

Conclusion

Signs and wonders and supernatural manifestations are currently widespread in churches and fellowships across the world. Some people are very enthusiastic about what is happening, others are cautious, and yet others are strongly against it.

Signs and miracles in themselves are neutral things. They are not an indication of great spirituality. The disciples healed the sick and drove out demons before their great baptism of the spirit on the day of Pentecost. People of many other religions, and no doubt many different kinds of power, have done similar things.

When signs and wonders are pointing people to the greater things that are in the mind and heart of God, we can do nothing but rejoice and be glad. God forbid that we should speak against them.

When they are promoting a man's ministry or organisation or when people seek them for their own sake, we need to beware.

Paul writing to the Colossians said, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Col 3:1, 2). As we have seen, signs and wonders are earthly things. If we want on the one hand to avoid the dangers of deception and on the other to go forward in our walk with God, we do well to follow Paul's advice.

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Truly, truly I tell you, anyone who believes in me, the things that I do, he will do also, and he will do greater things than these because I am going to my Father.

The first people who believed there was safety in numbers built the tower of Babel. They thought that if they made a name for themselves and built a wall around them everything would be alright. Many people since have followed their example!

Bible study is good, and fellowship with other believers, both in depth and in width, is good, but neither of these God-given blessings can guarantee that we will be safe from deception.

Jesus said, as quoted above, that **false Christs and false prophets would appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect -- if that were possible**. How then can we escape this deception? John, in the verse I quoted, tells us **who** will be deceived. It is **those who dwell on the earth**. Not those who physically dwell on the earth of course, but those who spiritually dwell there! Such people are like Nicodemus who could see the signs that Jesus did, but not the kingdom of heaven. The natural eye can see the signs and miracles, but not beyond them. It cannot see the greater things to which they point.

Jesus twice said to the Pharisees **“A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign”** (Mat 12:39 and 16:4). If our eyes are on the signs themselves we are open to deception. We are part of that *wicked and adulterous generation*. Jesus here used the word *adulterous* in the same way as it is used throughout the scriptures. When the people of God turn from worshipping him to worshipping idols they commit adultery. God requires that we worship him in spirit and in truth. If we turn from this invisible God to anything that our natural eyes can see, we are turning to idols and committing spiritual adultery.

The place of safety is that same place that Jesus went to prepare for us. When we become those who dwell in heaven, seated with him, we are in the place where we will not be deceived.

Paul’s words to Timothy, when understood spiritually, confirm the truth of this, **“Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner”** (1 Tim 2:14). Not the physical woman again, but the spiritual woman! The male in scripture represents the spirit, and the female the flesh. While we walk in the flesh, with our thinking controlled by and limited to the natural realm, we are prone to deception. As our minds are renewed by the spirit of God we become safe.

Bible quotations are taken from the NIV or retranslated

Each of these last three quotations has a similar context. They all look forward to the end of the age. They are for now. We live in the time of their fulfilment.

Who is going to be deceived? Who are these gullible people? Will it be the uneducated? Will it be believers who are not yet established? Will it be those who don't know their Bibles? More importantly, how can we avoid being deceived ourselves?

Some people feel the answer lies in knowing the Bible. If someone is thoroughly grounded in scriptural truth, they say, he will be safe. Wait a minute! What about the Jehovah's Witnesses? They and others like them spend a lot of time in Bible study and teaching. They claim to be the only true followers of the Bible. Either they are deceived, or everybody else is! Valuable though Bible teaching and study can be, it is not a guarantee against deception.

I have known sincere people with thorough knowledge of the scriptures who fell into serious deception. They met Christians (so-called) whose Bible doctrines were similar to their own who appeared to have the power of God. There were signs and wonders! The outward appearances were very good, but in reality they were false prophets. They were wolves in sheep's clothing.

The Pharisees were the Bible students and teachers of the new testament times. They knew the scriptures well, but that did not keep them from **error**. It kept them from the **truth**! When people were turning to Jesus they said, "You mean he has deceived you also? Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law - there is a curse on them" (John 7:47-49). Look at the terrible irony of this! According to the Pharisees, people were being **deceived by Jesus** because they did not know the scriptures!

