

# *The* GRACE JOURNAL

*"Taking God's Grace to the World"*

A BIBLE STUDY AND NEWS PERIODICAL

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## *To What Do the Signs Point?*

BY RICHARD JORDAN

The book of Mark concludes with a passage that every believer and Christian worker should ponder prayerfully:

"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, AND CONFIRMING THE WORD WITH SIGNS FOLLOWING. Amen" (Mark 16:19, 20).

In order to get the full significance of this last clause we need to consider how "*signs*" are used in Scripture as a whole and to what they point. In this regard, Psalms 74:9 is a good place to start. Speaking of the condition of the nation Israel the Psalmist cries out:

"WE SEE NOT *OUR SIGNS*: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long."

Clearly signs belong to the nation Israel. They are her birthright; "*they are our signs*," Israel says.

The nation Israel was born amid signs and wonders, even as Moses reminds them in Deuteronomy 26:8,

"And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and WITH SIGNS, AND WITH WONDERS."

When Moses was commissioned to deliver Israel from Egypt, he was given two specific signs designed to motivate the nation to believe. The Lord declared to him in Exodus 4:8,

"And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign,

that they will believe the voice of the latter sign."

The first signs performed in Scripture are thus performed as signs to Israel in connection with her liberation from Egypt and establishment as a nation.

Throughout Israel's history, signs were a part of her birthright. When she was where she belonged, doing what God gave her to do, these signs were in her midst. On the other hand, the signs stopped when Israel fell into sin and unbelief—as was the case in Psalms 74. Proverbs 29:18 also speaks to this: "*Where there is no vision, the people perish...*"

Thus when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared and began to perform signs and wonders, this was nothing new for Israel. They knew exactly what was going on. John 4:48 tells us:

"Then said Jesus unto him, EXCEPT YE SEE SIGNS AND WONDERS, YE WILL NOT BELIEVE."

Our Lord knew Israel would not believe if they did not see signs and wonders. Why? Because she expected them—signs were her birthright. They were part of Israel's program and she had a right to expect them.

This is why Peter declares to his nation at Pentecost:

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, A MAN APPROVED OF GOD AMONG YOU BY MIRACLES AND WONDERS AND SIGNS, which God did by him in the midst of you..." (Acts 2:22).

Jesus Christ was "*approved of God*"—how? "*By miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him.*" They would not believe if He did not have signs and wonders so God gave Him the necessary credentials to demonstrate who He was.

Paul later follows this same line of thought when he writes in I Corinthians 1:22,

"FOR THE JEWS REQUIRE A SIGN, and the Greeks seek after wisdom."

Notice the wording: "The Jews require a sign." They simply would not believe without such confirmation. They expected it. They demanded it. It was their birthright.

In light of this, we should not be surprised to find that each covenant God made with the nation Israel seems to have had an accompanying sign. Although this fact often seems to be overlooked, it is in reality an important point in understanding what signs were about and what they pointed to.

### CIRCUMCISION

Romans 4:11 declares circumcision to be a "sign" and when first given by God to Abraham in Genesis 17, no doubt was left as to what this sign pointed:

"This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; EVERY MAN CHILD AMONG YOU SHALL BE CIRCUMCISED.

"And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and IT SHALL BE A TOKEN OF THE COVENANT BETWEEN ME AND YOU."

"He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: AND MY COVENANT SHALL BE IN YOUR FLESH FOR AN EVERLASTING COVENANT" (Genesis 17:10,11,13).

Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. Through this "circumcision in the flesh made by hands" (Ephesians 2:11), Israel literally carried the Abrahamic Covenant with them in their flesh. So basic was the requirement of the identity of the nation with this most fundamental of all her covenants. Indeed, if a "stranger" desired to become a part of the favored nation, circumcision was the rite of initiation (Exodus 12:48). It was by submitting to circumcision that a Gentile could "take hold" of the covenant made with Abraham.

