

176. THE EIGHT "SIGNS" IN JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Miracles are spoken of in the New Testament under three names : --

1. **dunamis** = power. In the singular, power in the abstract; but in the plural it = mighty works, i.e. the manifestations of power. (See Ap. 172. 1.) The word occurs 38 times in three of the four Gospels: 13 times in Matthew, and is rendered "power", or "powers" 5 times; "mighty works" 6 times; "wonderful works" once (7:22), and once "ability" (25:15). It occurs ten times in Mark; and is rendered "virtue" once (5:30); "mighty works" 3 times; "power, or "powers" 5 times; and "miracle" once (9:39). In Luke it occurs 15 times, and is rendered "power" or "powers", 11 times; "virtue" twice; "mighty works" twice. In John it does not occur at all.

2. **teras** = a wonder. This word has regard to the *effect produced* on those who witnessed the mighty work. It is always translated "wonder", and occurs three times in three of the Gospels: viz. Matt. 24:24. Mark 13:22. John 4:48. Outside of the Gospels it occurs in Acts 2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12. Rom. 15:19. 2Cor. 12:12. 2Thess. 2:9. Heb. 2:4. It does not occur in Luke's Gospel; and only once in Matthew, Mark and John. The rendering "miracle" should be confined to this word, *teras*.

3. **semeion** = a sign. This word has regard to the *significance* of the work wrought, whether in itself, or in the reason, object, design, and teaching intended to be conveyed by it. It occurs in the Gospels 48 times, viz.: 13 times in Matt.; 7 times in Mark; 11 times in Luke; and is rendered "miracle" only once (23:8).

In John it occurs 17 times, and is quite wrongly rendered "miracle" 13 times, and "sign" only 4 times. No other word is used for a "miracle" in John, except in 4:48 (see 2 above).

The English word "miracle" is from the Latin word *miraculum*, which means "a wonder", and should therefore be confined to the rendering of *teras* (No. 2) above, and not used for either *dunamis* (No. 1), or *semeion* (No. 3).

All three of the above words occur in one verse (Heb. 2:4) : "God also bearing [them] witness by signs (*semeion*), both with wonders (*teras*) and various mighty works (*dunamis*), and distributions of *pneuma hagion* (See Ap. 101. II. 14), according to His own will".

John does not use the first of these words (*dunamis*) at all. He uses the second (*teras*) only once (4:48). In all the other passages he uses the third (*semeion*), and this 17 times. It is rendered "miracle" in all but four passages (2:18; 4:48; 6:30; 20:30, where it is correctly rendered "sign"). It should, of course, have been rendered "sign" throughout, because it has regard to that which is signified by the work wrought.

Out of all the miracles wrought by our Lord, John records only *eight*, and these are all "signs", not "wonders" or "mighty works".

The number (eight) is Divinely ordered. Of the first we read, "This beginning of the signs" (2:11); and of the second, "This is again a second sign" (4:54). We are thus invited to continue and carry out this important enumeration to the completion of the eighth.

Hence these eight (For the significance of the enumeration of the eight signs as a whole, see the Conclusion) have been Divinely selected only on account of their special *signification*.

It is ours to study them with the view of finding out what it is that is signified by them. For this purpose they are set out on page 194, according to their Structure; for, like all the other words and works of God, their *order* is perfect as well as all else connected with them.

They are at once seen to be arranged as an *Introversion*. This tells us that the *historical* order in which they were wrought must have had regard also to the *literary* order in which they are recorded.

The *Introversion* shows that the *first* corresponds with the *eighth*; the *second* corresponds with the *seventh*; the *third* with the *sixth*; and the *fourth* with the *fifth*.

Thus there are four pairs; the latter sign and signification in each pair is always an advance on the former : so that, while the former deals with what is preliminary and partial, it leads up to the latter corresponding sign, which is permanent and final.

THE SIGNIFICATION.

We are now in a position to examine these eight "signs" more minutely; and are able, at once, to see that the points which correspond are intended to emphasize the signification of each.

Two things stand out most clearly : they all manifest ISRAEL'S need, and condition of helplessness and death; and MESSIAH'S glory, and His ability to meet that need and restore Israel's lost condition.

