***Signs and Wonders
Romans 15:17-21
RO187-01***

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We are looking this morning at Romans 15:17-21. Our topic is Pioneer Missionary - Segment Number 2.

**The Coming of the Day of the Lord**

Well, this past week has seen another major piece fall into place of the picture, which the Bible predicts will exist immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ relative to world conditions. All the world is amazed and appalled at what is happening in eastern Germany as the people of that enslaved country reach out for freedom from the oppression of communist socialism. The wall in Berlin is tumbling down. Travel restrictions into West Germany, wonder of wonders, have been released, relieved, removed. The inmates are being permitted to go out of their prison and actually see what life is like under the breath of freedom. The communist rulers are doing this because they are in disarray. They have lost control. They are pleading with their citizens not to flee to freedom from the West. Only the most idiotic would listen to them and not flee while they have this grand opportunity to do so.

East Germans who have crossed over are awed by the standard of living that they are finding in West Germany. Can you imagine walking into a store where the shelves are full of consumer goods instead of walking into a store, as you do in communist countries, and the shelves are there and they're all gathering dust because they're empty? Perhaps you've been following, as I have, one or 2 of these families as they crossed over and seen the awe on their faces and their eyes are wide open as they look at shelves filled with consumer goods, as there are bins full of food of every variety imaginable, as they don't even have to stand in line to reach over and pick up this thing and that thing and to buy the things that they would like to have, all the essentials of life right there at your fingertips.

What a wonder that is to people who have never known that all their lives. It's important to remember that the East Germans have a much higher standard of living than Russia itself does. Russia is on the level of a third world country like socialist Mexico. If you want to see what life is like in Russia beyond the tourist areas, then go down into Mexico beyond the border towns. You will see what grinding, oppressive poverty is and the level of life a notch above animals on which people must live. That's life in the worker's paradise of Russia.

The East Germans, of course, do not want war with the West Germans or with any capitalist free enterprise country. What they want is to be able to join those countries in the pursuit of their high standard of living. They want peace to live their lives as free people in safety from government tyranny. They want peace to be able to live their lives as free people in safety from government tyranny.

They now see on the horizon the possibility of having that peace and safety. They want, in fact, to really unify the 2 Germanys, to enjoy the prosperity, the peace and the safety that they see across the Berlin Wall. Poland and Hungary are also pressing into freedom away from communist oppression and poverty. Communist masters are not quite sure what to do because the inmates suddenly are all ganging up on them. Other Eastern European countries will no doubt follow in this march to peace and safety with the capitalist countries. The Russian rulers themselves can do little to stem the rush to freedom of their satellites because their own citizens are fed up with poverty, fear and brutality.

You probably didn't hear on the evening news by any of our great newscasters, that last week, 48 police stations were burned down in Russia as people are on the verge of civil war in indignation and anger. Can you imagine in a communist country and in the mother country of Russia itself, the hotbed of communist socialism, that people would dare to burn down the citadels of the oppressors that control their lives, the police stations? Gorbachev has got his hands full and there is little that he can do to stem this rush for freedom. The Russians are fed up. What's a poor dictator like Gorbachev to do? Our hearts go out to him.

Russia, of course, is in the forefront, as you know, pursuing the reduction of weapons in order to establish peace and safety nationally with the United States. The communist countries, of course, are all cozying up to the United States because they want financial aid in order to salvage the mess that socialism has made of their economies. Everyone wants to be America's friend to get a handout of taxpayers' money. You may certainly count on American politicians that they will be breaking their necks to rush to help our communist enemies to survive under the illusion that they will thereby ensure peace and safety on earth.

