

What in heaven's name



Is going on?

Winchester Baptist Church, June 2008

What in heaven's name is going on?

I'm just aware there is so much going on at the moment: almost more than can be addressed in sermons. For the first time in my life I actually think it is necessary to write a paper to try and keep up with what God is doing. What a lovely situation to be in! So often our teaching is as a result of lots of foreplanning rather than in response to what it seems the Holy Spirit is doing.

"We have not been this way before"

This is a very exciting time for us. It is also a bit scary as we 'have not been this way before' (Jos 3:4). It is quite emotionally challenging- as only a baby with a wet nappy likes change. It is theologically challenging as well: I am finding my past theological perceptions and prescriptions challenged at every turn. I am having to learn 'on the hoof'- and it is a very steep learning curve. I believe it is a steep curve for all of us and we must stick together, close to one another and the Lord, as we seek to keep in step with His Spirit.

At the forefront of all that is going on we must keep a few priorities. Primarily there is love. "Above all put on love" which binds everything together in unity (Col 3:14). Secondly there is 'mystery': if we think we have got it all sussed it only shows how little we know! God can not be put in a box and our relationship with Him and His workings amongst us should be full of 'signs and *wonders*'. How sad to be in a church and there be no mystery or wonder. No sense of 'I *wonder* what on earth God is doing?!

We are certainly *wondering* at the moment!

For those who are reading this out of context the situation here at Winbap is that it seems there has been a breaking in of the supernatural, recently. I say 'seems' as, at this point, not all will be convinced it is supernatural. Certainly

"Above all, put on love"

there is going to be flesh in it. Also- some might be fearing that there is an overemphasis on these things, or that in focusing

*We will not
stop doing
the main
and plain*

on them we might forget more important things like love and justice. Let me, at this stage, emphatically say that there is simply no way we are going to do that! We will not forget the other, extremely important, things that we have learned over the years. We will not stop loving one another. We shall not stop being merciful to those who doubt (Jude 1:22). We shall not lose our emphasis on the poor or our priority to try to care for the broken and to be active in mission to the ends of the earth. We shall not forget the swathes of people who are not healed, do not 'feel' anything, or face death. We will never forget our love of the Word or our belief that people need to receive Jesus. Neither are we about to chuck our brains out! However- what else can we do?!: things are happening amongst us... I didn't instigate them... and there is simply no way we want to 'refuse Him who might be speaking' (Heb 12:25, Heb 2:3,4). We simply have to stay open to the Lord and try and follow Him on this path that we are on: believing that He is leading us.

When I say that there has been a 'breaking in of the supernatural' I do not mean that we are simply overrun with miracles. We have seen a *few*. A small number of them have been

*A marked
increase in
expectancy*

highly verifiable. However this is a huge increase on our prior experience (and mine for *years*) of never seeing *any!* It's an increase of a thousand fold. Along with that there has been the marked increase in expectancy and the ambient spiritual temperature of our church life.

What might be controversial, and certainly needs looking into, is the nature of the things that have happened. They seem to be clustering around certain kinds of 'miracles'- specifically bones, knees and legs growing. Why on earth would God be doing these in greater proportion to other, more needful, healings? Why on earth would He be doing these 'token'

*Of course
nothing is
trivial if
you are the
one healed*

things at all when the world is filled with poverty and *huge* issues? “Surely you can do better than this, God?!” I can imagine someone asking. “Are you into fads!?” “Surely God would do something less controversial or more irrefutable?” “Why, supposedly, heal one person when there is someone far more needy only a few feet away seemingly untouched or feeling like a lemon?!” I can hear the questions going on.

Of course- nothing of this is token or trivial if you have been healed! All you can do is thank God and jump for joy.

So... and I am simply doing a brain-dump here... let me launch in with some questions and simplistic, inadequate, half-baked answers that might help us move forward one mini step. I am simply thinking out loud.

Is God pulling my leg?!

Are legs *really* growing?- this is the first question to ask I have purported that I saw one grow in front of my eyes in April and, in June, others have reported that they have seen legs grow. About 15 on total. Not all in our church. Most of them over the weekend of 13-15th June.

