

The Kingdom of God part 5

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 1st July 2012

Intro-

- In part 1 spoke on Dan 7 about the kingdom of God becoming the greatest of all Empires, starting small but filling the earth, captivating hearts through God's love.
- In part 2 spoke on 'Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'- the rule and reign of God coming to earth through King Jesus.
- In part 3 spoke from Lk 11:14-26 on deliverance being part of God's kingdom coming.
- In part 4 we looked at the Kingdom of God coming through the ministry of healing.
- Today we will look at another aspect of God's Kingdom coming- signs and wonders.

Read John 2:1-11

Miracles are 'signs'- v11 'signs'

- What is a 'sign'? Greek word *sēmeíon* – a sign (typically miraculous), given especially to confirm, corroborate or authenticate.
- *Sēmeíon* is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament Hebrew *אֵימָנָה*, ('Ot) a sign, mark, token; a physical sign pointing to something or a miraculous event.
- It can mean simply a sign or mark – e.g. God put a mark on Cain- Gen 4:15
- It can mean the sign of a covenant- rainbow – sign of Noahic covenant Gen 9:12-13. Circumcision- sign of Abrahamic covenant- Gen 17:11; Keeping the Sabbath- sign that Israel belonged to God- Ex 31:13.
- But it is usually used of God's miracles- plagues of Egypt were 'signs'- used many times in Exodus. These signs showed the Egyptians that God was Israel's king and that He was more powerful than Pharaoh and the Egyptian gods

'if they don't believe the first sign they may believe the second' (Ex 4:8)

- Prophets also confirmed prophecy with 'signs'-

Is 7:14 Isaiah to Ahaz- the virgin will give birth to a son & his name will be called immanuel & before he is old enough to know right and wrong the coalition against Judah (Israel & Syria) will fall and the threat will be from Assyria instead;

Isaiah had at least 2 sons (3 if you include immanuel as his) who had prophetic names as signs confirming prophecies he made: Shear-Jashub ('a remnant shall return') and Maher-shalal-hash-baz ('hurry to the spoil' or 'He has made haste to the plunder!');

'Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion. (Is 8:18)'

King Hezekiah's life was to be extended 15 years & Jerusalem to be kept safe from the King of Assyria and this was the sign:

“This is the Lord's sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.” So the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down. (Is 38:7-8)

- Can also refer to signs done by of false prophets (i.e. Satan is a mimic).

For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mt 24:24); See also Mark 13:22; Rev 13:13; 16:14; 19:20; 2 Thess 2:9.

- What is the difference between a sign and a wonder (first used in Ex 7:3)? None. It is just Hebrew parallelism- the same thing spoken of in two ways- a miracle is a sign and a wonder to us, a sign which makes us wonder. In fact, the LXX translates Ex 7:9 which has the Hebrew word 'wonder' with the Greek word for 'sign', showing perhaps that they were considered the same.
- This particular sign was a miracle- v9- 'the servants who had drawn the water knew'. The servants could see this was a miracle- 6 water pots with 20-30 gallons each- huge amount of wine! Top quality wine too!
- **Application:** A sign is like a signpost pointing to something- The stars are for signs- Gen 1:14 (i.e. navigating signs, signs of what season we are in). Miraculous signs are a signpost showing us God's kingly glory- v11 the disciples saw the sign and put their faith in Jesus- they rightly interpreted it. Jesus rebuked those who were unbelieving in His generation by saying that they could interpret the weather based on signs in the sky but they couldn't interpret the times they were living in.

Amongst the Olympic opening ceremony last night there was a snippet of a clip with Michael Fish who became infamous in the wake of the Great Storm of 1987; a few hours before the storm broke, on 15 October 1987, he said during a forecast: "Earlier on today, apparently, a woman rang the BBC and said she heard there was a hurricane on the way... well, if you're watching, don't worry, there isn't!". That evening, the worst storm to hit South East England since 1703 caused record damage and killed 18 people.

- The purpose of a sign is to point to Christ- don't be obsessed with them and don't ignore them either:

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:38-40)

"Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:11-14)

- Don't become superstitious- thinking that everything is an 'Omen' that is believing in Fate controlling our destiny, however, when God wants to say something He will use signs in conjunction with His Word and godly counsel and the witness of His Spirit. Be wise. Not every weather pattern is a message from God.
- The 'sign on the car', the 'congratulations for trying something new' for me were signs that God highlighted- learn to listen to the Lord.
- Satan can mimic- just because something comes true it doesn't mean it's a sign from God – test the spirits- what is the message and to what is the message appealing to: my flesh, or my spirit? Is it bringing glory to Christ?

