

Exodus 8:16-19 and the Tragedy of Fake Miracles in Nigeria Christianity

Thompson Mayowa Stephen¹, Kolawole Oladotun Paul²

¹Department of Religious Studies, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji, Osun State.

²Department of Religious Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun state, Nigeria.

Pauldotun98@gmail.com

Abstract: *There is no controversy about the fact that a significant and current issue in Christendom that has caught the interest of the general public and urgently calling for scholarly concentration in contemporary Nigeria is the debacle of fake miracles used by false ministers to attract, defraud and exploit people. This problem has wrecked havoc on the value system of Christianity in Nigeria; therefore, the task of this paper is to make a critical scrutiny of the societal ill (with specific attention to the vice of fake miracles) in Nigeria Christianity trying to excavate the reality of this challenge. This study x-rays the concept of miracle from its etymological meaning, the feasible roots for fake miracle invasion in Nigeria Christianity and the drive behind the issue at stake. Also, this study employs an exegetical and contextual methodology; with Exodus 8:16-19 (Third plague) as the theological framework. In view of the radical emergence of the debacle in question; the reality of genuine miracles is another bone to break; thus, this keeps the mind of a modern-man with perplexity and apparently fill its reasoning with several questions.*

Keywords: Challenges, Christianity, Fake, Miracle, Nigerian

INTRODUCTION

Every society has its woes; meanwhile, Nigeria is not an exemption. It is conspicuous today that many Nigerians are daily been hoodwinked in their desperation to free from deluge problem besetting them. As a result, many Christians are victims of false religious ministers. One reads and hears of some fake miracles happening in Nigeria. For instance, it was reported in Punch Online News on 25th of October, 2019.

Pastors come under fire for alleged stage-managed miracles: The founder of Mountain of Liberation and Miracle Ministry, aka Liberation City, Dr Chris Okafor, has come under fire on social media after a video clip showing him performing what appeared like a miracle created a controversy. However, the same woman was shown in another video clip claiming she had the same problem as another unidentified pastor prayed for her in the publicⁱ.

There arose many questions based on this recent report, but a critical look of previous reports on Gist Online News (24th Nov, 2016) gives an account of a man who allegedly dies during fake miracle. The man of God in question had paid the man who is a trader, the sum of N500, 000 to pretend to be dead and to be carried in a coffin to the venue of a crusade where the pastor would perform the fake miracle and allegedly raise him from the dead. But before the coffin could get to the venue of the event, the trader had reportedly died probably due to suffocationⁱⁱ. This ravaging occurrence calls for a cogent need to look at what miracles entails from the biblical perspective so as to address this phenomenon as it goes beyond the borders.

The focus of this paper is on the prevalent challenge of fake miracle in Nigeria Christianity. Looking at the havoc it has wrecked on the worth-system of Christianity, this paper makes a critical scrutiny of the societal ill of the vice in Nigeria Christianity trying to excavate the reality of this

phenomenon and affirming whether genuine miracles still exist. Interestingly, God did not leave his people blinded as the Bible is not silent on the issue; this in turn makes the miracle performed by Moses (Ex 8:16-19) a cardinal part of this discourse. Also, this study also proffers biblical cautions for Christian's as awareness for the observed vice.

The study posits that the malady of fake miracles in Christendom that has caught the interest of the general public. Therefore, this research is significant in the sense that it addresses and redresses the church on the reality of false miracles occurrences and its multiplicity which is prevalent in the contemporary Nigerian Christianity. This study delves into the concept of miracle through the biblical purview. Although, miracle can be examined in philosophical perspective; this is not the focus of this work. It must also be specifically noted that no attempt will be made outside the confined of Nigeria Christianity; this is the bearing of the study.