Soon, the whole world is going to be euphoric as it is convinced that world peace and safety have finally been achieved. There will be no more threat from communism in the form of trying to take over the world for socialism. You know where I'm going. 1 Thessalonians 5 is being fulfilled before your very eyes. This is but the beginning of this fulfillment, but it is definitely the beginning and it's going to mount in intensity. In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, the apostle Paul who taught these people so much prophecy in the Thessalonian churches, now he's writing back to them and reviewing some basic things that he has taught them.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1, he says, "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you." He's referring to the ages and the events preceding what the Bible calls the "day of the Lord." The "day of the Lord" is a technical term for a period of human history that begins with the seven-year Tribulation period. It's a time of suffering and then it explodes into a time of magnificent blessing for 1,000 years in the Millennial kingdom. So, every time you read about the "day of the Lord" in the Bible, you must understand that it begins with the dark days of the seven-year Tribulation and ends up with the light days and the happy days of the 1,000-year Millennium. So, Paul says, "I don't need to give you any more instruction relative to this great event. The Thessalonians had received this from Paul when he was with them for about a six-week stint of instruction. So, he's not attempting to set any specific date for the Second Coming of Christ, but he has given them the general picture of what will exist at the time.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:2, he says, "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord [this technical period,] will come just like a thief in the night." The day of the Lord is going to come upon mankind unexpectedly. The day of the Lord from the Old Testament is clearly portrayed as an event that is coming upon this earth. It will contain both divine judgment and divine blessing. The Lord is going to return for the Church at the Rapture, and the day of the Lord will then begin. It will end at the end of the Millennium, at the beginning of Eternity.

The "day of the Lord" is the period of time that we read about in Revelation 6-19. So, this day, beginning with the Tribulation, is suddenly going to spring upon you, just bingo, out of the night, just out of the blue, just unexpectedly.

Last night, 3:00 in the morning, my little dog Aslan began barking. Those of you who are acquainted with Aslan know that she is good at barking. Anybody who makes a noise, knocks on the door, she comes charging, barking her head off. That's why she's called the headless Aslan. She started barking the old head off. When we investigated, there were 3 high school sized kids around the cars, there by the parsonage. They were under the car and Aslan had alerted them. When the lights went on, they scattered. When the police got there, they roamed the territory around here. I don't know whether they found them or not. We found that indeed the police were already looking for them. This was the latest fix that they had on this trio roaming around as thieves in the night: suddenly, quietly, while people sleep, showing up.

While people are sound asleep, all of a sudden, the world is going to come crashing down on their heads as God begins his tribulation judgments. That's what Paul means in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. And then, the application to us at this point in history, in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Mankind, while in a state of euphoria overachieving world peace and safety, is suddenly struck down by the judgments of Almighty God. And the capstone of this peace and safety illusion will be the signing of the seven-year treaty between Israel and the antichrist at the start of the Tribulation recorded in Daniel 9:27. "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them." Who is "them?" "Them" is all the unbelievers who have been left on this earth after the Church has been removed. God's wrath suddenly is poured out upon the Tribulation world and thus bringing their illusion of peace and safety to an end. Like Paul says, 'When a woman's time has come to deliver a child or birth pangs come and they shall not be able to stop it.' There is no turning back. It will now follow its course to the end, a fitting analogy. God's wrath against the Gentiles is building up every day of our lives today, and it is being stored up for the right moment when it's going to be poured out.

I want to suggest that you watch something. I want you, with all this euphoria of new level of peace and goodwill and safety for mankind, I want you to watch the communist attitude toward removing the border between the East and West Germany. Taking the wall down is one thing, but do not be deceived that taking the wall down means that the Russians have agreed to hand over a communist country to become a free-enterprise, prosperous Western-capitalist country. Keep your eyes and ears open so you're smarter than most Americans about what happens when they try to remove the borderline. Then you will see how much real peace and safety is there. Keep your eyes open for what happens when the Communist Party is finally totally kicked out of a country. When they hang a few of the communists from the lampposts down the streets, then you will see the depth, the real truth behind the illusion of peace and safety. That's when you will see Russia demonstrate what she really has in mind. Please remember that in these communist countries, all the guns, all the guns are still owned by the police and the military force. All the people have are bricks and sticks. Watch what Russia does if some of those Baltic countries that Stalin brutally conquered at the beginning of World War II and pulled into the Soviet Union, those countries that are calling for freedom, Latvia, Estonia, those countries that want to get back to their own heritage, just watch and see what happens if one of them is to secede.