*Scores
witnessed
bone
growing*

Many will not have seen anything happen. They will simply have *heard* others reporting this, or been at a distance hearing ‘oh my word... it’s growing’ from a crowd gathered around someone being prayed for. That in itself might have seemed unimpressive. The distant onlooker did not know the problem existed and they could see no evidence that it had been solved when the person walked away limping, somewhat!

There is the other question, of course, of ‘how many people have this problem of legs of different length for goodness sake?!’

These are good questions. I have them!

*Authority in
Jesus' name
was used and
something
happened*

But we are not allowed the luxury of staying at this comfortable (or uncomfortable!) questioning distance. Scores said they witnessed bone growing. Right in front of their eyes when "grow in the name of Jesus" was said. Shoes were held up- one with a built-up heel. Shoes no longer needed. Verified by a physiotherapist. Testimonies given. Lives changed. "We simply can't stop reading the Bible- it has come alive for us! We're devouring it". In another case medical records showed a disparity: a disparity now resolved.

I swear to the Lord that I have seen at least three grow at close proximity to me recently. I stood within three feet and saw legs grow: some slowly, some more quickly. When authoritative prayers were used in Jesus' name. Scores said others grew. I wasn't there for all of them. I just heard the 'oooooh my word's. I saw the one with the built up heel grow to a point where the heel stuck out by over an inch- the disparity that had existed between the legs. That disparity now resolved that meant the extra heel was a sticking-out-liability. What else can I say: saw it! (Jn9:25). We have a couple of videos of these things. I'd be a liar if I did not say it. Authority in Jesus' name was used and something happened!

*Genuine
things
have
happened*

Uncomfortable and inconvenient though it might be.

I wonder why we are so surprised?

So- from my perspective real, genuine, things *have* happened. Undeniably.

So- who, or what, is behind it?

There are really only three options here. Take the things that happened when Mark Marx prayed (acknowledging that not everyone was touched or healed). The options are:

- Mark Marx is behind it. Mark Marx is a confidence trickster. A charlatan. A con man. But is this really likely? Did he strike you as one? Did he hype things up or try and hypnotise people? If so – why do they report changes *after* the event? If you wanted to be a trickster there are more lucrative areas to trick in! He lives by faith and hasn't been able to afford a holiday for *years!* 'Poor show, Mark', if you're a con man! I can think of more lucrative things to do!

Would the devil do wonders in the name of Jesus?

- I spent a whole three days with him and would summarise him as a man of great integrity, humility and godliness. In fact- when TB Joshua's camera crew wanted to film him praying: he refused, shying from the limelight. Maybe Mark moved people's legs laterally (sideways) so the leg balance seemed to change? I watched closely: none of that happened.
 - Maybe we were being hypnotised, even well-meaning and unknowingly, so we all *felt* something was happening? If so- then how are these things verified by others, physiotherapists, *after* the event?
 - No- Mark is a man of integrity. A man of God.
- The Devil is behind it. This is something counterfeit to distract us. In fact- maybe this is part of the 'great deception' (2 Thess 2:9-12, Rev 12:9, 13:11-14, Rev 16:13,14) that accompanies the very 'end days'?

Can the devil create at all? Surely he can only corrupt?

*Maybe Jesus
actually is the
same
yesterday,
today and
forever*

would the devil do wonders in the name of Jesus that makes people read the Bible more and want to follow Jesus? Certainly that is the result with most claiming healing. It simply does not make sense that he would do that! He's fighting against his own works, kingdom, and is shooting himself in the foot. There is also the theological question of 'can the devil *create* at all? Surely he can only *corrupt*?' God is the creator. The devil destroys. Lies. No- it seems to me more likely that any such accusation of the devil being the instigator of these things is just a repeat of what people said to Jesus when He did *signs* that made them *wonder*. 'He's doing it by Beelzebub!' Mk 3:22- 29. As Jesus warned: we must be so careful not to do this. Surely it is more logical that Jesus' followers are simply doing the things, in His name, that they have always been asked, commissioned and commanded to do: pray for the sick and they will get well! (Mk 16:18). Mark prayed in the name of Jesus, spoke of Jesus and the Father's love often- and in Jesus' name things happened.

