



GOOD NEWS
for the unsaved
WORLD!

(#125)
Holy Spirit baptism and miraculous signs
– its Old Testament basis

1

The Holy Spirit's coming: Miraculous signs occurred three times... for specific reasons.



These reasons are rooted in the Old Testament.

- Normally, miraculous signs do not occur when the Spirit enters people's lives. The "miracle" is the change in their lives.
 >> **HOWEVER** <<
- Signs were *important* in certain situations; and God gave the Jews instructions on how to respond to them.

When signs occur, they are secondary things pointing to primary things. They might (or might not) be something extraordinary. Once they have done their job, the signs are no longer needed.

NOTE: Our focus here is strictly on SIGNS. We are not dealing with "miraculous" answers to prayer, visions, etc. – an issue we looked at in the past.

2

**The reason for signs,
and
their New Testament use.**
(= The general concept of "signs.")

What we see in the NEW Testament
has its basis in the OLD Testament!

3

THE OLD TESTAMENT REASON FOR SIGNS.

- In the Old Testament, when someone claimed to have new revelation from God, the Jews were told how to determine if the person's claim was true.
- According to Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:21-22:
 - ✓ Any signs they gave had to take place.
 - ✓ The message they spoke had to agree with God's Word.
 - ⇒ **If they failed in either of these criteria, they were not from God.**
- The signs were like "pointers" toward the message. But signs, by themselves, could never be the only criterion; for *signs can be used to deceive*.

... and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, "Let us follow other gods"... you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer.

Deuteronomy 13:2a, 3a (NIV)

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The New Testament met these requirements!
(Our focus here is on the signs.)

① **Signs in Jesus' day.**

- **Jesus gave signs.** The people were given many signs to confirm the validity of Jesus' ministry. As Peter later said:

"People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know."

Acts 2:22 (NLT)

- **Jesus sometimes refused to give signs.** This was after he had already given them MANY signs (which they refused to accept), and then were asking for more.

- ✓ Sometimes they just wanted entertained and fed.

"... you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."

John 6:26b (ESV)

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- ✓ Sometimes they asked with sinful motives (trying to trap Jesus).

To test [Jesus], they asked him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it."

Mark 8:11b-12 (NIV); he had already given them signs!

- ✓ Sometimes they didn't really want to know what the signs meant.

You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

Luke 12:56 (ESV)

- ✓ Sometimes they just wanted to satisfy curiosity, or be entertained.

[Herod] ... was hoping to see him perform some miraculous sign. So Herod questioned him at considerable length; Jesus gave him no answer.

Luke 23:8b-9 (NET); during Jesus' trial before he was killed.

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② Signs in the apostles' day.

In the book of Acts:

- **When the greater focus was on Jews:** Signs were common.
- **As the focus transitioned to Gentiles:** Signs became less common – occurring mainly in places where a large number of Jews were present (such as at Ephesus and Corinth).

In Paul's day, the Jews still asked for signs. However, they habitually *rejected* the signs they were given. They didn't want the Good News message – so it became a "stumbling block" to them.

For Jews demand signs ... but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews ...

1 Corinthians 1:22a, 23a (ESV)

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In the book of Acts, God had a purpose for these signs.

- **When these signs occurred,** it wasn't because the apostles tried to create them. It was God's doing, according to his will, for a specific purpose (even when the apostles were involved in doing them).
- In a few cases, the apostles were surprised when signs occurred. (An example is the speaking in tongues, mentioned in Acts 10:44-46.)

This applies to all the miraculous things God did through them.

First, the Lord told this saving message. Then those who heard him confirmed that message. God verified what they said through miraculous signs, amazing things, other powerful acts, and with other gifts from the Holy Spirit as he wanted.

Hebrews 2:3b-4 (GW)

★ **God has preserved for us eyewitness accounts of those signs.** ★
He put them in an accurate, historical document: THE BIBLE!

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Signs became less frequent as they fulfilled their purpose.

