

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What God's Word teaches about

MIRACLES

Gordon Lyons

KJV Edition

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Miracles

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Part 1

Synopsis: Miracles

A true miracle of God is an extraordinary and supernatural sign that is intended to exalt and magnify the name of the Lord. By means of these miraculous signs and wonders, the majestic glory of the Lord is shown forth, and his omnipotence and sovereignty over all creation is clearly demonstrated. As a sign, a miracle provides unmistakable evidence of God's power and ability to operate outside and above the regular laws of nature, or so to modify those laws that particular events are brought to pass in a supernatural manner and in accordance with God's express purposes. Also, as a sign, a miracle provides irrefutable evidence of God's power and ability to visit mankind, either in mercy or in judgment. In addition, God used miraculous signs to authenticate as genuine his divinely appointed servants, such as the holy prophets and apostles. In a unique sense, God the Father used miracles to authenticate the earthly ministry of his one and only Son, and to testify to the world that his divine Son was speaking with the Father's full power and authority. Miracles showing forth the glory of God must be distinguished from counterfeit miracles, false claims to miraculous occurrences, lying signs and wonder (pseudo-miracles) or satanic or occult operations and deceptions.

Note 1

Miracles Authenticate God's Word and God's Spokesmen

As a demonstration of the power of the Almighty and Sovereign God, miracles can be employed to attest to the truth and authority of God's Word. Similarly, miracles may attest to the truth and authority of those servants of God (such as the inspired prophets and apostles) who spoke and acted in the name of the Lord, and by his direct commissioning. True miracles are signs of God's infinite power, and are always used to show forth the majestic glory of God. Any miraculous sign that does not ultimately redound to the praise and glory of God does not originate from God. ([Mark 16:20]; Heb. 2:4; John 11:4,40-44; Acts 3:6,8)

Scripture References: Note 1

Mark 16:20

⁽²⁰⁾ And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and *confirming the word with signs following*. Amen. (Italics added; see vv.15-19)

Heb 2:4

⁽⁴⁾ *God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles*, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. (Italics added; see vv.1-3)

John 11:4

⁽⁴⁾ When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, *but for the glory of God*, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. (Italics added; see vv.1-37)

John 11:40

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, *thou shouldest see the glory of God?* (Italics added; see vv.38-44)

Acts 3:6-8

⁽⁶⁾ Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. ⁽⁷⁾ And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁽⁸⁾ And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, *and praising God.* (Italics added; see vv.1-10)

Note 2

Purpose of Miracles

Miracles may be used for the benefit of men and women, as in divine healing. Or, they may be used to warn men and women of coming judgment if they do not repent of their evil deeds and turn to the God of all creation. Again, miracles may be employed to demonstrate the absolute power and sovereignty of God in opposition to the non-existent power of false gods, and to show the futility of idol worship. On Mount Carmel, when the prophets of Baal failed to evoke a response from their false god, the true God answered his prophet Elijah by sending fire from heaven. The fire consumed not only the offering itself, but also the stone altar and the water in the trench surrounding the altar. (Exodus 7:1 - 12:30; 1 Kings 18:38-39; 19:11-12)

Scripture References: Note 2

Exodus 7:3-4

⁽³⁾ And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁽⁴⁾ But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, *and* my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. (See Ex. 6:28 - 7:6; see also Ex. 7:8,20; 8:6,17,24; 9:6,10,23; 10:13,22; 12:29)

1 Kings 18:38-39

⁽³⁸⁾ Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench. ⁽³⁹⁾ And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God. (See vv.16-40)

1 Kings 19:11-12

⁽¹¹⁾ And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD; *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake: ⁽¹²⁾ And after the earthquake a fire; *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. (See vv.1-18)

Note 3

False or Counterfeit Miracles

Counterfeit miracles, or 'lying signs and wonders', may be performed by false teachers in their attempts to deceive the people of God. For example, in Egypt, Pharaoh's court magicians were apparently able to replicate some of the miraculous signs performed by Moses in God's name. However, these magicians failed in their attempt to replicate them all. Leaving aside tricks and other purely human arts and skills, the power to perform false 'miracles' (miracles so-called), or lying signs and wonders, derives from Satan. Those who are in contact with satanic powers may be enabled to perform such signs. God, however, expressly forbids his people from becoming involved in any way with the occult, or with satanic and evil practises. Similarly, in his Word, God warns his people not to be led astray by any deceptive signs and miracles originating from the evil one, or from those associated with him. (Exodus 7:11-12,22; 8:7,18; Deut. 18:10-12; Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9-10; Rev. 13:13-14)

Scripture References: Note 3

Exodus 7:10-12

⁽¹⁰⁾ And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. ⁽¹¹⁾ Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: *now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.* ⁽¹²⁾ For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. (Italics added; see vv.8-13)

Exodus 7:20-22

⁽²⁰⁾ And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were 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. ⁽²¹⁾ And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. ⁽²²⁾ *And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments:* and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said. (Italics added; see vv.14-24; see also Ex. 8:7)

Exodus 8:16-18

⁽¹⁶⁾ And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. ⁽¹⁷⁾ And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. ⁽¹⁸⁾ *And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not:* so there were lice upon man, and upon beast. (Italics added; see vv.17-19)

Deuteronomy 18:9-12

⁽⁹⁾ When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. ⁽¹⁰⁾ There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, *or* an enchanter, *or* a witch, ⁽¹¹⁾ *Or* a charmer, *or* a consulter with familiar spirits, *or* a wizard, *or* a necromancer. ⁽¹²⁾ For all that do these things *are* an abomina-

tion unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. (See v.13)

(Or, as the NIV renders the above passage):

Deuteronomy 18:9-12 NIV

⁽⁹⁾ When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Let no-one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in {Or who makes his son or daughter pass through} the fire, who practises divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, ⁽¹¹⁾ or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. ⁽¹²⁾ Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.

Matthew 24:24

⁽²⁴⁾ For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (See vv.21-28)

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ⁽¹⁰⁾ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (See vv.1-12)

Revelation 13:12-14

⁽¹²⁾ And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. ⁽¹³⁾ And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, ⁽¹⁴⁾ And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. (See vv.11-18)

Note 4

True Miracles Transcend Natural Causes and Effects

Nothing can be described as miraculous that can be accounted for by other rational and valid explanations, and which can be proved by supporting evidence. True miracles are not only supernatural but also divine occurrences. They are acts or events in which Almighty God suspends, overrides, or operates outside and above the normally uniform laws of nature, in order to accomplish his designed ends. Examples of such supernatural acts, events or miracles, are the creation of the world (i.e., the primary or original act of creation *ex nihilo*—or without the use of any pre-existing materials); the conception of Jesus the Son of God by the direct almighty power of the Holy Spirit; and the raising of dead people to life. (Gen. 1:1; 2:7; Matt. 1:18; John 11:43-44)

Scripture References: Note 4

Genesis 1:1

⁽¹⁾ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (See vv.2-31; Gen. 2:1)

Genesis 2:7

⁽⁷⁾ And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (See vv.4-25)

Matthew 1:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (See vv.19-25; see esp. v.25)

John 11:43-44

⁽⁴³⁾ And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. (See vv.1-42)

Related Bible Doctrines

The doctrine of miracles is closely related to the doctrine of the person and work of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Divine miracles are demonstrations of God's sovereign and almighty power: i.e., his omnipotence. Another related doctrine is the doctrine of providence. As a rule, God acts in his creation through his works of providence. However, as the sovereign of the universe, God is free to set aside the 'fixed' laws of nature—laws that he himself has established—and/or to act above, beyond or without those natural laws, as he sees fit.¹

¹ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Providence; The Holy Spirit*, by Gordon Lyons.

Part 2

Doctrine of Miracles

Classes of Events

There are several classes of events that can occur in the natural or phenomenal world. We may summarise these classes as follows:²

Class of Events	Examples
1. Events due to the <i>ordinary</i> or <i>natural</i> operations of second causes, or effects, as upheld and guided by God.	The common processes of nature: e.g., the growth of plants and animals; the orderly movement of the heavenly bodies, and the more unusual occurrences: earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, violent agitations, and revolutions in human society.
2. Events due to the <i>supernatural</i> influences of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men.	Regeneration, sanctification, spiritual illumination, etc.
3. Events belonging to neither of the above classes, and which occur in the external world of time, space, and sense, but which are caused or produced by the <i>immediate volition</i> of God, without the intervention of any subordinate causes.	The original act of creation (primary creation) in which all co-operation of second causes was impossible. All truly miraculous events or occurrences fall into this class.

We may define a miracle, therefore, as an event in the external world that God brings about by his immediate efficiency or power. God may exercise this sovereign and almighty power through an express command. Alternatively, the Lord may will its occurrence through his unexpressed thoughts or volition.

Two Categories of Miracles

(Absolute, and Providential)

Sometimes, miracles are divided into two categories: (1) absolute miracles, and (2) providential miracles.

1. Absolute Miracles

Absolute miracles are those demonstrations of God's power that he performs or exhibits without the use of ordinary means. For example, the creation of the world *ex nihilo*; the raising of the dead; the restoring of sight, hearing, or speech to those who have been without these faculties. (Gen. 1:1; John 11:1-44; Matt. 9:27-31; Mark 7:31-37)

Similarly, the exercises of God's sovereign control over the natural elements are examples of absolute miracles. For instance, by a word of command, the wind and the waves were made subject to Christ's almighty and sovereign control. By a word of command, a dead girl was raised to life again. Again, by a word of command, a widow's son likewise was brought back from death to life. In all these cases, there were no intervening causes. (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 5:22-24,38-42; Luke 7:11-15)

² This section based on C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p.618.

2. **Providential Miracles**

Providential miracles are those demonstrations of God's power that he performs or exhibits in conjunction with the use of ordinary means. These means, however, are used in a supernatural manner. For example, while in the desert, God supernaturally brought flocks of quail over the camp of Israel each day, thus providing his people with meat. Similarly, God caused ravens to bring food to Elijah during a prolonged period of widespread drought. (Exodus 16:11-13; Num. 11:31-34; 1 Kings 17:2-6)

Again, by means of a strong east wind, God caused the waters of the Red Sea to stand up in a heap, while his people crossed over the riverbed on dry ground. However, when the pursuing Egyptians attempted to follow Israel through the same passage in the Red Sea, God changed the wind from east to north, thereby causing the waters to resume their normal flow. Consequently, all of Pharaoh's army units involved in the pursuit of the Israelites were drowned. (Exodus 14:21-31)

- **Absolute** miracles are supernatural acts or events: acts or events which transcend the natural realm, *and which admit of no natural explanation*. The creation of the world (without the use of any pre-existing materials), and the raising of the dead, are examples of absolute miracles.
- **Providential** miracles are acts or events where natural occurrences are employed only at the time and place, and under the conditions specified, by a prior announcement. For example, the plagues inflicted on Egypt, and the provision of manna and quail for Israel in the desert. Providential miracles such as these illustrate some of the unusual *natural occurrences, initiated and controlled by God's supernatural intervention*. (Exodus 7:1 - 12:30; 16:4-16)

Both absolute and providential miracles are operations of the sovereign God who works all things after the counsels of his own will.³

The Purpose of Miracles

The purpose of a miracle is to show forth the glory of God in a supernatural manner, by demonstrating God's omnipotence in action. By this means, the Almighty God is showing that he is not bound by the laws of nature (or physics). On the contrary, the laws of nature—that God has established, and which he continues to sustain—may be set aside at any time, or suspended or overruled by Almighty God.

