

***“Romans, Dispensationally Considered —
The Gospel in the Stars, Part 2”***

Our Outline for Today:

- **What are the Signs and What Do They Signify?**
- **What is the Apostle Paul’s Purpose in Referring to the Signs?**
- **Are the Signs Still Speaking?**

I. What are the Signs and What Do They Signify:

- ***In asking for what they signify we are inquiring into their meaning. Right? It all began with the first chapter in the Bible, you recall, in Genesis 1:14:***
- ***What does it say? “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years ...” Genesis 1:14.***
 - ***The sun — “to divide the day ...”***
 - ***The moon — “... from the night ...”***
 - ***The stars — “... and for seasons and for days and years”***
 - ***The planets, etc.***
- ***We may think we understand this well, but do we really? We must examine the use of this word translated by our English word “sign” here to learn more of how it is used Biblically, translated in different ways as “sign” most often, but also as “mark”, or “token” and several times as “miracle”. We will look at the first few to get the sense:***

Genesis 4:9-16

9 And the LORD said unto Cain, Where *is* Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: *Am* I my brother's keeper?

10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11 And now *art* thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

13 And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment *is* greater than I can bear.

14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the

earth; and it shall come to pass, *that* every one that findeth me shall slay me.

15 And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

16 And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

- ***We are not told what this mark was. But there also must have been a word of the Lord regarding it that was dispersed far and wide or no one would have known the “meaning” of the mark or sign.***

Genesis 9:8-18

8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

10 And with every living creature that *is* with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This *is* the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

15 And I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

17 And God said unto Noah, This *is* the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

18 And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham *is* the father of Canaan.

- ***But again we see here how the rainbow in this case and these signs required an explanation and without that they would not have been effective. Those revelations of the meaning the Lord had given for them was critically important to know. It had to be handed down generation to generation, probably beginning with Seth if not Adam***

himself. This is all summarized well (with some speculation, perhaps, of that I am not sure) by Ethelbert Bullinger in his "The Witness of the Stars" where he carefully outlines the 36 signs, Twelve groupings of three each, each tied back to ancient writings and/or the Bible. So the stars had there names and the had significant meaning but the explanations that made them signs has so critical as Bullinger explained them here:

Quotation:

"The First Book.
THE REDEEMER.
(His First Coming.)
"The Sufferings of Christ."

CHAPTER I.

The Prophecy of the Promised Seed of the Woman.

VIRGO (The Virgin. A woman bearing a branch in her right hand and an ear of corn in her left). The Promised Seed of the woman.

§ 1. Coma (The Desired. The woman and child). The Desired of all nations.

§ 2. Centaurus (The Centaur with two natures, holding a spear piercing a victim). The despised sin offering.

§ 3. Boötes (a man walking bearing a branch called Arcturus, meaning the same). He cometh.

CHAPTER II.

The Redeemer's Atoning Work.

LIBRA (The Scales). The price deficient balanced by the price which covers.

§ 1. CRUX, The Cross endured.

§ 2. LUPUS, or VICTIMA, The Victim slain.

§ 3. CORONA, The Crown bestowed.

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CHAPTER III.

The Redeemer's Conflict.

SCORPIO (The Scorpion) seeking to wound, but itself trodden under foot.

§ 1. Serpens (The Serpent struggling with the man).

§ 2. O-phi-u-chus (The man grasping the serpent). The struggle with the enemy.

§ 3. Hercules (The mighty man. A man kneeling on one knee, humbled in the conflict, but holding aloft the tokens of victory, with his foot on the head of the Dragon). The mighty Vanquisher seeming to sink in the conflict.

CHAPTER IV.

The Redeemer's Triumph.

SAGITTARIUS (The Archer). The Two-natured Conqueror going forth "Conquering and to conquer."

§ 1. Lyra (The Harp). Praise prepared for the Conqueror.

§ 2. Ara (The Altar). Consuming fire prepared for His enemies.

§ 3. Draco (The Dragon). The Old Serpent—the Devil, cast down from heaven.

The Second Book.

THE REDEEMED.

The Result of the Redeemer's Sufferings.

CHAPTER I.

Their Blessings Procured.

CAPRICORNUS (The fish-goat). The goat of Atonement slain for the Redeemed.

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§ 1. Sagitta (The Arrow). The arrow of God sent forth.

§ 2. Aquila (The Eagle). The smitten One falling.

§ 3. Delphinus (The Dolphin). The dead One rising again.

CHAPTER II.

Their Blessings Ensured.

AQUARIUS (The Water-Bearer): The living waters of blessing poured forth for the Redeemed.

§ 1. Piscis Australis (The Southern Fish). The blessings bestowed.

