**The Gift of Miracles - BD27-02**

Our subject this morning is the gift of miracles. We have found thus far that Christians can server the Lord in divine good production only through the exercise of their spiritual gifts under the condition of being filled with Spirit. For this reason, Satan tries to get Christians to go off chasing rabbits by making them seek temporary spiritual gifts, and thereby ignoring the permanent spiritual gifts which we do possess.

So let’s recapitulate briefly this morning. We have found that there were certain gifts which were temporary. Number one was the gift of an apostle. The term “an apostle of Jesus Christ” refers to one who has supreme spiritual authority over all local churches. The term “an apostle of the church” is a general term, and that means simply a messenger sent out. We may have apostles of the churches in that sense today, but we do not have anybody with the gift of “an apostle of Jesus Christ. These men were instruments of divine revelation. They received revelation directly from God, and they were used to write the New Testament Scriptures.

A second temporary gift was that of a prophet. A prophet was a person who was able to predict the future with 100% accuracy. He also was a channel of direct revelation from God about current things. He would reveal the mind of God relative to some situation, very much as someone with the gift of exhortation does in our day—one of the permanent gifts. The message which the prophet received was also used to produce the New Testament Scriptures and is therein recorded.

A third temporary gift was the gift of the word of wisdom. We don’t have a great deal of information on this gift. We have to make some conclusions based on the meaning of the Greek words themselves. This seems to be the ability to view a situation from divine viewpoint and therefore to counsel people accordingly, through the church body or an individual. We have divine viewpoint through the completed Scriptures. Therefore, this gift is no longer necessary.

Another gift that we don’t know a great deal about is the word of knowledge. It is also listed among temporary gifts, so we view it as a temporary gift. This is the ability to relate propositions of revelation under their proper doctrinal category. In order to understand a specific proposition of truth, you must relate it to the general category under which it fits, in order to get its proper perspective upon that particular propositional truth. Until the New Testament Scriptures were completed, there was no frame of reference, and therefore God gave people to the local assembly who had the ability to take a proposition of truth, and to present it and interpret it into the proper frame of reference.

A fifth temporary gift was the discernment of spirits. This was the ability to determine the genuineness of a teacher. Before the New Testament canon was completed, again, somebody had to have the ability in the local church to spot false doctrine from a false teacher. Now we have the standard of the New Testament as the basis of comparison, so therefore the discerning of spirits is no longer necessary.

**The Temporary Facet of Some Gifts**

Now it might seem like a good idea this morning to pause to look at the basis for the claim that some gifts are temporary. Among some Christians, this is strongly resisted. The idea is that everything that happened in the New Testament church is for us today. The idea that certain things were only for that day is not welcomed. But certain spiritual gifts were designed for a specific purpose during the birth and infancy stage of the church age. The purpose was to authenticate a messenger and his as from God. Now we’re just going to establish that as a basic premise. As we look at the miraculous gifts, I think you will see consistently that the miraculous expressions of spiritual gifts was always to authenticate that this man was from God, and this was God’s Word.

The purpose of confirming the transition from Judaism and the age of the law to Christianity in the age of grace was a very great problem. For centuries, God had worked through Judaism. Now along came a group of men and they say, “Judaism is through. The Law of Moses has been set aside. The Jewish people have been set aside. They are no longer God’s agents in missionary activity. God has now turned to a totally new operation where He has taken Jews and Gentiles, fusing them together into one new body.” If you had been a Jew with that heritage for centuries, you would have had to have some kind of confirmation that these people were telling the truth, and that they were delivering God’s mind in this matter. So the miraculous temporary gifts came along for that purpose.

However, the Bible does not have any proof text as such which declares that some gifts were temporary in nature. By the same token, we do not have any statement in the Scriptures that everything that happened in the New Testament is to continue throughout the church age. We don’t have any proof text for the doctrine of the Trinity, and yet it is clearly Bible doctrine. But there is no one single in Scripture that proves the doctrine of the Trinity. That doesn’t mean that it is not a true doctrine.