Thus, it is written in the Word of God:

Exodus 4:1-9

(¹) And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

(²) And the LORD said unto him, What *is* that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

(³) And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

(⁴) And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

(⁵) That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

³ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Providence*, under *Extraordinary Providence*, by Gordon Lyons.

⁽⁶⁾ And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand *was* leprous as snow.

⁽⁷⁾ And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his *other* flesh.

⁽⁸⁾ And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

⁽⁹⁾ And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour *it* upon the dry *land*: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry *land*. (Cf. v.9 with Ex. 7:19)

Exodus 14:4

⁽⁴⁾ And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; *and I will be honoured* [NIV, *I will gain glory*] upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so. (Italics added)

Exodus 14:31

⁽³¹⁾ And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses. (See vv.1-30)

John 2:11

⁽¹¹⁾ This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, *and manifested forth his glory*; and his disciples believed on him. (Italics added; see vv.1-10)

Miracles Demonstrate God's Almighty Power

It is mistaken to say that miracles are events or occurrences, which—at present, and with our limited knowledge—are not properly understood by the human mind, but nevertheless are to be considered as *natural* events. Since the living God is the God of creation, providence and redemption, then it follows that he will act, directly or indirectly, to accomplish all his purposes in and for the universe; and, in particular, for his church. And since God is infinite and omnipotent, then it follows that he is not bound by the finite and apparently uniform laws of nature.

Concerning the absolute sovereignty of God over his creation, it is written:

Isaiah 45:11-13

⁽¹¹⁾ Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.

⁽¹²⁾ I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

⁽¹³⁾ I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts. (See vv.9-19)

Isaiah 46:8-11

⁽⁸⁾ Remember this, and show yourselves men: bring *it* again to mind, O ye transgressors.

⁽⁹⁾ Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me,

⁽¹⁰⁾ Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

⁽¹¹⁾ Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it. (See vv.12-13)

Isaiah 48:12-13

⁽¹²⁾ Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.

⁽¹³⁾ Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they stand up together. (See vv.14-15)

Divine miracles demonstrate God's direct control over every power and authority in the universe. In the *natural* realm, events are overruled at the command of the Lord: for example, the stilling of the storm, and the restoring of sight to the blind. Again, in the *spiritual* realm, the power and authority of the devil and his evil spiritual beings are brought to nought at the command of the Lord. These demons, who are characterised by immense power (but not by almighty power)—tremble in abject fear in the presence of God's Son. These mighty spiritual entities are fully aware that the now risen, exalted and glorified Lord Jesus, who laid waste their kingdom at the cross, possesses the power and authority necessary to destroy them and to cast them into the place of eternal torments.

Concerning the Lord's absolute control over the powers of evil, and the demon's terror of the Lord's authority over them, it is written:

Mark 5:12

⁽¹²⁾ And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. (See vv.1-20)

Luke 8:28

⁽²⁸⁾ When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

Luke 8:31

⁽³¹⁾ And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. (See vv.26-39)

James 2:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Revelation 20:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (See vv. 1-9)

The above passages illustrate just a few examples of the Lord's absolute power and control over the devil and the fallen angels or demons.⁴

⁴ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: The Defeat of Satan and the Demons*, by Gordon Lyons.

Part 3

Examples of Miracles from the Old Testament

The Creation of the Universe

The Bible declares:

Genesis 1:1

⁽¹⁾ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (See vv.2-31;
Gen. 2:1)

This is the first recorded of God's 'miraculous' acts. God created the material universe (the heavens and the earth) out of nothing. This refers to the original act of creation: i.e., to the moment when God first caused matter to exist. Before that moment in time, there had been no material existence: i.e., no chemical elements or substances, no atomic or sub-atomic particles, and no gaseous or liquid materials from which the created physical universe could be formed.

The chemical elements, of which material, gaseous or liquid bodies in the universe are composed, were created originally *ex nihilo* by God. From these elements and by his express word of command—or exercise of his will—God formed the heavens and the earth and everything that they contain. This includes every living plant and animal, and every mineral and other inorganic substances. It includes also all spiritual and higher intelligences throughout the entire universe. In the Bible, these higher rational and spiritual intelligences include the angels or spiritual beings in the highest heavenly realms, some of whom later fell from their created state of righteousness and holiness. These fallen angels (i.e., Satan and the demons) had attempted to rebel against God. As a result, God expelled this entire evil host from the highest heavenly realms to the lowest heavenly and earthly realms.

The Creation of Mankind

(Adam and Eve)

The original act of creation (primary creation, or creation without the use of any pre-existing materials) was an example of an *absolute* miracle. In this instance, the elements (comprising atoms, electrons, etc.), were created out of nothing, and without the aid of any other existing means, except the command (or will) of the LORD.

In distinction from primary creation or creation *ex nihilo*, the creation of man was a miracle in which God made use of material that he had already brought into existence. In the Genesis record, God is said to have formed man from the 'dust of the ground': i.e., from the same chemical elements, fundamentally, as are found in the structure of the earth (iron, oxygen, silicon, magnesium, nickel, calcium, etc).

Thus, the Scripture says:

Genesis 2:7

⁽⁷⁾ And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (See vv.4-8; see also Gen. 1:26-28)

And, concerning the creation of Eve, God's Word says:

Genesis 2:22

⁽²²⁾ And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. (See vv.18-25)

In the beginning, God created Adam out of the dust of the ground. However, the LORD God created Eve out of Adam's side (or rib). That is, Eve derived her physical existence directly from Adam. At her creation, however, God gave to Eve those unique and special physical and psychological traits and characteristics that he had ordained to bestow upon the woman.

It is important to observe that mankind consists of body and soul. Out of the dust of the earth, God created man's physical and biological body; and he breathed into that body the breath of life, so that man became a living human being. However, in addition to his perishable *body*, God invested man with an imperishable or immortal *soul*. Mankind, therefore, is not only a physical or biological being, he is also a moral and spiritual being. Although his physical body will decay and return to the dust of the earth (until the resurrection), his soul will never perish. Being immortal, man's soul cannot cease to exist; nor does it depend upon the presence of a living body for its continued existence.

The body is merely a temporary 'vehicle' or 'carrier' for the soul while on this earth. Being spirit, the soul can exist with or without such a carrier (although it is destined ultimately for a resurrection body). Intelligence, and other rational faculties of the human mind, resides permanently in the soul. The brain is merely the conveyer or 'relay transmitter' of that intelligence and is necessary only for our present life.

As a real and very powerful example of this truth, we may consider the intelligence, wisdom, justice, love, mercy and grace of Almighty God. God possesses all these and other attributes to absolute perfection. He exercises all his functions as though he had a physical brain and every other required faculty. Yet, God is Spirit. He has no physical body, bodily organs or faculties. Clearly, then, it is entirely possible for intelligence, thought, will, wisdom, justice, love and everything else that we normally associate with the brain (or the mind or the heart) to exist completely apart from the body or the bodily organs. *Therefore, these attributes must have their origin and sustaining power in the immortal soul, not in the organs of the mortal body.*

The Creation of the Animal Kingdom

God's power can be seen again in the miracle of creation of every cell, plant and animal. Concerning the animal creation, God made all living creatures, setting them within their respective genera and species. Thus, concerning the animal kingdom, the Scripture says:

Genesis 2:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. (See v.20; see also Gen. 1:20-25)

Like mankind, God formed the animal species out of the dust of the ground. However, unlike mankind, animals were not created as moral and spiritual beings. Again, although there may be a number of physical and biological resemblances, there is no physical or biological link between man as created by God (true mankind or *Homo Sapiens*) and the animals. God created mankind in his own image and likeness: i.e., God created man as a moral, spiritual, and rational being, with the specific attributes of righteous, holiness and the knowledge of God. These attributes have been considerably marred, however, by man's fall into sin. Even so, *these particular characteristics or attributes are not to be found in any member of the animal creation.*

At the creation of mankind, one of God's express commands and purposes for Adam and Eve was that they should exercise dominion over the animal kingdom. Clearly, this would not have been possible,

if—from the outset—mankind had not occupied the supreme position in God's earthly creation. In other words, since he was appointed to rule over the animal creation, mankind must have been above the animal creation from the very beginning. He did not attain to this position through some gradual process of evolution.

Concerning the fact that man was created to exercise dominion over the animal kingdom, it is written:

Genesis 1:26-28

⁽²⁶⁾ And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

⁽²⁷⁾ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

⁽²⁸⁾ And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and *have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.* (Italics added; see vv.20-31)

Genesis 2:19-20

⁽¹⁹⁾ And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof.

⁽²⁰⁾ And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. (See vv.18-25)

God's Servants Authenticated by Divine Miracles

Miracles may be used to authenticate the word of the Lord, or his officially approved and appointed servants. For example, the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament had their prophetic and apostolic ministries officially and publicly endorsed and accredited by God. This happened when, by the working of the Holy Spirit, they were enabled to perform signs and wonders in the name of the Lord. God did this to demonstrate his power, and to inspire confidence and faith both in his servants, and in those to whom his servants were being sent.

Thus, concerning the Lord Jesus himself, it is written:

Acts 2:22

⁽²²⁾ Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: (See vv.14-36)

And, concerning the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles, it is written:

Hebrews 2:4

⁽⁴⁾ God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. (See vv.1-3)

Example of Moses

The LORD had appointed Moses to lead God's enslaved people out of their cruel bondage in Egypt. Moses, however, was not sure that the elders of Israel would believe that he was the LORD's servant. So the LORD demonstrated to Moses his ability to perform miraculous signs through him, thereby authenticating Moses' call to God's service. Thus, the Scripture says:

Exodus 4:2-3

(2) And the LORD said unto him, What *is* that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

(3) And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. (See v.1)

Acting through his servant Moses, the LORD changed a lifeless rod into a living serpent. This tangible evidence of God's power should have served as sufficient indication to the Hebrew people that Moses was an officially appointed servant of the LORD. As God's approved servant, Moses was authorised to speak to the people of Israel in the LORD's name, and with the LORD's authority. However, to confirm more fully, both to Moses himself and to all the people, the power and authority delegated to Moses, the LORD commanded his servant to pick up the writhing serpent:

Exodus 4:4-5

(4) And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: ⁽⁵⁾ That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee. (See also vv.6-9)

This further demonstration of God's power—to translate the living reptile back to an inanimate and lifeless rod—was given so that the people might believe in the living power of God's word, and so that they might heed his officially appointed servant. Certain it was that the Hebrew people would not have heeded anyone, unless compelled to do so by a mighty hand: a hand that would be able to deliver them from the might of Pharaoh, and from his cruel taskmasters, and from his powerful army.

