

SIGNS, WONDERS, MIRACLES

PART III

CESSATION OF SIGNS, WONDERS, AND MIRACLES

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Signs, wonders, and miracles, manifested during time covered by the gospel accounts and the Book of Acts, were inseparably connected with the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel (both in the original offer and in the reoffer).

In the gospel accounts (in the original offer), these manifestations of supernatural power *were more evident* prior to Israel's climactic rejection of the message and Christ's departure from the house (Matt. 12:22-32; 13:1), *though seen throughout this period*.

And in Acts (in the subsequent reoffer), these manifestations of supernatural power *were more evident* prior to Israel's climactic rejection once again and the introduction of Paul to carry this message to the Gentiles (Acts 7:51-58; 9:1-15), though, as in the original offer, *they were seen throughout this period*.

There was a definite, revealed reason for the particular type manifestations of supernatural power — something which would not be true at all beyond that time when the offer was removed from Israel and the nation set aside, awaiting "the fulness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:25). These signs, wonders, and miracles were not only inseparably connected with the offer of the kingdom to Israel

(a connection established in the Old Testament Scriptures) but they spoke volumes in and of themselves. These manifestations of supernatural power reflected directly *on Israel's spiritual condition, past, present, and future* — something dealt with throughout the Old Testament.

In this respect, before Israel's climactic rejection in both the original offer and the reoffer, it was only natural for these signs, wonders, and miracles *to be very prevalent*.

However, in each instance, once these climactic points had been reached it was also only natural for the signs, wonders, and miracles *to become less prevalent*, though still in evidence because the offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel. Then, once the offer had been withdrawn (about 62 A.D.), it was not only natural but absolutely necessary that the signs, wonders, and miracles *cease altogether*.

They *had to cease* at this time. They would have been *completely out of place* beyond this point. And this can be seen from a Scriptural standpoint entirely apart from referencing I Corinthians chapter thirteen — a section of Scripture in which Paul stated that they would cease, giving both *the time* and *the reason*.

I Corinthians 13:8-10

Paul's reference to this matter in his first letter to those in Corinth was made necessary because the Church in Corinth was a Gentile Church in which signs, wonders, and miracles were being manifested, which could only have been with a view to provoking Israel to jealousy (Rom. 10:19; 11:11-14; *cf.* Acts 13:44, 45). And Paul, viewing that which was occurring in the light of the Old Testament Scriptures, called their attention to *the time* and *the reason* when these manifestations of supernatural power would cease.

In I Cor. 13:8-10, Paul called attention to the fact that the spiritual sign-gifts being manifested in the Church in Corinth were only temporary, for a revealed reason. And it is evident that the whole panorama of spiritual sign-gifts (ch. 12) would be alluded to by the three which Paul singled out — *prophecies, tongues, and knowledge*.

All of the spiritual sign-gifts would have to be looked upon together — as a unit, comprised of different parts — simply because of *their interrelated purpose*. They all existed for *exactly the same purpose*. And when the Lord saw fit to bring His purpose surrounding these gifts to a close, they (all of them together, delineated by the three in I Cor. 13:8) *would no longer exist*.

Actually, from a Scriptural standpoint, *they couldn't exist beyond this time*. Any existence of these gifts beyond this time *would be contrary to the revealed Word of God and, thus, impossible*.

Prior to this time, Paul had the power to effect bodily healings (portending Israel's healing), for the offer of the kingdom was still open to Israel (Acts 19:6, 11, 12; 28:8, 9). But after this time, when the offer of the kingdom was no longer open to the nation — when healing for Israel was set aside with the nation, with the corresponding cessation of signs, wonders, and miracles — Paul no longer possessed this power.

After this time, Paul instructed Timothy, "...use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (I Tim. 5:23); and he later left Trophimus "at Miletum sick" (II Tim. 4:20).