In essence, this study is aimed at excavating the challenges of fake miracles in Nigeria Christianity with reference to Exodus 8:16-19 as a biblical thermometer and thermostat. This work is accurately is enshrined on Exodus 8:16-19 as the theological framework to analyze, examine and evaluate the societal malady which is ravaging Churches in Nigeria today. Based on the scope and objective of this work, it is imperative that the researcher carefully choose a suitable research methodology for the goal of this work. The study adopts exegetical and contextual methodology for the research.

The Statement of Problem

The problem with the attitude of many Nigeria ministers towards worldliness is that they engage in fraudulent strategies to gain flocks and amass materialism. It is ironical and quite disheartening that some Nigeria men of God have gallantly deviated from the path and pay a lip service to the

true Christianity thinking the best way of doing missions is by using human wisdom and fake strategies hence, neglecting the Holy Spirit as tool for effective ministry. This deceitful practice has affected the reputation of the Church in Nigeria. As one thinks of this problem facing the Christianity in Nigeria today, one is moved to ask the following questions; what is the feasible root for fake miracles in Nigeria? What are the fuelling factors responsible for fake miracle invasion in Nigeria Christianity? Are there authentic miracles at all? The questions raised forms the theoretical framework of this study.

Definitions of Terms

The study sees the need to take cognizance of the word 'miracle'. Just as Sunday Egwu (2010:188) opines, "Once a definition is given and accepted, it then narrows the boundaries of disagreement, thus enabling all to have a common focus of what the discussion is all about"ⁱⁱⁱ

Miracle

The term 'miracle' is traced to the Latin word '*miraculum*' which is derived from *mirari*, to mean "wonder"; thus the most general characterization of "miracle" is an event that provokes wonder. Merriam Webster Online Dictionary (2019) opines that "miracle is an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs the healing miracles described in the Gospels"^{iv}.

With the above definition it is clear that 'miracle' is an extraordinary happening in the physical world that apparently surpasses all known human or natural power of and is beyond any natural or scientific explanation; it can only be a product of supernatural agencies.

Fake

The term fake is "a word to describe people who aren't themselves in order to gain friends and end up being more popular. They seems very nice to everyone, yet trash talks them behind their back in order to get attention from people and make "friends" just to improve their social status."^v The word fake is "an object that is made to look real or valuable in order to deceive people"^{vi}. The word fake has its synonyms such as: forgery, counterfeit, mock-up, pirate, fraud, sham and copy.

Background to the Book Exodus

The Book Exodus

The book of Exodus continues the account of God's dealing with the descendant of Abraham that began in Genesis. It is pivotal for the Old Testament narrative and the faith that it sustains. Janzen (2010:15) claims that to remove this book would collapse the Old Testament story just as the removal of the four Gospels would collapse the New Testament^{vii}. In the same vein, John Muddiman (2010:92) submits that the second book of the Pentateuch is in many ways its centre piece. Genesis is about Israel's ancestors, Exodus tells how they became a nation through the action of their God. It is Israel's foundation story, their identity document, telling

them where they have come from and showing them their place in the world under God's sovereignty.^{viii}

The title "Exodus" is quite appropriate, though that was not the original name in the Hebrew text. That text followed the custom of describing a book by its opening words, in this case, "These are the names" (We'elleh shēmôth), or more simply, "names" (shēmôth). Longman and Dillard (2006: 63-82) are of the view that the title "Exodus" came through the Latin Vulgate which refers to the book as Liber Esodus. (We elleh shemôth, the opening words of the book) demonstrates the connection with Genesis in two ways. In the first place, the book begins with the conjunction "and" showing that it is a continuation of a preceding narrative.

Second, the opening phrase repeats a phrase in Genesis 46:8, both passages naming those "sons of Israel" who went down to Egypt at the time of Joseph. The concluding episode in Genesis (50:22-26) also highlights the connection between Genesis and Exodus. At his death, Joseph requested that his bones be carried up from Egypt. When Israel finally left Egypt, the text mentions that Moses took the bones of Joseph (Ex. 13:19).^{ix}

Authorship

According to Jewish and Christian traditions, it is believed that Moses authored the book of Exodus under the direction of God. Merrill (2011: 190, 206) says as with the book of Genesis, the primary options for the composition of Exodus fall into two categories. The first category alleges the use of various sources, gathered and edited by someone long after the Moses and the second views Moses as having some responsibility as the author or source of the traditions^x. Long and Longman III (2003:97) opines that some scholars consider Moses to have written major portions of Exodus with certain additions made by later editors (e.g., the genealogy in 6:14-27).^{xi} The extensive third person narrative of Exodus along with various parenthetical insertions were added by someone other than Moses.