Sadly, all too often, the same thing happens today. Knowledge of scripture does not keep people from error, but from truth! A lot of what people call sound Bible teaching is really indoctrination aimed at keeping people safely within the party, group or denomination that propagates it.

Others believe that safety lies in numbers. Individuals or small groups may go astray, but fellowship with a wider group protects us from deception. Only a little study of church history shows us that this is not so. Groups ranging in size from a few individuals to many millions of members have suffered serious deceptions. The largest Christian organisation in history has been guilty of the mass murder of all who opposed it. Groups small and great have believed all sorts of strange teachings, and done every kind of strange thing. Some have done little more than make fools of themselves. Others have incurred more serious spiritual and natural loss. Extreme groups, as we know, have ended in mass suicide.

Introduction

Truly, truly I tell you, anyone who believes in me, the things¹ that I do, he will do also, and he will do greater things than these because I am going to my Father (John 14:12).

Jesus healed the sick, drove out demons, opened blind eyes, walked on the water, turned water into wine and raised the dead. Having done all those things and more he said plainly that others would do them too and go on to do greater things as well. Did his followers fulfil his words? They certainly healed the sick and drove out demons and raised the dead as well as performing other miracles, but did they actually do greater things than Jesus did?

What greater things could they have done? Is there anything greater than raising the dead?

Some people say that Jesus in the flesh was just one person limited in time and space. His followers were many and spread out all over the Roman empire and eventually the world, and thus were able to do more than he did. That is of course true, but *more* is not the same as *greater*. What did the disciples do, and what can we do, that is *greater* than what Jesus did?

Did Jesus really mean what he said? It seems like blasphemy to suggest that we can do greater things than he did. The real blasphemy, however, is to deny his words and say that they were wrong. He plainly told his disciples that those who believed in him would do greater things than he had done.

With his help we will search out the meaning of these difficult words, and learn valuable new spiritual lessons as we do so.

What Did Jesus Do?

Jesus began his public ministry by standing up in the synagogue at Nazareth and reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. These were the words he read: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18,19).

¹ The Greek word ἔργα - plural of ἔργον - is most accurately translated *works*. However modern English only uses the word *works* in the sense of writings or compositions. *Things* is now a more natural translation. We could also translate ἔργα as *deeds* or *acts*.

Jesus went on to say to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). This was a very big statement. The carpenter’s son, who had grown up among them, was suddenly making an enormous claim. He himself, he said, was the fulfilment of this 700 year old prophecy.

What would those words from chapter 61 of Isaiah have meant to the members of the Nazareth synagogue? Firstly they would have remembered, as they were reminded annually at the Passover, that their ancestors had been slaves in the land of Egypt. There they had suffered hardship and oppression till Moses came and delivered them with signs and wonders worked by the hand of God.

Secondly they would have remembered their year of Jubilee, the year of the Lord’s favour. This special 50th year came once in a lifetime for most people. When it came in ancient times, all slaves were set free and all lands returned to their original owners. But what could that mean under Roman occupation? How would Jesus fulfil these scriptures?

I need hardly write of what happened in the next three years. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have all recorded it in detail. Jesus went about doing good. Everything that Isaiah had predicted was fulfilled. Jesus brought the good news of the kingdom to the poor of Galilee. No one knows how many sick people were healed and set free from the grip of deadly diseases. Those distressed and oppressed by the powers of darkness were released. Unbelievable miracles took place. Even those who had been born blind received their sight. Beyond even that he brought the dead back to life. Elijah and Elisha had done that in the distant past, but the miracles of the past aren’t things you quite expect to see in the present!

We can imagine the jubilation of those who were healed and set free. No doubt many among us have experienced some of these things. How excited the disciples must have felt as they not only watched these amazing happenings, but received power to do the same things themselves. They had read of such things in their scriptures, but they had never dreamt that they would happen before their very eyes, and through their own hands.

Where was this all going to lead? Was Jesus another Moses to set Israel free from the Romans as Moses had done from the Egyptians? Would he be another David to restore Israel’s military strength? Would Jesus’ miraculous powers bring in the promised kingdom of peace, health and prosperity to the world? Was this the end of disease, poverty and the many other troubles and sorrows that afflict mankind? The excitement and anticipation of the disciples and the crowds that followed Jesus must have known no bounds.

