

# Thoughts on the Eight Signs of John's Gospel

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### No. 1. John 2: 1-10.

All signs are miracles, that is to say, supernatural exercises of divine power. Yet all miracles are not signs, for signs convey some distinct teaching in addition to their display of power.

The first sign is given in the second chapter. Our Lord was there at the wedding feast at Cana as an invited guest. In the changing of the water into wine He manifested His glory. His act of power signified that He must supersede every human host. In this act He demonstrated that He was the true Host for Israel. *He* will bring in the joy of the kingdom in the coming day of marital festivity, but only after the waterpots have been filled with water of purification. The purifying fountain (see Zechariah 12 and 13) shall follow the great tribulation. Then Jehovah shall be called Husband by His people and shall no more be called Master. Then shall the joy of the vineyards be their portion when the door of hope is opened to Israel, culminating in the betrothal with all its attendant blessedness (Hosea 2: 14-23). Thus shall the Lord be Host and Husband to Israel in the coming day of His manifested glory. All this and much more is suggested in the consideration of this first sign. May we who belong, not to Israel but, to the heavenly family of God, learn from the sign that the gracious, lowly Stranger, who came unto His own and was not received by them — He who was unknown in the world His own hands had made — is none other than the Lord of glory.

"The Invited Man, at Cana's feast

A humble Guest did dine;

Yet God — the Host — the water blest,

And changed it into wine."

### No. 2. John 4: 46-54.

In Galilee our Lord exercised His healing power amongst the poor of the flock (see Isaiah 9: 1, 2 and Matthew 4: 14-16). The condition of the nobleman's son, physically, was illustrative of the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel. He was at the point of death. Healing mercy was there for him in

Jesus, and for the healing of the nation if they would have Him. On this occasion the Lord signified to such of whom it could be said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," that Jehovah, Himself, had come down for their blessing. He was none other than Jehovah Rophi — "I and the LORD that healeth thee," (see for instance Exodus 15: 26). The healing mercy which shall be experienced by His people in the day of His coming glory was in Him as He trod His gracious pathway. We elsewhere read, "the power of the Lord was present to heal them" — yet all were not healed! Unbelief was general. Still, that mercy *was* experienced by the nobleman's son, and blessed to relate, the nobleman, affected by the testimony of the Lord, believed His word (verses 50-53).

### **No. 3. John 5: 1-9.**

Here we learn that all that was signified by Bethesda — the House of Mercy — was present in the Person of our Lord. It is significant that the man's infirmity was of thirty-eight years' duration. Israel, after thirty-eight years of wilderness wandering, came very near to their inheritance. This period seemed to coincide with the incident of the brazen serpent (compare Numbers 21: 4-16, with Deuteronomy 2: 14). As in the flesh, and on the ground of law keeping, Israel will never get into the divinely promised inheritance. Here in John 5, the man at the pool was absolutely helpless. He had "no man" — but the mercy of God drew near to him in the Person of the Man called Jesus. In this act of healing mercy He shewed Himself to be the Lord of the New Covenant, as we elsewhere read, "*I will have mercy*" (see Hosea 6: 6 and Matthew 9: 13). It would seem that this man in John 5, subject of the mercy and power of the Lord, was not so responsive as the nobleman in chapter 4. The Jews, as ever, complained against the Lord for acting on the Sabbath day (John 5: 10-16). Jesus found the man and said to him, "sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole. He gladly availed himself of the mercy and power of our Lord in healing, thus meeting his need, but seemed to resent the word of the Lord which spoke to his conscience. Be that as it may, in this incident the work of the Lord and the word of the Lord throw into relief His mercy, power, and holiness. All forms the basis of what follows in this chapter which outstandingly presents the greatness of the Son of God.

### **No. 4. John 6: 5-14.**

Our Lord in feeding the multitude declared plainly that He is the Jehovah of Psalm 132: 15. Of Him it is written, "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread." This quotation is from the Psalm which looks on to the day when Jehovah shall come into His rest. How great shall be the blessing ensuing for Israel when the Lord receives His rightful place. Then shall brethren dwell together in unity (Psalm 133). The Lord's earthly people shall come under the effective administration of the anointed Priest. According to Zechariah's prophecy (Zech. 6: 13) "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne."

Coming under the joy and power of the blessing of the enthroned Priest, Israel shall enjoy life for the millennial age. Then, too, there shall be a spontaneous uprising of blessing Godward with its resultant blessing manward (Psalm 134). Read these last three Psalms of degrees and let us say to ourselves that the One who shall bring all this about is that adorable and glorious Person who fed the poor with bread in the day of John 6.

## No. 5. John 6: 15-21.

Also in this chapter we have the fifth sign — Jesus walked upon the sea. Just as He came to His disciples in that day in the midst of the storm so will He come to His elect in the coming darkness and strong wind of the great tribulation day. He will bring the storm to an end by His glorious appearing and bring His won to their desired haven. He is the Master of the seas — the winds and the waves are under His control. He it is who said in Job 38: 11, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

He will bring to an end the coming storm of tribulation which the Jews shall receive under the fury of the Roman and Jewish beasts. He will shorten the days of unparalleled suffering by His appearing in power and great glory and bring in days of peace and blessing. Such is suggested in the fifth sign of the gospel of John.

"The Dependent Man, the mount ascends,  
And Suppliant there is He;  
The Mighty God — He then descends,  
And walks the heaving sea."

Let us ever remember that, though we may learn much of dispensational significance through these signs, over all there shines the glory of our Lord.