Example of Aaron

On another occasion, when confirming Aaron's call to service, the LORD God authenticated his choice of this man by a miracle. Thus, the Scripture says:

Numbers 17:5a

^(5a) And it shall come to pass, *that* the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom...

Numbers 17:8

⁽⁸⁾ And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and

brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. (See vv.1-11)

This demonstration of God's power was given to authenticate Aaron's commission as being from the LORD, and to show the people that Aaron was acting in the name of the LORD and with his full authority. Since, by means of such miraculous signs, God would authenticate Aaron's office in the presence of the people, Israel was under a solemn obligation to hear Aaron as the one who was acting as God's spokesman. To refuse to hear the voice of the LORD speaking through Aaron was tantamount to despising God's voice or refusing to hear God's Word.

Dividing the Red Sea

Providentially, miracles include those occasions when God intervenes, directly or indirectly, to alter the otherwise natural or normal course of events. One example of this kind of miracle was the dividing of the Red Sea. Concerning the dividing of the Red Sea, the Scripture says:

Exodus 14:21-22

⁽²¹⁾ And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry *land*, and the waters were divided. ⁽²²⁾ And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry *ground*: and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. (See vv.10-31)

On this occasion, God altered the normal course of wind-speed and direction in order to achieve the safe deliverance of his people Israel across the Red Sea. However, when the Egyptian army attempted to pursue Israel to the other side, God removed his intervening hand. Consequently, the waters returned to their normal flow, and the Egyptian divisions were drowned beneath the ensuing deluge. The same hand that had brought divine salvation to the one people had brought divine judgment to the other.

Again, about forty years later, the LORD parted the waters of the River Jordan to allow Israel to cross over into the promised land. Concerning the dividing of the Jordan, it is written:

Joshua 3:14-17

⁽¹⁴⁾ And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; ⁽¹⁵⁾ And as they that bore the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bore the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) ⁽¹⁶⁾ That the waters which came down from above stood *and* rose up upon a heap very far from the city Adam, that *is* beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea [i.e., the Dead Sea], failed, *and* were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. ⁽¹⁷⁾ And the priests that bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan. (See vv.1-13; see also Joshua 4:1-24)

Manna and Quail

A providential miracle is an event where God makes necessary or abundant provision at a particular time, place, or manner. On such occasions, the Lord may alter circumstances to achieve his aim. Nevertheless, in this category of miracles, God meets the needs of his people *by making use of ordinary means* (i.e., providentially), rather than by working without those means (i.e., absolutely).

One example of God's miraculous providence was the unfailing supplies of manna every morning and quail every evening for Israel, during their forty years of wandering in the desert. Neither manna nor

quail, however, was provided on the Sabbath day. To compensate for this, the LORD provided twice as much on the previous day.

Concerning the miraculous provision of manna and quail, God's Word says:

Exodus 16:11-13

⁽¹¹⁾ And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, ⁽¹²⁾ I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God.

⁽¹³⁾ And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. (See vv.1-35)

Provision for Elijah

Fed by Ravens

Again, some providential miracles can be seen in the life of the prophet Elijah. Elijah had told wicked King Ahab that there would be neither dew nor rain on the land for the next few years, except at the command of the LORD. Consequently, the land was afflicted with a very severe drought.

Without water, the crops failed. Therefore, throughout the land, there was no food available for any of the people, including Elijah. However, the LORD had already made necessary provision for his faithful servant: a miraculous provision that would last, from one source or another, throughout the entire period of the drought. The LORD, therefore, instructed Elijah to seek refuge in the Cherith Ravine, by the River Jordan.

Concerning this ravine, the Scripture says:

1 Kings 17:4-6

⁽⁴⁾ And it shall be, *that* thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

⁽⁵⁾ So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that *is* before Jordan. ⁽⁶⁾ And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. (See vv.1-5)

So long as Elijah remained in the place where God had sent him, he was assured of food and drink. The flowing brook would provide him with all the water that he needed. The ravens had been directed by the LORD to bring bread and meat to Elijah every morning and every evening. This continued throughout the entire period that Elijah remained at the brook Cherith. In this instance, and by a series of providential miracles, the God who feeds the birds of the air had commanded the birds of the air to feed his servant.

The Widow of Zarephath

Unfailing Supplies of Meal and Oil

As the famine prevailed throughout the length and breadth of the land, the brook Cherith eventually dried up. Then, the LORD sent Elijah beyond the borders of Israel to a widow in Zarephath. Zarephath was a coastal town situated between Tyre and Sidon, in a land notorious for Baal worship. This poor Gentile widow had been suffering much, because the devastating effects of the famine had extended to her country also. In fact, when Elijah arrived at the town gate, he found this woman gathering a few sticks together to prepare a final meal for herself and her son. At home, she had only sufficient food

left for two people. Once she had cooked and eaten this meal, the woman and her son had expected to languish and die.

This last meal consisted of the remaining scrapings of a barrel of meal and a cruse of oil. However, although hearing of her desperate plight, Elijah asked the woman to first prepare a meal for him, out of her scant resources, before preparing meals for herself and her son (vv.11-13). The woman realised, of course, that it was impossible for her to feed three people. But the man of God had assured her that neither her barrel of meal nor her cruse of oil would be expended in the process, and she believed him. Thus, God's Word says:

1 Kings 17:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. (See vv.7-16)

The woman obeyed the voice of the prophet, and hence the voice of God's servant. Consequently, the God of Israel blessed this Gentile widow and her son. Both were kept alive during the period of the famine. In accordance with God's own word, the woman's barrel of meal did not waste; neither did her cruse of oil fail. By the miraculous power of the LORD, these supplies lasted until the rains returned, and the crops had been sown, watered and harvested.

These, and many other similar acts of supernatural and divine power recorded in God's infallible Word, illustrate very clearly that the Lord is in total control of all events throughout the universe. By his divine providence, he can suspend or override natural events, when, where and how he will, as he sees fit.

Part 4

Examples of Miracles from the New Testament

The Purpose of Jesus' Miracles

The Lord Jesus was accredited as the one sent by God by the many mighty miracles that he performed to the glory of his Father. These miracles, or 'signs', were unmistakable evidences of Jesus' divine commission from his Father. They attested to the fact that he was indeed who he claimed to be—the eternal Son of God.

Concerning the compelling witness of these mighty works or miraculous signs, the Jewish leader Nicodemus confessed:

John 3:2b

^(2b) ...Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. (See vv.1-15)

Evidently, this learned Pharisee had heard of, or had seen, some of the miraculous signs performed by the Lord Jesus during his three-and-a-half years of public ministry. Perhaps Nicodemus had heard of such signs as the feeding of the five thousand. Or, perhaps, this Pharisee had witnessed such demonstrations of Jesus' power as shown in his numerous healing miracles, or in his raising of dead people to life. At any rate, this Jewish religious leader was convinced that Jesus was indeed acting in the name of God his Father, and that the miraculous signs that he performed attested to this great truth.

On another occasion, after Jesus' death and resurrection, the apostle Peter made explicit reference to this same truth concerning the miracles performed by the Son of God. Addressing the people—including some of the religious authorities responsible for putting Jesus on the cross—Peter declared boldly:

Acts 2:22-24

⁽²²⁾ Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: ⁽²³⁾ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: ⁽²⁴⁾ Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. (See vv.14-36)

The miracles wrought by God's Son should have been proof to all the people that he was indeed the promised Messiah or the Saviour of the world. The vast majority of these miracles were performed in public. Even so, most of the people refused to believe on the one of whom those signs spoke so eloquently and powerfully. They rejected the signs that God had given them concerning his one and only Son. Additionally, however, they rejected the voice of God's prophets who had foretold the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament Scriptures—the very Scriptures that these people professed to believe.

Many others, however, saw the miraculous signs that the Lord Jesus performed; or they experienced their effects. These people believed the testimony that the signs bore to the Son of God. And, as a result of God's grace and mercy in their lives, they found forgiveness of sin, and life abundant and eternal.

On the pages that follow, we will look at a few of the many miraculous signs and wonders that the Lord Jesus performed during his ministry on earth.

Miracles Wrought by Jesus

(Selected Examples)

Water into Wine

The first recorded of the Lord's miracles was performed at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, to which Jesus and his mother Mary had been invited. While participating in the wedding feast, the wine had run out, and no further supplies were available to serve to the invited guests. When Mary had become aware of this embarrassing shortage, she had mentioned it to the Lord Jesus. Then, Mary had spoken to the servants or stewards at the wedding, and had instructed them to do whatever the Lord had told them.

Nearby, stood six stone water vessels. The Scripture continues:

John 2:7-11

⁽⁷⁾ Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

⁽⁸⁾ And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare *it*.

⁽⁹⁾ When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, ⁽¹⁰⁾ And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: *but* thou hast kept the good wine until now.

⁽¹¹⁾ This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him. (See vv.1-6)

These 20 or 30-gallon capacity purification vessels had been left standing in readiness for ceremonial cleansing. The servants were commanded to fill the vessels to the brim with water, to draw out the contents, and to convey it to the governor of the feast. However, as they drew from these newly filled vessels, the water was miraculously converted into wine; wine of the finest quality.

The purpose of this miracle was to demonstrate the glory of the Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In and of himself, no one could have transformed water into wine; but, at a word of command, the Lord Jesus did so. This miracle had the effect of increasing the disciples' faith (v.11). In thus showing forth his glory, the Lord was in effect proving that he was not man only, but God incarnate. The Lord Jesus Christ was (and is) not only true man, but also true God. This would be further manifested and substantiated by many other mighty works that he would yet perform.

In the past, God had often enabled his officially appointed prophets to work miracles in the presence of the people in order to authenticate their ministry as God-given. These miracles were always far superior in nature and power to any of the 'lying signs and wonders' performed by the false prophets. In like manner, the miracles of the Lord Jesus were of a kind that could be performed only by the authenticated and divine Servant of the LORD. This class of miracles included such signs as the calming of the storm, the healing of diseases (coupled with the forgiveness of those people's sins), and the raising of the dead to life. Jesus' miracles certainly bore witness to the fact that he was the one sent by God: the very one prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures. But the miracles did much more than this. By their very nature, they demonstrated that Jesus was God.