In I Cor. 13:8-10, two expressions relative to these sign-gifts are used in opposite senses — "in part," and "perfect":

"Charity [Love] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

In these verses, "in part" has to do with *incompleteness* (from *ek meros*), meaning "out of a part [plural in the Greek text of vv. 9, 10, 'out of parts']," and "perfect" has to do with *completeness* (from *teleios*, meaning "complete," "bringing to an end") Thus, *ek meros* and *teleios* are used in antithetical senses.

And both expressions, since they have to do with either *the continuance* or *the end* of the manifestation of supernatural signs, are inseparably connected with either *the continuance* or *the end* of the offer of the kingdom to Israel. This is a connection which, from a Scriptural standpoint, *must be recognized*, for "signs," apart from both Israel and the kingdom being in view, *cannot exist*. And *it must be recognized* in order to properly understand that which is being stated in I Cor. 13:8-10.

In this respect, *incompleteness* (shown by *ek meros*) has to do with that time *prior* to God finishing His work pertaining to the offer of the kingdom to Israel (with signs, wonders, and miracles still in evidence); and *completeness* (shown by *teleios*) has to do with that time *following* God finishing His work pertaining to the offer of the kingdom to Israel (with signs, wonders, and miracles no longer in evidence).

Thus, the thought set forth by Paul in I Cor. 13:9, 10, contextually, is *something quite easy to see and understand* as long as the proper connection with the manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles is made. But *remove this key, and the whole matter becomes impossible to properly see and understand*.

Verse nine teaches that Paul and others were exercising *supernatural spiritual gifts*. And they were exercising these gifts during a time of "incompleteness," *i.e.*, they were exercising

these gifts during the period *prior to the time* God would "complete" His work with Israel relative to the proffered kingdom.

Verse ten then goes on to state that the time was coming when God would "complete" His work surrounding the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel. Then, the things being done during the time of "incompleteness" (during the time when the offer of the kingdom had previously remained open to Israel, *prior to God completing His work in this respect*) — things pertaining to *Israel and the kingdom* — would "be done away" with.

(Note that to associate *teleios* in I Cor. 13:8-10 with the completion of the canon of Scripture and a corresponding cessation of sign-gifts, as many do, *has nothing to do with Israel and the kingdom*. Accordingly, the completion of the Canon of Scripture, *can have nothing to do with the matter*.)

Acts 28:28

Thus, the manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles ceased when the offer of the kingdom was withdrawn from Israel, with a view to God completing His work of removing from the Gentiles "a people for his name."

And this was *in complete keeping* with their usage in the Old Testament (pertaining to Israel and the kingdom), *in complete keeping* with their usage during the time covered by both the gospel accounts and the Book of Acts (again, pertaining to Israel and the kingdom), and *in complete keeping* with that which they portended (Israel's spiritual condition, both present and future).

In Acts 28:28, Paul told the Jews for the third and last time that he was going to the Gentiles with the message which they had rejected.

"Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

And when he had said these words, the Jews departed..." (vv. 28, 29a; cf. Acts 13:46; 18:6).

At this time, God set Israel aside for the remainder of the dispensation, and, correspondingly, *signs, wonders, and miracles ceased*. With God's termination of His dealings with Israel in relation to the kingdom, *signs, wonders, and miracles had to cease*.

For sign-gifts to continue beyond this point *would have been completely out of line with Scripture*. And, *remaining in line with Scripture*, these sign-gifts *cannot again be in evidence until that future time when God resumes His national dealings with Israel in relation to the kingdom*.

This is a truth drawn from the Old Testament, the gospel accounts, and the Book of Acts *which, from a Biblical standpoint, cannot be denied*.

And that's where we are today — living during a time in which Israel has been set aside awaiting "the fulness of the Gentiles" being brought to pass (Rom. 11:25). We're living during a time when signs, wonders, and miracles *can have no part within the framework of God's plans and purposes*. And this can be easily understood, for any present manifestation of supernatural powers of this nature would portend God dealing with *Israel* in relation to the nation's spiritual condition and *the theocracy* during the present time; and this is *something which God is not doing*.

Thus, such a manifestation of supernatural powers during the present time, from a Scriptural standpoint, can only be *completely out of place*.

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