The woman at the well in Samaria asked Jesus if he was *greater* than “our father Jacob who gave us this well.” He was! The water he came to give was utterly different from and superior to the water Jacob had given them. It was water of a wholly new order in God.

“Are you *greater* than our Father Abraham?” the Jews asked Jesus. “Before Abraham was, I am”, was his reply. Abraham was a great man, revered to this day by three world religions. Jesus was on an altogether higher plain.

False Signs

We must turn now to the negative aspect of our subject and consider the danger of false and deceptive signs.

If you come to a strange town and there are no signs, it is very difficult to find your way. If, on the other hand, there are hundreds of signs all pointing to nothing or in the wrong direction, things are very much worse!

Spiritists, Buddhists, Muslims, witch-doctors, shamans and many others all do miracles of various kinds. Obviously the followers of Jesus have not been given a monopoly in performing signs and wonders!

The scriptures are far from silent on the subject of false signs. The first three signs that Moses performed in front of Pharaoh were all replicated by the magicians of Egypt. When Aaron threw his rod onto the ground and it became a serpent, the magicians of Egypt did the same. When Moses turned the waters to blood the magicians of Egypt were able to do the same thing. When Moses and Aaron brought frogs out of the water, again the magicians were able to imitate them.

- Jesus gave a clear warning to his disciples that not all miracles came from God. He said, “For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect -- if that were possible” (Mat 24: 24).
- Paul wrote similar words to the Thessalonians, “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders” (2 Thes 2:9).
- John in the book of Revelation records his vision of a beast coming out of the earth. In similar words he says, “And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived those who dwell on the earth” (Rev 13: 13, 14).

Today aeroplanes soar up into the sky, and satellites circle the earth at great altitudes. Man has learnt by science to defy the law of gravity.

Paul discovered a different law of gravity long before Sir Isaac Newton enlightened the scientific world. He called it the **law of sin and death**. It had an equally strong downward pull. He wrote of it as follows: “**For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do -- this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members**” (Romans 7:19-23). There is a downward pull of the flesh that we can only resist by the power of the upward pull of the spirit.

Jesus miraculously walked on the physical waters of Galilee, but he also walked in victory over what those waters represent - the flesh. He defied the spiritual law of gravity. This was the greater unseen miracle that he acted out every day of his life.

Paul also discovered this victory, and wrote, “**the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death**” (Romans 8:2).

Progression

What we have been describing is progression in knowledge and experience of God. The whole Bible describes God's progressive revelation of himself to man. We should expect to experience a progressive and increasing revelation of God to us in our own lives, and through us to others.

Often in the New Testament we meet the comparative words *greater*, *better*, and *higher*. They speak of going up from the natural plain to the spiritual. The old covenant was *good*, the new covenant is *better*, *greater* and *higher*.

Jesus spoke these words about John the Baptist: “**I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he**” (Matthew 11:11). What a statement! John the Baptist had a dynamic effect on the entire population of Judaea. His fearless preaching brought many to repentance and baptism. Yet John himself knew that he could only prepare the way for the one who was to follow him. He could make people ready for what was to come, but he could not himself bring new life. His baptism was only with water and not with fire and the Holy Spirit. The *greater* was still to come.

What did Jesus Think?

One person, I believe, was not so excited. That was Jesus himself.

When the crowds followed him to listen to his teaching and see or experience his healing power, he retreated to mountain tops to pray and be alone with God. When reports circulated in Judaea that he was making more disciples than John the Baptist, he left and went to Samaria.

Instead of concentrating his thoughts and efforts on his wonderful ministry of help and blessing to the multitudes, he often spent his time giving teaching that even his own disciples could not understand. While they were thinking about his miracles his mind was often on other things. In time he began to tell them he was going to die and rise again. They wanted his unique and wonderful ministry to continue for ever. He and his Father had a different and a better plan, which at that stage they were totally unable to understand.

On one occasion Jesus said, “**I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how constrained (restricted, limited) I am until it is accomplished**” (Luke 12: 50). Jesus knew that his ministry, which so thrilled his followers, was limited. He longed to do things that to him now were impossible, but later he would do through his disciples. These were the **greater things** that could only take place *after he had gone to the Father*.

