

SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

INTRODUCTION (I)

THE PURPOSE FOR THESE SIGNS

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The New Testament, a continuation of the Old, opens with four gospel accounts. These four gospels record God dwelling among the Jewish people for a period of time once again, though in a manner *quite different* than previously seen in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament God had dwelt among His people, in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle and Temple, within a theocracy (Ex. 25:8, 9, 21, 22; 33:7-11, 18-23; 40:33, 34; Lev. 16:6, 7, 17, 18; II Chron. 5:1-14).

In the New Testament, in John 1:1-14, God is seen becoming flesh and dwelling (tabernacling) among His people in the person of His Son. And God dwelling among His people after this fashion at this time was done apart from an existing theocracy.

("Dwelt" in John 1:14 is a translation of the Greek verb, *skeno*. The noun form of this word, *skene*, means a "tent" or a "dwelling place," often used in the New Testament to reference the Old Testament "tabernacle," which was a tent; and, textually, the type dwelling seen through the use of the verb, *skeno* — Christ dwelling among the Jewish people — draws from *the tabernacle* in the Old Testament [typifying, in its entirety, different aspects of the person and work of Christ].)

The Old Testament theocracy came to an end at the time of the Babylonian captivity (Ezek. 10:4, 18; 11:22, 23). And though a temple existed in Israel six centuries later, at the time of Christ's first coming, there was no Glory in the temple and, thus, no exist-

ing (no restored) theocracy.

(Note in the preceding respect Ezekiel's account of the future restoration of the Glory, and thus a restoration of the theocracy. The Glory will be restored to the temple which Messiah Himself will build [Zech. 6:12, 13], following His return. Then God will once again tabernacle among His people [Ezek. 43:2-5].)

God, tabernacling among His people in the person of His Son, as seen in the four gospel accounts, offered to the Jewish people *a restoration of the theocracy, contingent on national repentance* (Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17-25; 10:5-8; cf. Acts 1:6; 2:37, 38; 3:19-21 [an offer of the kingdom is seen in the gospel accounts, and a subsequent reoffer of the kingdom is seen in the Book of Acts]).

This restored theocracy though would not come at this time through an offer and reception of the kingdom covenanted to David (that facet of the kingdom which had existed in the Old Testament for about eight centuries and which will exist once again yet future [II Sam. 7:12-16; II Chron. 6:16; 7:17, 18]). Rather, the restored theocracy at this time would come through an offer and reception of *the kingdom of the heavens* (cf. Gen. 22:17, 18; Matt. 4:17-25).

Two Realms of the Kingdom

The kingdom as it relates to this earth, whether past, present, or future, consists of two realms — *heavenly* and *earthly*. "The heavens do rule" (Dan. 4:26b), whether from God's throne in the far reaches of the north or from the throne of a ruler whom God has placed over a province in His kingdom (the earth being one such province).

The proffered kingdom of the heavens had to do with *the heavenly part of the theocracy*, not the earthly part which had previously existed. That is, at the time of Christ's first coming, the Jewish people were offered *the heavenly part of God's overall kingdom in relation to this earth, ruled at that time (with a continuing, unchanged rule today) by Satan and his angels from a heavenly sphere* (cf. Dan. 4:25, 26; Eph. 1:19-21; 3:9-11; 6:12).

But the Jewish people *spurned the offer* (Matt. 12:22-32), *rejecting the One Who had made the offer* (Israel's announced King [Matt. 2:2], God Himself, dwelling in the nation's midst once again). And the Jewish people climaxed this rejection by not only crucifying their King (very God of very God) but also by pledging their allegiance to the Gentile ruler of the world power of that day — Caesar — a pagan ruler exercising power directly under Satan and his angels (Dan. 4:25, 26; 10:12-14, 20; Matt. 21:38, 39; John 19:14, 15).

Nothing in the annals of Israel's history presents a bleaker picture than can be seen in the events surrounding Israel's crucifixion of the nation's King, God's firstborn son (Ex. 4:22, 23), *the only nation on the face of the earth in possession of the rights of primogeniture, which included the regal rights among the nations, not only called for their King's crucifixion but placed themselves in subjection to a pagan Gentile ruler*.

Through so doing, the people comprising the one nation on earth which existed apart from Satan's kingdom and rule (Dan. 10:21) removed themselves from any possibility of a restored theocracy at this time and placed themselves, *regally*, in subjection to a ruler and nation which existed within Satan's kingdom and under his rule. And, through this means, the nation called into existence to be the channel through which God was to bless all of the Gentile nations further removed itself from this position. This left all of the Gentile nations continuing in their estranged and alienated position (Eph. 2:11, 12), with God's blessings for the nations, through Israel, withheld because of Israel's actions (Gen. 9:26, 27; 12:1-3).