While this euphoria is going on, please remember that the Bible tells us the time will come when Russia, with her Arab allies, are going to come down to attack Israel. When Russia does that, that's when her final moment will come. Then God from Heaven will destroy Russia. A sixth of her armies will straggle back to the homeland. The antichrist will then be able to become not only the ruler of Western Europe, which he plans to do, beginning as Europe has told us at the beginning of 1993 when Europe will become the United States of Europe, one parliament, one currency, one government, the largest, most powerful group in Europe, unless the 2 Germanys join, then you will have even a more powerful group. Russia is very intent on moving into Israel. She has wanted to do that historically since the time of the great czars of the medieval ages. The Bible tells us Russia is going to get her Arab friends together. They're going to come down upon Israel. So, peace and safety is an enormous delusion. I do not want you to be fooled by Tom Brokaw and Peter Jennings and all the other big boys with all the hogwash that they're going to be pouring out to you now, and even the Oval Office of the United States government.

**The Extent of Paul's Ministry**

The apostle Paul is, in effect, still pointing out to us the latest edition of what is happening in the ministry to the Gentiles, which he began. You are seeing what is happening in the Gentile world, the very world to which Paul ministered the gospel of the grace of God. In Romans 15 Paul has pointed out to us that he feels justified in taking pride in his ministry to the Gentiles, proud of what God is accomplishing among the Gentiles through him. He is not boasting about his own personal achievements, but those that the Lord has performed. God's word of doctrine and Paul's life of service to God have brought conviction among the Gentiles. The Gentiles have responded, he says, 'with obedience to the gospel.'

**Paul's Authority Confirmed**

We come to Romans 15:19 where Paul deals with the extent of his ministry. He has already pointed out that he has the right to speak with boldness and with great authority because he has that special spiritual gift which existed in the New Testament, which does not exist today, the gift of an apostle. That was supreme spiritual authority over a group of believers. Paul says that his apostleship was fully confirmed "in the power of signs and wonders." The word "power" is the Greek word "dunamis," d u n a m i s. "dunamis" is the word from which we get the English word dynamite. It is the impact of the words and deeds through Paul of the Lord Jesus Christ that has brought conviction, repentance and faith to the Gentiles. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that has been functioning in Paul's ministry. And Paul says his work has been confirmed by God's supernatural work as the result of the message that Paul has given people.

This has been confirmed with the power of "signs." The word "signs" looks like this in the Greek Bible, it is the Greek word "semeion," s e m e i o n. A "semeion" is a distinguishing mark by which something is identifying. The sign of God's Messiah in Luke 2:12 was an infant child wrapped in diapers, lying in a manger. Jesus was the sign of God's coming judgment to His generation as Luke 11:30 says Jonah was a sign to his generation. A sign is basically a miracle performed by God. It's an event which overrides often natural laws. Signs are used by God to confirm the truth of what His messengers are saying. Here, Paul was given certain demonstrations of power and of signs, miracles which confirm the truth of his message concerning salvation by the grace of God and all that was included in the Church Age doctrines.

A sign from God, of course, is of no use to those who are too stubborn to be convinced by them. You have this illustrated by the Jews in Matthew 12:38-40. You may compare Matthew 28:11-15 with that. If you're going to be stubborn, unyielding, unteachable, then a sign doesn't mean a thing. So, a sign points to the agency by which something is done and it certifies that it is the work of that agency. Here it pointed to the fact that what Paul was doing was by the agency of Almighty God and that God was confirming what Paul was bringing to them.

Paul's power was also demonstrated not only with signs, but also with wonders, and wonders is a word which expresses the awesomeness of a miracle. It's an act of God which causes the person to marvel. A sign appeals to the mind while the wonder appeals to the emotions.

And Paul says that he had these signs and wonders delivered to him in the "in the power of the Spirit," referring of course there, to the Holy Spirit. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, which uses miraculous signs and wonders to authenticate the messages of God's messenger.