I am Going to the Father

Jesus spent the evening before his death preparing his disciples for what was to come. John recorded much more than Matthew, Mark and Luke of what Jesus said on that unforgettable night. Like Matthew, John was present himself, but he was closer to Jesus and understood more than the others of what Jesus had meant. Also he had had longer to reflect on it and had grown greatly in understanding before he eventually wrote it all down. It occupies chapters 14, 15 and 16 of his gospel.

On this occasion, as at previous times, the disciples found it difficult to understand what Jesus was saying. Why should this be? I don't believe it was because they were simple. I expect they were as intelligent as most of us. It was certainly not because Jesus did not explain things clearly. I am sure he was a master of communication.

Was it because the disciples were spiritual beginners? Hardly - at least by today's standards! From childhood they would have heard the scriptures read and expounded in the synagogue. In addition they had listened to the teaching and preaching of John the Baptist and then Jesus for over 3 years. They had even

watched and performed miracles. You could hardly call people novices who had had years of the best teaching possible and seen more miracles than most of our church leaders put together!

The reason the disciples did not understand Jesus was that **they had not yet received the Holy Spirit**. Without the baptism and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, they could have no inward experience of the things about which he was talking.

The basic situation today is unchanged from what it was then. It is as impossible now as it was then for anyone to understand what Jesus said apart from the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The words that he spoke to his disciples on his last evening with them will be meaningful to us only to the extent that we have experienced the indwelling and illumination of the Spirit of God.

Let us then prayerfully and with divine assistance seek to understand something of what Jesus told his disciples on that eventful night.

Chapter 14 begins with the words: **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust God; trust me too. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am”** (John 14: 1-3).

Many people don’t go much beyond the thought that “if you believe in Jesus you will go to heaven when you die”. Such people, with the help of the KJV translation of this verse, believe that Jesus was here comforting his disciples with the promise of a mansion in the sky, either when they died or when he came again. If we read the rest of the chapter it becomes obvious that this was not what he was talking about.

Jesus was not comforting his disciples with the hope of a beautiful new home somewhere far away above the sky when they had finished their years of trouble and suffering down on earth. He had something much better to give them. He was talking about a new spiritual place that they were to occupy here and now. He was speaking about the present rather than the future.

While Jesus was on earth, his disciples were with him physically, but not spiritually. Though together in the same physical place he was in a totally different spiritual place from them. As he said to the Pharisees, he was from above and they were from below. He was from God and they were from Adam. He was from heaven and they were from earth. He wanted his followers to be with him in the same **spiritual** place as he was. His death and resurrection and return to the Father were the only way for this to become possible.

In his last recorded prayer Jesus asked his Father, **“Glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began”** (John 17:5). In the

give coverage to those who are able to feed the hungry with spiritual food. After feeding the multitudes Jesus said, **“Do not work for perishable food, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you”** (John 6:27). The multitudes were more excited about what had happened than he was. He knew that they would all be hungry again the next day.

No right minded person can see pictures of starving and emaciated children without feeling distress and wanting to do something to help. Praise God there are those who give their time, their money and even their lives to alleviate the wretched conditions under which so many people live. God sees and hears the cries of those who suffer poverty and affliction. But God sees more than that. He sees behind it the spiritual darkness, blindness and poverty that have caused it.

We must learn what is true spiritual food. We must discover the difference between milk and meat, and give what is appropriate to those whom we feed. Good spiritual food will make healthy spiritual people. Those who are spiritually healthy will do much also for the mental and physical health, both of themselves and those around them.

Healing the sick

The healing powers of the apostles as they preached in Jerusalem, Samaria and on through Asia Minor to Rome brought amazement and joy in every town they visited. Disease of the body is not a pleasant thing! Before the days of modern medicine and social security it was even worse than it is now. Not only did people suffer physical pain and discomfort, but further hardship came through inability to work. Healing of the body, whether supernaturally through the power of God, or naturally through modern medical science is a great blessing. But it is temporary and does not last. None of those healed through Paul is physically in good health today! Their bodies have all long since rotted away!

