church leaders (see helpful article: [Long or Short Ending in Mark? - EARLY CHURCH HISTORY](#)). Whether Mark himself wrote these words as the ending of his Gospel, the words contained here

were consistent with the truth the early Christians knew and passed on to others.

- e. I believe we can accept these words as authentically of Jesus about the unfolding of the gospel work in the world. It is consistent with what we see in the early church and with the whole flow of Jesus' teachings and actions.
- 3. Romans 12:4-8** – “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”
- a. It is significant that Paul included prophesying in this list of gifts for the church. Most people today would accept the other gifts as presently at work in the churches, but prophecy is excluded by many. Paul apparently saw this gift to be just as normal within church life as teaching and giving generously. Do we have any clear Scriptural statements showing that prophecy is no longer to be used as a gift within the churches? I do not know of any at all.
  - b. Prophecy is clearly meant to be used by faith and for the benefit of the body of Christ. If we are not expecting the Master to use us for this purpose, how can the gift be used?
- 4. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 12:27-31** – “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines...Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.”
- a. As in Romans 12, the emphasis here is on gifts within the church for the building up of the body of Christ. Here the more “supernatural” gifts are included in the life of the church as much as those that seem less sensational (e.g. teachers, helping, guidance).

- b. Again, I know of no clear Scriptural indications that these gifts were only meant for the first one or two generations of the church's life. In fact, considering the benefits these gifts offer the church, it seems unreasonable to think the Master would remove them from the gifts he offers at any point in the church's earthly ministry.
- c. Clearly some of these gifts could be used to benefit the unbelievers (apostles who share the gospel, workers of miracles and those who offer gifts of healings, and those who share miraculously share the gospel in foreign languages), and these benefits can still be extremely beneficial to unbelievers today.

## Implicit Scriptures

1. **Acts 4:29-31** – “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.
  - a. The apostles were not the primary ones praying. Luke indicated that those who heard what happened to the apostles “raised their voices together in prayer to God” (Acts 4:23).
  - b. It is unclear at first whether “your servants” refers specifically to the apostles who had been persecuted before this prayer, or whether it refers to the whole assembly of those praying. We get clarity in Luke's comment about the response of God: “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” The “they” is surely a reference to the ones who were raising their voices in prayer!
  - c. All of the believers, then, were filled with the Spirit to speak the word of God boldly. Also, the believers clearly expected God to stretch out his hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through those who spoke the word of God boldly – which was all of them! They knew that the pattern of signs and wonders accompanying the announcement of the gospel (seen all through the Gospels and Acts). If they shared the word boldly, they expected God would enable them to do the works that accompany it.
2. **Acts 8:4; 11:19-21** – “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went...Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good

news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord."

- a. The significant reference to the "the Lord's hand" being with them should be understood as a reference to powerful signs and wonders being done (typically healings and casting out spirits, but not limited to these). This is the consistent way the hand (or finger) of God is referenced in reference to the kingdom gospel going out:

- i. **Acts 4:30** – "Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."
- ii. **Acts 13:11** – [Paul to Elymas the sorcerer] "Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand."
- iii. **Luke 11:20** – "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."
- iv. **See references to the wonders of Israel's deliverance from Egypt using the language of God's/Moses' hand:** Exodus 7:5; 8:5; 9:3; 9:22; 10:12; etc.
- v. If these people went out to spread the message of the Kingdom and of the Messiah and had the hand of the Lord work powerfully with them so that many believed, it would be consistent with the summary statement made at the end of Mark: "**Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it**" (Mark 16:20).
- vi. This account by Luke verifies that the apostles weren't uniquely empowered to do signs and wonders, but that they did wonders because they were spreading the word of the Kingdom and the Messiah, and that this work reliably has the accompanying power of the Spirit to do the signs and wonders to confirm the word.
- vii. Many say that this is no longer needed because we have the completed "canon" (authoritative Scriptural writings used to measure all else by). This idea is not in the Scriptures and has many problems on a practical level. The Jews had a lot of Scriptures to which they could look to verify the message, but the signs and wonders were still shown to them to verify that God was present to verify the message. It seems clear that this is still needed today with our present Scriptural canon.

### 3. The Works Verifying the Message and Messengers:

a. Jesus was very clear that the works of healing and casting out demons was a crucial part of persuading people that the message he declared was of God. It is hard to imagine that it would be any different today when so much skepticism abounds and so much has been done to damage the witness of the church.

- i. **Matthew 11:20-24** - Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.<sup>[6]</sup> For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”
- ii. **John 5:36** – “I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me.”
- iii. **John 10:25-26** – “The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.”
- iv. **John 10:37** – “Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”
- v. **John 14:11** – “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.”
- vi. **John 15:24** – “If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.”
- vii. Why would Jesus and the apostles need these things to verify the divine source of their message while we do not? Does the world listen more attentively to us because of our centuries of tradition or our claim that we have completed canon of Scripture? Don’t they listen more attentively because of clear and powerful signs of God’s reality, just as the ancients did? Why would God want the ancients to have

that benefit but not the people of the last eighteen or nineteen centuries?

- b. **Luke 16:27-31** – “He [the rich man] answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ ‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”
- i. Many have pointed to this text to make the case that signs and wonders are no longer needed to share the gospel convincingly. This punchline to Jesus’ story about the poor man Lazarus and the unnamed rich man cannot be making that point. The Master spoke this as a rebuke to the stubborn religious leaders who did, in fact, have signs and wonders to consider, including the raising of dead people, but were unwilling to believe the gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus was announcing. He did not say this to deny signs and wonders are effective for many; rather, he said it to point out the outrageous stubbornness of the unrepentant hypocrites. They had the Scriptures and the miraculous, but still they wouldn’t believe.
  - ii. To use this in making the case that the miraculous signs and wonders of the Kingdom mission have ceased is to yank it violently out of its clear context and purpose. This is something we must very carefully not do!