We need not go outside these to learn the *signification* of these "signs". All else must be by way of *application* and not *interpretation*. Messiah was baptized and anointed by the Holy Ghost "that He might be manifested unto Israel" (John 1:31). The first sign is called "the beginning", and the next is called the "second", to intimate to us that we are to continue the enumeration, and thus be led on to emphasize the signification of each. It "manifested forth His glory". This is the signification of the whole eight.

THE FIRST (A) AND THE EIGHTH (A).

The Marriage in Cana (2:1-11), and the Draught of Fishes (21:1-14).

The signification is the same in each case, as to Messiah. In the first He "manifested forth His glory" (2:11); in the eighth He "manifested Himself" (21:14, note the same word in each) : as to Israel, it was to manifest the depth of the nation's destitution. He alone could supply that need by becoming "the glory of His People Israel" (Luke 2:32). Apart from Messiah, Israel could have no joy, no supplies, no blessing, no glory.

The first sign signified that need : "they have no wine" (2:3), while the last signified that with all their toil they had "caught nothing", and had "no meat"; but it signified also that Messiah could supply both the one and the other -- sustenance and joy.

Religion with all its punctilious observances could not supply either. Religion grossly corrupted (cp. Isa. 1:22), was in full evidence : the "waterpots" and "the purifying of the Jews" only manifested the truth of the inspired indictment of Isa. 1:10-23; while the next recorded event (John 2:13-16) manifested that they were destitute of all idea of true worship of Jehovah.

The discourses which followed carried the signification further, and showed that this spiritual destitution could be remedied only by the Divine

gifts; yea, in spiritual regeneration and resurrection.

Nicodemus, who was attracted by the signs (3:2), sought their signification, and was taught the need of spiritual birth from Ezek. 36:24-32. The word "must" of 3:7 and 3:14 enforced and explained it; while the gift of God (v. 16) was the only answer to his question "How?"

From Jerusalem and a ruler He goes to Samaria (4:4), like Peter in a later day (Acts 8:14-25); and again shows to a Samaritan woman, the need of spiritual worship, enforcing it by the same "must" (4:24); and answering her question "How?" by the same "gift of God" (4:10).

When Messiah gives joy to the nation, it will be filled "up to the brim" (2:7. Cp. Isa. 9:2-7. John 21:11); and when He fills the Land with restored Israel in resurrection, it will be to the last one (Ezek. 37:12-14). For in the eighth sign Messiah was the Caller, signifying that He will be the Gatherer (Jer. 31:10); while the seven disciples (John 21:2. Ap. 10) signify the spiritual perfection with which Israel will be gathered, yea, "one by one" (Isa. 27:12) to the last one ("153"). For "though Israel be sifted among the nations, as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." (Amos 9:9).

THE SECOND (B) AND THE SEVENTH (B) .

The Ruler's Son (4:46-50), and the Sisters' Brother (11:1-44).

If in the first and eighth the signification was national destitution of all *good*, in the second and seventh it is destitution of national *life*. The "sign" in each case was connected with *death*; and, as in all the other pairs, the latter is an advance upon the former : so here, the son being on the point of death (4:47) in the death chamber, the brother is actually dead and in the tomb. The signification being that in the former which took place during the first period of our Lord's ministry, which was the proclamation of the kingdom, the nation was at the point of death, though not actually dead (see Ap. 119): but in the latter case the "sign" was given in the third period when the King had been already rejected (10:39; 11:8, 53; 12:10), and national life was in God's sight practically dead.

The nation's only hope was in Messiah, the great Life-giver. He would raise it again from the dead, according to Ezek. 37. There is a reference here to Hos. 13:14. Can there be a reference also in the "two days" (4:43 and 11:6) to Hos. 6:1-3?

THE THIRD (C) AND THE SIXTH (C).

The Impotent Man (5:1-47), and the Man born Blind (9:1-41).

In both these two "signs" the condition of Israel is "manifested" in another phrase, as being of long standing and hopelessness (5:5; 9:1); and Messiah is manifested in His grace as the only Helper and Healer.

In both cases, Messiah is the Seeker (5:6; 9:1), and takes the initiative; while in both the preceding pairs He was the One Who was sought.

Both "signs" were manifested in Jerusalem (5:1 and 8:50 with 9:1), and thus have special reference to Government and its seat.