So just because we don’t have a proof text that says that some gifts were temporary, that does not mean that they were not. We do however have certain hints which indicate that some gifts were of a temporary nature. We have one such in Hebrews 2:3, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.” These are the apostles. They are the ones who heard the Lord. Verse four goes on to say, “God also bearing them witness (the apostles), both with signs and wonders and diverse miracles with gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.” And the expression in verse four, “God also bearing them witness,” is in the past tense, indicating something that God had done in the past, confirming the apostles with miraculous signs and wonders in their day, in order to confirm these men and their message. It’s a past thing, and this is a hint that it is not something that God is doing today. He is not confirming His messengers today by enabling those messengers to stand up before the congregation and perform miraculous gifts.

He does not confirm that a pastor-teacher is telling you the truth today, and delivering the mind of God by enabling that pastor-teacher to stand up to speak in tongues, or to heal someone who has a terminal case of cancer. He is confirming it now upon the basis of the completed canon of Scripture. That’s why in this text that He speaks in the past tense. It’s something that God used to do, but He is no longer confirming it in that way. So this is a hint that certain miraculous gifts have been phased out.

A second factor is that the pattern of miracles in history was to cycle in and out. As a messenger and a message arose that needed to be confirmed, miracles came upon the scene of history. Once that messenger and message was confirmed, miracles were phased out, then later they came back in. You may have thought, without thinking, that miracles were found throughout the Bible. As we shall see this morning, they were not. They were only at certain points of history that miracles arose, and then they phased out. That raises the question as to why there were miracles at a point in history, and then there were centuries without miracles, and then all of a sudden miracles occurred again, and then there were centuries without miracles. That gives us a clue as to what God intends to do with miracles, and that gives us an indication as to whether we should expect to see miracles today.

A third indication is the nature of spiritual gifts. They demand, by their very nature, to be temporary. For example, an apostle had to be someone who saw the Lord in resurrection. We have nobody in his right mind today who claims to have seen Jesus Christ in His resurrection. Therefore we can’t have anybody as an apostle of Christ with this gift. The same is true of the prophet. The prophet had to predict the future with 100% accuracy. We have people who do some predicting, and sometimes with some amazing accuracy, but never with 100% accuracy. They don’t have the spiritual gift of prophecy.

A fourth indication is that history confirms that some of these gifts were temporary, because we don’t have any evidence of divine miracle gifts after the first century. The miracle gifts of the New Testament were temporary because we don’t find them being supplied over the centuries. What took place in the New Testament—we have no authentic evidence that these same things have been taking place since the time of the apostles.

God spoke in history of His temporary nature of some of his work, for example, in the case of Judaism. When he tore that veil in the temple and He destroyed the city of Jerusalem in 70 AD. He was historically indicating that Judaism was a temporary thing. When God ceases to deal with a structure, such as the temple and all that it connoted, it is an indication that He is through dealing with that particular phase of His program. So when we don’t see these gifts functioning (we see fraudulent claims to these gifts) since the time of the apostles, it’s a pretty good indication that they were temporary, and they have served a specific purpose. The purpose has been served, and they have been phased out.

Thus, we are saying that there is a difference between the era when salvation was created and the church founded, and the era of appropriating salvation and the full-blown functioning of the church age. There was a difference when the church started, and what God had to do at the point, in confirming His message and messenger. There is a difference now that the church age is now in full-functioning, and how God confirms His message and His messenger today.

**The Gift of Miracles**

We’re going to look now at another temporary gift, and that is the gift of miracles. You’ll find this in 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28. Paul says, “To another the working of miracles.” Verse 28 says, “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that, miracles.” The Greek word for miracle is “dunamis.” This means a power of establishing something, a supernatural kind of power. It has supernatural origin. It is a force which is beyond the functioning of natural laws.

You would not exactly say that the incident of Jonah was a miracle because, as a matter of fact, we have historical records where, on one occasion, a man fell overboard on a whaling expedition, and a large whale indeed did swallow him. He went into the stomach. There were plenty of air cavities in there for him to breathe. There was plenty of food floating by, sort of cafeteria-like, for him to select from, whatever seemed to be on his stomach at the time. It so happened that they caught this whale. They pulled him aboard and started to process this animal. When they got to the stomach, it was wiggling and jumping. They thought someone was really having a rock concert inside it. When they opened it up, lo and behold, there was the seaman who had fallen overboard. His skin was a livid white, not because he was scared, although he probably was that, but because of the gastric juices in the whale’s stomach. As I recall the story, he never did return to his natural color. But he survived the incident. We are not saying that God did not have a man in bringing that sea monster right next to that ship when Jonah went overboard. But from that point on, this was a natural process.