- Jesus is at work. In some way. "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... that this man stands before you healed" (Acts 3:16, 4:10). Maybe Jesus actually *is* the same yesterday, today and forever. Maybe His name has not lost its authority or healing touch. Maybe? Certainly! Why are we so surprised when things happen in His name? What did we think the Bible stories were all about? Just lovely allegories or enacted parables?! No- this stuff is word and power.

But of course that still leaves us with many other unanswered questions as to *why* Jesus would do *these* kind of things. These things and not others.

Why the 'major'... special deal... on legs?

This is indeed a good question! Why the focus (amongst others) on legs? Does God have a 'special' on on them?

*You get more
by believing
than pleading,
any day*

I'm not sure I know all the answers to this one but I do have some thoughts. Let me share them:

I suspect it has more to do with us than God. By that I am not saying 'we are doing it rather than God'. What I'm saying is that we (and primarily Mark) have *faith* for this kind of thing. We've seen it happen before and so we approach God with greater expectancy and boldness. We get what we expect. In the end water-tight theology and huge Bible knowledge is not what impresses God, desirable though it is. Faith is what pleases Him (Heb 11:6). Simple faith. You get more by believing than pleading, any day (Gal 3:5).

Take Mark as an example. Mark has a track record and faith for that kind of thing and so it's where he starts when praying for people so as to be obedient to the Lord and *grow* faith so the Lord can do more. Having chatted with him he knows it's controversial but he says 'I've seen the Lord work in this so many times that that is where I start until He tells me otherwise'.

It would be easy to despise this kind of thing and say 'I want to see cancer healed!!' but who are we to dictate to God? If this is what God is doing (Jn 5:19) then we had best follow it and not despise the day of small things (Zec 4:10). How else will we go on to see greater things unless we welcome small things and grow from there? It is possible to get offended and protest on behalf of those with (seemingly) greater need but in so

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doing we burn the bridges by which God may further help those we love in greater need. Such indignation does not in fact help those on whose behalf we vicariously protest.

Welcoming what God is doing and asking Him to help us move

I can understand why the Holy Spirit uses 'legs' as a starting place

to the next level will help them more. It's no good writing a book about the 29 who were not healed at the pool of Bethesda (Jn 5)- instead we should 'rejoice in the one' and seek God so we may be his tools for the other 29. Without in any way forgetting those not touched we need to focus on

what God is doing not on what He is not.

In one sense I don't believe a 'special' is on on legs at all. We are simply at a point where we can receive that. The kingdom is here in part- and that bit of the kingdom is easily manifested among us (and in Mark's ministry). If and when the kingdom comes in greater fullness we will see more, broader, miracles. This has happened in the Bible and history. There have, indeed, been times and seasons where *all* were healed (Mt 12:15, 14:36, Acts 5:16). Just imagine what that was like. Would be like. Oh please, Lord Jesus.

However- I can understand why the Holy Spirit allows it as a starting place: it is highly visible and verifiable and beneficial. Boy does it increase your faith! Yes- I think many more people may have leg disparity than they know. How many of us measure our legs? It's not until we get to our forties and our backs start causing us problems that we notice these things. Also maybe it is possible that back and hip problems show themselves in legs of different length. Who knows?! I'm not a doctor! Ask one! I doubt that it's the root of all ills, though!

I would rather that Jesus had chosen something that was not so open to criticism and, perhaps, fakery- but, again, that does not surprise me. I think faith is needed to perceive any kind of miracle. Very few would leave us in 'no doubt'. Even if we saw someone raised from the dead we'd be saying to ourselves 'I

wonder if they really were dead'. Think about it: this is a message of faith from first to last (Rom 1:17). It would almost be out of character for God to give a manifestation that needed no faith to perceive it (and seriously condemned those who did not do so! Lk 12:47f). So- do not be surprised when you find your mind working through all the options around these events (as I have! "did they... was it... did Jesus?" etc)- just be sure to come to the 'renewed mind' conclusion (Roms 12), difficult though it may be, that Jesus *did* do something. All the evidence points that way- but all of our minds, cultural programming and even Bible teaching pulls us the other way.

Are others helped by our indignation?

What about more serious illnesses- is Jesus not concerned about them?! What about the suffering in the world?