Healing the spiritually sick is greater than healing the physically sick. Physical and mental illnesses can be healed by doctors and medicines. Spiritual illnesses only respond to the power of God. If we speak words of life in the power of the Holy Spirit we heal those who are spiritually ill. Through us the power and love of God reach the deeper sicknesses of the inner man and bring health and life. Often this leads to the better mental and physical health of the outer man as well.

Walking on Water

Walking on the water is a miracle that defies the physical law of gravity. The disciples gasped in wonder and fear when they saw Jesus walking over the water towards them. For the rest of his life Peter would never forget the moment when he stepped out of the boat and felt the water firm beneath his feet.

too happy with it either. On earth there was a mixed reaction, but in heaven there was great rejoicing. The angels thought it was wonderful. This was the greatest miracle of all. Members of the human race, the inhabitants of earth, who had been “dead in transgressions and sins” had become spiritually alive. The words of Jesus were being fulfilled. This was the beginning of the greater things of which he had spoken.

Raising someone from spiritual death into spiritual life is greater than bringing a physically dead person back to life. That is of course in the sight of God and in reality. In human sight, to raise the physically dead is the greatest thing possible. God’s sight and human sight are two different things, and we are learning to have God’s sight.

Sight to the Blind

Opening the physical eyes of someone who has never seen is certainly a wonderful thing. Imagine the delight of someone who sees colour for the first time, maybe in adult life. There is certainly joy on earth when physical sight is received for the first time or rescued or restored. In heaven there is joy when people receive their spiritual sight. Jesus described the Pharisees as *blind leaders of the blind*. He was not referring to their physical sight! Nor was he concerned about their intellectual knowledge. They knew the scriptures well enough and could teach correct doctrine. Their problem was spiritual blindness! They could neither see God, nor his kingdom. They had not been born from above.

When Paul was struck down on the road to Damascus, he saw a light brighter than the midday sun. He was physically blinded for three days and able to see nothing. During this time he neither ate nor drank. Then a disciple named Ananias came to him, in fear and trembling, and prayed for him that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and his physical sight was restored. What about his spiritual sight? Much more importantly he began to receive this as well. His spiritual eyes were opened.

Till this point in Paul’s religious life he had only seen the things of earth. He knew every detail of the moral commands and rituals and sacrifices of the Law, but he could not see the kingdom of heaven. He had not been born from above. Because of the spiritual sight he received, his writings have become part of our sacred scriptures and been a blessing and help to many millions of people in every part of the world.

Feeding the Multitude

To feed a multitude from just five loaves and two fishes would certainly make headlines in the world’s newspapers of today. The newspapers of heaven

beginning, before God created the heavens and the earth, Jesus shared his Father’s glory. The Hebrew word for glory - *kavod* - means weight or importance. The Greek word - *δοξα* - had an original sense of high reputation, and went on to include meanings of splendour and brightness. No human words can ever describe the position of honour, majesty, power and importance that Jesus shared with his Father.

There came a time when he laid all this aside and took human flesh and blood and was born of Mary. He became subject to limitations and restrictions that are hard for us humans to imagine. Now on the eve of his departure, even though he must first face the suffering of death, he was looking forward with joy to his restoration to his Father’s glory. After his death and resurrection he was to be reinstated. Nothing in human history or imagination can compare with the wonder and glory of the triumphant homecoming that was about to take place.

Joseph had an important position in his youth as the son of a wealthy and respected tribesman. He was taken captive and became a servant to an officer in Egypt. He had gone down in the world. He went lower still when he was unjustly thrown into prison. Suddenly, in one day, he was promoted to the highest position in the land. The mighty Egyptian empire was totally under his control and waiting for his command. All power was given to him.

The dramatic and wonderful story of Joseph is a little picture of the infinitely greater story of Jesus. His return to the Father was an exaltation from a far greater depth to a position of much higher power and glory than anything a mortal man could ever hold.

When Jesus returned to that position with his Father, his prayer could be fulfilled, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world” (John 17:24). Not only did Jesus return to his place of glory at the Father’s right hand. Wonder of wonders, his disciples went to share that place with him. In spirit they went to be where he was. He received them to himself. He did not wait till they died before receiving them to himself. He did not revisit this earth in a physical second coming to receive them. He received them to himself by the Holy Spirit while they still walked this earth in their mortal bodies.