Conviction of the truth was thus established in Paul's ministry, and it resulted in lost sinners believing the Gospel and trusting in Christ as Savior. The power of the Holy Spirit backed Paul's preaching to the Gentiles and brought conviction to them as unbelievers. 1 Corinthians 2:14, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, all point out that what Paul did and the conviction that followed his preaching was the work of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord Jesus Himself in His humanity performed many signs and wonders to certify His claims to Messiahship and to certify the message that He was bringing as the message from God.

So, you and I today are still dependent indeed upon the conviction of God the Holy Spirit. That conviction of our message, now that the Bible has been written and we may quote an inerrant Scripture, that confirmation of our message is no longer in the form of the power of signs and wonders, the apostle Paul himself in his day performed a large number of signs and wonders. You can see this in Acts 13:6-12, Acts 14:1-3, Acts 14:8-10, Acts 16:16-18, and Acts 19:11-16. All of those passages give awesome demonstration of the miraculous working power of the apostle Paul.

**The Signs And Wonders Movement**

Signs and wonders, we have a vast number of Christians today who pursue it, who actually think that they possess these miracle working powers. Last night I attended a Bible study, and while people were coming in, there was a gal sitting behind me talking to her friends, and I got fascinated by her conversation, so I listened to it. And she was telling her friends of her experience of having a great vision of being in a tunnel and finding herself shooting through this tunnel toward the light. She just carried on about this. She says, "It was the most amazing experience. God spoke to me." Well, I got serious enough to turn around and look at her. I spotted that she was a charismatic.

I could tell, because in the old days, you could tell a charismatic (They were called Pentecostals then.), and you could tell Pentecostal women because they didn't wear any makeup, they wore long dresses, and they always looked like somebody's grandmother. They're not like that anymore. Now, you can tell a charismatic because they're very gaudy. They have rings on every finger. They are wearing earrings that jingle and jangle. They have all kinds of floozie hairdos and they're just really classy looking, they think. They all look like that. I won't describe to you what their preachers look like, but the women do look like this.

As soon as I looked at her, I knew where she was coming from. Then she continued. They got on languages. And she told them she had the miracle of tongues. She said, "I speak in 7 different tongues." And the person next to her said, "Do you really know any other language, do you speak in any other language than English?" She says, "Oh, no, I only speak English." But she had the delusion that she spoke in 7 different languages when she was using the tongues gift under the Holy Spirit, which only meant that she could speak gibberish in 7 different dialects, which I thought was very impressive. Well, I couldn't resist that and I turned around and I looked at her once more. And she looked at me and I was hoping she'd say something because I was just itching to get into that conversation. But she didn't invite me in. So, I turned around and proceeded to occupy myself in other ways until the meeting began.

What this girl is saying is that she's just a little representative of thousands of people out there who all think that they're little "apostle Pauls" carrying the great power of God with signs and wonders, and they're only fooling themselves. We ought to look at this for just a little bit, because even out of Dallas Seminary, there were 3 professors that had to be dismissed a year or so ago because they had got trapped in a new movement called "The Third Phase of the Pentecostal Revival." The first phase was Pentecostalism. The second phase began in 1951, where it broke out into the main denominational churches and it was called the "Charismatic Movement." And now, the third phase, it is moving up into the biblical fundamentalist theological realms like Dallas Seminary.

And these 3 professors were into John Wimber, who is the founder of it, (a man who got into this on the encouragement of his wife,) the founder of the Signs and Wonders movement. What they were implying to their students in seminary classrooms was that, 'yes, God is working in the miracles of power of signs and wonders.' Well, when the administration found out, they were dismissed because that is heretical. That is not true. That is exactly the falsehood that Satan, who is such an amazing personality, (Talk about clever!) that even these men who are thoroughly versed in the Bible could be caught up emotionally and deluded by the impression that they are performing signs and wonders in the pattern of the miracle confirmations that were necessary before the Bible was written. Once the Bible was written, we no longer need signs and wonders to confirm the truth of God, because those signs and wonders performed in the early New Testament Church are all recorded in the Bible. All we have to do is read this inerrant, authentic document, and we have confirmed without seeing any more signs and wonders.

