

**The place of sickness in the
Word of God**

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Introduction

In the creation in which we currently live, there was no sickness. It was when sin was introduced that sicknesses arose. God had told man that on the day he ate of the forbidden fruit, he would die! He ate of it, and death came into the world. With death came sicknesses of all kinds. The earth itself was cursed.

« *Cursed is the ground for thy sake* » (Genesis 3 v.17).

The place God assigns to sickness is linked to the nature of the period in which it occurs. We can distinguish the following major periods:

- The Old Testament period (mainly relating to Israel)
- The period when the Lord Jesus, the King, came to establish the kingdom foretold by the Old Testament prophets, the last of whom was John the Baptist. But the King was rejected and crucified.
- The period of God's grace, characterized by the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth and His presence in all those who are born again. It begins at Pentecost (Acts

2) and ends with the coming of the Lord Jesus to take His own away (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

- The final seven years, situated between the coming of the Lord to take away the Church or Assembly (the body of all true believers) and His coming in glory to establish His 1 000-year reign (Revelation 20:4–6)
- That of his 1 000-year reign
- The eternal state: the new earth and the new heavens (Revelation 21:1-8)

In the context of the people of Israel

When Israel, disregarding the weakness of their natural hearts, undertook to do everything the Lord (God’s name in His relationship with Israel) had said. God made promises to them linked to this obedience.

*“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, **i will put none of these diseases upon thee**, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee”*
(Exodus 15 v.26).

*“Ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and **I WILL TAKE SICKNESS AWAY FROM THE MIDST OF THEE**” (Exodus 23 v.25).*

*“If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, **THE LORD THY GOD**; Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues ... **SORE SICKNESSES** ...” (Deuteronomy 28 v.58-59).*

Etc ...

Although there were some faithful among the people, the entire history recounted in the Old Testament testifies that Israel did not obey God’s commands!

This was the situation first encountered by John the Baptist, who preached the Gospel of the Kingdom (which proclaims the earthly kingdom of the Messiah) and, in this context, administered the baptism of repentance (distinct from Christian baptism). This Gospel was also preached by the Lord Jesus from the very beginning of his ministry on earth.

During the three years of the Lord Jesus' ministry.

From the very start of his ministry on earth, we see the Lord Jesus performing many miracles.

After his childhood and adolescence, having become an adult, he worked as a carpenter.

Before beginning his ministry, he allowed himself to be baptized with the baptism of repentance by John the Baptist, even though he himself was without sin. It was to take his place as a Jew amongst the Jews that he wished to be baptized by John (Matthew 3). But then the heavens had to open and God had to make his voice heard:

“Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3 v.16-17).

He was then tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:1–10); unlike Adam in Eden, Satan had no hold over Him.

It was then that he began his ministry by preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom:

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4 v.17).

*“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and **HEALING ALL MANNER OF SICKNESS AND ALL MANNER OF DISEASE AMONG THE PEOPLE.** ... they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and **HE HEALED THEM**” (Matthew 4 v.23-24).*

Through all these miracles recorded in the four Gospels, the Lord Jesus demonstrated to all classes of Jews that He was indeed their Messiah, their King, and that the Kingdom foretold by the Old Testament prophets was ready to be established!

When John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus whether He was indeed the One they were to expect (as King over Israel), the Lord reminded him that the evidence was clear:

*“Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; **HOW THAT THE BLIND SEE, THE LAME WALK, THE LEPERS ARE CLEANSED, THE DEAF HEAR, THE DEAD ARE RAISED**, to the poor the gospel is preached” (Luke 7 v.19-22).*

The Lord Jesus demonstrated that He was the ‘Branch’ of whom the Prophets had spoken:

*“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous **BRANCH**, and a King*

shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jeremiah 23 v.5).

*“I will bring forth my servant the **BRANCH** ... and I will remove the iniquity (*) of that land in one day” (Zechariah 3 v.8-9).*

(*) This includes, therefore, sickness and every other physical disability—everything connected with iniquity.

One could add other quotations from the Old Testament.

In this context, the Lord Jesus (God the Creator) sent out his disciples, the 12 apostles and also the 70: to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, to announce that the King (the Lord Jesus) foretold (*the* ‘Branch’) was present in the land of Israel, giving his disciples the power to heal, cast out demons, raise the dead—all the things that the Lord himself also did.

*“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and **TO HEAL ALL MANNER OF SICKNESS AND ALL MANNER OF DISEASE.** ... preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. **HEAL THE SICK, CLEANSE***

THE LEPERS, RAISE THE DEAD, CAST OUT DEVILS (Matthew 10 v.1-8).

*“After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two ... into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you ... **HEAL THE SICK** that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you”* (Luke 10 v.1-8).

The “regime” associated with this period came to an end with the rejection and crucifixion of the King!

The cross brings one era to an end and introduces another: that of grace, which concludes with the rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ, and is followed once more by the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom during the seven years that follow, continuing into the 1 000-year reign. It is the preaching of this Gospel of the Kingdom, based on the New Covenant (between God and Israel, and not with the believers forming the Church). But this New Covenant is based on the same blood of Christ which washes us from all sin and through which the Christian has received eternal life, which has brought him into the Church, the Body of Christ.

The period of the Grace

As described in the Book of Acts, this period begins at Pentecost (Acts 2).

In the early years, as recounted to some extent in the Book of Acts and the epistles, there were miracles, notably healings from various sicknesses.