When we are talking about miracles, we are talking about something that absolutely interrupts the order of natural laws. It takes a supernatural power, the God who established these natural laws, to be able to interrupt them. That’s what we mean by the miraculous, and that’s what this word “dunamis” means.

So, we’re speaking of the mighty power of God as it is exercised in Jesus Christ and by His witnesses. Then we have this word “working,” the working of miracles. That is the Greek word “energema.” This word stresses the effects which are produced by the power. When it speaks of working, it’s not talking about what you’re doing, but about the results of what you’re doing. The results are a spectacular supernatural intervention into the normal order of natural laws. Certain people in the New Testament could interrupt the normal working of natural laws. They had the power to do something that resulted in a miracle, with no fakery, no pretense, and not put-on.

Now the purpose of these miracles was that of a sign to authenticate a claim of a message from God. The miracles did not have so much value for what it accomplished, but what the miracle spoke to. That’s what the word “sign” means. It’s the visible evidence that confirms a certain fact. That was the sign of a miracle—not so people could receive their sight, not so lepers could come to full health, not so people who were dead could come to life again. That wasn’t the purpose of a miracle. The purpose of a miracle was to show something—that God was speaking and that this was His man who was doing the speaking.

In Mark 16:20, we read, “And they (the disciples) went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word with signs following.” Here the miracles are specifically declared to be a confirmation from God of His messengers. This was the normal regular pattern of the purpose of miracles historically—the power of God confirming message and messenger. In 2 Corinthians 12:12, Paul says, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, in signs and wonders and might deeds.” Now what does he mean? Paul says the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in wonders and mighty deeds. For what purpose?

Well, when he spoke up and said, “I am an apostle. I have the gift of supreme authority over all local churches conferred upon me by God. I authenticate this claim in your eyes at this point by these miracles that I am now going to perform.” Now this message that the apostle brought us is now in the New Testament Scripture, so the gift of miracle confirmation has ceased. There is nobody today who can perform instantaneous miracles through the power of God, such as the healing miracles. There are some today who are capable of performing the miraculous through satanic power, but these also have limitations.

One thing Satan is not able to do, and that is raise somebody from the dead. There may be some people who may have purported to have raised somebody from the dead, or maybe claims to that effect, but these are usually claims that are too far away to be confirmed. Don’t be carried away by someone who writes a book purporting to something that happened that’s so far away, but you can’t confirm it, because they heard somebody who said something. Or there may be any number of reasons. One nurse said, “You know, we also had a case where someone was seemingly dead, and then they snap back to revival on us, and it seems to us to be miraculous.” You had better take that into account.

Satan is the cleverest deceptive sneaky tricky character you ever saw. He will con you. He will con you if you’re fool enough to believe him. And do you know what will make you fool enough to believe it? Because your mentality, the directive side of your mind, is empty of Bible doctrine so you no longer have a frame of reference. So your emotions get down inside of you and they take over. They charge up and they take you mentality, and they make a fool of you in spiritual things. I cannot warn you enough to let your emotions take over and guide your mind. By that I don’t mean that you’re not going to find great happiness in the things of the Lord. I’m not implying for one moment that it won’t be a very thrilling experience to learn the Word of God and to see the Word of God functioning and working in your life. I’m not saying for one moment that you won’t say, “Praise the Lord,” “Thank God,” and “Hallelujah.” If that’s your inclination, if that’s your type of expression, then great. But it will be a genuine happiness. It won’t be a fake out happiness, like some gal who stands down at a Las Vegas nightclub belting out a song to make the drunks happy.

Miracles were signs. There is nobody who is capable of performing these miraculous signs today. If you had any spiritual gift, these nine basic permanent spiritual gifts that we went over, if you possessed one or more of those gifts today, and every believer does, then it is at your command to exercise that gift. You can exercise it any time you choose. If you have the gift of teaching, then under the condition of being filled with the Spirit, you are able to put that gift into operation anytime you choose. These temporary gifts were the same way. When a person had the gift of miracles, he could perform a miracle any time he decided to perform it. Any time he was going to raise somebody from the dead, all he had to do was to decide to do it, and he went and did it.