Hill and Walton (2001: 104) point to the four literary units that were clearly Mosaic regarding the book of Exodus (15:1-21; 17:8-16; 19:1-24; 34:1-28) and he also affirms that the book of Exodus stands substantially as the literary product of Moses.^{xii} This is obvious within the book itself, there are occasions when it is clearly stated "Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (17:14); "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people" (24:4, 7); "Then the Lord said to Moses, write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" (34:27).

The Date of Exodus

The dating of exodus event is difficult and the question of the date of exodus has captured the attention of scholars for centuries. E.H Merrill (2008:145,147) is of the opinion that no exodus at all.^{xiii} In the middle of the twentieth century, the two primary options were a late date (c. 1250 BC) and an early date (c. 1446 BC). The debate between an early date and late date of the exodus has become the intramural debate for the evangelicals.

On the one hand important interpretive issues are involved in the portion one takes that have implications for the way one interprets numerous OT passages. In other words the debate is not meaningless or insignificant. Although evangelicals differ in the way they understand OT chronology and certain archeological discoveries, but they share an important common heritage.

Michael (2011:190- 206) noted that two biblical texts are relevant to the date of the exodus. The first and most direct statement is 1 Kings 6:1: “In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD.” This passage places the exodus 480 years before Solomon’s fourth year, for which scholars are able to give an absolute date of 967 BC.

The date of the exodus is then 1447 BC or thereabouts, allowing for the possibility of a rounded-off number and the second relevant passage is Judges 11:26. However, the juncture of biblical statements along with the indications of various archaeological discoveries also seems to favor strongly the early date position.^{xiv}

Exegesis of Exodus 8:16-19

The Text in Hebrew Translation

16 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הִשָּׁבֶם בְּבִקְרֹה וְהִתְיַצַּב לִפְנֵי פְרֹעֹה הַגֹּהֵז יוֹצֵא הַמִּמָּדָה וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה שְׁלַח עִמִּי וַיַּעֲבֹדְנִי:
17 כִּי אִם־אֵינְךָ מִשְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי הַגִּנִּי מִשְׁלִיחַ כֹּה וּבַעֲבֹדֶיךָ וּבַעֲמָדָה וּבַבְּחִידֶיךָ אֶת־הָעֶרֶב וּמִלֵּאֹו בְּתֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶת־הָעֶרֶב וְגַם הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־הֵם עָלֶיהָ:
18 וְהַפְּלִיטִי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־אֲרָץ גִּשְׁן אֲשֶׁר עִמָּד עָלֶיהָ לְבִלְתִּי הִיֹּת־שָׁם עָרֵב לְמַעַן תִּדַּע כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּקִרְבֵּי הָאָרֶץ:
19 וְשָׁמַתִּי פֶדֶת בְּיַד עַמִּי וּבְיַד עַמָּדָה לְמַתָּר יְהוָה הָאֵל הַגֹּהֵז:

The Text in English (NIV)

Exodus 8:16. Then the LORD said to Moses tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground,’ and throughout the land of Egypt the dust will become gnats.

8:17. they did this, and when Aaron stretched out his hand with the staff and struck the dust of the ground, gnats came upon men and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats.

8:18 But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals.

8:19. The magicians said to Pharaoh, “this is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said.