Healing the Leper

(Jesus Receives Social Outcasts)

In Jesus' day, leprosy was among the most obnoxious and contagious diseases known to man. Any person confirmed as having a leprous type of disease was immediately separated and isolated from other members of the community. (At this time, various forms of contagious skin diseases were comprehended under the term '*leprosy*'.)

The infected person was banished to a secluded and desolate area among other unfortunates. So long as the signs and symptoms of the disease prevailed in his body, the afflicted person was expressly forbidden from associating with society at large. Indeed, if he saw anyone approaching him, the leper was required to signal with his hands and to call out loudly and clearly, *Unclean! Unclean!*

The lepers of Jesus' day found themselves in this miserable situation. Being afflicted with a potentially contagious disease, people shunned the lepers treating them as social outcasts. In very many of the more serious cases, these leprous people had little or no hope of ever being cured.

Although the majority of people carefully avoided any contact with these infected persons, the Lord Jesus had no such inhibitions. Not only did he meet and talk to those who thus were grievously afflicted, but he also reached out to them and touched them. In this way, the holy spotless Son of God identified himself with these people in their affliction, and demonstrated his love and compassion for such people. Such compassionate physical contact also demonstrated the Lord's willingness to receive and to heal all those who bore the marks of vile and incurable diseases in their bodies.

Of one such occasion, the Scripture records:

Matthew 8:1-4

⁽¹⁾ When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

⁽²⁾ And, behold, there came a leper and worshiped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

⁽³⁾ And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁽⁴⁾ And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. {*Cf. Lev. 14:1-4, 10, 21-22*}

(Cf. Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16; see also Luke 17:11-19)

Concerning the offering that the LORD commanded through Moses, it is written in Leviticus chapter 14:

Leviticus 14:1-4

⁽¹⁾ And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, ⁽²⁾ This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest: ⁽³⁾ And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, *if* the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper; ⁽⁴⁾ Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive *and* clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop: (See vv.5-9)

Leviticus 14:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals [NIV,

*ephah*⁵] of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and one log⁶ of oil.
(See vv.11-20)

Leviticus 14:21-22

⁽²¹⁾ And if he *be* poor, and cannot get so much; then he shall take one lamb for a trespass offering to be waved, to make an atonement for him, and one tenth deal [NIV, *ephah*⁷] of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering, and a log of oil; ⁽²²⁾ And two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to get; and the one shall be a sin offering, and the other a burnt offering. (See vv.23-32)

Although forbidden from approaching anyone, this ‘unclean’ man must have struggled through the great crowd of people before coming finally into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The first thing we note about this leprous man was that he *worshipped* the Son of God. (Matt. 8:2)
- Secondly, we note that, in his heart, he believed that Christ was *able* to make him clean, if he was but *willing*.

The leper’s faith and humility were amply rewarded. The Lord Jesus was indeed willing to make him clean.

Without any doubt, Jesus could have healed this man’s afflicted body by a word of command, without laying a hand on him. But the Lord chose not to do so. Instead, he reached out to the afflicted man, and touched him. By so doing, Jesus demonstrated the fact that, to him—the Son of God—no one was considered too ‘unclean’ or too ‘untouchable.’ All who came to him in faith, he would receive—and would welcome with open arms.

Immediately the Lord Jesus touched this leper, the man was cured of his vile condition. (Matt. 8:3) The festering lesions covering his body were healed instantly and completely. Once more, the Lord of life and glory had reversed the physically degenerating and putrefying processes taking place in a person’s body in order to restore that body to health and strength. This indeed was a miracle: a miracle of grace and of physical healing.

Healing the Blind

Another type of ailment that cuts people off from society, and from a full appreciation of the wonders of God’s natural creation, is physical blindness. To a certain extent, the blind person is forced to live in a world of his own. He may try as much as possible to share in normal everyday living. However, because of his lack of vision, a blind person is hindered from doing many of the things that so often we do without thinking, or with very little effort. Likewise, he is hindered from engaging in most of those interests, activities and everyday pursuits in which our eyesight plays an essential part.

In Jesus’ day, blindness was considered a major handicap. There may have been some very simple devices to assist a blind person to perform the most basic of tasks. But there were no elaborate systems, such as the Braille system, to enable a blind person to read. There were no modern technological aids to assist the blind or visually impaired person at home or outdoors, or to enable him to carry out a normal day’s work. Some blind people did indeed perform some *basic* forms of work, but many of them possessed the ability to do very much more—if only they were able to see.

⁵ That is, probably about 11½ pints (about 6.5 litres) [NIV footnote to Lev. 14:10]

⁶ That is, probably about ½ pint (about 0.3 litre); also in verses 12, 15, 21 and 24 [NIV footnote to Lev. 14:10]

⁷ That is, probably about 4 pints (about 2 litres) [NIV footnote to Lev. 14:21]

Some of these afflicted people would be supported by their families; or, in a few cases, by sympathetic friends. Others, however, had no assistance of any kind. Unable to support themselves in any other way, some of these sightless people turned to begging. In this way, they managed occasionally to collect enough money to feed themselves on a very meagre diet.

One such person was a blind man named Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus was accustomed to beg regularly by the roadside, probably, in the company of another blind friend. One day, as he sat by the roadside expecting alms, Bartimaeus heard someone say that the Lord Jesus was passing by. In his Gospel, Mark tells us what happened:

Mark 10:47-52

⁽⁴⁷⁾ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, *thou* son of David, have mercy on me.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, *Thou* son of David, have mercy on me.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

⁽⁵¹⁾ And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

⁽⁵²⁾ And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

(See v.46; cf. Matt. 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43; see also Matt. 9:27-31; 12:22; Mark 8:22-26; John 9:1-7)

A man, who had been afflicted perhaps for many years, if not from birth, is healed instantly at the command of the Lord. His handicap is totally removed and now he is able to see. Suddenly, a whole new world of opportunity presents itself to this formerly blind man.

This represents another miracle of Jesus' healing power. Unlike so many so-called healings today, this healing was instantaneous and it was permanent. There would be no return to this man's former condition. Once again, it can be seen that the Son of God is in full control over the laws of nature, and over the souls and bodies of men and women.

Healing the Deaf and Dumb

Unlike the blind person, a deaf and dumb person is able to see everything taking place around him. However, he is not able to communicate with other people except by means of signs, sign language or written messages. A totally deaf person is unable to appreciate the sounds of nature, voices or language. The melody and harmony of music and singing are unheard by him. Just as a blind person is cut off from the normal world of *vision*, so a deaf and dumb person is cut off from the normal world of *sound*.

A deaf and dumb person cannot express his thoughts verbally, but only by means of signs or signals. Like the blind person, deaf and dumb people often feel isolated: cut off from society because they cannot participate fully with other people, and because most other people are unable to communicate with them. Even in this day and age, it can be a very lonely world for people such as these.

In Jesus' day, many people suffered from loss of hearing and speech, either totally or partially. There were no modern advances in science and technology, of course, that might have helped their condition, or alleviated some of their sufferings and frustrations. But, although sadly neglected by many and

disgracefully despised by some, these were among the people whom the Lord Jesus had come into the world to seek, to save, and to heal.

Concerning a person who suffered from deafness, and from a speech impediment, God's Word says:

Mark 7:32-35

⁽³²⁾ And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

⁽³³⁾ And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; ⁽³⁴⁾ And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

⁽³⁵⁾ And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

(See vv.31-37; see also Matt. 9:32-33; 12:22)

Yet again, the miraculous healing effected by the Son of God was instantaneous (v.35). Now, this man could hear everything that was happening, and everything that was being said. Now, possibly for the first time, he was able to speak freely.

A person who, from birth, has been totally deaf and dumb is not normally able to speak, even if the ability is restored to him. The reason for this is that he has never had the opportunity of *hearing* or using sounds coherently and articulately. Consequently, his ability to form and pronounce the words and expressions used in everyday language must be very limited. Usually, a prolonged learning process must come first. However, in the case of all these whom Jesus healed, no such learning process was ever needed. The Lord enabled these formerly deaf-mute people not only to *hear*, but also to *speak*—freely. This meant, of course, that—from the moment they were healed—these people spoke coherently and articulately.

Granted, the man mentioned in Mark chapter 7 was not suffering from *total* speech loss, but from deafness coupled with a speech impediment. This impediment, however, may very well have been directly related to his inability to hear. Whether this was the case or not, it is certain that, on other occasions, the Lord Jesus enabled those who formerly had been totally deaf and dumb, to speak freely and fluently.

Healing the Paralysed

Another common disability was the various forms and degrees of paralysis (known as 'palsy' in older versions of the Bible). Paralysis is a muscular condition that may affect any part of the body. It occurs in a number of different forms, and may result from an accident, a stroke, or disease. As a result of any of these conditions, partial or perhaps irreparable damage may be caused to some of the body's muscle fibres, or to parts of the nervous system controlling those muscles. Again, due to the damage sustained, the brain may be unable to send chemical signals to the muscles of the body via the damaged parts, or to receive signals from those parts. Muscles which have been damaged, or that cannot receive the essential chemical signals from the brain, fail to function normally.

In cases where the damage or injury is beyond natural, medical or surgical processes of repair, the affected area of the body is left permanently unusable, or in a state of paralysis. Thus, an affected person may have lost the use of both legs (paraplegia), or of his legs and arms together (quadriplegia or tetraplegia). Other forms of paralysis may result from illnesses or diseases such as polio (paralytic poliomyelitis) or a brain tumour.

At the time of Christ, medical treatment for paralysis and related conditions was primitive by comparison with modern standards. At that time, the prognosis for paralysed patients was bleak. Apart from a

small possibility of natural healing, many of the people suffering from paralysis in these days often had little or no hope of being restored to full strength and health.

Once, when the Lord Jesus was teaching in a house at Capernaum, four men arrived at the house carrying a paralysed friend on a bed-mat. Concerning this incident, Mark tells us:

Mark 2:1-12

⁽¹⁾ And again he entered into Capernaum after *some* days; and it was noised that he was in the house. ⁽²⁾ And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. ⁽³⁾ And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. ⁽⁴⁾ And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

⁽⁵⁾ When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

⁽⁶⁾ But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, ⁽⁷⁾ Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

⁽⁸⁾ And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? ⁽⁹⁾ Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? ⁽¹⁰⁾ But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

⁽¹¹⁾ I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

⁽¹²⁾ And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

(Cf. Matt. 9:2-8; Luke 5:18-26; see also Matt. 12:9-13; Luke 13:10-13)

Once more, the Son of God demonstrates his miraculous ability to heal all manner of diseases, physical and spiritual. A man, who was so disabled with paralysis that he needed to be carried to Jesus on his bed-mat, walks home unaided, carrying his bed-mat with him! As on previous occasions, this healing was instantaneous and permanent. However, like many others before and after him, this man found healing not only for his body, but also for his soul.