EXAMPLE IN PAUL'S MINISTRY:

- **Near the beginning of Paul's ministry:** There were many signs... and much Jewish opposition to the Good News. So Paul began proclaiming the Good News to the Gentiles. Example: Acts 14:3.
- **As the Jews continued to reject the Good News:** Signs became less frequent. God still did wonders (displays of his power) through Paul – **but not for the purpose being a of sign.** Examples: Casting out a demon (Acts 16:18); a few visions (such as in Acts 16:9); healing the sick at Malta (Acts 28:8-9); etc.
- **By the end of Acts, Paul's last recorded interaction with the Jews ends NOT with a sign, but with Scripture – a prophetic warning about the hardness of their hearts** (Acts 28:25-28).
He also told them that *the Good News had been sent to the Gentiles, who would be willing to pay attention to it.*

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③ What about in the future?

God gave the Jews the signs they needed; they rejected them.

- As a nation, they ignored the signs... and it sealed their fate. As a nation, they remain "not God's people" (as Hosea 1:9 says)... until a future time, when they will return to God (Hosea 1:10).
- *In the meantime, God has taken individuals (Jews and Gentiles) who were "not his people" and turned them into "the people of God" (1 Peter 2:10)!*

In the future (when the nation of Israel turns back to God)...

- Perhaps there will be more signs – connected to the final fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. HOWEVER...
- Many New Testament references to signs in the future are warnings about counterfeit signs, produced by the devil and his followers.

This is all the more reason for us to focus on the content of truth, rather than on signs that can potentially deceive.

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④ Anything else?

Jesus and the future: In the gospels, Jesus mentions signs related to his coming and the end of the world... and gives warnings about deceptive signs that will also be present (from false Christs and false prophets) – Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21.

Who gave signs?

- Mainly the apostles. Signs were "marks of an apostle" (2 Corinthians 12:12), given by God (Hebrews 2:4).
- *Any others?* Barnabas, when he was with Paul (Acts 14:3); and two of the "seven deacons" – Stephen (Acts 6:8) and Philip (Acts 8:6, 13).

Who were the signs for? Primarily Jews. The Samaritans (half-Jews) also saw them. Sometimes, signs are mentioned *after* the Jews had rejected the Good News – perhaps in the presence of the Gentiles (though Jews in the community would know about them).

A warning: The devil and his followers will perform false signs – mentioned several times in Revelation; also 2 Thessalonians 2:9.)

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The foundation for the specific sign of "speaking in tongues."

This *also* has an Old Testament basis!

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"TONGUES" – the sign related to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- Three times in the book of Acts, the baptism of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by the sign of speaking in "tongues" – or "languages." (*Never is it described as incomprehensible ecstatic babble.*)
- Acts 2 defines "tongues" as specific languages.

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

Acts 2:5-6 (NLT)

English translations tend to use the words "tongue" and "language." But in New Testament Greek, there is only ONE word. Acts 2 shows us the normal way Scripture uses this word: as a reference to speaking in a [different] language.

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"Tongues" is NOT a New Testament invention. It comes right out of the Old Testament.

- To accurately understand this New Testament sign, we need to go back to the Old Testament!
- That's why Paul quotes the Old Testament (a verse that refers to *languages*), when he explains the purpose of "tongues."

He is quoting Isaiah 28:11, 12b.

In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord."

Thus *tongues* are a sign not for believers ...

1 Corinthians 14:21–22a (ESV)

★ This Old Testament connection means the Jews had no excuse for refusing to accept what the tongues signified! ★

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Just as: ① the coming of the New Covenant, ② the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and ③ the heart/mind changes that would occur in people's lives, were ALL Old Testament concepts...



So also: The presence of "tongues" as a sign was an Old Testament concept. *It was not an unprecedented New Testament invention!*

- The same prophets who talked about: ✓ the New Covenant, ✓ the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and ✓ the heart-changes that would occur, ⇒ also talked about tongues.
 - ⇒ They described them as languages.
 - ⇒ They used the concept in a number of different ways.