Analysis of Exodus 8:16-19

It is observed by Hebrew commentators that the nine plagues are divided into three groups: distinct warnings are given of the first two plagues in each group; the third in each is inflicted without any previous notice; namely, the third, lice, the sixth, boils, the night, darkness. Walvoord (1985:122) also agrees that unlike the previous two plagues, this one came without warning. This was also true of the sixth and ninth plagues. This may have been because of Pharaoh’s false promise of release (vs. 8, 15). The judgment was sudden. Aaron struck the dust with his staff, and flying, biting insects covered man and beast. The Hebrew word for gnats is ‘*kinnim*’, which occurs only here in the Old Testament. It may mean gnats or perhaps mosquitoes.^{xv}

The verb (Nakâ) in verse 16 is often used for “hitting” or “smiting” an object with one, non-fatal strike. A man may “smite” an animal such as an ass (Num 22:23, 25, 27). He may “hit” a person on the cheek (Psa 3:7; Lam 3:30) or in the eye (Exo 21:26). Exodus records that Moses’ rod “struck” the river (Exo 7:17), the dust (Exo 8:16) and a rock (Exo 17:6) thus the theological importance is the fact that God is often the subject of Nakâ.).

Fleming (2005:123) explained that God intensified his display of power in the successive plagues; the Egyptian magicians were forced to admit defeat. They saw that Moses and Aaron was not just a couple of sorcerers or magicians who could foresee events then perform tricks to make it appear they had produced the events. This was the direct activity of God, and the protection of Israel through the plagues confirmed the fact. The favorable breeding conditions created by the first two plagues may have been the causes God used to produce successive plagues of gnats and flies (8:16-32)^{xvi}.

Matthew (1994:108) opines that these lice were produced out of the dust of the earth; out of any part of the creation God can fetch a scourge, with which to correct those who rebel against him. Even the dust of the earth obeys him. In view of this, Adeyemo (2006) explains; this can be seen as a blow against Set, the Egyptian god of the desert. Also, there may have been a pun here, for the Egyptian word “*Pharaoh*” is similar to the Hebrew word “*aphar*” which means dust

The mention of dust also brings Genesis 2:7 to mind; an abrupt reminder of human insignificance before the creator (Kolawole, 2019). Therefore, it is logical to think that this man-god is really insignificant as dust.

These lice were very troublesome, as well as disgraceful to the Egyptians, whose priests were obliged to take much pain that no vermin ever should be found about them. All the plagues inflicted on the Egyptians, had reference to their national crimes, or were rendered particularly severe by their customs. The magicians attempted to imitate it, but they could not. It forced them to confess, this is the finger of God! The check and restraint put upon us needs be from a Divine power. Sooner or later God will force even his enemies to acknowledge his own power.

Pharaoh, notwithstanding this, was more and more obstinate.^{xvii}

Ex. 8:18. “The magicians did so with their enchantments (i.e., smote the dust with rods), to bring forth gnats, but could not.” The cause of this inability is hardly to be sought for, as Knobel supposes, in the fact that “the thing to be done in this instance, was to call creatures into existence, and not merely to call forth and change creatures and things in existence already, as in the case of the staff, the water, and the frogs.” For after this, they could neither call out the dog-flies, nor protect their own bodies from the boils; to say nothing of the fact, that as gnats proceed from the eggs laid in the dust or earth by the previous generation, their production is not to be regarded as a direct act of creation any more than that of the frogs.

The miracle in both plagues was just the same, and consisted not in a direct creation, but simply in a sudden creative generation and supernatural multiplication, not of the gnats only, but also of the frogs, in accordance with a previous prediction. The reason why the arts of the Egyptians magicians were put to shame in this case, we have to seek in the omnipotence of God, restraining the demoniacal powers which the magicians had made submissive to their purposes before, in order that their inability to bring out these, the smallest of all creatures, which seemed to arise as it were from the dust itself, might display in the sight of every one the impotence of their secret arts by the side of the almighty creative power of the true God.