This was the secret of the greater things that they were going to do. They moved into that infinitely greater realm of the spirit. They entered a dimension that till now they had not seen - a dimension that no one sees till by the miracle of grace he is born of the spirit and begins to see the kingdom of God.

All this happened when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. The disciples entered a new place with God. They began to be where Jesus was. In the language of Paul writing to the Ephesians, “God raised them up with Christ and seated them

with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). They continued to do miracles in the natural realm, but there was now a big difference. They knew now that these miracles were only the visible things that drew man’s attention. Invisible to the human eye, but visible to God they began to do *greater* things. These greater things were in the hidden realm of the spirit. They were the spiritual counterparts of the physical signs that Jesus had performed.

Signs

Matthew, Mark and Luke generally use the Greek word *δυναμις* meaning an *act of power* to describe the miracles that Jesus did. John more often uses the word *σημειον* or *sign*.

A sign on its own is totally valueless. It must point to something. It must have a meaning. When on a journey, you don’t stop when you find a sign pointing to your destination. You press on, encouraged that you are on the right road. Signs that point to non-existent places are worse than useless!

John saw, more clearly than others, that the miracles or signs that Jesus performed pointed beyond themselves to spiritual realities. They pointed to the greater things that those who believed in Jesus would do.

We will now consider the signs that Jesus and his first followers performed, and seek to understand the spiritual realities to which they point.

Meanings of the Signs

Turning Water into Wine

Jesus’ first miracle or sign was to turn water into wine. A wedding reception was in crisis because the wine had run out. Nearby there were six stone water jars. Jesus told the servants to fill these with water. Then he told them to draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet. The water had become wine. At the human level a most embarrassing situation was wonderfully resolved. What excitement it must have caused. No doubt the news of it spread like fire through the village of Cana and into the surrounding country. Nothing like this had happened for centuries. Who would have thought that the carpenter’s son from the next village had the power to do such a thing?

But what was the meaning of this *sign*? I believe it was an introduction to all the further signs that were to follow.

The water was contained in six stone pots. The water and the number six both speak symbolically of the flesh, or natural realm. Wine, on the other hand, speaks

of the spirit. When the apostles were full of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they were accused of being full of new wine! Outside observers cannot always tell the difference!

All the further miracles that Jesus did were events in the natural realm that the Bible calls the *flesh*. Each one was a sign or indication of what was later going to take place in the spirit. As we examine them one by one we will see that wonderful though they were in themselves they pointed to something better that was to follow. They were an outward representation of an inward reality that was to come.

Why are we told that the water pots were made of stone? Stone is a dead substance. The old law was written on tablets of stone, and it was utterly unable to give life. The life-giving law of Jesus is written on the heart. Solomon’s temple was built of stone, and it could never be the living temple in which God wanted to dwell. The altars of the old covenant were all made of stone, but God wanted living altars.

So the water had to be taken out of the six lifeless pots of stone before it could become the living wine of the new covenant.

Raising the Dead

A lady named Tabitha, who lived in the ancient town of Joppa, fell sick and died. She had been a very popular lady because of the many good things she had done and the help she had given to others. The disciples immediately sent for Peter who went into her room and prayed. He then told her to get up, and she did! We can imagine the joy and delight of her friends. The news rapidly spread through all the town.

When Eutychus fell to his death from a second storey window because he went to sleep during Paul’s sermon, it was a terrible moment. The joy and thrill of Paul’s visit and the revelations of Jesus that he was sharing were suddenly replaced by shock and horror at the tragic loss of a young man’s life. All turned to euphoria when Paul went downstairs and prayed a prayer of faith that restored Eutychus to life. The impact of an event like that on human minds must last a lifetime.

There were many people in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost who were in a condition of spiritual darkness and death. Peter spoke the words of life to them in the power of the Holy Spirit. Multitudes heard his words and were brought into spiritual life by that same Holy Spirit. On earth no doubt there was a mixed reaction to this event. Probably the friends and relations of the new believers were greatly disturbed by what had happened, and the religious authorities were none