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What does the Old Testament say?

① "Tongues" as JUDGMENT.

- Tongues were sometimes considered a sign of judgment for the Jews who refused to be loyal to the God of the Bible.
- This concept is brought into the New Testament.

Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people, ...

Isaiah 28:11 (NIV) = quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:21.

Behold, I am bringing against you a nation from afar, ... a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say. Jeremiah 5:15 (ESV)

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② "NO tongues" as BLESSING.

- Some prophets used the removal of foreign tongues to represent the removal of God's judgment: a reference to a coming day when the nation will repent and turn back to God.

You will no longer see these fierce, violent people with their strange, unknown language.

Isaiah 33:19 (NLT)

- This concept focuses on the Jews as a nation in the land of Israel.
- The New Testament mentions Israel's future repentance, but not using "language" terminology.

Old Testament Hebrew has a word that refers to tongues/language, and another that refers to lips/speech. In some of these verses, *both* words are used as two ways to express the same concept.

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③ From the perspective of the "tongue speaker."

- A passage in Ezekiel uses the concept of "speaking in tongues" from the foreign-language-speaker's perspective!
- When the Jews refused to listen, God tells Ezekiel that people of other tongues (languages) would be willing listen!

I am not sending you [Ezekiel] to people whose language is hard to understand or difficult to speak. I am sending you to Israel. I am not sending you to nations whose language is hard to understand, difficult to speak, or whose words you cannot understand. *If I send you to those nations, they will certainly listen to you.*

Ezekiel 3:5-6 (GW)

- This parallels what Paul said, in the New Testament context!

"You need to know that God has sent his salvation to people who are not Jews. They will listen."

Acts 28:28 (GW)

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Today: The FOUNDATION

We looked at the Old Testament foundation on which the New Testament concept of tongues was built.

Next time: Its FULFILLMENT

We plan to look at the three specific occasions where God gave the Jews a specific sign – speaking in tongues – related to the Good News and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Good News – related to:

- The New Covenant and the heart-and-mind changes it causes.
- The promised Spirit and his outpouring into the lives of God's people.

The Spirit accomplishes the changes that the New Covenant guarantees.

With several issues we've looked at, we have emphasized the Old Testament connections. **WHY?**

(1) Because the connection does exist (and many people don't realize it).

There are some in the church who don't see any connection between Old and New Testaments (other than being able to "prove" prophecy about Jesus and his two comings).

They are often under the false assumption that Jesus simply arrived on the scene, and started making unprecedented and arbitrary changes to what the Old Testament said.

Depending on the specific way they view the issue, it can have a great influence on how they interpret Scripture – and thus, on their values and conduct.

(2) To remove unnecessary barriers for Jews living today.

Such views create an additional barrier that hinders Jews from accepting the Good News and being saved. They need to see that the New Testament message is for them (as well as us).

When they see little connection between the two testaments, there is no reason for them to see that the New Testament message is directly connected to their past and their future.

Jesus was faithful to what the Old Testament taught. If they would become faithful to what the Old Testament taught, they would look to Jesus as their only hope!

**The Good News of the New Testament:
It's based on the Old Testament!**

The apostles could appeal to facts, proof, and logic – connecting what the Old Testament said to verified factual events that were occurring in their own day (now recorded in the New Testament).

Our "Mission" Today: We can rejoice!

REJOICE IN PAST SIGNS...

We can rejoice that we have an accurate record of the three signs in the book of Acts (to be examined next time) – along with all the other signs recorded in Scripture.

REJOICE IN PRESENT REALITIES...

We can also rejoice that we don't need to look for signs. We now have the realities that the signs pointed to!

We don't need to be looking for signs... to know IF the Good News has come, and IF it is for us.

> BECAUSE <

We have what the signs pointed to... the Good News, and the fact that it is for us!

Credits

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