Vs 19: Keil (2002:313,314) articulates that seeing the omnipotence of God the magicians were compelled to admit and acknowledge that, “This is the finger of God.” “But they did not make this acknowledgment for the purpose of giving glory to God Himself, but simply to protect their own honour, that Moses and Aaron might not be thought to be superior to them in virtue or knowledge. It was equivalent to saying, it is not by Moses and Aaron that we are restrained, but by a divine power, which is greater than either. The word Elohim is decisive in support of this view. If they had meant to refer to the God of Israel, they would have used the name Jehovah. The “finger of God” denotes creative omnipotence (Ps. 8:3; Luke 11:20, Ex. 31:18). Consequently this miracle also made no impression upon Pharaoh^{xviii}. Elwell (1996:34) is of the opinion that the magicians are unable to produce the “gnats”. They tell Pharaoh (v. 19), “This is the finger of God.” By this statement, they concede that they are up against a superior force. Therefore, magicians now recognize that they are being confronted by divine action, not human magic^{xix}.

From the analyzed text, the study observes that there are two crews which can be tagged; genuine and fake. The former is attributed to Moses and Aaron, why the later can be attributed to the Egyptian magicians. Therefore, the study posits that the availability and reality of the genuine will spur the non-genuine. Thus, the dimension with which the two crews works and operates places them in two

different and conflicting pedestals; meaning that any miracle that doesn't come through the divine channel of the Almighty God is sham and a scam at that.

The study posits that in the analyzed text, the crews of Pharaoh have been known and identified as magicians obviously associated with what and who they actually stand for; no deceit attached. This in turn brought about their remark at the end. But in Nigerian Christianity, reverse is the case; fake and non-genuine miracles are done under the canopy of Christianity; during Christian meetings, gatherings and services.

Feasible Roots for Fake Miracle Invasion

The next question that comes to mind is what is the foundation of these false manifestations? Lugwuanya (2000:30) says among the evangelistic strategies employed by the missionaries in colonial Africa, healing and the eradication of the roots of suffering, diseases, and illnesses ranked most successful. In essence, missionaries and African evangelists who succeeded in offering healing and protection for the people won more converts^{xx}. This is not unconnected with the physical, spiritual, economic, and psychological conditions of a typical African. For instance, the people believe that every misfortune comes from magical attack, witches, wizards, or other demonic powers in their environments.

This religio-cultural setting encourages the desire for miracles to cure diseases and resolve other distressing situations. The fear of these malevolent agents is, therefore, so deeply rooted that both modern education and religions cannot totally eradicate them. “In fact, Harry (2010:10) articulates that women are overwhelmingly the better customers of the church business in Nigeria. The reason is obvious; women are more emotionally vulnerable than men. For instance, Nigeria women have so many peculiar problems such as a search for suitable responsible husband, the supply of which is getting shorter by the day, or she has a husband but no children, so she is desperate for the fruit of the womb^{xxi}.”

There is no doubt that any religion or individual that does not only claim, but also demonstrates, the power to deliver from those oppressive forces will not only win such person's attention but also their affection. Today in Nigeria, there is hardly a well-known denomination or ministry that is not linked with the performance of miracles. In view of this, Abogunrin (2004: ix) makes an observation that people appear in their thousands in churches and crusade grounds (both Christians and non Christians) not seriously seeking after Christ or spiritual food, but for miracles. Thus, healing miracles have actually become the real thing or the most current issue in African Christianity today.^{xxii}

Factors Responsible for Fake Miracle Invasion

The Lust for Materialism

Many Christian religious ministers today in their quest for materialism have deviated from the gospel as it was in the

beginning. Since they could not maintain the divine principle Matthew 6:33 “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (KJV). What they sing to cover what they do is: “Me I no go suffer, I no go beg for food, God of miracle na my papa o.” Its translation goes does; I will not suffer or beg for food since God of miracle is my father. In view of this, Zachariah (2013:37) opines that the rise of materialism among some pastors has led to their being described as “Men of Gold” rather than Men of God. He also describes them as “gospel merchants” who “possess predatory skills akin only to carnivorous animals that lie in wait for their prey with the intent to pounce on them at the slightest opportunity.”^{xxiii}

