**Bible Study October 12thth 2023 – The Gifts of the Holy Spirit part 13 – the working of miracles**

Read **1 Cor. 12.4-11**So far this month we have looked at Faith and Gifts of Healing. This week we are going to look at the third gift of power – the Working of Miracles.

As we have seen previously with the gifts of power it can be quite difficult to categorise which gift is being used for example, when handkerchiefs and aprons were carried away from Paul’s body to the sick and diseases left them and evil spirits came out this is described as “extraordinary miracles”; so was this the gift of healing or of miracles? (**Acts 19.11-12**)

Sometimes people receive a gift of healing instantaneously but for others the healing may come gradually. However, in the ministry of Jesus, in almost all of the accounts that we have of Jesus healing the sick, the healing took place immediately. On two occasions the healing was not instantaneous (Luke 17.11-19 & Mark 8.22-26) but even on those occasions the healing took place within a very short period of time. Also, the Gospels record many accounts of Jesus healing people that could not have been healed by a physician and so Jesus’ healing ministry can rightly be called miraculous. Similarly, in the Acts of the Apostles there were healings which took place which were miraculous but this evening we are going to focus on miracles which are not miracles of healing.

First of all, we need to define what we mean by a miracle. Sometimes the word miracle can be used in a quite broad sense such as when someone describes the birth of a baby as a miracle. However, as wonderful as it is to witness the birth of a baby, this is a normal and natural event which takes place every day. A miracle, however, is something which is an extraordinary event which cannot be explained by anything other than divine intervention such as the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus.
The Oxford English Dictionary defines a miracle as “an extraordinary and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore attributed to divine agency.”
Merriam-Webster defines it as “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.”

When we look at the miracles recorded in the Bible we see that there were particular periods when God moved in miraculous power.
Abraham witnessed the miraculous birth of his son Isaac when he was 100 years old and his wife Rebecca was 90 years old and had been barren for many years. He also witnessed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven. More than 500 years passed after the miraculous birth of Isaac to the time of Moses’ deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt. In that 500 year period we see God speaking to Joseph through dreams, giving Joseph the interpretation of Pharaoh’s dreams also God moving providentially in Joseph’s life to bring about the fulfilment of those dreams but apart from that there is no miraculous intervention from God in that period.

The exodus from Egypt and the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites took place over a 40 year period and this short period of time saw a multitude of miracles:
God appeared to Moses in the burning bush - Ex. 3.1-4
Moses’ rod that turned into a snake & his hand that turned leprous – Ex. 4.1-9
The ten plagues on Egypt – Ex. 7-12
Guided by the pillar of fire and cloud – Ex. 13.21-22
Crossing the Red Sea – Ex.14
The bitter water turned sweet at Marah – Ex. 15.23-26
Fed with manna for 40 years – Ex. 16.14-36
Fed with quails – Ex. 16.12-13
Water from the Rock twice – Ex.17.1-7; Num 20.2-13
Miriam’s leprosy – Num. 12.10-15
The earth opening up and swallowing Dathan and Abiram – Num. 16.29-34
Fire from the Lord on Korah \_ Num. 16.35
Fire from the Lord on Nadad & Abihu – Lev. 10.2
Plagues in the wilderness – Num. 11.33; 16.46-50; 25.8-9
Aaron’s rod that budded – Num. 17.1-11
The Brass serpent – Num 21.6-9
Balaam’s ass that spoke – Num. 22.22-23

It was no wonder that this period of time when God moved in miraculous power was remembered so frequently by the Israelites.

In the time of Joshua the miracles continued:
God stopped the River Jordan so that the people could cross – Josh. 3 &4
The walls of Jerich fell – Josh. 5.12
God helped them to defeat the five kings of the Amorites by sending hailstones to help them in battle and making the sun stand still – Josh.10.10-14

In the period of the Judges (approximately 400 years) there were a few miracles:
The dew on Gideon’s fleece - Judges 6.36-40
The supernatural power of Samson to kill a lion, kill 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass and pick up the gates of Gaza – Judges 13-16
In the time of Samuel the Philistine god Dagon fell and when the ark of the covenant was captured, tumours came on the Philistines – 1 Sam. 5-6
In the battle with the Philistines God thundered with a mighty voice and sent them into confusion – 1 Sam. 7

During the next 200 years only one miracle is recorded – a man of God prophesied against the altar at Bethel and when Jereboam stretched out his hand against him his hand withered but his hand was restored when the man of God prayed for him – 1 Kings 13.

