

SIGNS, WONDERS, MIRACLES

PART II

PURPOSE FOR SIGNS, WONDERS, AND MIRACLES

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Most of the manifestations of supernatural power during the ministry of Christ and the apostles (during the periods covered by both the gospel accounts and by the Book of Acts) centered around *bodily healings*. This was the manner in which they were introduced during Christ's ministry (Matt. 4:23-25), and this was the manner in which they were brought to a close about three and one-half decades later during Paul's ministry (Acts 28:7-9).

(And along with bodily healings, *death* was no longer irreversible [Mark 5:35-43; John 11:1-47; Acts 9:36-42; 20:7-12], *material needs* were miraculously supplied [food, drink, etc. (John 2:1-11; 6:1-14; Acts 5:19-23; 16:26)], there was *deliverance* from demonic spirits [Matt. 12:22; Acts 5:16], and *angelic ministry* was abundantly available [Matt. 4:11; Acts 12:7, 8, 23].)

The signs, centering around bodily healings (though including other related things), reflected on and had to do with a dual aspect of one thing: *the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel*. The signs showed *an existing condition (sickness, seen prior to the healings)* and *a condition which could exist (restoration, seen following the healings)*. And *deliverance for the nation* after the fashion set forth by the

signs was contingent on *national repentance, followed by baptism* (cf. Matt. 3:1-11; 4:17, 23-25; 10:5-8; Acts 2:37, 38; 3:19-21).

These *signs, wonders, and miracles* were the credentials of the messengers of the gospel of the kingdom. They were a manifestation of supernatural powers (powers necessary to bring the signs to pass) depicting Israel's present spiritual condition and showing how this condition could change, if... This same manifestation of supernatural power could and would — contingent on Israel's repentance — bring to pass that of which the signs spoke, *i.e., Israel's future supernatural healing* (accompanied by God's supernatural provision for the nation in all areas of life, dealt with in all the other various signs).

(Defining "signs, wonders, and miracles" [e.g. Acts 2:22], the "sign" is *centrally* in view; and the words "wonder" and "miracle" *describe* the "sign." That is, the "sign" [Gk. *semeion*] is both a "wonder" [Gk. *teras*, something out of the ordinary] and a "miracle" [Gk. *dunamis*, meaning "power," referring to the supernatural power necessary to bring the sign to pass].)

ISRAEL'S PRESENT SPIRITUAL CONDITION

Israel's spiritual condition prior to God's miraculous healing is revealed numerous places in Scripture. But note Isaiah's description of the nation in this respect:

"Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

Why should ye be stricken anymore? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores:

they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (1:4-6).

This was the way Isaiah introduced Israel at the very beginning of his prophecy; but he didn't remain at this point, *depicting Israel's spiritual condition during his day (a condition which has continued to the present day)*. Isaiah went on, at the beginning, to relate the main subject matter of his prophecy.

Israel was sick, but Israel could and one day would be cured of this sickness. And the latter is what Isaiah went on to also relate. Israel's condition *was not* permanent. The nation *would* one day be healed.

But this would occur only after *God's conditions* had been met: "If ye be willing and obedient..." (1:19a; cf. v. 18). Only then would the Lord turn His hand, purge the nation, and restore her rulers (1:25, 26). Only then would redemption occur, and only then would the kingdom with all its glory be restored to Israel (1:27-2:5).

ISRAEL'S FUTURE SUPERNATURAL RESTORATION

But when will Israel repent, allowing *healing* to occur? The answer is provided numerous places in Scripture, but note Hosea's prophecy where the matter is dealt with in so many words.

In Hosea 5:13-6:2 Israel is pictured as *sick*, having a *wound* (near the end of Israel's time of sickness, during the coming Tribulation), with the Assyrian (Antichrist) being unable to provide a cure (5:13). Help though is available, but it *must* come from the same source which Isaiah or any of the other prophets foretold. *It must come from the Lord* (5:14-6:1).

Israel's sickness was brought about by the Lord because of the nation's refusal to obey that which the Lord had commanded. And the same One Who brought about Israel's con-

dition is also the only One Who can effect a change in Israel's condition. And a reversal of the nation's condition after this fashion is dependent on a reversal of the nation's attitude and action regarding the Lord's commandments (cf. Ex. 2:23-25; 3:7-12; 4:19, 20).

Israel being positioned in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the head of the nations, within a theocracy, is conditional. It was conditional in history and remains so today. It is conditioned on Israel obeying the Lord's commandments.

The Lord made this very clear to the Israelites through Moses immediately prior to the giving of the Law:

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" (Ex. 19:5, 6; cf. Lev. 26:1-13; Deut. 28:1-14).

And it was also made very clear exactly what would occur if Israel refused to obey the Lord's commandments (Lev. 26:14ff; Deut. 28:15ff). The nation would be punished "seven times [a number signifying the completeness of that which was in view, i.e., a complete punishment at the Lord's hands]," all types of curses would befall the people, they would be removed from their land and scattered among the nations, and they would find themselves in subjection to the Gentile nations where they had been scattered.

They would find themselves at the tail of the nations rather than at the head, and their lot in this position would be that of curses rather than blessings. And, though remnants of those scattered would, at times, leave the Gentile nations and return to their own land (a remnant was present 2,000 years ago, and another is present today), the nation — the

whole nation, including any remnant in the land (Isa. 1:5-7) — would remain in the same spiritually sick condition, with its land desolate. Only the Lord could bring about healing, but in His time.

And that's what Hosea 5:13-6:2 is about — Israel's present condition and that future time when the nation will repent, resulting in the nation being healed. Note Hosea 6:1, 2 relative to Israel's repentance and healing:

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

Then, note the two things revealed in Hosea 5:15 which introduce Israel's future repentance: 1) The two days begin with Israel's "offense" (i.e., the nation's crucifixion of her Messiah); and 2) the two days come to a close with the Jewish people seeking the Lord's face during a time of "affliction" (during the coming Tribulation), receiving the Lord when He returns.

Both the time of the Tribulation and the time when Israel will seek the Lord's face will be two days (2,000 years) beyond the crucifixion of Christ, which was four days (4,000 years) beyond the creation of Adam. Thus, healing for the nation will occur after two days, on the third day (counting from Calvary), or after six days, on the seventh day (counting from Adam).

As God worked six days to restore a ruined creation in the beginning and then rested the seventh day (Gen. 1:1-2:3), so is He presently working six more days to restore a subsequent ruined creation (6,000 years), with a view to resting the seventh day (the seventh 1,000-year period). And all subsequent sections of Scripture, such as Hosea 6:1, 2, merely rest upon and provide additional light for the

foundational framework — showing the septenary structure of Scripture — set forth at the very beginning.

Then, with all of the preceding in mind, note Isaiah chapter fifty-three. This chapter outlines Israel's confession in that coming seventh day, following the healing of the nation:

"Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed..." (vv. 1, 4, 5).

It was this future condition of Israel which Isaiah (along with the other prophets) dealt with so extensively. And it was this future condition of Israel to which the miraculous signs throughout Scripture pointed, whether during Moses and Joshua's day, during Elijah and Elisha's day, or during the days of Christ and the Apostles (both preceding and following the events of Calvary).

The central thought when the Spirit of God closed the Old Testament Canon pertained to Israel being healed [Mal. 4:2, 3], and this was likewise the central thought when the heavens were once again opened over four centuries later [Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17, 23-25]. The New is simply a continuation and unveiling of that which has lain in the Old from the beginning.

Do you want to understand the New? Then study the Old. Do you want to see Israel or the Christ of the New? Then view Israel or the nation's Messiah in the eyes of the Old.

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