



## *The Value of Signs and Wonders*

*Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound! It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.*

*"How great are His signs  
And how mighty are His wonders!  
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom  
And His dominion is from generation to generation. (Daniel 4:1-3)*

To have a Gentile write in Scripture about his coming to faith in the One True God is an attention grabber in and of itself, but whereas so many people throughout Scripture are documented as remaining unchanged spiritually after witnessing a sign or wonder, here we have someone who actually testifies to being changed by them. But if you just flopped open your Bible and began reading Daniel 4 you would probably think Nebuchadnezzar is referring to the signs and wonders connected to the events in this chapter and miss the fact that these are actually the culmination of a series of signs and wonders. Yes, Nebuchadnezzar witnessed some very amazing signs and wonders recorded previously in Daniel 2 and 3 but the fact is that he did not allow them to change his heart. No, having missed the greater application of what God was teaching through those other signs and wonders, Nebuchadnezzar's testimony here is that after one final round of signs and wonders he finally "gets it".

In Daniel 2 we are provided with the account of how God provided an amazing dream to Nebuchadnezzar but no one could explain its meaning to the king except through Daniel. What was the king's public confession after witnessing these signs and wonders?

*The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely **your God** is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery." (Daniel 2:47)*

It is an acknowledgment of sorts but far from a ringing endorsement of recognizing how much the king of the earth needed the King of Heaven.

And what was Nebuchadnezzar's public confession after all the brouhaha in Daniel 3 after witnessing the signs and wonders associated with the persecution of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego for their faith in the One True God?

*Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be **the God of** Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except **their own God**. Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against **the God of** Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." (Daniel 3:28-29)*

He appears to be drawing a little closer, but this is still far from a personal confession of a changed heart. In effect Nebuchadnezzar has personally witnessed signs and wonders which he himself acknowledges could come from no one but the God of Israel, but spiritually he continues life unchanged. So now God is going to provide signs and wonders yet again for a third time, but these are going to belong to a very different category than those previously experienced.

Having repeatedly failed to learn the right spiritual lesson so as to be changed from the heart by signs and wonders which demonstrated God's sovereignty and character benignly, now the king of the earth is going to experience signs and wonders that express the King of Heaven's judgment. He could have learned from signs and wonders that witnessed to the truth, now instead he will learn from signs and wonders rendering judgment for rejecting that truth.

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Yes, Nebuchadnezzar's remarkable testimony provided to us in Daniel 4 is actually a lesson in how God uses signs and wonders in general and how they work on the heart specifically. God repeatedly reached out with a "carrot", so to speak, but repeated rejection of His peaceful gestures ultimately warranted an extreme "big stick" in an attempt to save even the most stubborn heart. God's first choice was not to put Nebuchadnezzar through seven years of punishment, it was the only option left because of the repeated choices Nebuchadnezzar made to reject every previous approach of the One True God. Nebuchadnezzar did not really believe the signs and wonders provided as an outreach, but he certainly believed after the signs and wonders of judgment.

To my mind this is the overall principle behind Jesus' own teaching that when it comes to the End Times, signs and wonders will increase with frequency and intensity analogous to increasing birth pangs leading to a birth.

*"But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.  
(Matthew 24:8)*

The "silence" or gap between each wave is meant to provide the time to learn and properly apply the greater spiritual lesson from the last round of events. But if we study all the signs and wonders predicted to come it becomes clear that they begin to transition from things that testify to our need for a personal relationship with Christ, to judgment for consistently refusing to heed those calls, to ultimately culminating in the expression of God's wrath – destruction for steadfastly refusing to submit. The purpose of signs and wonders is not to provide God with the opportunity to show off His power, but to make an ever greater appeal to change from the heart.

When I was a teenager our local pastor became terminally ill and yet he was miraculously cured, a medically verifiable fact by his doctors and the local hospital. Did we start having healing crusades? Did we start laying hands on everyone who was sick? Did he become the

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object of veneration for having experienced a miracle? No, he came back empowered with the Word of God like never before in his life and initiated revival preaching repentance and a return to God's Word and ways with unbelievable results. To my knowledge no one else in the course of his ministry was ever healed of anything or experienced anything I would call "supernatural". There was a greater message attached to the sign that turned out to be far more important than the sign itself.

It would be easy at this point to launch into a tirade against the many individuals, groups, and even movements who place an undue priority on seeking signs and wonders. But equally amiss, in my opinion, are those of us placing an undue emphasis on the signs and wonders of these Last Days.

Over the past 62 years we have received enough fulfillments of specific prophecies in God's Word to shake us permanently out of ever living comfortable in this old world. We have already witnessed enough to irrevocably change us from the heart and to induce us to heed the greater lesson of these things which calls us into an ever greater personal relationship with Christ. We should actually be more motivated in sharing the Gospel and working while it is still day than ever before. But what do you suppose is going to happen to those who, like Nebuchadnezzar, acknowledge God is working but go on living unchanged? Sooner or later it will escalate to judgment, and eventually to the very wrath of God.

I would submit that this is already the case. I believe what we are experiencing in the Western world is not simply evil running amok or strictly the eternal battle between Satan and the Church, but much is judgment from God for a Church that has willfully chosen to no longer be salt and light to the world. To be sure the End Times will play out exactly according to God's will, but I am not convinced every single thing we have been witnessing in recent years is specifically an End Times event predicted in the Bible. There is also the reasonable

possibility that in addition to those things there is an increase in frequency and intensity because, like Nebuchadnezzar, so many are simply not paying attention, not learning the right lesson, not repenting and returning in earnest. I have no doubt that many of the things we are witnessing testify of His imminent return; I equally believe many of the things we are witnessing are the result of hardened, unrepentant hearts who are risking having to learn things the hard way.

I am not praying that I will see any new signs and wonders. I am praying I will see more hearts yield to the greater message behind the signs and wonders we have already seen.

In His Love,

[Servant@WalkWithTheWord.org](mailto:Servant@WalkWithTheWord.org)