

The Church's Greatest Hour is Still Ahead



David Wilkerson December 26, 2011

When Israel had crossed the Red Sea they sang God's praises for his mighty deliverance. Think of the amazing miracle they had just experienced. Giant waves of water parted for them but swallowed their powerful enemy. As they beheld what happened they could only marvel. They must have said to each other:

"Never could there be so great a miracle as this. No future generation will ever witness so mighty a demonstration of God's power. And never will his people be in so severe a crisis as this one. Generation after generation will remember this day. They will point back to it as the greatest proof of God's powerful work among the human race."

For many years this was indeed the case. In fact, Israel was commanded to tell succeeding generations about God's great miracle-working power on their behalf as demonstrated at the Red Sea: "Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done" (Psalm 78:4).

Centuries later David looked back to Israel's miraculous deliverance from Egypt to stir the people's faith. He urged Israel, "Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him" (66:5-6).

As a child David must have sat enthralled as he heard the story over and over again from his own father: how God delivered his ancestors from Pharaoh, how he rolled back the waves for an escape route, how he then crushed the mighty Egyptian army. David told his own children the same story, saying, "You know God lives because he took our ancestors through the Red Sea on dry ground. Now, tell the story to *your* children and grandchildren."

When David was king, he reminded the whole nation of God's command to tell every generation the awesome testimony: "I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children...that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children" (78:2-4, 6).

"Marvelous things did he in the sight of their fathers.... He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as a heap" (78:12-13).

A time came when David could no longer merely recite the story — he had to ask God to do it again!

Suddenly it wasn't enough for David to talk about what God had done in the past. This godly man wanted to see the Lord deliver his people in their present crisis. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand... because thou hadst a favour unto them" (Psalm 44:1-3).

David was saying, "Lord, all my life I have heard about what you did in the past. I've told and retold the incredible stories of how you manifested your glory to my fathers." Then David burst out this plea: "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob" (44:4). In other words: "Lord, you are my King also. Do these things again for your people today! I can't hear any longer about your past miracles done for Jacob and Israel. I've got to seek those deliverances for your people right now."

As David spoke these words, he was in the midst of a deep trial, as was the whole nation of Israel. They required a miracle. So David brought forth strong reasons to God for his request:

"Lord, at the Red Sea your children thought there would never be another crisis like it. But today your people are facing a crisis that is just as critical. It is as if we're standing at the Red Sea watching Pharaoh come down on us. We need your deliverance right now, Lord. We've got to have a powerful manifestation of your mighty, outstretched arm. Do it again today!"

In years past I used to hear a similar heart-cry from my minister sons. They told me, "Dad, we know about all the miracles God did for you. When you acted in faith years ago, coming to New York City to work with teen gangs and addicts, God led you supernaturally. He provided miracles of open doors, of funds, of changing hardened people like Nicky Cruz.

"We praise God for all of that. But now we need to see God's miraculous deliverances in our ministries. All our lives we have heard about what God did in the early days. Now we need to experience his works for ourselves. This is a different generation, and America and the church are both facing great crises. We simply have to see God at work today."

Over the past decade I have heard from many young ministers who are researching the history of revivals. These young faithful ones are desperate to see for themselves God's mighty hand at work. They long to see him provide miracles of deliverance and salvation. Tell me, is this your heart-cry too?

God's miracle-working power should not die out with the present generation.

Let me ask you: If you could talk to the Israelites at the Red Sea and tell them about the global crisis today, how do you suppose they would respond? What would they say about the scores of Christians who tremble at the troubling things taking place — terrorism, genocides, tsunamis, devastating oil spills, earthquakes?

I am sure those Israelites thought in their own day, "There will never be another crisis like ours." Yet today the world is in such turmoil that people in every nation are looking for God to act. Amazingly, many Christians have no sense of this. They are too preoccupied with the economy, with politics, with the frightening events they see on the news. In short, they have become discouraged and downcast over time. Many have lost hope for a spiritual revival.

Beloved, we have been promised last-day deliverances far greater than the opening of the Red Sea. What God wants to do for us is more powerful than anything seen in the past. He desires to do something so great that we will no longer simply look to past miracles. This isn't some grand prophetic utterance from my own mind. It comes straight from God's Word:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord.... They shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt" (Jeremiah 23:5, 7). Listen to what Jeremiah is saying: "All those past miracles were incredible. But soon they will no longer be our proof that God is mightily at work. *Our God had promised to do a new thing!*"

According to Jeremiah, the day is coming when the church will report with amazement: "We are witnessing great deliverances from bondage. We are seeing amazing heart-cleansings. God is powerfully at work. The world has to say, 'Surely the Lord lives. He is working miracles, transforming lives and performing changes before our very eyes!'"

Jeremiah gives us the "new" testimony: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch.... They shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; *but, the Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them*" (Jeremiah 23:5–8, my italics).