When the apostle Paul got to preaching that night when he was passing through, leaving one congregation for the last time, the service got long. And there set one fellow in a window. He found himself a nice spot and leaned back with a breeze blowing through, and Paul preached on until midnight. Pretty soon he fell down, dropped three stories, and he woke up dead. What does the apostle Paul do? He turns to the song leader and says, “Would you lead us in verse of a hymn?” He hops downstairs and puts himself on this young man, and brings Eutychus back upstairs just as big and fancy as life. Eutychus went back to his window and somebody else was sitting in his place. There was no danger in sitting there. What do you have to lose? When you have a man like the apostle Paul, you can fall asleep and fall out, and you’re not going to get hurt. Because Paul could raise people from the dead anytime he decide to use the gift of miracles.

People are interjecting back to New Testament times the limitations we have today. There were no limitations, just as there are no limitations to your permanent gifts today. Now you can use your permanent gifts now, and they could use their temporary gifts during New Testament times. There is nobody today who can confirm the fact he has instantaneous miracle working power. What seems to be miraculous is through Satan. I remind you again that Satan has great miracle working power.

So we have these groups today who are seeking miraculous expression because they are doctrinally disoriented in the directive side of their mind. Instead of God the Holy Spirit leading them, it is their own sin natures that are leading them to seek the miraculous. Make no mistake about that.

Incidentally, this is not to say that God cannot perform miracles today. He does. God performs great miracles of healing. I know one or two of you who are sitting here and you are a testimony of that. It is a frightful thing when a doctor says, “We know what’s wrong with you but there’s no way we can cure you. You’re just going to get over it by yourself.” I had that happen once. Then you learn what God is. Then you learn how God comes in as the miracle worker.

What we are saying is that there is no agent who is coming along, who you call in, and he puts his hand on you, and you’re healed. And anybody who says that is a fraud, and I don’t care how big of a name he has. And anybody who performs what seems to be a miracle, a healing or any other kind, is an instrument of Satan, or he’s working on somebody’s psychology, and bringing off a psychosomatic change.

**Miracles in History**

Now I want you to think through with me this morning of the periods of miracles in history. Who was the first miracle worker? When did miracles first appear upon the scene of history? Moses was the first miracle worker. The occasion for this appearance of miracles was God’s demand for the release of the Jews from Egyptian slavery. The purpose of the miracles was to confirm that when Moses came to the Jewish people and said, “Listen, My name is Moses and God has sent me to lead you out of slavery,” that they were going to look at him and say, “How do we know you’re telling the truth?” Exodus 4:1, “Moses answered (God) and said, ‘But behold they will not believe me nor harken unto my voice for they will say, ‘The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.’ And the Lord said unto him, ‘What is in thy hand?’ And out of the rod that he cast on the ground, it became a serpent. Moses fled from it. Then God told him (verse 4), ‘Put your hand into your shirt and bring it out,’ and it became leprous.”

In verse 8, “Should it come to pass that they believe not thee, neither harken to the voice of the first sign, they will believe the voice of the latter sign. Should it come to pass that if they believe not also these two signs (notice all of these signs so they would believe you), neither harken unto your voice that you shall take of the water of the river (the Nile), and pour it upon the dry land. And the water which you take out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land. As you read through these nine verses, it’s clearly evident that the reason for the miracles was to prove that Moses spoke for God.

God said, “Now go tell him.” The same was true for Pharaoh. Moses said, “He won’t believe me.” God said, “Use the miracles to confirm the fact that you are God’s man.” That’s exactly what Moses did. The purpose of these miracles was to confirm God’s messenger and his message.

Verse 29 says, “And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel, and Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and Moses did the signs in the sight of the people. These were the Jews themselves, and the people believed. When they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their affliction, they bowed their heads in worship.” Why did they believe? Because it was evident that Moses possessed the powers of God, and no man possesses the powers of God unless he is God’s messenger.

These were also to authenticate his message to Pharaoh. Exodus 7:8 says, “The Lord spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, ‘When Pharaoh shall speak unto you saying, ‘Show a miracle,’ then you shall say unto Aaron, ‘Take thy rod and cast it before Pharaoh and it shall become a serpent.’ And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh and they did as God had commanded. Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants and it became a serpent. And Pharaoh also called the wise men and sorcerers. Now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments, for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents.”