§ 2. Pegasus (The Winged Horse). The blessings quickly coming.

§ 3. Cygnus (The Swan). The Blesser surely returning.

CHAPTER III.

Their Blessings in Abeyance.

PISCES (The Fishes). The Redeemed blessed though bound.

§ 1. The Band—bound, but binding their great enemy Cetus, the sea monster.

§ 2. Andromeda (The Chained Woman). The Redeemed in their bondage and affliction.

§ 3. Cepheus (The King). Their Redeemer coming to rule.

CHAPTER IV.

Their Blessings Consummated and Enjoyed.

ARIES (The Ram or Lamb). The Lamb that was slain, prepared for the victory.

§ 1. Cassiopeia (The Enthroned Woman). The captive delivered, and preparing for her husband, the Redeemer.

§ 2. Cetus (The Sea Monster). The great enemy bound.

§ 3. Perseus (The Breaker). Delivering His redeemed.

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The Third Book.

THE REDEEMER.

(His Second Coming.)

“The glory that should follow.”

CHAPTER I.

Messiah, the coming Judge of all the Earth.

TAURUS (The Bull). Messiah coming to rule.

§ 1. Orion, Light breaking forth in the person of the Redeemer.

§ 2. Eridanus (The River of the Judge). Wrath breaking forth for His enemies.

§ 3. Auriga (The Shepherd). Safety for the Redeemed in the day of that wrath.

CHAPTER II.

Messiah's Reign as Prince of Peace.

GEMINI (The Twins). The twofold nature of the King.

§ 1. Lepus (The Hare), or THE ENEMY trodden under foot.

§ 2. Canis Major (The Dog), or Sirius, the coming glorious Prince of Princes.

§ 3. Canis Minor (The Second Dog), or Procyon, the exalted Redeemer.

CHAPTER III.

Messiah's Redeemed Possessions.

CANCER (The Crab). The possessions held fast.

§ 1. Ursa Minor (The Lesser Bear). The lesser sheepfold.

§ 2. Ursa Major (The Great Bear). The fold and the flock.

§ 3. Argo (The Ship). The redeemed pilgrims safe at home.

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CHAPTER IV.

Messiah's Consummated Triumph.

LEO (The Lion). The Lion of the Tribe of Judah aroused for the rending of the Enemy.

§ 1. Hydra (The Serpent). That old Serpent—the Devil, destroyed.

§ 2. Crater (The Cup). The cup of Divine wrath poured out upon him.

§ 3. Corvus (The Crow, or Raven). Birds of prey devouring him.”

- ***That Witness in the Heavens Continued (With Limitations)***
 - ***Though so much was lost as the meaning behind them was passed down from generation to generation and perverted by the enemy,***

some remained and Paul reminded all of that. But what had God said at the beginning? Paul on his missionary journey to Gentile cities explains it in compelling fashion.

- ***So the change is clear. Faith in Christ risen is now the only basis for salvation. The gospel written in the heavens pointed forward to that coming Seed, the Redeemer, who would provide what was needed for saving faith to stand upon, and in whom alone could there be true redemption. Amen.***
- ***But it was not always so. Not all had been revealed until Paul and though much had, whether through the Witness in the Stars or through the special revelation given through Seth, or Noah, or Abraham or Moses or others, the dispensational plan of God changed with Paul as he gave witness there on Mars Hill so long ago.***

II. What is the Apostle Paul's Purpose in Referring to the Signs?

- ***The revelation in Romans 1: The righteousness of God was revealed from heaven...***
- ***The reference in Romans 10 made it more clear what this heavenly witness was just as Psalms 19 had. For in some fashion the heavens with their speech still conveyed knowledge and continued speaking in some degree ...***
- ***Paul's preaching in Acts 13, 14 & 17 makes that clear:***

[READ] Acts 13:38-43, 48 [Just after preaching the resurrection, Paul continues...]

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

...

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

- *Many were saved. Some Jews and proselytes were exhorted to continue in grace (continue hearing so that they might believe) but it was the Gentiles that gladly received the teaching and were saved. I wonder if it was because they had at least to some degree received the witness in the heavens while the Jews had not. Perhaps.*
- *Much can be learned by Paul's example of preaching here and leaving when it was time to depart. For the Lord had a great work ahead for him with others who "had been ordained to eternal life and the faith that secures that. Amen. And then in chapter 14 where we looked last time where Paul's preaching of the gospel was interrupted with his stoning, but afterward he returns to this city and region and further ministers God's grace with much fruit. The foundation had been laid by his earlier preaching that relied on and prepared their hearts using the signs and their teaching.*

[READ] Acts 14:14-19

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

19 And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

[READ] Acts 17:16-23

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

Acts 17:24-29

24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

- *Paul refers here to the signs established from the beginning. He knows that some of what had been revealed in the heavens was still known but much surely had been lost. But he begins this preaching with a reference to it by quoting from Greek poets and philosophers here (and elsewhere in his letters as well). They, of course,*
- *The poet who wrote those words was Aratus who was from Tarsus in Cilicia, interestingly, where Paul would surely have known of him from his youth and his training in the schools of his day. But their*

“knowledge” of God and the creation and his plan of redemption although it had been largely lost through time and the enemy’s lies, some still remained. And the Greek mythology had its roots in distant ancient times for its ultimate origin was the witness of the stars.