Because circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Israel through Abraham, it is not unexpected that in the present dispensation it has no such value. With the setting aside of the nation Israel (Romans 11:11-15), Paul can now write:

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Galatians 6:15).

This is quite a change! Because Israel has been set aside, this "sign of circumcision" has nothing to point to today.

### THE SABBATH DAY

When God made the further covenant with Israel through Moses, He again gave a sign as a ceremonial observance of that covenant. Exodus 31:12-18 clearly set forth the observance of the Sabbath Day as "a sign between me [the Lord] and the children of Israel forever." It was to be that part of the Mosaic Covenant that represented the whole:

"Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Exodus 31:16).

The sabbath was a sign given to the nation Israel for the purpose of perpetually reminding them of the covenant God had made with them through Moses. Hence centuries later the Lord calls Israel to repentance through Ezekiel with the plea:

"I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them;

"And HALLOW MY SABBATHS; AND THEY SHALL BE A SIGN BETWEEN ME AND YOU, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God" (Ezekiel 20:19,20).

Again, however, with the present "fall of Israel," this Jewish sign has also been rendered inoperative—having nowhere to point. Hence Paul instructs the believer today:

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Colossians 2:16).

### WATER BAPTISM

The next great covenant God made with Israel was given to King David. This covenant had to do with the kingdom God purposed to establish through Israel. II Samuel 7:12-16 records the giving of the Davidic Covenant, the essence of which is captured in the words, "*I will establish the throne of his [i. e., David's] kingdom for ever.*"

This kingdom had long been promised to the

nation Israel. In fact the very purpose of God in giving birth to the nation centered in this kingdom. God Himself had promised Israel through Moses:

"And YE SHALL BE UNTO ME A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, AND AN HOLY NATION..." (Exodus 19:6)

While no specific "sign" is directly identified with the Davidic Covenant<sup>1</sup>, in light of Exodus 19:6 it is not difficult to identify the mark of entrance into the kingdom.

Notice that Israel was to become "*a kingdom of priests*." In Exodus 29 we learn that ordination into the priest's office was through a ceremony that included two very important rites: first, a *washing* with water; second, an *anointing* with oil. In other words, to prepare a priest to carry out the duties of his office, at least two things were done: first, "*wash them with water*" (v.4) and then, "*anoint him*" (v.7).

These two things are beautifully united when our Lord, Israel's true High Priest (Hebrews 3:1), came to be baptized of John in order "*to fulfill all righteousness*."

First, He was washed with water and then anointed with the Holy Spirit by the Father (Matthew 3:13-17). Thus His ordination into His ministry as Israel's Prophet, Priest and King was complete.

Water baptism is the sign of the Kingdom Covenant—the Davidic Covenant. It is "*the door*" through which the believing Israelite was to identify himself as a part of the "*little flock*" to whom the Father purposed to give the Kingdom (Luke 12:32. See Luke 7:29,30).

This, of course, is why John the Baptist came preaching "*the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*" (Mark 1:4). We learn from Acts 13:24 that John preached his "*baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel*."

In other words, John preached a *national* baptism to the nation Israel as a means of *national* repentance and preparation to be the kingdom of priests God ordained that favored nation to be. Clearly, in Scripture water baptism is associated with the kingdom given to the nation Israel.

In Acts 2:38, Peter echoes John's words in Mark 1:4 as he declares to His nation:

"...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Peter's appeal to Israel is a further development of John's earlier call to repentance, calling Israel to place faith in her Messiah and to prepare herself to fulfill her God-given role as a "*royal priesthood, an holy nation*" (I Peter 2:9).

Just as *circumcision* is the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant and the *sabbath* is the sign of the Mosaic Covenant, so *water baptism* is the sign of the Davidic Covenant.

And as with the other signs, the setting aside of Israel resulted in the setting aside of the practice of water baptism. It has no place in God's current program.

As God's program for Israel was replaced by His program for the Body of Christ, so Israel's water ceremony was also replaced with the baptism by the Spirit of God into the Body of Christ:

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13)."

This is the "*one baptism*" of Ephesians 4:5 that is in effect today.