Among these miraculous gifts is speaking in tongues. This is not incomprehensible gibberish, but speaking a language used in another part of the world, without having learnt it. A person from that region would understand it perfectly!

As with the gift of tongues, miracles (healings and others) are given as signs, not for believers but for unbelievers. The Apostle Paul tells us:

“Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe” (1 Corinthians 14 v.22).

These miracles of healing were given as signs so that the unbeliever to whom the preaching was addressed might be cer-

tain that it truly came from God! For the Word of God, the Bible, had not yet been fully written down!

As soon as the Word of God, the Bible, had been fully written down, these miraculous gifts, having served their purpose, came to an end!

What this Word says is of such power that it penetrates the secrets of the heart, far more than 1 000 miracles performed before one's eyes! This written Word authenticates itself. It works miracles every time a soul, through its power, repents unto salvation! Speaking of the Gospel, which can only be made known through the Word (because it is God who says so), the apostle says:

“THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST ... IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION to every one that believeth” (Romans 1 v.16).

Therefore, in our day, on the eve of the coming of the Lord Jesus, miraculous gifts (tongues, healings) no longer have a purpose.

All those who claim to have received a miraculous gift from God today are liars and impostors. Alas, there are many such people within Christendom!

ON THE OTHER HAND, GOD THE FATHER, THE LORD JESUS, OR THE HOLY SPIRIT, IS JUST AS POWERFUL TO HEAL THE SICK AS HE WAS DURING CHRIST'S MINISTRY ON EARTH, AND WHEN HE GAVE THE APOSTLES THE POWER TO DO SO!

God uses sickness as a means of testing those living on earth. He does so with one purpose in mind for the believer and another for the unbeliever. Either to draw the believer closer to Himself and seek fellowship with him, or to make the unbeliever reflect on the fragility of life and become aware of the eternity that awaits him in hell, so that he may repent by believing in the work that God accomplished on the cross through His Son, Jesus!

In both these cases — whether the sick person is a believer or an unbeliever — the Holy Spirit calls upon His servant (another believer) to pray for their brother or sister, so that the trial may bear fruit, to offer comfort in their suffering,

and to plead that the unbeliever may come to repentance and also find relief from their suffering.

Prayer in this context is a subject in its own right:

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6 v.18).

“In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4 v.6).

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men” (1 Timothy 2 v.1).

Sickness also affects believers! God does not spare them from the circumstances associated with the first creation, which is suffering because of sin (created things, nature and animals have not sinned, but suffer because the ground was cursed due to man’s sin)!

Timothy suffered from a stomach ailment; the apostle, who certainly possessed the gift of healing, did not use it for his child in the faith:

“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities” (1 Timothy 5 v.23).

Paul had received the gift of healing, with regard to unbelievers, to prove that the Word he spoke was God's! For this Word had not yet been written down in its entirety. As proof, the quotations we read had yet to be written down in his letters. They are written down today! Paul would have misused his gift (as some in the Corinthian church were doing) if he had healed Timothy, Trophimus or Epaphroditus!

“... Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick” (2 Timothy 4 v.20).

The apostle Paul says of Epaphroditus, his fellow worker for the Lord:

“He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow” (Philippians 2 v.26-27).

Thus the believer does not remain indifferent to the sickness that afflicts others. It is implied that prayers were offered up to God concerning Epaphroditus, as taught in this very Epistle to the Philippians!

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4 v.6).

We shall need to return to this subject.

The seven-year period following the end of grace

One need only read the book of Revelation from chapter 6 onwards to see all the plagues, diseases and other calamities that are poured out upon the unbelieving world. This begins

immediately after the coming of the Lord Jesus to take His own away, so perhaps tomorrow!

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4 v.13-18).

During the reign of the Lord Jesus for 1 000 years

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Revelation 20 v.6).

For all those who have then believed in the Gospel of the Kingdom, there will be no more sickness, no more trials of any kind. They will not sin, for Satan will have been bound for those 1 000 years:

“I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season” (Revelation 20 v.1-3).

In the very first days of the reign, there will be only believers! But the children born to them must also be converted by believing in the Gospel of the Kingdom. Thus, those who have not believed will die as soon as their sin is made visible! This implies that they will not be spared from certain diseases! Speaking of the period of the reign, Isaiah writes:

*“But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for **THE CHILD SHALL DIE AN HUNDRED YEARS OLD; BUT THE SINNER BEING AN HUNDRED YEARS OLD SHALL BE ACCURSED.** And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for*

trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 65 v.18-25).

The eternal state

During the reign, sin has not yet been removed, for these young men, sinners aged 100, will die to appear before the great white throne to be condemned to the second death:

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written

in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20 v.11-15).

But in the eternal state, as we read in the Gospel of John, this is then fulfilled: sin is removed from the new world, which is the new creation:

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1 v.9).

There, in the new creation (to which the believer already belongs now, having been brought there forever by the work of Christ), the new earth and the new heavens, the Holy Spirit caused John to write:

“I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell

with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Revelation 21 v.3-6).

Conclusion

There is still much to be said on the subject of signs and miracles, the role of illness in God’s ways, and so on. This will be the subject of another document.

I have tried to outline the framework within which sickness and infirmity must be considered, so that we are not influenced by those who exploit the weakness of others to better dominate them by making use of so-called gifts! And if there is ever a gift, it is then the manifest work of Satan! For

God always acts in accordance with what He says in His Word!