Then the gospels end by recording Jesus' resurrection and brief accounts of His earthly ministry prior to His ascension, with Mark and Luke including a statement at the end of their gospels concerning Jesus' ascension back into the heavens (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51).

Same Message in All Four Gospels

All four gospels present *exactly the same message*, though each presents the message from a *different*

perspective. Each gospel has *its own peculiar place* in presenting *one part, one facet, of a complete word picture*. And the picture becomes complete, as God would have man to see it, *only through viewing that revealed in all four gospels together*.

This same thing is seen in the types, the parables, and other parts of Scripture.

No one type on a subject records the complete picture pertaining to that subject. Rather, *all of the types, set alongside the antitype*, record the complete word picture.

Likewise, *no single parable* on a subject records the complete picture pertaining to that subject. Rather, exactly as in the types, *all of the parables, set alongside that to which they relate (prior revelation)*, record the complete word picture.

And, *Scripture as a whole* can be viewed in exactly the same light. No single book out of the sixty-six books comprising the canon of Scripture presents the complete picture in and of itself. Rather, *all sixty-six books taken together* present the complete word picture of God's revelation to man concerning Himself, His plans, and His purposes as they pertain to man and the earth.

And God's plans and purposes pertaining to man and the earth have to do with man not only exercising *regal power and authority* over the earth (millennial) but with man ultimately exercising *regal power and authority* out in the universe itself (beyond the Millennium, in the eternal ages).

(Scripture throughout is centrally about the former [man and the earth], with very little stated about the latter [man and the universe at large]. Scripture has to do centrally with events relating to man and the earth, extending over 7,000 years of time — from the creation of Adam to the end of the Messianic Kingdom, covering Man's Day [6,000 years] and the Lord's Day [1,000 years].

Very little is stated about that which occurred before this time or that which will occur after this time. God though has provided enough information about conditions outside the 7,000 years of time that man can take this information, in conjunction with the

remainder of Scripture, and see the complete picture of God's plans and purposes relating to His government of the universe — past, present, and future.)

The gospel of John records one facet of the complete word picture as it would pertain to the message presented by the four gospels; and John presents this *in a manner quite different than that seen in the other three gospels*. John records historical information, structured after a particular fashion, as do the other gospels. But John, led by the Spirit, recorded eight signs around which this historical account is built, *for a specifically stated purpose* (five of these signs are peculiar to John's gospel); and *this purpose* is revealed near the end of the gospel, in John 20:30, 31:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing ye might have life through his name.”

The recording of John's gospel, in this respect, stands alone. None of the other three gospels records a statement of this nature. But, though the gospel stands alone in this respect, it forms an intricate part of the complete, overall word picture presented by all four gospels. And, in this manner, John's gospel can only reflect upon and show *the purpose for a manifestation of signs* seen throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, set forth in the other three gospel accounts as well. And viewing *the purpose for these signs after a correct fashion forms a major key necessary to properly understand the central message seen throughout all four gospels*.

(Israel in the Old Testament was made the repository for both spheres of the kingdom, *both heavenly and earthly* [Gen. 22:17, 18]. And at some point in time Israel must come into possession of, or at least be offered *the complete kingdom, both heavenly and earthly spheres*. The Gentile nations were, remain today, and will always remain, *completely estranged from anything having to do with God's dealings with Israel in this respect* [Eph. 2:12].

Israel realized the earthly portion of the kingdom during and following Moses' day. But, because of continued disobedience over about an eight-hundred-year period, the kingdom was eventually taken from Israel; and the Jewish people then found themselves uprooted from their land and driven out among the Gentile nations to effect repentance, with a view to the restoration of both the Jewish people and the theocracy.

Apart from repentance, the Jewish people will remain scattered among the nations; but, with repentance, the Jewish people will be regathered from the nations, restored to their land, and the kingdom will be restored to Israel [Lev. 26:40-42; II Chron. 6:24-27; 7:12-14].

At the time of Christ's first coming, Israel was offered *the heavenly portion of the kingdom*. But the Jewish people spurned the offer and crucified the One making the offer, God Himself, manifested in the flesh in the person of His Son.

This aspect of the kingdom was then taken from Israel [Matt. 21:33-45], the nation was set aside for a dispensation [lasting 2,000 years], and an entirely new creation [*the one new man, "in Christ"*] was called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected [II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:14, 15; I Peter 2:9, 10].

The earthly sphere of the kingdom though is an entirely different matter. This can never be taken from Israel; and once the nation has been brought to the place of repentance [through persecution at the hands of the Gentile nations where Israel has been driven for this very purpose], the kingdom will be restored to Israel.

Repentance on the part of the Jewish people and the restoration of the Jewish people to their land, with the theocracy restored to Israel, will occur during and following the coming Tribulation [repentance during, restoration following]. Then God's complete purpose for calling this nation into existence will be realized during the ensuing Lord's Day, the 1,000-year reign of Christ over the earth.)

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