Now did you notice that? How could the magicians of Egypt do exactly the same miraculous thing that Moses had done? Very simply because the magicians of Egypt were demon possessed. They had satanic powers, and here’s one of the proof texts that Satan can perform miracles. However, there was a difference. Aaron’s rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians’. The result was that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.

Verse 19 says, “And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, “Go there and take thy rod and stretch out thine hand upon all the rivers, upon the ponds, upon the pools of water, that they may become blood, and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in the vessels of wood and in the vessels of stone. And Moses and Aaron did so as the Lord commanded. They lifted up the rod and smote the rod upon the water that was in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.” Then it tells what happened to the fish. Verse 22 says, “And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments. They did the same thing. How could they do it? Because they had demonic powers.

The same thing happened a third time in chapter 8:5-6 with the frogs. The magicians produced the same thing that Moses did. These miracle powers of Moses attested also to the Egyptian people the supreme power of the God who was demanding the release of the Jews. In Exodus 7:3, God says, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart and multiple my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt, but Pharaoh shall not harken unto you that I may lay my hand upon Egypt and bring forth my armies and my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of judgment by great judgment, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt and bring out my children of Israel from among them.”

So here we have miracles to prove Moses and his message: 1) to the Jews themselves that he was to lead out of slavery; 2) to Pharaoh who was to give the order for their release; and, 3) to the Egyptian who were to suffer because their Pharaoh was to refuse to obey the Word of God. On all three accounts there was only one purpose for the miracles—not the miracles themselves, but to prove something. So He uses the words “my signs” and “my wonders” to stress that God is doing this and not Moses. The Egyptians shall know power in action beyond that of their magicians.

After this the magicians were not able to do what Moses did. Consequently, they were not able to reproduce the plagues. Satan has powers, but they are limited. God always indicates that Satan is in a coral. Satan can really carry on within his coral, but when he gets to the fence, God says, “That’s all. You don’t go any further.” So there are limitations upon Satan, although he has great freedom within that coral.

So Satan tried to neutralize this divine confirmation with his counterfeit miracles, exactly what he’s doing today. The attempts of Satan were frustrated by the limitations of power that God put upon him. Then follows that whole series of plagues.

The variety of miracles followed Israel all the way through their journey into the Promised Land. Then they crossed the Jordan, that miracle of the Jordan waters opening. They walked through and once the waters slammed together behind them, and that was it. Centuries went by and not another single miracle took place in Israel. No place on the face of the earth was God working miracles.

Then we come to a second period when again miracles show up. When was that? With Elijah and Elisha. This was the time of Ahab and Jezebel. Centuries had gone by since the time of Moses and there were no more miracles. The Pentecostalists today insist that everything that was in the New Testament church is for us today. By the same token, the Jewish leaders over the centuries after Moses could have said that everything that took place in the miracles of the Exodus generation was to be experienced by them. They could have started pursuing them. If they would have pursued these miracles, to try to perform these miracles such as what took place during the Exodus generation, do you know what Satan would have done? Satan would have watched them and listened to them going through their rituals, and he would have looked over at one of his demons and given him the nod, and said, “Do the miracle for them.” And he would have reproduced it. And the people would have run off chasing rabbits saying, “God is among us. How spiritual we are that we can perform these miraculous functions.” But they did not try to follow. They did not do what Pentecostalists are trying to do today, to reproduce what God has phased out.

In the period of Elijah, this was a time of great spiritual apostasy under King Ahab and Jezebel. In 1 Kings 16:30, we read, “And Ahab, son of Omri, did evil in the site of the Lord above all who were before him. And it came to pass as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the site of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that he took as his wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.

Now we can’t review Baal. You understand the Baal sex cult worship, the nude statue, the phallus, the male sex organ, and the Baal figure sitting atop a furnace into which the children were fed alive. Now this is what Israel’s King through Jezebel his wife (marrying an unbeliever), and she brining in her Baal worship background, that Ahab went along with her. Now you can see the conditions to which Israel has come. This is one of the periods of the greatest darkness in the history of the Jewish people spiritually.