More good questions! (and, yes, they came from me!). One thing that goes through our mind is 'why on earth would Jesus do this when there are far more serious needs three feet to the left and in three billion people in the world?' Such a questioner feels justified in being irritated at what is supposed to have happened. Indignant on behalf of other, greater sufferers.

Some of this I have answered above: are others *really* helped by such indignation? They may feel supported and sympathised with (and that is good)- but wouldn't you rather take the power of God to them to *really* help them? I would! That's *actually* one of the reasons *I* get so indignant and angry: at my sense of impotence to help them.

What if God is not actually behind the suffering in the world?

Yes- Jesus IS concerned about them. Totally. There is no place where earth's pains are more fully felt than heaven. He loves them. He LONGS to help them. He longs to use us to help them. In every way.

Let me think out loud here. Follow me if you can. This is controversial and profound (and certainly incomplete):

What if?

What if God is not actually behind the suffering of the world but fallen beings and their choices are? Firstly the beings of the angelic realm (Gen 3:1, Lk 10:18, Rev 12:7f) and then the fall of human beings (Gen 3)?

*Simply:
God is
good, the
devil is bad*

What if the judgements we see in the Old Testament are not actually God *sending* them (though the Hebrew language only allows for this linguistically) but rather repercussions. Sowing and reaping. Consequences being *allowed*¹. God 'allowing', not 'smiting' or 'sending'. What if even the cruelty of nature is a result of these things and the earth groaning because of the fallenness and abuse of its delegated masters? What if we do God a complete injustice when we call such things 'acts of God'!!

What if, in the end, after all our theologising and theodicies ('why does God allow suffering'- the question that has vexed my mind for 26 years)... it really is as simple as 'God is *good*, the devil is bad'? "An enemy did this" (Mt 13:28)

What if Jesus *actually* shows what God is like: *always* good, always loving, never turning away anyone who comes to Him? Always willing to heal. Healing all who came to Him (Mt 4:24, 8:16, 12:15, 14:35). Never answering questions of suffering with 'Oh the Father sent it... or the Father is allowing it to make him more like *me!*' (Jn 9). What if He really *is* the fullness of the revelation of God's nature? Perfect theology? (Col 1:15, Jn 14:9 etc etc).

What if we see in Jesus (...God in the flesh, the perfect man..) the perfect will of God? The will that will ultimately be (all of) ours when we go to heaven but also the will that He wants when His Holy Spirit brings heaven. Brings heaven through the prayers

*We see in
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and deeds of those He commissioned right from the start (even from Eden) to be His priests on earth bringing His realm (Ex 19:6, 1 Pet 2:9, Rev 5:10). His kingdom.

*His will is
"your kingdom
come, your
will be done"*

Are you with me so far? Sounds pretty orthodox? It is. Now let me stretch you with some further suggestions.

What if 'heaven on earth' really *is* His will *now*? (Mt 6:10). His perfect will as demonstrated in Jesus. What if He really is willing to heal, touch and save *all* the time (Mt 8:3, 1 Tim 2:4)? Actually wants to? But He can't sometimes because of issues far too complex for us to understand (Mt 6:5)? Because He has limited Himself to work within our free will... with us?

Yes- He *will* bring His will, forcibly even (?), in the *end*- but until then His will is *not* fully done. Yes He can *use* suffering, and suffering can be used (indeed it must)- but He does not want it... *send* it. *Rejoice* in it. It's not His 'plan A'. It's 'plan B'². His will is "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

And we are to be instigators, brokers, bringers of that heaven... kingdom. What if?

So- what if the blocks are not so much in God's will but on our side? I don't even want to mention what they might³ be as that gets us nowhere and is not helpful. We simply can't have any condemnation, finger pointing, guilt or blaming. It's so wrong and so damaging. It's so not what Jesus wants. Many of us feel we did *all* we could on behalf of others and nothing happened⁴. The only question I want to ask is (again) 'what if the blocks are down *here*... on *our* side... rather than on *Jesus*' side'. That could explain so many things. Let me extrapolate:

It explains the seeming randomness of healing. The 'healing lottery'. Why some get

*It explains
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not others*

It explains why series of healings happen

healed and others don't. Why minor things get healed and majors don't (often). *God* is not discriminating- the problem is in receiving. *God* is not only doling out minor things- it's just we are not in the place to receive the major things. Yet. *God* has not forgotten the huge suffering of the world... others. Oh how He longs that those could be touched, too. Indeed- He sends us to do so. Once we have received what we *can*. Bible and history have shown that greater things... all... do happen. Will happen (Jn 14:12). Can happen-when heaven opens fully over earth and comes to it.