## SPIRITUAL "SIGN GIFTS"

The nation Israel was promised a New Covenant—one in which God Himself would enable them to be all He purposed them to be. This covenant is recorded in Jeremiah 31:31-34. The essence of the New Covenant is clearly set forth in Ezekiel 36:27,

"And I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT WITHIN YOU, AND CAUSE YOU TO WALK IN MY STATUTES, AND YE SHALL KEEP MY JUDGMENTS, AND DO THEM."

This direct empowering of the nation by the Holy Spirit assures the accomplishment of God's purpose through Israel. The sign of this empowering by the Holy Spirit is found in the list of "sign gifts" given in passages like Mark 16:17,18 and I Corinthians 12:7-11. All of these gifts are signs to the nation Israel that point to the empowering of the Holy Spirit—the "*anointing*" of Exodus 29:7 which completes the preparation for the priest's office.

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1. We believe this is because water baptism (as we demonstrate in this article) would easily be understood for what it was: the initiation rite into the "*royal priesthood*." Thus in the book of Acts, water baptism is always associated with "*signs and wonders*."

One example of this is "speaking with other tongues." Acts 2:4 records,

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, AND BEGAN TO SPEAK WITH OTHER TONGUES, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

The evidence of the Spirit's empowerment was the talking in tongues. This same evidence is given in Acts 10:44-47 when the Spirit fell on those in the house of Cornelius.

Thus Paul states in I Corinthians 14:22:

"Wherefore TONGUES ARE FOR A SIGN..."

Since Paul has already declared that *"the Jews require a sign,"* it is clear these "gifts"—of which tongues are but a representation—are, signs given to the nation Israel for the purpose of identifying the empowering operation of the Holy Spirit. As a foretaste of "the powers of the world to come," these signs were especially suited to Israel's Kingdom hope.

Once again, however, with the setting aside of Israel's Kingdom program these signs also ceased (I Corinthians 13:8-10). That this is an historic as well as dispensational reality is illustrated in Paul's ministry. As the "diminishing" of Israel (Romans 11:12) was completed at the end of the Acts period, it is evident that these sign gifts ceased too and were no longer operative even in the ministry of the great Apostle Paul (e.g., II Timothy 4:20).

With the fall of Israel and her program, her sign gifts have nothing toward which to point.

#### WHAT ABOUT NOW?

All the signs point to God's purposes in and through the nation Israel—they are the people of the signs; theirs is the program of the signs. As the nation Israel was set aside her sign program was also set aside.

In the present dispensation of grace there are no signs such as were given to Israel. Rather, as the signs were withdrawn they were replaced with something far better: the fullness of God's revelation of His grace to us in Christ Jesus found in the epistles of the Apostle Paul.

This article is available in booklet form to share with your friends. Price: \$.75 ea, 3 for \$2.

## ***"Be Strong"***

Writing to young men, the apostle John says, *"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong"* (1 John 2:14). How did they get that strength? *"And the word of God abideth in you."*

Show me a weak, wobbling believer, and I will show you a Christian not giving very much time to meditation upon the word of God. Show me one who is a strong, devoted, earnest Christian, seeking only the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I will show you one who is living on the Book.

As you eat the word, as you feed upon the truth, you get strength that you cannot obtain in any other way. People go around lamenting their weakness and their leanness. I get so tired of people coming and saying, "Do pray for me that I may be a stronger Christian." What is the use of praying for you?

You might say, "Do pray that I may get stronger physically." "What kind of food do you eat?" I ask. "Not any." And I would say, "Then there is no use praying for you. You need to get some good, wholesome food into you!"

What you need as a Christian is a good meal of spiritual nourishment, and you can get it only in the Book. You may do all the praying you like to be a strong Christian, and your prayer will never be answered until you begin to answer it yourself by feeding upon the word of God.