Verse 32 shows the depth of degradation into which he had led the Israelites. Ahab reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he had built in Samaria. He now pursued worshipping this god, and centering great attention of the nation upon him. Then verse 33 says, “And Ahab made an idol, and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord of God of Israel’s anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

Chapter 18:4 says, “For it was so when Jezebel cut of the prophets of the Lord that Obadiah took 100 prophets and hid them by 50 in a cave and fed them with bread and water.” If you were a true prophet, if you were really God’s messenger in the time of Ahab and Jezebel, your life was at stake. True prophets had to be hidden because Jezebel went around systematically executing every one of them. This was spiritual darkness in the worst possible sense upon the people of Israel. Something had to be changed.

In verse 17, “And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah that Ahab said unto him, ‘Are you he who troubled Israel?’ And he (Elijah) said, ‘I have not troubled Israel, but thou (King Ahab) and your father’s house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord (Bible doctrine), and you have followed Balaam.”

Here’s Ahab saying, “Are you the troublemaker in my nation?” Isn’t that strange how along comes God’s preacher who’s really telling it like it is, and giving people the information that He really wants them to have, and they call him a troublemaker. That’s sometimes why churches switch preachers, so they can hear the Word without having a sense of obligation to respond to it.

So the period of Elijah was great apostasy. The nation was plagued with the message of false prophets. The true prophets are silenced. The people are in a disobedient rebellious condition. Notice 1 Kings 18:20-21, “So Ahab had sent all of the children of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. And Elijah unto all the people and said, ‘How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him, but if Baal, follow him.” Notice the last phrase, and the hardness of the people. “And the people answered him not a word.” They just looked at him stone cold. The nation was on a spiritual roller coaster.

So what happens? God says, “I’ve got to prove My man and My message.” How does He do it? He does it again with miracles. So there was no rain in the land of Palestine for a period of three years (1 Kings 17:1). There is a supply of food to the prophets by the ravens (1 Kings 17:2-6). No, mind you, there have been no miracles since the time of Moses. Then all of a sudden there was an explosion of miracles:

The widow’s container of oil and the barrel of meal that never ran out. It just kept replenishing itself (1 Kings 17:14-16). The raising of the widow’s dead son (1 Kings 17:21-23). Elijah finds a child dead. We read that he stretched himself upon the child three times and said, “Oh Lord my God I pray thee let this child’s soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came in again and he was revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down out of the chamber into the house and delivered him unto his mother, and Elijah said, “See your son lives.” Notice verse 24, “Now the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now by this I know that you are a man of God and that the Word of the Lord is in thy mouth, and the Word of the Lord in thy mouth is true.

Now how could you put it any clearer than that. Miracles are to confirm a message and a messenger, and that’s all they are to do. They have nothing to do with spirituality. They having nothing to do with healing sickness. They have nothing to do with alleviating human suffering. It has only one purpose, to confirm the message and messenger.

And we have the confrontation with the priests of Baal. You’re all familiar with that story in 1 Kings 18:24, 29, 36-39. In this one, when Elijah makes his prayer in 1 Kings 18:36, it says, “And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that you are the God of Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.’” Again he prays that the miracle would be performed—the fire to light the altar in order to confirm his authority.

Another miracle was the fire from heaven on Ahaziah’s soldiers (2 Kings 1:9-12).

Well, Elijah was taken miraculously to heaven, and Elisha his understudy took his place, and the miracles continued. Under Elijah, we see the parting of the Jordan River (2 Kings 2:14-15). Here were a group of seminary students at the time, sons of the prophets who were studying for the ministry. As you read this passage, you will discover that they were impressed and confirmed that Elisha had indeed replaced Elijah in God’s power.

There was the purifying of contaminated water by Elijah (2 Kings 2:20-22). There was the supply of oil to the widow who was in debt, so she could pay her debt (2 Kings 4:1-7). There was the enabling of the conception of the barren Shunammite woman so she bore a son (2 Kings 4:14-17). There was the raising of the same Shunammite woman’s son when he died (2 Kings 34:32-36). There was the neutralizing of the poison food (2 Kings 4:40-41). There was the multiplying of the loaves of bread (2 Kings 4:42-44). There was the healing of Naaman the leper (2 Kings 5:14). There was the recovery of the lost axe head from the Jordan River (2 Kings 6:5-7). There was the blinding of the Syrian soldier (2 Kings 6-18). All of these were incidents—miracles to confirm God’s messages and messengers.