It explains why things happen in some part of the world and not others. It's not as though *God* is prejudicial, biased, or inclined to some kind of needs more than others (our culture is just as needy as others, just in different ways⁵). Maybe some cultures are simply more open to *God* doing things, more desperate to receive from Him, and so things happen. What is so thrilling and surprising at the moment is that we are seeing *God* do incredible things in the 'West'. Maybe, at last, we are beginning to believe that Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever- and the same the whole world over!

It explains why *series* of healings happen. Not only because testimony carries with it the power to reproduce what is told⁶ but, humanly, because our hearts... the conditions... are right... prepared... to receive. How encouraging it is if we see a series of common colds healed- but just imagine what it could be like if we got the faith, confidence, experience, 'anointing', for cancer or depression! This is why I am so eager to learn by and welcome any moving of *God*- no matter how small. I'm looking for more!

It explains the concept of the Kingdom of *God* being here in part: Now but not yet. Heaven, *God*'s good and perfect will, is unchanging and not '*part*' (divided, mixed with good and evil) but it is *here* in part.

The longing for more of God's kingdom to be revealed

Here where it is allowed to break through. Through a combination of God's working and our welcoming. Through prepared and right conditions.

What if we get unnecessarily irritated at God 'doing this' or 'not doing that' whereas in fact HE is not discriminating at all? He is irritated that His kingdom is not breaking in more! (Mt 17:17). The name of Jesus has authority to heal, deliver, save and change lives. Wherever the seed falls on good soil it bears fruit. (Lk 8:11ff)

Where to from here?

I realise I have raised... started... more questions than I have answered- but I warned you this was going to be an incoherent 'brain dump'. Maybe you will find solace in the fact that I am asking some of the same questions as you? Maybe you will be helped by the fact that I don't have all the answers? Maybe you find some of the resonances of your own heart not only in the questions but also in the longings for more of God's kingdom to be revealed. Maybe you would be helped by listening to some of my recent sermons on 'Heaven and Earth'.

We must remain open to the Holy Spirit and one another

Certainly my thoughts raise further questions impinging on God's sovereignty and timing. Do my thoughts of *our* restricting the kingdom coming in the power God wants mean that His sovereignty is undermined⁷? This needs further thought. Do my thoughts that God is good to *all* mean that Jesus wants everyone healed *right now*? This very moment? We see from scripture that Jesus did heal all who came to Him but He didn't necessarily respond immediately. He had a sense of the Father's *kairos timing*⁸. We would do well to look into this more.

A robust biblical and theological framework

We also need to develop a fuller theology of suffering and its value- without locking

ourselves into being moribund Christians who only feel happy with Good Friday and uncomfortable with the Easter Day that Jesus purchased for us and all⁹.

Certainly we need to be aware that the seed of healing is perhaps like the seed of the sower. The seed is *good*. But its germination and fruitfulness will depend, somewhat, on the soil on which it falls. Please don't be surprised or offended if some of those who are healed are not made perfect overnight or, through thorns and thistles, are not able to walk fully in it or leave their 'stick' behind. I think we will find that people are very complex and there are layers of healing needed in many. I suspect we are going to need to develop a 'healing process', here. Maybe along the lines of 'healing rooms'?

From here I suggest we remain open to one another and the Holy Spirit's leading. Open to Him teaching us new things. Open to Him developing in us a more robust Biblical and theological framework that not only helps us understand these things but *see them in greater measure*.

Winchester Baptist Church, June 2008. ERMH

Footnotes:

¹ God 'confirming', 'affirming' people in and to the consequences of their own free will choices.

² And indeed, in all the excitement of Easter Day, we must not forget the redemptive value of suffering... Good Friday... and we must certainly not forget to offer our pains and sufferings to Him that they may be jewels of praise in pain to Him and become redemptive. But what if He suffered not only as an example but so we wouldn't have to? He suffered on our behalf?