In other words, God's name will be known throughout the world for a new work. Jeremiah is speaking of a time of great deliverances, wonders that will surpass the miracle of the Red Sea. Christ is the seed of David, the Branch of righteousness reigning in the lives of God's people. And the "days (to) come" refers to a time when Jesus' ministry in the world exceeds all past wonders.

God has promised to bless and increase his church "more than at the beginning."

"I will multiply men upon you ...they shall increase and bring fruit... and I will do better unto you than at your beginnings" (Ezekiel 36:10–11). Note this verse doesn't describe a church that is asleep, preoccupied with the global economy. Instead, it contains the promise of a great work by God, greater even than Pentecost, to occur in these last days.

Think back to your own spiritual beginnings, when you first encountered Jesus. You were so happy and excited you were saved. It was a most amazing and precious time in your life. Now God is saying to you, "I am going to manifest greater works."

"Better than the Red Sea?" you ask. "Better than Elijah calling down fire from heaven and shutting it down with rain?" Yes, God has something better in the spiritual realm.

"What on earth could be better?" you may ask. "Our very faith is built on these great examples." According to Scripture, we have yet to see the fullest revelation of Jesus Christ in the history of humankind. And here is one of the most amazing parts of this miracle: *God is going to take the most sin-hardened, unbelieving generation of all time and save multitudes, giving them loving hearts and turning their hearts to Christ.*

"I will increase them with men like a flock...as the holy flock" (Ezekiel 36:37–38). God is going to save and deliver a "flock," meaning a multitude of men and women. First, God will gather together a great number of believers who have been "scattered" by their own slumber. And second, we will see sinners from every walk of life being drawn to Jesus and getting serious about the things of God — including Jews and Muslims, rich and poor, criminals and societal leaders, people from all backgrounds.

You may say, "None of that is a new thing. God has always cleansed sinners. He has been doing that since the cross." That is true, but sin is also increasing. And where sin abounds, God's miracle-working grace is going to abound much more.

There is another difference today. At the Red Sea the devil was on the advance, threatening to destroy God's people. But at this hour he has already prevailed on much of the church, with more believers than ever in great need. "Because they have...swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen...and are an infamy of the people" (36:3).

God is going to move in, "because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession" (36:2). Satan and his followers mock and laugh, claiming, "We are about to completely erase the name of God from the earth." But the Lord says, "For my name's sake I am going to do a mighty deliverance."

This miracle is going to come at the neediest, most critical time in the history of the church. What is this miracle? God is going to meet his people in the midst of fiery trials. He is revealing his great love for his afflicted ones.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.... And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways...and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities" (26:30–31).

These great promises are given to us so that we will pray them to pass.

God is telling us today, "I want to increase your faith." He is also telling us to pray for this increase. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock" (Ezekiel 36:37).

I have to admit that my prayer has been, "Lord, you have to do it. I can't see it. But you have no choice other than to do it, because you promised it."

I believe God wants us to pray this way. You see, even when we can't see it for ourselves, *prayer is God's promise turned into petition*. Simply put, we are to pray what God has promised us. We are to claim his promises in every area of our lives. And we are to lay hold of those promises until God lays hold of us.

According to Ezekiel, the salvation of this multitude of sinners will cause the world to know God's power. All flesh

will see and know his awesome works of loving mercy.

As miraculous and wonderful as these promises are, none will be fulfilled without God's people praying them to pass. Why did the Lord base his promises on the condition of prayer? It is because prayer shows that we want what God wants. It shows that we prize his desires enough to align our lives with them — our desires, time and energy. And the Holy Spirit uses the process of prayer to transform us.

Beloved, this generation is going to see great numbers coming to the Lord. And it will not happen through hype, advertising or prominent names. A revival cannot be worked up, forced or bought. Revival happens because "the whole house inquires."

It is time now for the whole house of God to stop looking backward at his deliverance and instead look forward. It is time to pray for and anticipate the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit.

I thank the Lord for all he has done for his people throughout history; he is indeed worthy of all praise and thanksgiving. Yet he himself says he desires to do a new thing!

Prepare to witness the birth of the most devoted and dynamic generation in church history.

God is faithful — our sons and daughters are going to see their prayers answered. Righteousness is going to rain down on their generation, and the Lord will allow them to see his greatest works ever. If we pray earnestly and unceasingly, here is what God says he will do:

"I will turn to you...I will multiply men (in your midst)...they shall increase and bring fruit...neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people anymore..."

"The heathen shall know that I am the Lord...from all your filthiness will I cleanse you...a new heart also will I give you..."

"Ye shall keep my judgments and do them...ye shall remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves..."

"The heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places...so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 36:9–11, 15, 23, 25–26, 27, 31, 36, 38).

What an incredible list of promises, all found in one chapter of Ezekiel. How will we see these promises come to pass? Only by praying them to pass.

You may wish you had been at Pentecost. But the Lord already said he has saved his best wine for the last days. This means more of Christ's glory will shine forth greater than ever. So, forget the "good old days." The best days of the church of Jesus Christ are still ahead. Start praying now!

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