Although motivated by malice and envy, the teachers of the law were right in declaring that no one but God had the authority to forgive sins (v.17). However, by enabling this paralysed man to arise from his bed and walk home in the presence of so many witnesses, Jesus was demonstrating both his ability to effect miraculous cures, and his power—or rather, his authority—to forgive sins. This authority, of course, demonstrated the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was God: God manifest in the flesh. As such, he possessed all the attributes and exercised all the prerogatives of Almighty God, including the *absolute* right and power to absolve a person from his sin.

(We must bear in mind, of course, that every time the Lord Jesus forgave someone his or her sins, it was on the basis of the atoning sacrifice that he would make on their behalf at Calvary. In addition, when he forgave sin, it was inseparably related to his (then) coming voluntary and substitutionary death

and subsequent resurrection. Only in these ways could a sinner's forgiveness and justification be effected, and the redeemed sinner be reconciled to God.)

Demon Possession

In Biblical times especially, one of the most feared class of afflictions was not of a physical or mental nature, but of a spiritual nature; namely, demon possession. Demon possession involves the complete invasion of a person's body and mind by one or more evil spirits. These are real spirit entities; they are not merely or exclusively states of mind resulting from a psychological or neuropathological condition. In order to gain access to a person's life, these evil supernatural beings may masquerade as harmless natural or spiritual 'forces'; 'spirits of the departed'; 'higher powers'; 'ascended masters'; or 'benign entities' from beyond this world. In many instances, these masquerading evil spirits bestow special powers or abilities on those individuals who become involved with them.

Without exception, these supernatural spirits are the associates of Satan. They are the mighty angels that rebelled against God before the creation of the world, and that God expelled from his holy and glorious presence. These mighty fallen angels retain much of their original power and strength, although now they use this great power for intensely evil purposes. In the Bible, these powerful fallen angels are known as *unclean spirits*, *evil spirits*, or *demons*. The demons are the willing and committed servants of their vile master, Satan—the chief of fallen angels or fallen spirits. Operating in league with their diabolical master, these rebellious spirits seek to exercise a powerful and malevolent influence over the minds and bodies of fallen men and women.

When demon possession occurs in a person's life, the demon (or demons) exercises an overriding control upon that person's mind and body. Once under the control of these evil spirits, the mind and body is then used as a vehicle for the spirit's wicked intentions. The effect of this might be to use the controlled person as a channel of communication to others. Sometimes, highly accurate information is communicated in this way; but not from the source claimed by the controlled person. Rather, and if not merely fraudulent, the source of information is demonic. At other times, however, misleading or deceptive information may be imparted. On other occasions, these evil entities may cause the controlled person to harm himself physically and/or mentally, to harm other people, or to damage other people's property.

At times, the invading evil spirits may so control a person's thoughts and actions that he may behave as though he was—and, as a result, may actually become—mentally unbalanced or deranged. Often, the demonised person may feel himself completely overpowered by the alien spirit (or spirits) invading his mind and body, and be utterly helpless to do anything about his resulting bizarre behaviour.

Casting Out Demons

Concerning one of two such demonised men at Gadara, God's Word relates:

Mark 5:1-15

⁽¹⁾ And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes [NIV, *Gerasenes*.⁸] ⁽²⁾ And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, ⁽³⁾ Who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: ⁽⁴⁾ Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any *man* tame him. ⁽⁵⁾ And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

⁽⁶⁾ But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, ⁽⁷⁾ And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of

⁸ Some manuscripts *Gadarenes*; other manuscripts *Gergesenes* [NIV footnote to Mark 5:1]

the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. ⁽⁸⁾ For he said unto him, Come out of the man, *thou* unclean spirit.

⁽⁹⁾ And he asked him, What *is* thy name? And he answered, saying, My name *is* Legion: for we are many.

⁽¹⁰⁾ And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

⁽¹¹⁾ Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. ⁽¹²⁾ And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

⁽¹³⁾ And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

⁽¹⁴⁾ And they that fed the swine fled, and told *it* in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. ⁽¹⁵⁾ And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

(See vv.16-20; cf. Matt. 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39)

Here was a man whose life was completely under the control of evil spirits. His behaviour was like that of a ferocious wild animal; a savage animal that no one could capture or tame. Chains and fetters could not restrain him. Under the influence of these mighty invading spirits, this poor wretch of a man became so physically powerful that he could rend asunder the iron shackles that bound him. In his wildly violent moods, he would have attacked brutally anyone who dared to approach him. (Matt. 8:28) Yet, when he caught sight of the Lord Jesus from afar, this man ran to him, fell down at his feet *and worshipped him*. (Mark 5:6 with Luke 8:28)

The Lord Jesus knew that this tormented man was not suffering from a physical or psychological condition (except insofar as these conditions were the effects of his *real* condition).⁹ Rather, this man was suffering from demon possession: i.e., the intrusion into his life (body and mind) of powerful supernatural spirit beings. Indeed, the record tells us that the man was possessed by a considerable number of demonic spirits. (Mark 5:9) (Unlike material bodies, spirits do not take up space. Vast numbers, therefore, could occupy and take possession of one person or animal's body.) The demons immediately recognised the Lord Jesus for who he was; i.e., the Son of God. Trembling with fear, the evil spirits pleaded with the Lord not to send them to that place of eternal torments, which they greatly dreaded—the place known as the 'Abyss' or 'bottomless pit'.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Luke 8:28,31

⁽²⁸⁾ When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not...

⁹ It is true that demon possession may produce certain physical and mental effects normally associated with recognisable clinical conditions: e.g., in Luke 9:14-29 we note the case of a boy suffering from deafness, muteness, and (apparently) epilepsy. Looking more closely at the relevant passage, however, it is clear that the seizures experienced by this young man were not purely or fundamentally of a physical or neurological nature. Rather, *in this particular instance*, the seizures were being induced by the presence of demonic spirits. We must emphasise, however, that—as an almost invariable rule—conditions such as epilepsy are usually nothing more than common physical and neurological conditions. (GL)

⁽³¹⁾ And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep [NIV, *Abyss*, Gk., ἄβυσσος ¹⁰] (See vv.26-39)

Revelation 9:1-2

⁽¹⁾ And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit [NIV, *Abyss*]. ⁽²⁾ And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit [NIV, *Abyss*]. (See vv.3-12)

Revelation 20:1-3

⁽¹⁾ And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit [NIV, *Abyss*] and a great chain in his hand. ⁽²⁾ And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, ⁽³⁾ And cast him into the bottomless pit [NIV, *Abyss*], and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. (See vv.4-10)

The Lord Jesus commanded the 'legion' of demons to depart from this tormented man, giving them leave to enter a herd of pigs on the nearby hillside. Immediately, the demons left the man's body and entered the pigs, driving the now-demented animals to their death in the sea below. The man, however, was now found sitting on the grass, clothed, and in his right mind. His mental derangement had been caused by the invasion of these evil (or unclean or impure) spirits. As soon as Jesus had expelled these vile spirits, the man's mind had been restored to normal. Consequently, his formerly bizarre behaviour also returned to normal.

Once again, the Lord Jesus effected a miracle of healing, and once again the healing was immediate. (Mark 5:13) By means of this divine sign, the Lord of glory was demonstrating his sovereign dominion not only over physical and psychological conditions, but also over conditions caused by the invasion of evil supernatural powers. Although no man on earth is able to exercise control over these mighty spirit beings (except in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ), these same mighty beings are terrified in the presence of God's Son. They know that he alone has the power and the authority to cast them into the everlasting fire; their ultimately destiny—and this they greatly fear.

To this end, God's Word says:

James 2:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (See vv.14-26)

Matthew 25:41

⁽⁴¹⁾ Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: (See vv.31-46)

Revelation 20:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. (See vv.7-15)

¹⁰ ἄβυσσος (*Abyss*): immensely deep (space), or bottomless.

Raising the Dead

During his public ministry, the Lord Jesus raised several people from death to life. One of these was Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary. When Lazarus fell seriously ill, his sisters sent word to Jesus asking him to come to heal their sick brother. The Lord, however, had refrained from going immediately to Lazarus' aid—in order that even greater glory might be brought to God's name.

Thus, the Scripture says:

John 11:4

⁽⁴⁾ When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

John 11:40

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God? (Cf. with vv.23-25)

Some days later, Jesus approached the village of Bethany where Mary and Martha lived. Martha heard that Jesus was coming, so she left Mary in the house and ran out to meet the Lord. Like her sister Mary, Martha was extremely distraught by this time. Her brother Lazarus had died four days earlier, and his body had been lying in the tomb since that time. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus proceeded to comfort the grief-stricken woman with the solemn assurance that her brother would rise again. Martha, however, thought that Jesus was speaking about the resurrection at the last day. Concerning these things, the Scripture says:

John 11:21-27

⁽²¹⁾ Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. ⁽²²⁾ But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee.

⁽²³⁾ Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

⁽²⁴⁾ Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

⁽²⁵⁾ Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ⁽²⁶⁾ And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

⁽²⁷⁾ She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. (See vv.1-37)

At this point, Martha returned home to call her sister, Mary. Then, together with the Lord Jesus, they made their way to the cave where the body of Lazarus had been laid. On arriving at the scene, Jesus prayed to his heavenly Father, asking him to grant faith to those who were about to witness a spectacular miracle. This miracle in particular would attest to the Lord Jesus' authority as the Son of God: the one who is the resurrection and the life.

Concerning these things, it is written:

John 11:40-44

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?

⁽⁴¹⁾ Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. ⁽⁴²⁾ And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

⁽⁴³⁾ And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. (See vv.38-48; see esp. v.47b)

That Lazarus was indeed dead can be established from the fact that his body had been prepared for burial according to Jewish custom, and then placed in a tomb in the presence of witnesses. Again, four days later, this body was now in the early stages of decay and corruption. However, from this decaying state, the Lord restored this man to life, and to his family.