**The True Biblical Use of Signs and Wonders**

There is indeed in the Word of God, the biblical doctrine of miracles. You had this referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:10. I want to point out something to you about this whole concept of miracles.

In 1 Corinthians 12:10, Paul is listing spiritual gifts, he says, "and to another the effecting of miracles." The word effecting is the Greek word "energema," e n e r g e m a. And the word "energema" means "operation or the working." "Effecting" is a good translation and it is the working, he says, "Of miracles." We've got our word that we had earlier this morning, the Greek word "dunamis" again, the word of power. So, he's speaking here about the working of power, supernatural power, the working of miracles and the effects that it produces. In the New Testament Church, there were certain people that were given the spiritual gift of miracles. Yes, they could at their choice, at their decision perform a miracle under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. They could not perform a miracle if God the Holy Spirit was not enabling them to do that and if they were going to seek it in the wrong way.

1 Corinthians 12:28 also speaks of miracles, and it uses this word "dunamis." Power here refers to God's omnipotence exercised by believers who are doing His work. This is a force which is beyond natural laws, it is a divine power which accomplishes supernatural works through human agents.

Now, miracles had the purpose of being signs unless they're connected with the words 'signs and miracles.' The purpose of the sign, as we indicated, was to authentic God's message. A miracle was not so much of value in what it did. When a man's eyes, which were blind from birth, were given sight, that was great value to that man, but that wasn't the value of the miracle in God's purpose. The point and the value of the miracle is what it indicated, as we see in Mark 16:20. This was the regular purpose of miracles historically, the power of God to confirm the message of God and the messenger. 2 Corinthians 12:12 indicates that. The purpose of miracles was a demonstration of the power of God to show you that the messenger was telling you the truth.

This message is now in the New Testament. So, the gift of miracles, of confirmation are no longer necessary. No one, I can assure you today, is capable of instantaneous miracles performed at his personal decision because he has the spiritual gift to do that. There is no one running around performing acts of miracle healing. Satan is on the scene with great powers, powers that look to us, nothing short of miraculous. There are groups who are seeking these powers today. They're not motivated by the Holy Spirit. They're motivated by their own sin natures. Having said that, I should tell you that the immediate defense that most miracle seekers will do will be to push you and say, 'Well, God could do that today, couldn't He?' to which we all agree, yes. 'Well, God could let me speak in a foreign language. God could enable me to do that, couldn't He?' Yes, God could do that. But it is not the point of what God can do. It's what God is purposing to do right now.

You should be aware that there are only certain periods in human history when miracles were performed. I would have liked to have pointed that out to the lady behind me who was carrying on about her miraculous performances to alert her that if she was doing something miraculous today, that was truly miraculous, today it was by the power of Satan, not by the power of God, because God's purpose of authentication is the only time He used miracles. Therefore, what's the first time you ever hear about miracles in the Bible, the period of history when Moses came on the scene, before that, there was no record of miracles. When Moses came on scene, we had the first miracle worker. It was the occasion of his displaying the power of God to Pharaoh in order to secure the release of the Jewish slaves. The purpose was to confirm that the message of Moses was indeed from the creator living God and that Pharaoh had better pay attention to him. These miracles authenticated, indeed, the message of Moses to the Jewish people. You had this in Exodus 4:1-9, Exodus 4:29-31. Moses had to perform miracles so that the Jews said 'Yes, God has sent you to be our leader to bring us into freedom.'