Both are associated with a pool (5:2 and 9:7, 11), and may signify that Pool of spiritual cleansing which in a future day is yet to be "opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1). In connection with this it is significant that these

two "signs" are the only two out of all the eight that have any reference to *sin* (5:14 and 9:2, 24, 25, 34), as the second and seventh are the only two connected with *death*.

Sin had been the cause, in the case of Israel, both of *impotence* and the *blindness*. (*1).

It was the cause of Israel's thirty-eight years' typical and helpless wandering (Ap. 50. VII; cp. 2 and 3) before the nation entered into rest; as it was the cause of the suffering of this impotent man, before he met with the great and only Giver of Rest.

This rest is emphasized by the reference to a "Sabbath-Day" (5:9 and 9:14) and by the "sign" that Messiah (the true Joshua) can alone lead them into that true rest and sabbath-keeping that yet remains for Jehovah's People (Heb. 4:4-10).

Messiah is Himself not only the Seeker (5:6; and 9:1), but He is also the Finder (5:14 and 9:35).

The double reference to Moses' *words* (5:45, 46 and 9:28, 29), and to the Father's *works* (5:17 and 9:4), are both "signs" also, full of the utmost significance as deepening the sin of Israel, and enhancing the grace of God Who had raised up Messiah as the Prophet, like unto Moses (Deut. 18:15-19), and sent His Son to seek and to find and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:9, 10).

THE FOURTH (D) AND THE FIFTH (D).

The Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:1-14), and the Walking on the Sea (6:15-21).

These are the two central "signs", and are emphasized by being the only "signs" which are recorded in the other three Gospels; thus implying that all four Gospels are needed in order to give us their full signification.

Both "signs" are followed by the Lord's own signification in the discourses which manifested the special glory of His Deity.

The two "signs" are connected together by the parenthesis of 6:23, which shows that the signification is one, manifesting Messiah as Divine; in the former, as the Creator and the only Supplier of all His People's needs; temporal as in 6:6-13, and spiritual as in 6:32-51; in the latter, as the Creator and Lord of the elements.

The discourse which follows is to signify the enormity of the sin of His rejection, as shown in 7:1, 11, 12, 25, 30, 32, 43, 44, 45; as the second and seventh are the only two connected with death.

Thus, these two central "signs" manifest the two central truths which are common to all the four Gospels: viz., the glory of the Messiah and His rejection by the nation.

They were connected by His departing from them, and going up into a mountain (6:3 and 6:15), signifying that He was about to depart from them, until His return from heaven on the repentance of the nation.

CONCLUSION.

As to the eight "signs" as a whole, they are divided into seven and one; the seven taking place during the ministry of our Lord; and the one (the eighth) after His resurrection; the number eight being symbolical of that fact, the Resurrection having taken place on the eighth day (see Ap. 10).

The seven are divided into two, three, and two; the first two occurred in the *first* period of His ministry, which was the proclamation of the Kingdom (see Ap. 119).

The next three (the third, fourth, and fifth) during the *second* period of His ministry, which was the manifestation of His Person as *Jehovah-Ropheka*, the Healer of His People; *Jehovah-Ro'i*, and *Jehovah-Jireh*, the Supplier of all His People's needs; and Jehovah the Creator of heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is.

The next two (the sixth and seventh) occurred during the *third* period of His ministry, the period of His rejection, manifesting the enormity of their sin, in the rejection of Him Who is the Restorer of His People's sight, and the Lord and Giver of life. Both were parabolic and prophetic with reference to His rejection.

The eighth stands out alone, in this connection; occurring as it does in the Post-resurrection period, and referring to the future gathering of Israel by the rejected Messiah, Who is seen as the Seeker, the Finder, and the Gatherer of His scattered People, Israel.

(*1) See v. 2 which shows that they believed the Babylonian "tradition" of reincarnation.

THE EIGHT "SIGNS".

A 2:1-11. THE MARRIAGE IN CANA.

- a The background. Nathanael's faith (1:49-51).
- b The Place. Galilee (v. 1).
- c "The Third Day" (v. 1).
- d Wine Provided (vv. 8, 9).
- e "Jesus was called, and His disciples" (v. 2).
- f Failure confessed. "They have no wine" (v. 3).
- g Numbers. Six waterpots, holding two or three firkins apiece. (v. 6).
- h Command. "Fill the waterpots with water" (v. 7-).
- i Obedience. "The filled them" (v. -7-).
- k Waterpots filled to the last drop. "Up to the brim" (v. -7).
- l The servants bare (*enenkan*, v. 8).
- m Glory manifested (*ephanerose*, v. 11-).
- n His disciples' faith (v. -11).