Not even the Pharisees, the vast majority of whom were implacably opposed to the Lord Jesus, could deny that Lazarus had been raised from the dead. The evidence was overwhelming; Lazarus was in the midst of the community again, alive and well. The most thorough investigation by the Pharisees could only reveal that Lazarus had indeed died. They ascertained that he had been buried, and that after four days in the grave, he had been raised from death by the glorious power of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It was impossible for these religious leaders to deny the evidence. Had it been otherwise, however, the Pharisees would most certainly have exposed and discredited the Lord Jesus. But, faced with an undeniable miracle, their only concern now was how they could stop the Lord Jesus from performing even more glorious miracles. (John 11:47-48) Furthermore, in an attempt to stop this miraculous event from becoming more widely known, the Jewish leaders endeavoured to find a way of putting Lazarus to death again! (John 12:9-10)

Clearly, no one but God can impart life to the dead. Those disciples, who, on another occasion, were invested with the Lord's authority and commission to raise the dead, were powerless to do so; except in and by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This, in itself, is further incidental proof of the deity of God's one and only Son.

Feeding of the Five Thousand

The feeding of the five thousand (and of the four thousand) represents another example of the Lord's power and authority over creation. From only five loaves and two fish, the Lord Jesus was able to create more than enough food to feed a hungry multitude. Rationalists and others who deny the inspiration and authority of God's Word attempt to explain away such miracles by declaring that the Lord merely instructed everyone present to share their picnic lunches; but patently, this is absurd. According to God's own infallible Word, no food was immediately available, apart from the five loaves and two fish.

It must be remembered that these hungry people had not come to a pre-arranged meeting. Many of them had only just heard that the Lord Jesus was still in their area, and they had come out hurriedly from the surrounding towns and villages to see him and to hear his teaching. (Matt. 14:13) It is most unlikely that these curious or spiritually hungry people would stop to think about preparing picnic lunches, lest, by delaying, they should miss being fed on the Bread of Life.

In fact, the Lord Jesus himself was perfectly capable of providing all the food that was necessary, by a miracle of creation. As the five loaves and two fish were being distributed among the vast crowd, this small amount of food was being multiplied by the Lord in order to provide a fully satisfying meal for all every one of those present.

Concerning this great event, God's Word says:

Matthew 14:15-21

⁽¹⁵⁾ And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

⁽¹⁶⁾ But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

⁽¹⁷⁾ And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

⁽¹⁸⁾ He said, Bring them hither to me.

⁽¹⁹⁾ And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and broke, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

⁽²⁰⁾ And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. ⁽²¹⁾ And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

(See vv.13-14; cf. Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13)

Clearly, then, the Lord Jesus was supplying as much food as was required to feed this vast and hungry crowd. And since it is evident that the Lord was multiplying the five loaves and two fish indefinitely, then it is evident that he was performing a miracle. Such miracles demonstrate beyond all doubt the Lord's power to create. However, the power to create in this manner is a power that inheres in God alone.

Again, it must be remembered that, when he performed this miracle, the Lord Jesus provided sufficient food not only for 5,000 *men*, but also for all the *women and children* present as well. (Matt. 14:21) In addition, when the remnants of food were gathered later into baskets, *twelve baskets* were filled with the leftovers (v.20).

It would be absolutely incredible to attempt to deny the evidence. On at least two occasions (the feeding of the five thousand, and the feeding of the four thousand), this miracle of creation was witnessed by a vast crowd of people. To say, as some do, that, on these occasions, the crowds were experiencing mass hallucination is a feeble and futile attempt to avoid the only truthful conclusion. And, in any event, mass hallucination does not feed hungry stomachs. Nor does it provide twelve tangible baskets filled with leftovers!

Calming of the Storm

The one who had power to feed a hungry multitude, to raise the dead, and to heal the sick, also had power over the natural elements. By him, through him, and for him, the heavens and the earth had been created; and, at his word, the entire universe is now being sustained. (Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:3)

When he created the heavens and the earth, the LORD God set in motion the laws of nature by which the universe is governed or controlled. This, however, does not mean that the universe is now entirely self-sustaining or self-governing, as many believe. Rather, every star, planet and other heavenly body in the created universe continues to be directed and controlled by God's sovereign and almighty hand: i.e., by the exercise of his all-powerful will, which governs all events throughout the entire universe.

Nothing can take place in the heavens or on the earth unless it is ordained or permitted by the LORD God. It should not have surprised the disciples, therefore, to discover that the Lord Jesus had authority over the wind and the waves. However, from God's Word, we find what probably would have been true of any one of us: In what the disciples perceived as a life-threatening situation, they were afraid; or, more likely, terrified. As the disciples battled vainly against the raging wind and sea, they greatly feared that the natural elements would very soon completely overwhelm their frail craft, and that they would soon perish beneath the waves. Thus, in God's Word, it is recorded:

Mark 4:36-41

⁽³⁶⁾ And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. ⁽³⁷⁾ And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. ⁽³⁸⁾ And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

⁽³⁹⁾ And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

⁽⁴¹⁾ And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

(See v.35; cf. Matt. 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25)

The wind and the sea forms part of God's natural creation. Normally, the Lord permits these natural elements to follow the course that he pre-ordained for them, without any apparent supernatural intervention. However, the Lord of creation is perfectly free at any time to set aside, by-pass, or override the natural laws that he himself has established. He may do so to accomplish a specific purpose, or to demonstrate his power and glory over the created elements, as in this and many other instances.

The wind and the waves could do no less than obey their Creator. Granted, these were inanimate natural powers or forces. But all creation, animate and inanimate, is subject to the sovereign will of Almighty God. They were created by his power and for his glory and they were created to accomplish his own ends. They remain subject to his will at all times. When the Lord of creation deems to pacify the raging storms of life, he does so when, where, and how he wills.

When they experienced the miraculous calming of this raging storm, the disciples were witnessing something of the power invested in the Son of God: a power that enables him to exercise total control over all creation. However, the exercise of this kind of power is nothing less than the exercise of omnipotence; i.e., infinite or unlimited power. But omnipotence is an attribute that belongs to God alone, or to one who possesses exactly the same characteristics as God. Only the Lord Jesus Christ—the eternal Son of God—possesses these same characteristics or attributes. This miracle, therefore, demonstrates not only the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also his deity.

Miracles Wrought by The Holy Spirit

The Conception of Jesus

Strictly speaking, miracles are wrought by God the Father, or by his Son Jesus Christ, through the person and agency of the Holy Spirit. That is, the Spirit of God is the personal executor who effects God's Word of command in the performance of supernatural or miraculous acts.

Having said this, there are several miracles in God's Word that are attributed particularly to the working of the Holy Spirit. One of these is the miraculous conception of the incarnate Son of God. Jesus was *born naturally* of the virgin Mary, but he was *conceived* in Mary's womb—not as a result of natural procreation—but by the *supernatural* act and almighty power of God the Holy Spirit.

As the Scripture says:

Matthew 1:18-20

⁽¹⁸⁾ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, *she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.* ⁽¹⁹⁾ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

⁽²⁰⁾ But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for *that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost*. (Italics added; see vv.21-25; see esp. v.25)

According to the physician Luke, the angel Gabriel told Mary that she had been chosen by God to bring forth his Son, and consequently she was about to conceive this holy child. However, Mary could not understand this situation since she had never had sexual relations with Joseph or with anyone else.

Thus, it is written:

Luke 1:34-35

⁽³⁴⁾ Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

⁽³⁵⁾ And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. (See vv.26-33)

Here is a very clear example of the almighty power of God acting through the Holy Spirit in the creation of life. On this singular occasion, the normal process of fertilisation is by-passed, so that the sinful nature common to all mankind would not be transmitted to the holy child of God. From this it follows, that the sinful nature is normally transmitted by means of—but *not because of*—natural sexual relations. This, then, is one example of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit: a supernatural and divine power that is not dependent on natural processes to create life.

The Conception of John the Baptist

Unlike the Son of God, John the Baptist was conceived in the normal way. At the time, however, his mother Elizabeth was well advanced in years and consequently beyond natural childbearing age. However, with God, nothing is impossible. By his almighty power, this aged woman would be enabled to conceive a child. All this was part of God's eternal plan for Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah (KJV, *Zacharias*); for the child to be born to this elderly couple was destined to become the forerunner or herald of the coming Messiah.

Thus, concerning her cousin Elizabeth, Mary was told:

Luke 1:36-37

⁽³⁶⁾ And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. ⁽³⁷⁾ For with God nothing shall be impossible. (See vv.39-45)

When, according to the natural course of events, it is impossible for an objective to be achieved, this does not interfere in any way with God's eternal plans. The execution or fulfilment of God's plans is not bound by the natural course of events. On the contrary, the 'natural course of events' is under God's almighty and sovereign control. The fact that Elizabeth was no longer of childbearing age presented absolutely no hindrance to God's plans for her and for her husband. God had intended to bless this couple in their old age by giving them a child: a child who would become a special messenger of the Lord. If it took a miracle to bring this about, then the Lord would perform a miracle: That is, he would intervene directly in the natural course of events; and, by his divine intervention, he would enable the aged Elizabeth to become pregnant by her husband, Zechariah.

A miracle, therefore, may be seen as a supernatural and divine intervention of God, or as a time when God overrules the natural course of events in order to accomplish his eternal purposes. From this, it is evident that the entire course of nature is under God's almighty control. There is not one natural occurrence or event that God cannot intercept, interrupt, or reverse—if it is his will to do so. This is clearly

demonstrated, for example, in the healing of the sick, the cleansing of the lepers, and the raising of the dead.

There are many occasions, however, when the Lord chooses not to intervene (obviously or miraculously) in the natural course of events, even although it is within his power to do so. In such situations, the Lord's eternal plan and purposes are not being hindered or thwarted. All these situations are in the Lord's hands, and his plans are still being fulfilled. Often, we may not fully understand the ways of God. But we know that a loving heavenly Father always act in accordance with his infinite wisdom, mercy and compassion; for the glory of his own goodness, and for the greatest good of his beloved people.

Holy Spirit Miraculously Bestowed Gift of Tongues

Other miracles of the Holy Spirit include the bestowal of special gifts on particular individuals in God's church, for a specific purpose. These gifts are not to be confused with natural talents or abilities, although these too are God-given. Spiritual gifts may be bestowed in addition to such natural gifts, or in the absence of particular natural qualities.

In the early church, one such miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit was the gift of tongues. The gift of tongues was the immediate ability to speak in a foreign language or languages: a language or languages that the speaker had not learned previously. The Holy Spirit bestowed this remarkable gift on the apostles of the Lord Jesus at Pentecost and on a number of other believers subsequently.

Concerning this miracle of the Holy Spirit, God's Word says:

Acts 2:1-4

⁽¹⁾ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ⁽²⁾ And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ⁽³⁾ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. ⁽⁴⁾ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Cf. Acts 1:4-5)

Before the bestowal of this gift, it is very unlikely that the Lord's disciples had been able to speak in any language other than their own native Aramaic or Greek. However, at this time, vast numbers of foreign-speaking Jews had arrived in Jerusalem to attend the annual Feasts of Passover and Pentecost. (Passover had already been celebrated, but Pentecost was still to come.) In this bustling throng of worshippers, men and women of many different languages and dialects were represented.