These miracles also were used to authenticate the message of Moses to Pharaoh. You have this indicated in Exodus 7:8-10, Exodus 7:19-20, Exodus 8:5-6. There, the miracles were to convince Pharaoh that there is a God out there who has this power that his animal gods do not have; he should listen. The miracles of Moses also attested to the Egyptian pharaoh that his gods were inferior gods and no gods at all, but that the true God was the one who Moses represented. He was demanding the release of the slaves, Exodus 7:3-5. So, in speaking, God says, "My signs, My wonders," stressing that the miracles were not performed by Moses. He indicates that the Egyptians, as a result, are going to know something, a power that is beyond what their magicians could do. Yes, Satan tried to counter the miracles of Moses with counterfeit miracles because the devil can perform things that will just blow your socks off. I mean, he is awesome. You think that here is a miracle power in force coming from God. Exodus 7:11-12, Exodus 7:22, Exodus 8:7, all indicate Satan's attempt at counterfeit. But God frustrated this, the demon possessed magicians could not perform all the miracles that Moses could, Exodus 8:18-19.

So, these miracles, performed by Moses and followed the people out into the wilderness travel, were the first set of miracles in human history. Then when they were freed, they were across the line, they were out in the wilderness, they were moving toward the land, they finally arrived at the port of entry, and miracles stopped. You have to remember that centuries went by, the people had plenty of authentication now that God was leading. Pharaoh had learned the hard way that God was leading. They had all learned that Moses really spoke for God so they didn't need any more miracles.

Then Israel fell into an enormous depth of apostasy when Elijah came on the scene as the prophet of the living God. When Elijah came on, he was confronted by the all-time vile husband and wife team, Ahab and Jezebel. They had so corrupted the Jewish people that the Jews would not even take their prophets seriously. So, God came to Elijah and said, 'Elijah, we're going to have to do something to authenticate your message, not only to Ahab, but to the people.' Because as you remember, when Elijah stood up before the people, he said, 'Now make your choice who you're for. Is it a real living, true God that has taken us historically to this point? Or is it this Baal worship with all of its degeneracy and its phallic cult practices? Make your decision? I ask you, who is God?' You remember what the Bible says? The people answered, not a word. They were all on the side of Ahab and Jezebel. That is a tough congregation to preach to. That really takes something to bring conviction upon them. That's exactly what God proceeded to do now with Elijah. The need for confirmation, you see, had again arisen.

That's why the Pentecostalists and the Charismatics are wrong in saying that everything that was experienced by the believers in the New Testament Church should be experienced by them today. The Jewish leaders and the people over the centuries could have insisted that they continue having the miracles of the Exodus generations, but God would not give that to them. So, you can read about the period of Ahab and Jezebel in 1 Kings 16:30-33, 1 Kings 18:4, and 1 Kings 18:17-18. The nation was plagued by false prophets and people in total rebellion. 1 Kings 18:20-21 describes that confrontation where he told them to make their choice. So, God comes through and he performs a miracle to confirm the message of Elijah.

First of all, He said there would be no rain on the land of Israel, 1 Kings 17:1, for three-and-a-half years. Then God established a private catering service for Elijah to sustain His prophet physically because there wasn't much food around and He supplied that through ravens. 1 Kings 17:2-6 told how the raven catering service brought Elijah his food each day. In 1 Kings 17:21-23, we have the record of Elijah raising the dead son of the widow who had befriended him and thus authenticated again his message as the messenger of God. You want to note 1 Kings 17:24. Then of course, was the great all time miraculous confrontation with the priests of Baal, 1 Kings 18:24, 29, 36, and 39. Note 1 Kings 18:36 where he commits himself to the Word of God. He believes God. The result is that prophets of Baal are shown to be false. God ignites the altar of Elijah, and the result is that the prophets of Baal are then killed and the people of Israel have their eyes opened and they get their sense back together, realizing where the true God is.

Then you have the miracle of Elijah bringing fire down from Heaven on Ahaziah's soldiers in 2 Kings 1:9-12. This man's life was just filled with miraculous confirmations of his message. When he was taken alive into Heaven in that chariot of fire, which is probably a chariot of fiery angels, his understudy, Elisha, came on the scene and took over. The Bible tells us that, interestingly enough, if you count up the miracles of Elisha, (Elisha, you remember, said, 'God, please give me twice the spirit that rested upon Elijah.' God says, "If you see Elijah being taken to Heaven, you've got twice his power.' He saw him. And indeed, the Bible records, if you count them up,) exactly twice as many miracles are recorded, performed by Elisha than were performed by his master, Elijah.