—Harry Ironsides on I Cor. 16:13

## ***Inside Out!***

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## CHANGES TO FORGOTTEN TRUTHS SCHEDULE

Due to programming changes, our last program on *FETV* was September 10. We have moved to *Impact Network*, which airs on both *DirecTV* and *Dish* as well as *Comcast*, *Charter*, *Time Warner Cable* and *ATT U-Verse*. This means our *FETV* viewers can continue watching *Forgotten Truths* on the *Impact Network* Mondays at 10:00 p.m.ET (9:00 p.m., CT; 8:00 p.m. MT; 7:00 p.m. PT) on *Dish* channel 268, *DirecTV* channel 380, cable users check your local listings for the *Impact Network* channel.

We continue our Saturday 9:00 p.m.ET airing over *DirecTV* channel 367 as well as broadcast stations in Albuquerque, NM, Colorado Springs and Denver, CO, Detroit, MI, Indianapolis, IN, South Bend, IN, New Orleans, LA, Tulsa, OK. The program can also be accessed via the Internet at [www.lesea.com/wht/watch-live](http://www.lesea.com/wht/watch-live) on Saturday at 9:00 p.m.ET, and [www.kazq32.org/watch-online](http://www.kazq32.org/watch-online) on Sunday 8:30 a.m. and Monday 10:30 a.m.MT.

These broadcasts are reaching a potential of 75 million households each week! As you pray for them, perhaps you should consider what part you could be having in seeing that they continue to take the message of God's grace from the rightly divided word into the market place. You should know that currently there is a pressing need. Please direct your support to *Forgotten Truths Ministry*, 13630 Common Road, Warren, MI 48088 or online at our web site [ForgottenTruths.com](http://ForgottenTruths.com).

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## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*THIS ISSUE OF THE GRACE JOURNAL* will be the single issue for 2017. This is in no way due to a lessening interest in literature or the printed page. Rather it is the result of the growth of our ministry overall and the fact that we have thus been forced to prioritize some areas. This is a "high grade" problem! We appreciate hearing from so many readers wondering where their *Journal* is. We will seek to be more regular next year!

**CHICAGO AREA READERS** can once again hear our *Daily Bible Time* radio program over WYLL (1160AM) at 1:30 p.m. each weekday—in addition to our Sunday 8:30 a.m. program over the same station. You can also join us via [www.1160hope.com](http://www.1160hope.com).

**UP-COMING CONFERENCES** proclaiming the message of grace abound. Some 2018 meetings where you can hear the Editor include:

January 12-14:	Orlando, Florida
February 16-18:	San Clemente, CA
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May 25-27:	Wilmot, OH
June 10-16:	Florida Grace Youth Camp
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For details watch [GraceImpact.org](http://GraceImpact.org) or contact our office at 888.535.2300

**REMEMBER:** You can hear Richard Jordan and Alex Kurz **live** each Sunday at 9:30 & 10:45 a.m., 6:00 p.m.; Wed. 7:30 p.m. CT at [GraceImpact.org](http://GraceImpact.org).

## FIVE WAYS TO GIVE

This ministry is a campaign "to make all men see." As such, it is a *work of faith* supported by the prayerful giving of its friends. There are five ways you can partner with us with your contributions:

1. *By mail:* simply send your gift to our office.
2. *By phone:* call our office at 888.535.2300 and use your charge card.
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5. *By contributing things other than money:* stocks, vehicles, real estate, charitable trusts, etc. Contact us for details about how to proceed. And remember that estate planning allows you to continue to give even after you've moved to heaven!

The *real question*, of course, is not *how* but *why* give to the work of getting the unadulterated, undiluted message of grace out to others. But if you haven't come to grips with the answer to that question, you aren't ready to be a generous giver yet. Keep growing! Your time may come!

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For further details contact Pastor Russ Hargett at [russhargett@verizon.net](mailto:russhargett@verizon.net).

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October 31, 1517 is the date history marks as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Although flawed both personally and doctrinally (who of us isn’t!), those who stood for the spiritual light they recovered literally changed the trajectory of history by breaking the political power of the Roman Catholic Church and making God’s word available to “the common man.”

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