Then all of a sudden, there were no more miracles. Centuries rolled by and you come to a third period, and that’s the period of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets. John 10:41 tells us that He performed no miracles. Then in 30 AD, along comes Jesus Christ, and He brings with Him the claim that He is the promised Jewish messiah—that He’s bringing the kingdom in that was promised to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-15. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and he claimed thereby to possess deity. How was He going to prove it? Well, I’m just going to run these passages through. You can read them at your will, but you will find constantly in these Scriptures that He was confirming His claim of what He said He was. By what? By the miracles He performed: John 2:11; John 4:47-48, 53-54; John 7:31; Luke 11:20; Matthew 11:20-23; Matthew 13:54-58; Matthew 11:2-6; John 10:36-38; John 3:2; John 12:37; Acts 2:22; and, John 20:30. All of these were for His confirmation.

The Lord was confirmed by His miracles, and then His disciples confirmed their message by miracles too. Luke 10:8-12 and Matthew 10:1, 5-8 indicate to us again that when they went out, their message was confirmed by the miracles.

The next period of miracles was the period of the church. This is the era when Judaism is over, and Pentecost has begun the church age. We have that record in Acts 2:1-4. The Jews were now to accept Christianity. They were to accept the fact that the Mosaic Law and Judaism was put aside. Jesus anticipated the confirmation of the church age by promising that miracles would follow his witnesses.

Well the apostles authenticated their message with miracles (Acts 2:42-43, 5:12-14). When Christians were under persecution, they authenticated themselves with miracles (Acts 4:29-31). The apostle confirmed himself with miracles (Acts 14:1-3; 2 Corinthians 12:12). All of these were confirmation to unbelievers that they were listening to God’s voice (1 Corinthians 14:22). The work of the Holy Spirit, as we’ve already seen (Hebrews 2:4) was to confirm his messengers with miracles.

Well, then the apostles passed off the scene, and here is the problem. Nobody debates that there were no miracles before Moses. Few would debate that there were no miracles between Moses and Elijah. Few would debate that there were no miracles between Elijah and Jesus Christ. Then there were miracles in the church age, and nobody doubts that. But here is where the problem comes, coming down here now to where we are today, people say we’ve got to have now what we had in a previous problem. Therein lies the debate, and Satan knows this. Satan says, “Great, you want miracles? You want miracles for some other reason that you’ve invented?” (And I hope by now you’ve seen that there’s only one reason for miracles, and that’s confirmation of message and messenger, and the miracle itself and what it does is not the important thing—what it says is what’s important.)

Satan comes along during the tribulation period, this period when the church is gone. The restraining power of God the Holy Spirit is removed with the church. Then in comes Satan and him man, the antichrist, and the false prophet, and miracles appear again on the scene. To do what? To do exactly what Satan has seen God doing. He’s going to bring miracles to authenticate his false man. Some of the miracles would be from God to authenticate His messengers. Luke 21:11 and Revelation 11:3-6 tell you about miracles that God performed to confirm His messenger, but Satan has a series of his own (Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10; Revelation 13:13-14; Revelation 16:14). These are stupendous miracles that Satan performs. Now the bible tells us that he is going to be so effective that even the saints will almost be deceived. People who are believers during the tribulation, who have not become part of the church, will look at this and they’ll say, “Now that looks like God working.”

However, they will not be deceived. Do you know why not? Because Bible doctrine, the frame of reference of the Word of God, will protect them from swallowing what Satan is throwing out to them. It is that same frame of reference that can protect you and me today. If you are ignorant of doctrine, you will be a sucker for Satan’s miracles today because he is performing them today. He has started what is going to come to a climax during the tribulation. He has started it today because people want it today. So in the current period of the church, you are going to have miracles functioning—from our day on to the tribulation, and the coming to a climax—but they’re going to be Satan’s miracles.

Now you have to ask yourself why there are these gaps in miracles in the history of the world. It is because only at certain times is it necessary for God to produce miracles. They are for certain periods to confirm His message and messenger. When that has been done, the miracles were phased out. The church age is confirmed. We have the completed canon of Scripture, and the miraculous was phased out with it.

John Danish 1971