In providing the apostles with the gift of tongues, the Holy Spirit was equipping these men to communicate the Gospel to these foreign visitors in their respective native languages. That this gift was a genuine ability to speak in different foreign languages is attested to by those who heard the apostles preaching the Word of God. The various different language groups represented, testified to the fact that they were hearing the wonders of God presented to them in their own native tongues. Thus, God's Word says:

Acts 2:5-8

⁽⁵⁾ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. ⁽⁶⁾ Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak *in his own language*. ⁽⁷⁾ And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? ⁽⁸⁾ And how hear we every man *in our own tongue, wherein we were born?* (Italics added)

Acts 2:9-11

⁽⁹⁾ Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, ⁽¹⁰⁾ Phrygia, and Pam-

phylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, ⁽¹¹⁾ Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak *in our tongues* the wonderful works of God. (Italics added; see vv.9-21)

Once more, a miraculous event is witnessed by the people, to the glory of God. Men without any previous knowledge of foreign languages are enabled, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to speak in those languages. It must be remembered that, to those who heard them, the apostles' newly acquired ability represented nothing less than fluent, coherent, and distinctly recognisable speech. This speech was fully understood by the foreign-speaking Jewish visitors, without the need for interpreters.

Again, it must be remembered that these visitors had arrived from the furthest parts of the Roman Empire, and also from Arabia, Mesopotamia, and from other parts of the inhabited world. The apostles, however, did not address those from the Roman territories in Greek (the common language), but in the respective indigenous languages of the lands from which these Jewish visitors had come.

Many centuries earlier, when mankind had sought to rebel against God by building a tower up to heaven, the LORD had utterly confounded their then common language. Then, the LORD had caused these people to become dispersed throughout the world: each group according to their now distinct languages. Now, however, by miraculously equipping his servants to speak foreign languages, God was addressing Jewish people *from every nation under heaven* (v.5) with the message of eternal salvation. Very soon, by the preaching of the apostles, Gentiles too would hear the message of eternal life, through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Herein would be represented another miracle from above: the miracle of regeneration or the new birth.¹¹

¹¹ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Regeneration*, by Gordon Lyons.

Part 5

False or Counterfeit Miracles

Lying Signs and Wonders

Not all miracles (so-called) are divine miracles; i.e., not all demonstrations of supernatural power originate from God. False miracles—or rather, lying signs and wonders—can be effected by other supernatural beings or higher rational intelligences in the universe. Although often masquerading as angels of light (i.e., angels of God), these powerful supernatural spirits are utterly opposed to God and to his holy angels. They are inherently and abominably evil. In the Bible, the evil higher rational intelligences are known as Satan and his angels (i.e., the fallen angels or demons).

However, although apparently miraculous events or occurrences may at times be satanic or demonic in origin, this in no way implies that such deceptive ‘miracles’ are equal in power, glory, or effectiveness to those of Almighty God. Nor does it imply that they are outside God’s knowledge and control. False or counterfeit miracles are vastly *superior* to any demonstration of *human power* or ability, but they are vastly *inferior* to miracles effected by *God’s omnipotence*. Again, false or counterfeit miracles (i.e., lying signs and wonders) can be effected only insofar as God ordains or permits them. No holy or evil supernatural being (i.e., neither holy angels nor demons)—or any other being—can proceed one step beyond God’s eternal decrees.

Charles Hodge on Counterfeit Miracles

Concerning counterfeit miracles or lying wonders, Dr. Charles Hodge wrote:

...An effect may transcend all the powers of all material causes and the power of man, and nevertheless be within the compass of the ability of superhuman intelligences. These are rational creatures, superior to man, endowed with far higher capacities. These exalted intelligences have access to our world; they do exercise their powers in producing effects in the realm of nature...

...The question is not, Whether the works of the Egyptian magicians, and the predicted wonders of the Antichrist, are to be regarded as tricks and juggleries. It may be admitted that they were, or are to be, the works of Satan and his angels. But the question is, Are they to be regarded as true miracles?

The answer to this question depends on the meaning of the word. If by a miracle we mean any event transcending the efficiency of physical causes, and the power of man, then they are miracles. But if we adhere to the definition above given, which requires that the event be produced by the immediate power of God, they of course are not miracles. They are ‘lying wonders,’ not only because intended to sustain the kingdom of lies, but because they falsely profess to be what they are not. [Trench in C. Hodge’s Systematic Theology]...

...The difficulty in discriminating between miracles and these lying wonders—i.e., between the works of God and the works of Satan—has been anticipated and provided for by the sacred writers themselves...

The passages [infra] teach that supernatural events—i.e., events transcending the power of material causes, and the ability of man—may be brought about by the agency of higher intelligences; and that no such supernatural events are to be regarded as of any authority if produced by wicked agents, or for a wicked purpose.

It was on this principle our Lord answered the Pharisees who accused him of casting out devils [demons] by Beelzebub the prince of devils [demons]. He appealed to the design for which his miracles were wrought, to prove that they could not be referred to a satanic influence. Satan will not co-operate to confirm the truth or to promote good. God cannot co-operate to confirm what is false or to promote evil. So that the character of the agent, and the design for which a supernatural event is brought about, determine whether it is truly a miracle, or whether it is one of the lying wonders of the devil...¹²

Pseudo-Prophets can work 'Miracles'

In the Bible, true prophets of God were men whom the Lord had divinely appointed and authorised to act as his official spokesmen, and to foretell future events or occurrences. When relaying God's messages to the people, the Holy Spirit inspired these men to speak only the exact words of God. As such, the prophet's words were effectively, authoritatively, and inerrantly the very words and instructions of God to the people. In view of this, the people were required to hear and to heed the voice of God's officially appointed prophets as though listening to the voice of God himself.

To profess falsely to belong to this divinely instituted prophetic office, or to proclaim false messages in the name of the LORD, was a most serious matter indeed. Under the Old Testament arrangement, God's law required that all such false prophets be put to death for presuming to speak in the name of the LORD. (Deut. 13:5) This was God's just and righteous punishment for those who led his people away from the worship of himself alone, and introduced them to the worship of idols. It was the Lord's just and righteous punishment for those who persuaded God's people to leave the paths of obedience and righteousness, and to walk in the paths of disobedience and unrighteousness. It was the Lord's just and righteous punishment for those who seduced God's people from the only way that leads to life, and attempted to lead them into the ways of death and destruction.

Even so, in spite of this severe punishment, the Bible makes it plain that, from time to time, false teachers would arise among God's people. These people would claim falsely to be appointed to some 'spiritual' office, or to possess 'spiritual' gifts, or to be able to convey 'divinely revealed' messages contained in visions or dreams.

Even today, false teachers like those mentioned above claim God-given authority for their messages. This is evident from the very fact that they pretend to belong to a divinely appointed office, or that God has commissioned them to carry out a particular work. They may have assumed the office or work themselves. They may have been appointed to it by a particular church or denomination. But, contrary to their assertions and to the beliefs of those who appointed them, they have not received their calling or their appointment from God. The fact that they are not the true servants of God becomes clear subsequently from the nature of their message and their works.

Warning his own people to be on their guard against those false teachers who would arise in their midst, the LORD God says through his servant Moses:

Deuteronomy 13:1-3

⁽¹⁾ If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, ⁽²⁾ And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spoke unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; ⁽³⁾ Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (See vv.4-5)

False prophets or teachers are intent only in leading God's people astray, thereby dividing and scattering God's flock, and leading them into idolatry. (Idolatry involves not only the worship of false gods, but

¹² C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, pp. 630-632

also unfaithfulness to God and a wilful compromise or denial of the beliefs, principles, and practices of the true faith, as revealed in the Bible.)

To achieve their evil ends, these lying prophets are prepared to use any means at their disposal, and to display something of their power, by performing some notable and convincing signs and wonders. Some of these pseudo-prophets have the ability to foretell correctly, significant future events or occurrences. Others have the ability to perform super-human signs and wonders, including an ability to heal the sick, although not necessarily instantaneously or on a permanent basis. These pseudo-miracles are of such a nature that they cannot be performed merely by skill, tricks, or other human means. Rather, their successful performance requires power from beyond this world; i.e., power from supernatural demonic spirits (so-called 'paranormal' sources or forces).

Sometimes, these lying signs and wonders of the devil may closely resemble genuine gifts of God's Holy Spirit—but they are not of God. Rather, they are Satan's counterpart to the gifts of the Spirit. Nevertheless, these awe-inspiring pseudo-miracles can be so utterly convincing that they can tend even to deceive and mislead God's own people.

God's People Must Test Prophets or Teachers

That these prophets, teachers, or healers are not genuine servants of God can be established from the test that God himself has told his people to apply. Examples of this test are to be found in Deuteronomy chapter 13 verses 1-3 and in such passages as 1 John chapter 2 verses 18-23, and chapter 4 verses 1-6. Thus, God's Word solemnly declares:

Deuteronomy 13:1-3

⁽¹⁾ If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, ⁽²⁾ And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spoke unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; ⁽³⁾ Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (See vv.4-5)

1 John 2:18-23

⁽¹⁸⁾ Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. ⁽¹⁹⁾ They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

⁽²⁰⁾ But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. ⁽²¹⁾ I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. ⁽²²⁾ Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. ⁽²³⁾ Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. (See vv.24-27)

1 John 4:1-3

⁽¹⁾ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ⁽²⁾ Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ⁽³⁾ And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

1 John 4:4-6

⁽⁴⁾ Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. ⁽⁵⁾ They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. ⁽⁶⁾ We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

In 1 John chapter 4 verses 1-6, God's people are told to test the spirits. They are instructed to try those who claim to be prophets (or teachers), to determine whether or not their teaching and works are completely in agreement with the Word of God, both doctrinally and practically. In this vein, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 8:19-20

⁽¹⁹⁾ And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter [NIV, *consult mediums and spiritists*]: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? ⁽²⁰⁾ To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them. (See vv.11-22)

Acts 17:11

⁽¹¹⁾ These [the Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. (See vv.10-15)

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

⁽¹⁹⁾ Quench not the Spirit. ⁽²⁰⁾ Despise not prophesyings. ⁽²¹⁾ Prove [Test] all things; hold fast that which is good. ⁽²²⁾ Abstain from all appearance of evil.