Another 200 years pass without any miracles and then there is another period of God’s miraculous intervention during the ministry of Elijah and Elisha:
Elijah is fed by ravens – 1 Kings 17.4-6
The oil and meal that didn’t run out – 1 Kings 17.12-16
The widow of Zarephath’s son raised from the dead – 1 Kings 17.17-24
Fire on the altar on Mt. Carmel – 1 Kings 18.20-39
Fire from heaven on those who try to arrest Elijah – 2 Kings 1.10-15
Elisha divides the Jordan – 2 Kings 2.13-15
Water made pure – 2 Kings 2.19-22
Elisha multiplies the Shunammite woman’s oil - 2 Kings 4.1-7
Her son is raised from the dead – 2 Kings 4.20-37
Elisha makes the poisoned pottage good to eat – 2 Kings 4.38-41
Elisha feeds 100 men with a small amount of food – 2 Kings 4.42-44
Naaman cured of leprosy – 2 Kings 5
Gehazi smitten with leprosy - 2 Kings 5.27
Lost axe head floats – 2 Kings 6.5-7
Elisha shows his servant the horses and chariots and the Syrians are smitten with blindness – 2 Kings 6.8-20
The Syrians hear the sound of an army and flee Samaria – 2 Kings 7.6-7
Dead man who is thrown into Elisha’s grave is raised – 2 Kings 13.20-21

Elijah and Elisha lived during the 9th Century B.C. and after this there were very few miracles for the rest of the Old Testament period:
In the 8th Century B.C. during Isaiah’s ministry Sennacherib’s army was destroyed by the angel of the Lord – 2 Kings 19.35; Isaiah 37.36
Also the shadow went backwards on the sun dial as a sign that Hezekiah would be healed and live longer – 2 Kings 20.1-11

In the 6th Century B.C. in the time of Daniel there were three notable miracles:
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace Dan. 3.19-27
The writing on the wall at Belshazzar’s feast – Daniel 5.5
Daniel saved from the lions – Daniel 6.16-23

There was then a period of more than 500 years during which no miracles are recorded until we the come to the New Testament.

To summarise the miracles of the Old Testament:
1. Most of the miracles took place during two main periods: Moses & Joshua and Elijah & Elisha.
2. There were some long periods of time in which there are no miracles recorded.
3. The majority of the miracles were unique.
4. There were very few miracles of healing.

In the Gospels the vast majority of Jesus’ miracles were healings. His other miracles were:
Water into wine – John 2.1-11
Walking through the crowd – Luke 4.30
Feeding the 5,000 – Matthew 14.15-21
Feeding the 4,000 – Matthew 15.32-39
Calming the storm – Mark 4.35-41
Walking on water – Matthew 14.22-33
The withering of the fig tree – Matthew 21.18-22
Coin in the fish’s mouth – Matthew 17.24-27
miraculous catch of fish – Luke 5.1-11
A second miraculous catch of fish – John 21.1-14
Jairus’ daughter raised from the dead – Mark 5.22-43
Widow’s son raised from the dead - Luke 7.11-17
Lazarus raised from the dead - John 11.38-44

Some of Jesus’ miracles were signs which pointed to the fact that He was the Messiah. In John 20.30-31 John tells us that he recorded these signs so that we would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. For this reason some of Jesus’ miracles, such as turning water into wine, were unique miracles which were signs pointing people to who Jesus is. However, in John 14.12 Jesus told His disciples that those who believe in Him would do the works that He did and greater. When we read the Acts of the Apostles we see that the healing miracles continued through the power of the Holy Spirit. Other miracles included:
Ananias and Saphira being struck dead – Acts 5
The apostles set free from prison by an angel – Acts 5.17-20
Philip caught away by the Spirit of the Lord – Acts 8.39
Dorcas raised from the dead – Acts 9.36-42
Peter delivered from prison – Acts 12.6-17
Elymas smitten with blindness – Acts 13.11
Eutychus raised from the dead – Acts 20.9-12
Paul shakes off a viper and is unharmed – Acts 28.8

As with the other gifts of the Spirit, the gift of working of miracles is not just for Bible times.
Read “The Heavenly Man” p.255 – 257 about Brother Yun’s miraculous escape from prison.
Read Body Builders by David Petts p. 183-185 about Nigerian Pastor, Daniel Ekechukwu who was raised from the dead after two days.