These Materialistic ministers use self-employed skills for manipulation, coercion, threats and dictatorial behavior to squeeze more financial and material wealth from their congregations. Because of materialistic pursuit in their ministry, they put themselves in the position of being enemies of God (Mal 1:6; Micah 3:9–12). Ayantayo (2010:208) is also of the opinion that the lust for materialism has affected the religious moral values such as honesty, truthfulness, co-operation and contentment. It has elevated the ‘Get Rich Quick Syndrome’ in the mind and mentality of Nigerians especially the young ones.^{xxiv} The lust for wealth has made them to engage in a materialistic ideology, to the detriment of the laity and to the discredit of the ministry. As a result, they have shifted from the basics of winning souls and working hard to build up the faith of church members to a desire to derive material benefits from the ministry.

The Lust for Fame

A number of these so-called Christian religious ministers (pastors, prophets, evangelists etc) who engage in this fake miracle are in ministry not because they are called to the ministry but because they want to escape joblessness. They only force themselves into the pastoral ministry for self gain, self seeking. Basically, Scripture reveals the pastoral office as a called one. As Robert (1985:4) asserts, a pastor “is an ordinary person who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, has experienced the call of God in his life for full-time Christian service, and knows that he is fit for such service because he meets certain biblical character qualifications.”^{xxv}

On the contrary, these self seeking ministers in their quest for popularity they have resorted to bizarre rituals of healing and luring more people to their church by performing prearranged illusions with people acting as blind, deaf and dumb and cripple people, with this they are more known on social media which goes viral. Onwuka (2011:34) asserts that these kind of false ministers engage in boasting, and defining ministerial success in terms of the quality of clothes they wear, the type of cars they drive, the amount of salary they earn, and even in some cases the type of television they have in their parlor.^{xxvi} Paul described such people as “peddlers of God’s word” (2 Cor. 2:17; 11:13-15). Some are

even wolves in sheep’s clothing, deliberately setting out to distort the truth and devour their prey (Matt 7:15; 10:16).

The Lust for Crowd

The quest for crowd has led many pastors, evangelists and prophets into ungodly practices. Some have gone into occultism, ritualism and all kinds of voodoo practices in order to perform fake miracles that will attract more people or crowds to their churches or ministries. Kalu (2008:12) observed that many pastors involve themselves in all kinds of unholy practices in order to attract unsuspecting members of the public, who regard them as powerful men of God^{xxvii}.

To gain attention to themselves they dramatize, stage managed session of exorcism where they fake the expulsion of demons in form of reptiles or insects from the bodies of their members and create all divers of manipulative scenes that make people believed that their claims are real and factual. These are aims to bring gullible folks to the church or to attract crowds to their crusade, in regards to this Nigerians should be vigilant so as not to be exploited by the fake prophets.

The Effects of the Vice on the Gospel in Nigeria

The gospel of Jesus Christ is all about the good news and it is accompany with the power to transform the society at large but the failure of Christian religious ministers as greatly impede the effective spread of the gospel. The emergence of these false ministers has marred the face of Christianity and detracts or removes from the expected positive effects of Christian testimony and the gospel in the eyes of bewildered watching public. As a result, Nigeria society sinks deeper into corruption and decay and even worse, many souls are being lost because of the spreading of this falsehood in the faith and encouraging believers to be lukewarm in falsehood. This has made many growing believers become spiritually bankrupt because they scarcely unravel good from bad or differentiate between false and true prophet; thus anything that is thrown at them is accepted as good. Therefore, the testimony and loss of integrity of the church has made the effectiveness of the gospel fast losing their grip on society because Christianity in contemporary Nigeria has become anthropocentric rather than Christocentric by the false prophets.

Are There Genuine Miracles Today?