1 John 4:1-3

⁽¹⁾ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ⁽²⁾ Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ⁽³⁾ And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

1 John 4:5

⁽⁵⁾ They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

In the cases mentioned in Deuteronomy chapter 13, it was anticipated that these false prophets would be able to perform many wonderful and convincing signs (as did Pharaoh's magicians in Egypt). These signs, however, did not originate from God. Rather, they originated from the evil one, and were in fact some of the lying signs and wonders of the devil. This is proved by the fact that the aim of these signs and wonders is to mislead God's people by subtlety, since many of them would mistakenly regard these signs and wonders as demonstrations of God-given power and authority. This, of course, they most certainly were not. Thus, by placing false confidence in these pseudo-prophets, God's people would be deceived; especially in regard to what they ought to believe and practice.

Under the bewitching spell of these charming pseudo-prophets, God's straying sheep would be led ever further away from the truth and from the worship of the only true God. Invariably, they would be

led to acknowledge false gods and deceiving spirits, and to embrace false beliefs and practices. To this effect, God's Word says:

1 Timothy 4:1

⁽¹⁾ Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; (See vv.2-3)

2 Peter 2:1-2

⁽¹⁾ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction {cf. *Jude 1:4b*}. ⁽²⁾ And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (See vv.3-22; see esp. vv.10,14,18-19)

2 John 1:9-11

⁽⁹⁾ Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. ⁽¹⁰⁾ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him Godspeed: ⁽¹¹⁾ For he that bid-deth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds. (See vv.7-8)

Jude 1:3-5

⁽³⁾ Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

⁽⁴⁾ For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁽⁵⁾ I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. (See vv.6-25; cf. v.5 with 1 Cor. 10:1-14)

Evidently, some professing believers had been deceived by these false teachers. Undoubtedly, they must subsequently have become aware of their error. However, instead of forsaking it and returning to the Lord, they wilfully maintained it. Often, this may have been because their newly found 'enlightenment' permitted them to indulge in some sinful practices: practices that, in his Word, God had expressly forbidden.

God Tests his People

God's Word is explicit. Notwithstanding a prophet's ability to perform miraculous signs, God's people must not heed what that prophet says if it is not in full agreement with the teaching of the Bible. If, however, they allow themselves to be led astray by false teachers performing remarkable signs, or proclaiming unsound doctrine, then God's people will be held accountable: for they are the stewards of his Word. From Deuteronomy chapter 13 verse 3, it is evident that the attempt on the part of the false teacher to seduce and mislead the people of God may well be a test sent by the Lord himself. He may permit such a test in order to prove his own people, and to ensure that they remain utterly faithful to him.

The people of God can only be aware of the dangers that surround them by becoming thoroughly familiar with God's inerrant and infallible Word, and by dealing uncompromisingly with those who peddle

false doctrine. The children of God, and the children of God's people, must not allow themselves to become contaminated with unsound and ungodly teaching.

Lying Miracles Performed in the Name of Christ

Miraculous signs performed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, are not necessarily true miracles. Throughout the centuries, multitudes of people have performed so-called miraculous signs in the name of Christ. These people, however, have had no personal experience of spiritual regeneration or the new birth. They may have claimed to belong to Christ, but their claim has not been based on fact. They may have used the Lord's name daily and hourly, but they have used his name in vain. According to God's own Word, the day will come when the Lord Jesus will deny that he ever knew these people. Thus, in Matthew's Gospel, the Lord Jesus utters these solemn words:

Matthew 7:21-23

⁽²¹⁾ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ⁽²²⁾ Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ⁽²³⁾ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

For these people, the power to prophesy did not come from the Lord Jesus Christ. The power to cast out demons did not come from the Lord Jesus Christ. The power to perform many wonderful works did not come from the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the sight of God's only begotten Son, the miraculous works that these false professors performed were no better than works of iniquity. Their apparently good works were intended to deceive the people. They were motivated by a wicked source and toward a wicked end. In these cases, the ability to prophesy (sometimes, accurately); the ability to cast out demons, and the ability to perform many awe-inspiring works, were all examples of lying signs and wonders. All were counterfeit miracles—miracles not from God, but from Satan and the demons.

These people whom the Lord denied knowing, were rejected for what they really were; the servants or messengers of Satan. While claiming to be acting in the name of Christ, the Light of the world, they had in fact been acting subtly and deceptively in the name of their true master; the prince of darkness.

False Christs Perform Lying Signs and Wonders

According to the Word of God, false christs will arise in the latter days. These pretenders to the Messiahship of Jesus will perform great signs and wonders by which they will endeavour to prove and thereby establish their claims. In fact, the signs they will perform will be so powerful and convincing that even some of God's own people would be led astray by them, if they were not being kept secure in the faith by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Lord Jesus declares:

Matthew 24:23-24

⁽²³⁾ Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not. ⁽²⁴⁾ For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (See vv.21-31)

The ability to perform these miraculous signs and wonders comes from that supernatural intelligent spirit in the heavens who is known as the *god of this world* [or *age*]; i.e., Satan himself. He is the one who supports and equips the false Christs, and he is the one who enables them to perform these superhuman signs and wonders

Antichrist Performs Lying Signs and Wonders

One of Satan's greatest ambassadors for evil will be the man of sin; otherwise known as the Antichrist. While blasphemously claiming all the attributes and prerogatives of Almighty God this man's whole life will be characterised by unbridled evil: although, perhaps cleverly masked by a cloak of 'religion'.

At his appearing in the world, the Antichrist or man of sin will set himself up as the only object of worship. He will do so in order that people may be induced to follow and worship him. His intention will be to lead people away from a saving knowledge of the only true God, and into a false and utterly worthless form of 'religion', or into a knowledge of the 'deep things of Satan.'

To a greater or lesser extent than any before him, this grossly evil man will be able to perform all kinds of lying signs and wonders. There will be no limit to his power in this respect (except insofar as God restrains him). Those who love their sin will love the man of sin, for he will condone and encourage their vile deeds. They will be utterly deluded and deceived by the Antichrist; but only because, formerly, they refused to believe the truth, and so be saved. (2 Thess. 2:10)

In his arrogance and pride, the Antichrist will profess to be the greatest and most powerful being in heaven or on the earth, with no one above him. Having witnessed the lying signs and wonders performed by this thoroughly evil man, the deluded mass of mankind will actually believe his blasphemous claims to deity, and will willingly serve, worship and follow him.

Concerning the appearing of the man of sin, the apostle Paul warns:

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

⁽⁸⁾ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: ⁽⁹⁾ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ⁽¹⁰⁾ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ⁽¹¹⁾ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: ⁽¹²⁾ That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (See vv.1-7)

Because of their intense love of unrighteousness, God permits these people to become completely deluded in regard to the truth. In fact, in verse 11 of the above passage, we are told that, because of their wilful rejection of the truth, *God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie* (italics added).

These people become thoroughly deluded by the lying signs and wonders performed by the man of sin simply because they absolutely refused to hear and believe the truth of God's Word. Instead of seeking the mercy and salvation of the Lord, they chose to practise every wicked inclination of their evil hearts and minds. Consequently, they suffer gross delusion by the Antichrist, the emissary of Satan.

In the end, however, the sins in which they take immense pleasure will result ultimately in miserable and wretched memories that will consume and torment them in the lake of fire. The punishment they might have avoided through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will be poured out upon them in full measure at the last day. The awe-inspiring 'miracles' that they witnessed and in which they trusted, were not miracles of God's love, grace and power, but lying signs and wonders of the devil, his Antichrist, and their evil servants.

Satan's Servants Face Eternal Judgment

At the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his holy ones, the Antichrist—that great servant of Satan and emissary of unrighteousness—will be destroyed utterly, and banished eternally to the lake of fire. The very one whom the man of sin will deny, vilify and trample underfoot, will come in the glory of his Father with his holy angels to judge the world. In righteousness, justice and with terrible vengeance, the Son of God will pass judgment upon all the ungodly. Especially severe will be the sen-

tence of condemnation against those who were leaders of unrighteousness, or who incited others to ungodly beliefs, attitudes or practices.

Thus, regarding the one who will deceive multitudes of people by his lying signs and wonders—the Antichrist or man of sin—it is written:

2 Thessalonians 2:8-9

⁽⁸⁾ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: ⁽⁹⁾ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. (See vv.10-12, quoted above)

Again, concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in judgment, it is recorded in the book of Revelation:

Revelation 19:11-16

⁽¹¹⁾ And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. ⁽¹²⁾ His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. ⁽¹³⁾ And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. ⁽¹⁴⁾ And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ⁽¹⁵⁾ And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron {*Psalm 2:9*}: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ⁽¹⁶⁾ And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (See vv.1-10; see also 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Jude 14-15)

And, regarding the final destruction of Satan's emissaries, the inspired apostle John declares:

Revelation 19:19-20

⁽¹⁹⁾ And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. ⁽²⁰⁾ And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. (See vv.17-21)

That their torments will be eternal is confirmed by God's Word:

Revelation 20:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. (See vv.7-9)

True and False Miracles Contrasted

In marked contrast to those who perform lying signs and wonders, the Lord's servants were able to perform genuine miracles. They did not perform these miracles in and of themselves, however. Rather, the Holy Spirit granted them the ability to work these miracles, in order to authenticate their ministry as of divine origin. These wonderful works of God included miracles of healing, casting out demons, and raising the dead.

Thus, it is written in the Word of God:

Luke 10:17-20

⁽¹⁷⁾ And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

⁽¹⁸⁾ And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. ⁽²⁰⁾ Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. (See vv.1-16)

Acts 5:12a

^(12a) And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people...

Acts 5:15-16

⁽¹⁵⁾ Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

⁽¹⁶⁾ There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one. (See vv.12b-14)

Acts 8:5-7

⁽⁵⁾ Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. ⁽⁶⁾ And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. ⁽⁷⁾ For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. (See vv.4-8)

Acts 9:40-41

⁽⁴⁰⁾ But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁽⁴¹⁾ And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. (See vv.36-43)

Acts 28:7-9

⁽⁷⁾ In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. ⁽⁸⁾ And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. ⁽⁹⁾ So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: (See vv.1-10)

True miracles are never performed as an end in themselves, no matter how beneficial to others. Their purpose is to glorify God and to validate the ministry of God's genuine servants. As such, miracles performed by the Lord's servants always draw people's hearts and minds to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the worship of the only true God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. On the other hand, lying signs and wonders always draw people's hearts and minds away from the truth concerning God, his Son, and his Holy Spirit. They entice unwary people to accept, believe and practise false, superstitious, and dis-

torted forms of worship. This is the kind of service (or bondage) and worship (so-called) of which Satan himself is the real author.

But God alone—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the only true object of worship for those who love the Lord. The saints of the Lord are being kept secure in his everlasting love—not by the demonstration of miracles or by other mighty works or experiences—but by the faithfulness of God. God has redeemed his people through the atoning blood of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, according to his own Word, which cannot fail, he will keep them in his everlasting arms until they are brought safely to glory, and into the presence of their loving Father and of the Lamb upon the throne.