³ The sin of a fallen world. Our sin. Lack of faith. Mt 13:58, Mt 17:14f, 17:20, Mk 6:6 etc. You can see why I don't want to mention these things! I immediately feel condemned and it gets me nowhere. It's not what Jesus wants, either.

⁴ We felt we had faith. Contended. Persevered. Prayed. Fasted. Had the words from the Lord. But nothing happened or the person was not healed.

Certainly this has been the experience for many of us. I simply have no answer for this, and I'm not pretending to. I only have more questions and want to avoid us automatically concluding 'it obviously wasn't God's will to heal'. If Jesus were present, physically, we would have taken our friend and he/she *would* have been healed- has God's will suddenly changed now that Jesus is in heaven? I don't think so. I just think this issue is far more complex than we can imagine and we must avoid, because of a bad experience, developing a bad theology to explain (and dictate!) why things don't happen. I just think we must always, when praying for the sick, be aware that nothing might happen. That the kingdom is here in part. That it might not break in. That there might be all kinds of blocks and reasons that we know nothing about or cannot perceive. This is not a simple slot machine. It's mysterious, folks!

⁵ One could argue we are in a far worse state than some other cultures. More closed to God. More materialistic. More on the path to destruction. More in need of His help and intervention than some others! Just more closed to God being the source of that help. Less likely to believe He can or wants to help.

⁶ The old testament word for testimony is to 'do again'. Re-member means to sow the seed of the event again

⁷ This is the age old debate and balance between our free will and God's sovereignty.

⁸ A sense of timing that, it seems, could often be overruled by someone pleading or responding in faith. Jn 2:5. Jesus tells His mother that His time has 'not yet come' but her full of faith response seems to make it come might quick! Again, maybe we dictate far more than we can imagine. Even with regard to God's timing.

Our healing leaflet, available for those prayed for:

HEALING

Healing– where to from here?

We are, as a church and churches, in a very exciting phase where we are finding Jesus doing all kinds of incredible things. The healing testimonies have only just begun! However– this does not mean we understand everything or have all the answers! We only know the Man who does– Jesus. It also does not mean *everyone* is healed. We are on a steep learning curve and want to keep humility, a sense of mystery, obedience and simple trust in God as our priorities as we allow Him to do more and more of what *He* wants among us. He wants to bring heaven to earth. To our world and lives.

Thank you for allowing us to pray for you, today. We believe without a doubt that God will have heard our prayers and started working in some way in your life. His primary concern is to have a personal relationship with you– but you will find He has done all kinds of *other* things simply because He loves you. No other reason. Please be sure to thank Him for *anything* He has done and become determined to *seek* Him– because if you seek you will find. It would be tragic to be healed in your body– but miss out on the greatest thing of all: a living relationship with Him and a secure eternity through Jesus Christ God's Son. Your *body* healed but your *spirit* not.

From here (pto): www.winbap.org.uk www.winhealing.org.uk

- If you are on any medication– *stay on it*. We work with doctors and counsellors, not against them, and if you have been healed their verification is a great endorsement of what God has done. Take *their* advice. *We* are not medics
- If you have been healed– tell your friends and us. If you go to church– tell them. This is the start of a new phase in your life. No looking back
- If it seems you have not been healed– do not despair or feel rejected. Please do not feel you have to put something on for us. God loves you and *will* be at work in your life in some way. *Miracles* are instantaneous but *healing* often takes time: many are healed over a period of time that includes all kinds of things getting right in their life– so do not give up. Keep seeking God. Get some more prayer when it seems right to do so: we don't mind trying again and again
- If you have been partially healed, or are healed for a while (beyond any psychological 'high')- then see this as an encouragement of what your heavenly Father wants for you. Go for it! Get prayed for again
- Go forward in your spiritual journey: get a Bible and read it (start with John or Luke). Go to a good church. Pray– even the simplest prayers. Go on an Alpha course (ours starts in Sept). Get to know God through Jesus. We'll help
- If you have any questions– ask a Christian friend or contact us here

With you in this exciting journey of knowing God and bringing heaven to earth,
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