Elisha, you remember, (part of the River Jordan) purified the contaminated water, caused the supply of oil in the widow's barrel to continue, he enabled the conception of the barren Shunammite woman, the raising of the Shunammite woman's son when he died, the neutralizing of the poison food, the multiplying of the loaves of bread, healing of Naaman the leper, the recovery of the lost axe head from the Jordan River, the blinding of the Syrian soldiers, all of these Old Testament records of the great miracles of Elisha. You had to be really stupid not to have seen that and to listen to the message and watch the performance and life of Elisha and said, 'He's not speaking for God.' With this confirmation of the message and the turning of Israel back to God, the curtain is brought down on miracles. Centuries passed by.

It is important that you understand that centuries existed between Moses and Elijah. Centuries now existed following Elisha until you came to the time of Jesus Himself on this earth. Again, you had a man who had a message from God and a claim that had to be confirmed by the miraculous. The same thing happened again. John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets. You remember he performed no miracles, John 10:41 points that out. Then along comes Jesus, about 30 A.D. He makes His claim to being the king of the Jews, to being the promised Messiah of the Abrahamic covenant, that He is sent by God to establish the Davidic Kingdom on this earth, and to pay for the sins of the world, and to usher in the Millennial kingdom, 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

Jesus, furthermore, claimed not only to be human, He claimed to be the very Son of God, a member of the Godhead. These claims of the Lord Jesus Christ as God's Messenger and Agent were authenticated by many, many miracles. I'll mention a few Scripture verses. We don't have time to look at them. But I want you to understand that Jesus performed scads of signs and wonders; why, to confirm His message. John 2:11, John 4:47, John 4:48, John 4:53-54, 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, John 20:30, ample confirmation of the miraculous capacity of Jesus Christ. And the message of the Lord's Disciples was then also confirmed by miracle workings: Luke 10:8-12, Matthew 10:1, Matthew 10:5-6 and Matthew 10:5-8 and Acts 8:5-6.

So, in the early period of the Church, what had to be established? People had to understand the unbelievable, the unthinkable. Judaism has been set aside by God; Christianity and the Church, a new thing, has been brought into the picture. People could not believe that God had turned His back on the Jewish people and that He had set them aside and that He was calling out a new group of believers, a royal family, of all things out of Gentiles as well as Jews. Now who's going to believe that message? Nobody, unless it is adequately once more confirmed.

So along comes the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4, and God the Holy Spirit does what He has never done before in the history of the human race. He comes in and He takes up His abode within the very physical bodies of believers. A Jew was never indwelt permanently by the Holy Spirit. Here he is permanently indwelt, and the sign of that indwelling is tons of fire, dancing on top of each head and suddenly their mouths break out in foreign languages that they themselves are awed.

Wouldn't that be a great experience? Wouldn't you love to wake up some morning and start clicking off in Spanish like a native or in German or in Hindustani or whatever? That would be exhilarating! For most people, it's exhilarating to even be able to speak English who were born in the United States, but to be able to speak another language.

Well, these people couldn't believe! And those who sit around and listen said, 'This is really strange. I know that these Galileans are not linguists. They don't know this language. I came from one of the outer reaches of the empire to come here to this Feast of Unleavened Bread Festival following the Passover event. How in the world am I hearing the gospel of the grace of God in my native language from way over there on the fringes of the Roman Empire? This is strange!' And indeed, it was true: foreign languages being spoken. And Peter stands up and says, 'This is a work of God. It reflects something that's going to be happening in a much greater way at the beginning of the Millennium. Joel tells us about that. This is a little preview of what's going to happen. You are going to see the power of God poured out upon people in this kind of supernatural, miraculous confirmation. What you are seeing, folks,' Peter said, 'is that God is confirming the message and His messengers.' Jesus Himself, had anticipated this miraculous confirmation of the Church Age in Mark 16:17.