The study argues that the denial of miracles in our contemporary time because of the bastardizing of miracles is logically inappropriate. Miracles are real and they have foundations in the Bible which is evident in the biblical passage above that God used Moses and Aaron to perform miracle in the land of Egypt. The question as to whether outside the biblical times miracles still do happen, more so in our contemporary time, can be answered in the affirmative.

To deny the reality of miracles in our time is a denial of the power and goodness of God in our time. Miracles are acts of God not only to confirm the truth and

holiness of his message and messenger but also for the benefit of his children in need of his favors. Although, there may be many fake and fraudulent miracle claims in our time, many of them may fall under the classification of magic, sorcery and witchcraft, and many though amazing, but they are naturally explainable but that does not mean there are no genuine miracles which have been verified and authenticated by the experience of individuals but Nigerian should beware of fake miracles by false ministers of the gospel.

Hence, it is only when such act or event are unexplainable and is proved to be an act of God either directly or through his messenger that such can be called a miracle. One will therefore affirm after such quantum of authenticated miracles can also be attested to by experts such as medical professionals. Some of these credible miracles include: spiritual (instantaneous and sudden conversion), physical, emotional and mental healings; extraordinary occurrences in the lives of saintly people in the form of spiritual gifts; marvelous phenomenon in places of worship to build faith and other favors spontaneously received by devotees after prayers. These prove the power and goodness of God in our time.

Biblical Caution for Nigerian Christians

The Bible is not silent on this matter of fake miracle, thus provide helpful insights which should be taken seriously. However, God in His foreknowledge warned the church of individuals who would gain people's attention through false miracles and wonders. Such Bible prophecies and their warning messages include:

1. Matthew 24:24, 25; Mark 13:22, 23 Christ's warnings against false Christ and prophets who would work wonders so much that the elect would possibly be deceived.
2. 2 Peter 2:1–3 false teachers that would attract many people with falsehood at the expense of the truth. Such would exploit the innocent ones through made-up stories.
3. Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus says that at the last judgment he will tell some who claim to have prophesied and done miracles in his name "I never knew you"
4. Acts 13:4–12 Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, called Elymas the sorcerer (v. 8), a child of the devil, enemy of all righteousness, one who perverts the right ways of God (v. 10), and went blind by the power of God (v. 11).
5. Isaiah 8:19 God's people should seek their God instead of the power of the devil.
6. Revelation 16:13, 14 because the unity of the dragon, beast, and false prophets working miracles through the spirits of devils.
7. Revelation 19:20; 20:10 there is final doom for both the beast and false prophets.

Conclusion

It has been recorded in the Bible that in the perilous time, there will be a lot of false prophets that will spring up. Recent emergence of several shams is not shocking, although many have been victimized. However, genuine miracles come from God in response to the prayer of His people and for His own glory. Magic or sorcery is satanic in its origin and works through manipulation which accompanies magical principles and rituals. It is suffice that it is manifested in Nigeria; thus, there is need for the Christians to be careful about issues of miracles, signs and wonders as it has entered the nook and cranny of the country. Christians must take heed to those biblical warning seriously about false prophets, false miracles, false teachings and precautions centers on the word of God. In is essential that the church promotes the kind of biblical literacy and discipleship that addresses the contemporary problems that lead congregants to these prophets in the first place.

ⁱ <https://puchng.com/pastors-come-under-fire-for-alleged-stage-managedmiracle/> (Accessed on 22nd Dec., 2019).

ⁱⁱ <https://www.pulse.ng/gist/bad-market-man-allegedly-dies-during-fake-coffin-miracle/r239gsw> (Accessed on 22nd December, 2019).

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About the Authors

Thompson Mayowa Stephen is a post graduate student with the Department of Religious Studies, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji, Osun State, Nigeria.

Kolawole Oladotun Paul studied at University of Ibadan, Ibadan, ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja and Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye. He also lectures with the Department of Theology, ECWA Theological College, Kpada, Kwara State, Nigeria, where he teaches New Testament related courses.