B 4:46-50. THE RULER'S SON.

- o The background. Rejection (vv. 43, 44).
- p Time. "After two days" (v. 43).
- q His son. "Sick" (*esthenei*, v. 46).
- r Parenthetic explanation re the place (Cana) (v. 46).

- s "At the point of death" (v. 47). "Death" only here, and in "B" below.
- t "Ye will not believe" (v. 48).
- u "Ere my child die" (v. 49).
- v The servants "met him" (v. 51).
- w "Thy son liveth" (v. 51).
- x "The fever left him" (*apheken*, v. 52).

C 5:1-47. THE IMPOTENT MAN.

- a The Place. Jerusalem (v. 1).
- b The Pool. Bethesda (v. 2).
- c The longstanding case, "thirty-eight years" (v. 5).
- d "Jesus saw him" (v. 6).
- e The Lord takes the initiative (v. 6).
- f "The same day was the Sabbath" (v. 9).
- g "Afterward Jesus findeth him" (v. 14).
- h. "Sin no more" (v. 14). Sin, only here and in "C", below
- i "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (v. 17).
- k A double reference to "Moses" (vv. 45, 46).

D 6:1-14. THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND.

- l The only "sign" (with *D*) recorded in the other Gospels (Matt. 14:15. Mark 6:35. Luke 9:10).
- m "Jesus went up to the mountain" (v. 3).
- n Followed by a discourse (vv. 26-65). Signification.
- o "Many disciples went back" (v. 66).
- p The testimony of Peter (vv. 68, 69).

D 6:15-21. THE WALKING ON THE SEA.

- l The only "sign" (with *D*) recorded in the other Gospels (Matt. 14:23. Mark 6:47).
- m "Jesus departed again into the mountain" (v. 15).
- n Followed by a discourse (ch. 7). Signification.
- o "Many of the people believed" (7:31).
- p The testimony of Nicodemus (7:50).

C 9:1-41. THE MAN BORN BLIND.

- a The Place. Jerusalem (8:59; 9:1).
- b The Pool. Siloam (vv. 7, 11).
- c The longstanding case, "from birth" (v. 1).
- d "Jesus saw" him (v. 1).
- e The Lord takes the initiative (v. 6).
- f "It was the Sabbath day" (v. 14).

- g "When He had found him" (v. 35).
- h "Who did sin?" (v. 2. Cp. vv. 24, 25, 31, 34). Sin, only here, and in "C", above.
- i "I must work the works of Him that sent Me" (v. 4).
- k A double reference to "Moses" (vv. 28, 29).

B 11:1-44. THE SISTER'S BROTHER.

- o The background. Rejection (10:31, 39; 11:8).
- p Time. "Jesus abode two days where He was" (v. 6).
- q Lazarus was sick (*esthenei*, v. 2).
- r Parenthetic explanation re the person (Mary) (v. 2).
- s "Lazarus is dead" (v. 14). "Death" only here, and in "B" above.
- t "That ye may believe" (v. 15).
- u "Our brother had not died" (v. 21, 32).
- v Martha "met Him" (vv. 20, 30).
- w "Lazarus, come forth" (v. 43).
- x "Let him go" (*aphete*, v. 44).

A 21:1-14. THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

- a The background. Thomas's unbelief (20:24-29).
- b The Place. Galilee (v. 1).
- c "The third time" (v. 14).
- d A meal provided (v. 9).
- e The Lord was the Caller of His disciples (vv. 5, 12).
- f Failure confessed. They had "caught nothing" (v. 3). Had "no meat" (v. 5).
- g Numbers: 200 cubits (v. 8); 153 fishes (v. 11).
- h Command. "Cast the net into the water" (v. 6).
- i Obedience. "They cast therefore" (v. 6).
- k Net full, to the last fish (vv. 8, 11).
- l "Bring of the fish" (*enenkate*, v. 10).
- m The Lord manifested (*ephanerothe*, v. 14).
- n His disciples' love (vv. 15-17).