

The Kingdom and the Power:

“Are Healing and the Spiritual Gifts used by Jesus and the Early Church meant for the Church today?”

Old Testament Foundations: Signs and Wonders in Prophetic Ministry.

When Jesus came to earth, He brought what the Bible metaphorically calls the “Water” of the Holy Spirit, who had been poured out on Him without measure.

John 3:34 “For He whom God has sent [Yeshua] speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure = “limited portion or degree.”

Isaiah foretold Jesus’ first coming who predicted the result of Christ’s ministry –

Isa. 32:15 “The Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field.”

Both Isaiah and all the prophets predicted the Messiah’s life, work, and the prophetic Ministry of Jesus.

Their references to Christ foretold of a Kingdom ministry of signs and wonders – both in the past and for today.

Signs and Wonders – Moses and Jesus:

In the O.T. - God did signs and wonders to advance His kingdom.

“Signs and Wonders” first occurs in the Bible to describe the plagues that God, through His prophet Moses brought upon Egypt – Ex. 7:3.

But the miracles were not only destructive:

- God also parted the Red Sea.
- Held up the waters of the Jordan River
- Brought His people safely across both as miracles of salvation for Israel.

In the N.T. – Jesus worked great miracles as part of God’s plan of salvation for His people.

- Jesus’ miracles showed God’s power over nature – just as Moses’ had done.
- Jesus turned water into wine – John 2:1ff.
- Caused the fig tree to shrivel up – Mark 11:12-24.
- Stilled the many storms on the waters of the Galilee Sea – Matt 8:23-27.

- Most of Jesus' miracles involved the healing of diseases and bodily infirmities, and deliverance from evil spirits.

Point: The ministries of Jesus and Moses have important things in common:

- Jesus and Moses were covenant mediators: Moses mediated the Old Covenant; Jesus mediated the New Covenant.
- Both Moses [Duet. 34:10] & Jesus [Acts 3:22] were prophets.
- They both did sign and wonders that were effective in advancing the Kingdom of God and His program for the salvation of His people.

Signs and Wonders and Prophetic Ministry:

The examples of Moses and Jesus show a connection between prophetic ministry and signs and wonders: This is not accidental.

- The O.T. contains evidence that God has always intended to establish a relationship between prophetic ministry and miracles, including divine healing.
- Signs and wonders were a part of what it meant to be a prophet – one who is called to speak and act on God's behalf.
- The connection between God's prophets and God's healing ministry stands out more boldly in the cases of Elijah and Elisha.
- Both of them performed healings and other miracles that looked forward to the ministry of Christ.
 - Elijah's first healing [1Kings 17:19-24] was the raising from the dead the son of the widow of Zarephath.
 - Elisha also raised the Shunammite woman's son from the dead – 2Kings 4:32-37.
 - In both cases, the prophet lay upon the dead body and prayed bringing life.
 - Paul brought the boy Eutychus back to life by lying on him – Acts 20:10.
- Both Elijah [1Kings 17:7-16] and Elisha 2Kings 4:1-7; 42-44] miraculously reproduced scant supplies of food, just as Jesus did with the loaves and fishes
- Elisha healed Naaman the Syrian of leprosy by commanding him to go and wash in the Jordan seven times – 2Kings 5:1-9; just as Jesus healed the blind man by commanding him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam – John 9:1-7.

The parallels between the miracles of these O.T. prophets and the miracles of Jesus & Paul and others are remarkable – and they have a purpose.

God's reasons for performing miracles:

Why did God perform these miracles of healing and provision?

He did it for three reasons:

1. **God did them to show that He is God** – to reveal His character and nature that He alone is the Omnipotent – All Powerful God. As Elijah on Mt. Carmel, 1Kings 18:16-39. Whatever else a sign or a wonder does, it always brings Glory to God, who alone could do such things?
2. **God did them for evangelistic purposes-** God wanted the non-Israelites to know Him as God also.
 - Ex. – the widow of Zarephath, a suburb of pagan Sidon, exclaimed when Elijah raised her son from the dead: “Now I know you are a man of God and that the Word of the Lord from your mouth is truth.” – 1Kings 17:24.
 - Naaman the Syrian was converted to the true God when the Lord healed him by the word of the prophet Elisha: “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel... I will never again bake a burnt offering and sacrifice to any other god but the Lord. 2Kings 5:15, 17.
 - John 9:35-38 “Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him He said, Do you believe in the Son of Man? He answered, And who is He, sir, that I may believe in Him? Jesus said to him, You have seen Him, and it is He who is speaking to you. He said, Lord, I believe, and he worshiped Him.”

