

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 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, with the kingdom in view*.

- 1) The signs showed *an existing condition (sickness, seen prior to the healings)*.
- 2) The signs also showed *another condition which could exist (restoration of the nation, in a restored kingdom, 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*, along with being the credentials of the Messengers of the gospel of the kingdom, were manifestations 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...*

These same manifestations of supernatural powers could and would — contingent on Israel's repentance — bring to pass that of which the signs spoke, *i.e., Israel's supernatural healing, accompanied by God's supernatural provision for the nation in all areas of life, dealt with in all the other various signs. And this deliverance, as previously seen, would occur in a restored kingdom.*

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 purifying 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 condition 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 was/is *conditioned on Israel obeying the Lord's commandments*.

Once the Israelites had been delivered from Egypt and were at Sinai, about to receive the Law [the Magna Charta for the kingdom, the rules and regulations governing the people within the kingdom], the Lord made one thing very clear — *the necessity and importance of the people obeying His commandments*.

"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).

(Note that *obedience to the Lord's commandments follows repentance [a change of mind]* in both the type and the antitype.

In the type, the Israelites changed their minds and received the one whom they had previously rejected [Moses]. In the antitype, the Israelites will change their minds and receive the One Whom they previously rejected [the One greater than Moses, the nation's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Zech. 12:10-14; 13:6)].

It is only after this, in the type or the antitype, that subsequent events leading up to the reception of the Lord's commandments governing the Jewish people in the kingdom occur [in the type, following the Passover, the Exodus from Egypt...; in the antitype, following that foreshadowed by these events].

In the type, the Lord's commandments had to do with the old covenant, the Law received at Sinai; in the antitype these commandments will have to do with the new covenant, the Law placed "in their inward parts," written "in their hearts" [Jer. 31:31-33]. And the new covenant may very well be made with Israel at the same place that the old covenant was made with the nation — at Sinai.)

And it was later clearly revealed *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 again 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 [after 2,000 years] will he revive us: in the third day [the third 1,000-year period] he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

Then, note the two things revealed immediately before this, in Hosea 5:15, which introduce Israel's future repentance:

1) The two days (the 2,000 years, covering the Jewish dispensation) begin with Israel's "offense" (disobedience over centuries of time, resulting in harlotry and ultimately the crucifixion of the nation's Messiah).

2) The two days (the 2,000 years) 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.

"The Tribulation" will be *the last seven years of the Jewish dispensation*, a fulfillment of Daniel's Seventy-Week prophecy. And when time resumes in Daniel's prophecy, the Jewish people, time-wise, will be placed *in the position of having just crucified their Messiah*. Then, exactly as stated in Hosea's prophecy, healing for the nation will occur immediately following the Tribulation — after two days (after 2,000 years), in the third day (in the third 1,000-year period).

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 (6,000 years) to restore a subsequent ru-

ined creation, 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 in the New Testament [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 and the Christ of the New? *Then view Israel and the nation's Messiah in the eyes of the Old*.

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