So, the apostles then proceeded to preach Church Age doctrine and they authenticated their messages again with miracles, Acts 2:42-43, Acts 5:12-13. When Christians were under persecution, Acts 4:29-31. The apostle Paul confirmed his message with miracles, Acts 14:1-3, 2 Corinthians 12:12. These miracles were confirmation to unbelievers that the messenger and the message had divine authority as 1 Corinthians 14:22 indicates. So, the work of God the Holy Spirit was to confirm the message of the early Christian witnesses, Hebrews 2:4.

What they were saying and what they were receiving through these gifts of prophecy, these gifts of tongues, the gift of knowledge and the gift of perception that was given to them, the word of knowledge, these other gifts, all of these was the information that eventually God the Holy Spirit, had these men sit down and write out. And what they were bringing through these marvelous gifts are now recorded in the Bible. Once the New Testament was written, 1 Corinthians 13 makes it clear that once "that thing" is completed, the neuter "thing" in the Greek, meaning the New Testament, then the gifts of tongues and prophecy would cease. And indeed, they did.

So, today somebody comes along and says, 'I'm performing miracles. I'm doing signs and wonders.' They're mistaken. The lady behind me at the meeting was self-deluded. The seminary professors that are pursuing signs and wonders have gone over the edge because they've lost their way. They have forgotten a simple little principle: God only uses the miraculous when it's necessary to confirm a new message or a message that has been forgotten.

But there are miracles on the horizon, and I must tell you that you may expect to see miracles, but they will be miracles not from God. He will again perform miracles; He will again demonstrate and confirm His messengers as we read in Revelation. But the next miracles are going to be the miracles of Satan himself.

God will authenticate His messengers; Revelation 11:3-6, for example, indicate that. But the miracles of Satan are going to create the illusion that he is indeed speaking for God. This is referred to in Matthew 24:24. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10, Revelation 13:13-14, Revelation 16:14; all these, speaking of the confirmation of Satan's miracle working power.

Now, what is going to keep you from being deceived? Because the Bible says that Satan will be so adept at performing these miracles (And they will be overriding of natural laws. They will be tremendous demonstrations of power that human beings will not be able to understand.) that even believers, we're told, will look at these miracles, the Lord says, 'That almost the very elect of God will be deceived by Satan's miracles.' You and I are living today in an age when the very elect of God in the Charismatic Movement are being deceived by miracles of Satan. Yes, there are miracles going on today. There's no more authentication needed; we have the Scriptures. It is the miracles of Satan that you are seeing.

Now once the Church is gone and the Tribulation begins, now you have a condition where, again, you need divine authentication. Now, you've got 144,000 Jewish evangelists. Now you've got the 2 witnesses that stand in the city of Jerusalem and they are going to tell the antichrist and his world the things they don't want to hear. They will say, 'We speak for the living God.' How will they confirm that as people are glued to their television sets watching these 2 witnesses? Only one way; they have the capacity to perform the miraculous in such a way that only the most abject negative backward mentality would say they're lying. They will confirm their message.

So, the apostle Paul said, 'I take great pride in what God is doing in the Gentile world through me. I have been obedient to the message I have delivered true doctrine of salvation. And I have lived a life of integrity that confirms that I myself believe these things and I serve this true God. Furthermore, God Himself has confirmed my message of grace salvation and the end of the Judiastic system of the Mosaic Law by powers, powers of signs and wonders, miracles that awe the human mind.' Be grateful to God, that that confirmation enables us to know that the Scriptures we have in the Bible are the very truth of the living God.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for Paul's message, for his instruction, and for the ministry that Thou has given to him. We pray that we ourselves will not be deceived by the Signs and Wonder Movement that has now encroached into the most dignified levels of Christian society. Oh God, if it were not for doctrine, the truth, the perspective of Scripture, we would be just like all the rest of the human race, which is milling around and muddling through and going over the precipice into its eternal destruction. We pray that Thou will give us a new sense of appreciation that we are under the sound and the hearing of the truth being proclaimed from the living Scriptures concerning our living Lord. We pray in His name for that sense of gratitude. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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