Jesus' life was full of signs- v11 'beginning'

- The Messiah was the King who was promised and He needed to come with some sort of proof that He was the promised King they were expecting. As God had previously authenticated His kingship to Israel through the Exodus using miraculous signs (as well as miracles through the Prophets) it would be logical for the promised King to be validated with signs and wonders.
- This miracle was the beginning of the signs- i.e. Jesus had a whole lifestyle of signs and wonders. Note, however, there were other signs previous such as the shekinah

glory manifesting at His birth, the sign of the star, the prediction by the angel that the shepherds would find a child wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. But this marks a new phase in Jesus' life- moving into His time of ministry.

- The miracles of Jesus were a sign. Miraculous catch of fish (a sign that Peter would catch many men for God), coin in fish mouth (a sign that God is able to provide), walking on water, calming storm, feeding of 4,000 & 5,000 (a sign that Jesus is the Bread of Life). Transfiguration.
- The healings of Jesus were a sign that He was sent by the Father- see John 8:29,42 'sent' (verse 58 I AM!); 9:4 'sent', 9:7 Siloam means 'sent' (He was sent by Jesus to 'sent' and came back seeing- the blind see and those that claim to see can't see that He is sent of the Father! God has a sense of humour!).
- The dead raisings- signs that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life .
- The prophecies of Jesus were a sign- Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple within a generation & it happened in AD70. He predicted His betrayal, denial, arrest, sufferings, death and resurrection on the 3rd day.
- The resurrection (and subsequent ascension into heaven) was the culminating sign and the key sign of His being the King- witnessed to by over 500 people over a 40 day period, people touched him, chatted with him, ate with him. Paul states that this is God's declaration that Jesus is God's Son- Rom 1:4.
- **Application-** Have you responded to Christ yet? Have you understood the signs? If these signs are true (which they are) we can't live the same. We can't live for ourselves any more. If you have responded to the Gospel have you forgotten the amazing miracles of provision and healing that Christ did? He is able to do them now.

Jesus is still doing signs today- v11 'beginning'

- The signs of Jesus being the Christ are to continue in the Church
- Tongues of fire at Pentecost and rushing wind- manifestations of the shekinah glory, just as burning bush.
- These 'signs' shall accompany those who believe- not only healings but signs: Mk 16:17-18, 20 "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." ...And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.
- The early Church doing miracles-

"And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people." (Acts 5:12)

"Paul and Barnabas speak boldly in the Lord, who bears witness to His word of grace, granting signs and wonders to be done through their hands." (Acts 14:3)

"Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds." (2 Cor. 12:12)

"in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." (Rom. 15:19)

Paul was unaffected by a fatal snake bite. Paul and Elymas (Acts 13:11). Peter and Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5).

- Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32)- signs and wonders in Heaven and on earth. Peter's sermon in Acts saw a fulfilment of this prophecy as being the miraculous signs of Christ (Acts 2:22) and also God's promise of the Spirit (verses 33, 38-39) which they were then experiencing and is promised to all believers. Peter's understanding was that from Jesus onwards it was a fulfilment of this promise from Joel about the age of the Spirit when signs and wonders were to be the order of the day. We don't

need to tarry and wait for Jesus to be glorified- He has been glorified and the gift of the Spirit is to all who believe. We are temples of Christ, He dwells, tabernacles in us, not a physical building. We are to expect manifestations of His glory increasingly- if the Old Covenant was glorious how much more the New!(2Cor 3 & 4, especially 3:8, 18 & 4:6)

- That Signs and Wonders are to be part of the End-Time Church ministry is seen from Revelation- 2 witnesses with signs and wonders ministry empowered to witness using signs and wonders similar to Moses and Elijah- Moses witnessed against Gentiles (Egypt) using plagues to say 'let my people go', Elijah witnessed to Israel to give up idolatry to Baal using no rain for 3.5 years. Surely this is a picture of the end time church preaching repentance (sackcloth), being witnesses of Christ and doing signs and wonders as testimony to the truth of the message.
- Today- various strange signs that some accept and others struggle with.
- Gold dust. Gold teeth. Gold in Bibles. Precious stones. Oil coming out of Bibles. Glory cloud manifestations (e.g. Bethel). Raining inside buildings
- Mike Pilivachi- his friend who was an intercessor, very quiet man, didn't have a platform, but had oil running out his hands when the anointing came on him.
- Earth signs & heaven signs- wars, earthquakes, signs in the heavens- Jesus said about signs on the earth- wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences- we are seeing these in our day- these are all 'signs of the times'.
- The sign of the Son of Man appearing on the clouds of Heaven when He returns in glory is His final sign to mankind, but then it will be too late for those who have rejected His previous signs, and many will mourn when they see this sign- Mt 24:30
- **Application-**

'Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil' (1Thess 5:19-22)

To this we could add 'do not despise signs and wonders' but test everything and hold fast to that which is good- hold fast by drawing closer to Christ, responding to Him.

- See the signs in the earth, but don't be obsessed or complacent- use evangelistically, preach the Gospel.

Summary

- **Miracles are 'signs'**
- **Jesus' life was full of signs**
- **Jesus is still doing signs today**

Song: *Water You turned into wine*