God has always sought to reach all nations and bring them to the knowledge that He is Lord and wants to save them.

3. **God did and does signs and wonders out of compassion for His own people** –
 - Through Moses, God did signs and wonders to free and provide for His people.
 - Through Elisha, God healed the waters of Jericho so His people could drink it – 2Kings 2:19-22.
 - He miraculously reproduced oil for a wife of one of the prophets [2Kings 4:1-7].
 - Made a poisonous stew safe for His people to eat – 2Kings 4:38-41.
 - Matt. 14:14 “When He went ashore He saw a great crowd, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick.”

All of the signs and wonders foreshadowed what God did through Jesus Christ, who showed God's compassion and provision for His own people – but He also touched

‘foreigners’ – Romans, Samaritans, Syro-Phoenicians always displaying His Father’s glory and love for people.

The Old Testament and Deliverance Ministry:

One-way God healed people through the ministry of Jesus involved a blatant disruption of the demonic realm.

1John 3:8 “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”

Nowhere is such destruction more obvious than in the salvation of a sinner, when the Spirit of Christ brings a person out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God –

Acts 26:18, Col. 1:13. Giving that person the right to become a child of God – John 1:21.

But it is also an obvious and dramatic thing when Jesus “destroyed the devil’s work” by casting out demons.

The O.T. does not say much directly about demonic realm but what it says is interesting that the power behind the pagan religions is demonic.

- Before Joshua leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, Moses spoke in a prophetic poem - Duet. 32 about the sins of that future generations of Israelites would commit. His words are a theological commentary on pagan worship:

“They sacrificed to demons, which are not God – gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. “Duet. 32:17

Later, there is the sad historical fulfillment of that prophecy: Psa. 106:37, 38

“The sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan.”

Paul warned the church at Corinth and us today: 1Cor. 10:19, 20

“Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? NO, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.”

Old Testament Healings and the Prophetic:

God chose to do signs and wonders through anointed prophetic figures.

Through His prophets and covenant mediators such as Moses; through Elijah, Elisha and David.

The New Testament is similar, God did signs and wonders not only through Jesus [the Prophet and Mediator of the New Covenant], but also through the disciples and then through other Christians as the church began.

The parallel suggests that God has always intended Kingdom Life in both Old and New Testaments to be prophetic – a life that includes signs and wonders.

The gift of the Spirit for Kingdom work is what Jesus promised just before He ascended”
“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes o you; and you will be My witnesses.” – Acts 1:8

The Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to enable God’s people to advance His Kingdom.

Old & New Testaments and Healing Today!

In the similar ways in which Elijah and Elisha raised people from the dead and healed them of diseases, 1Kings 17:24, and 2Kings 5:15-17; God used not only **words** but also **power** to bring the lost to Himself.

Jesus did the same in the N.T. Jesus not only preached the Gospel of the Kingdom – He demonstrated it by miraculous healings, deliverances, and resurrections – Matt. 4:23, John 11:38-44.

His words and power manifestations were so intimately related, that the crowds in Capernaum exclaimed: “What is this teaching? With authority and power, He gives orders to evil spirits and they come out.” Luke 4:36

Paul’s ministry follows Christ’s example:

His words to the Romans are: “I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have **said** and **done** – by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit.”

Rom. 15:18-19, 1Cor. 2:4- “...and my speech and my message were not in words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

Paul characterizes his ministry as twofold:

- “What I have said – exclaimed and proclaimed,”
- “What I have done – demonstrated by power.”

Paul seems to make a clear statement that a “Full Gospel” proclamation consists both of preaching/teaching the word and of a demonstration of power – signs and wonders.

This is the same pattern God used in the Old Testament prophets who foreshadowed Jesus Christ.

God has in mind the creation of a prophetic people, who will be gifted to advance His Kingdom by signs and wonders like the prophets of old.

Another way of saying this is: “Jesus not only died on the cross for our sins; He rose and ascended on high and – with the Father- sent His Spirit to enter His people – John 14:17 and empower them – Rom. 8:9-14 for prophetic living.

God wants to work through His people by the Spirit to do signs and wonder on earth, just as He worked through His prophets in the O.T., and through His Son – Jesus and through the disciples/apostles and early Christians.

Jesus declared: “A pupil is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. “Luke 6:40ff, Matt 10:25.

“He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father.” John 14:12.