## No. 6. John 9: 1-7.

The great theme of the earlier chapters has been the testimony *to* men. Here the prominent thought is the work of God *in* a man. Thus we have had the Word of God to man, now it is a matter of the Work of God in man. If Israel, or Gentiles, are to be delivered from the darkness of their ignorance of God a divine work is essential. This is the significance of this sign. The downstooping of the Son of God into this world in the lowliness and grace of His incarnation — symbolised in His making clay with His spittle — only intensified the blindness of the Jews. If they looked for the Christ it was certainly not a humbled Christ; they looked for a mighty delivering warrior. Now that He had come, as the prophets had foretold, the only hope of blessing for Israel lay in their being obedient to the Sent One. Blessed be God, the day shall surely dawn when their hearts shall turn to the Lord. They shall then repent of their unbelief with its arrogant pretension to knowledge. They shall then no longer boast that they see. They will own their sin and ignorance and He will open their blind eyes. The veil shall be taken from their hearts and they shall gladly confess, in the words of Isaiah 25: 9, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is our LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Then, as in Isaiah 33: 17, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty."

What a change from their state when they said, "There is no beauty that we should desire Him." That belonged to the day of their national blindness as depicted in Isaiah 53. "The eyes of the blind shall be opened" (Isaiah 35: 5). Then shall the period of their judicial blindness be ended (See also Romans 11: 25-27).

In unbelief they had rejected the Lord when He presented Himself in inimitable grace and so, according to the end of John 9, they were given over to blindness and shall be until His coming in power and great glory. See also Isaiah 6 and John 12: 37-41. As set forth in this sign He is the only One

who can lighten their darkness and He shall yet open their eyes. He is the Light Giver.

## No. 7. John 11: 1-44.

This is the sign of the resurrection glory of the Son of God. What He did for Lazarus He shall yet do for the nation which is sleeping among the Gentiles. According to Daniel 12: 2, when the great tribulation has run its appointed course there shall be a national awakening — "some to everlasting life."

In Ezekiel 37 we read of the valley which was full of bones, "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel . . . and shall put My Spirit in you and ye shall live . . ."

Please read the whole of this wonderful passage of Scripture. The power of the Lord shall be exerted in the resurrection of His people Israel, the major part of whom have long been lost among the nations and thus are nationally dead. The glory of the Lord shall be manifested in bringing this about. Such is the portent of this sign. So the Lord Jesus had said as to Lazarus, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."

Again, in verse 40 of our chapter, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Israel's great hope of national resurrection shall be realised for them by the power of the Son of God. He is declared such by resurrection of the dead.

"Arise and shine — thy light is come;  
Israel, one day, shall hear the welcome word;  
Shall then come forth from out their darkened tomb,  
To stand before the glory of their Lord.  
Times of the Gentiles then give way,  
Beneath the righteous sceptre's sway  
Of Him, who out of Zion comes,  
Bringing deliverance to all Israel's sons.  
Dry bones shall live — a nation in a day be born.  
When 'neath the banner of Jehovah's love,  
They dwell in safety and in 'lasting peace,  
And *He* — amidst their swelling shouts of praise."

(See Isaiah 60).

## No. 8. John 21: 1-14.

The eighth sign in chapter 21 may now occupy us briefly. The third time in which our Lord shewed Himself to His disciples, after He was risen from among the dead, afforded the occasion. The disciples — the true remnant of Israel — during the night of His absence had caught nothing in their fishing. Acting on the instructions of their risen Lord, casting their net into the sea at His behest, they netted such a haul that they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fishes — 153 great

fishes. The net, for all there were so many, did not break, unlike the occasion at the beginning of their history with the Lord, as recorded in Luke 5.

This occurrence would suggest the service they shall yet perform in casting the net of the Gospel of the Kingdom into the sea of nations.

When the Assembly has gone to glory God shall resume His ways on earth. The messengers of the coming King, still fishers of men, shall, so to speak, reap the harvest of the seas. The result, for millennial blessing, shall be that the Gentiles shall come to Israel's light (Isaiah 60). Then Isaiah 66: 18, 19 shall be fulfilled, "I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see My glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them to the nations . . . that have not heard My fame, neither have seen My glory; and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles."

Thus at the end, as at the beginning of these signs at which we have glanced, and as to which, without seeking to be dogmatic, we have made some simple dispensational suggestions, the paramount feature is the manifestation of the divine glory of our Lord.

May we all be joined in heart with those who witnessed the first sign in the second chapter of the Gospel of John, for of His own we read, "This beginning of signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." (John 2: 11).

**"What sign shewest thou?"**

## **John 2: 18; John 6: 30.**

Further to our previous consideration of the eight signs in the Gospel of John we would remind ourselves that in answering the query of the people, as recorded in John 6: 30, our Lord spoke of the bread from heaven and identified it with Himself as "He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world." First, there was His coming down out of heaven — His Incarnation. Later He said, "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (v. 51). This was plain teaching as to His death. So here are two distinctive significations of the bread out of heaven; *His Incarnation* and *His death*.

In chapter 2: 18, answering the Jews who had said, "What sign shewest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?" Jesus said unto them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." In verse 21 we read, "But He spake of the temple of His body." This was a reference to the certainty of *His resurrection*. "When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the Word which Jesus had said" (verse 22). Here then is the sign of His resurrection. In John 11: 25, He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." The power for both was inherent in His glorious Person.

It was after He had risen and had twice appeared to His assembled disciples, with His special appeal to Thomas on the second occasion, that we read, "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 believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20: 30, 31).

The Lord grant that we may all derive some spiritual gain from the consideration of the eight signs, with their dispensational bearing, and also from the three signs of His INCARNATION, DEATH and RESURRECTION. All unite in setting forth the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.