- ***And so the message of Almighty God had been revealed as scripture has said. There are other references as well perhaps that we should take note of, like the Tower of Babel, perhaps not an idolatrous building at all with a height reaching “unto the heavens” as some translations seem to indicate, but rather a top intended for astronomical observation with a map of the heavens and the messages also recorded there from the distant past, that message which was itself also revealed from heaven, in addition to the names of the stars and was passed down generation to generation.***

The issue with it therefore from the Lord’s point of view was the intention of the builders to unify all peoples of the earth, which, was also it seems the purpose for the building of the great cathedrals.

- ***Another example was perhaps the pyramids of Egypt and the Sphinx itself, which at its beginning has a head of a woman (the Virgo sign), and after that the body of a lion (the Leo sign), showing where in the heavenly revelation the beginning was and the end was, as the Lord God saw it. For without that information there would be no way to know the beginning and the end which of course had much significance prophetically. For it would be the Seed of the Woman which would finally destroy the satanic destruction or what the Lord God had made and in this is veiled the eternal message of deliverance from the curses of this world (and as we know it from Paul’s revelation), from sin and eternal separation from God.***
- ***But there is yet another example too in Egypt (or was when in the first century of this dispensation), a temple built also in Egypt by the Egyptian king married to Cleopatra. This is referenced prophetically by Isaiah in chapter 19:18-21 where a temple unto the Lord God was to be built in this Gentile land as a witness of Almighty God and his work yet future among all nations of this world. There is an additional related reference to that possibly as well in Jeremiah 43:8ff. This is a most compelling witness by God even among Gentile lands of the revelation in the heavens and even there in Isaiah that temple is called a “sign” which is most interesting.***

- *And so indeed, God had left no one with any excuse, as Paul explained at Mars Hill and elsewhere and has written in Romans 1. Praise God:*

[READ] Acts 17:30-33

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*.

33 So Paul departed from among them.

- *This was the new “sign”, now revealed — the resurrection of Christ — which he is explaining to them!! Revealing the meaning of the sign will require more though. And, at this point, the apostle stopped speaking and left Mars Hill. But some “mocked” but others said they wanted to hear more. But it was not the philosophers and the rulers of Athens that Paul was most interested in, it seems, for he did leave them behind, just as he taught we should in Romans 16:17.*

The next verse tells the rest of the story:

Acts 17:34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

- *So although the witness of the stars of heaven and the signs of the seasons, new moons, etc. only continued in a more limited way, nevertheless all were without excuse. And now a new sign has been given — and that was Christ resurrected from the dead!*

But would the Jews receive it? Christ had foretold this, you will recall, and made reference to the sign of the prophet Jonah. And what was that sign? It was all about Jonah being swallowed by a great fish and then after three days he had been brought back to life having clearly died in the belly of the fish. Take note though that the sign was not the miracle of Jonah’s “resurrection”. It was rather how the Lord was going to use that miracle in Israel’s history. That

required a special revelation by the Lord himself as we find in the gospel accounts, for example in Matthew 12:

[READ] Matthew 12:38-41

38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

- ***And here we see also Nineveh listed. Very interesting and worthy of additional comments.***
- ***But, as Paul says in verse 31 of Acts 17 with the words "... but now commands all men everywhere to repent ... because he hath appointed a day ..." the signs were not enough for saving faith to grasp on to anymore. Something else was required for that as a dispensational change had occurred. As in the Acts 14 account, his preaching there was interrupted before he reached that additional item. But after his stoning he was surrounded by those, like Dionysius and Damaris here, who "continued with Paul 'in the grace of God'" (Acts 13:43).***

III. Are the Signs Still Speaking?

- ***The dispensational outline is seen here in the Romans, isn't it? Not that most of those signs still remain, of course, but some do, at least. But which are they that remain? Well the one is clear: It is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus C, that the enemy has not erased forever from the original shared knowledge of mankind? That of Christ risen, of course, as Acts 17:31 proclaims. That should convince all of coming judgment and none are without excuse, Paul writes. How wonderful the rest of the saving message is though, that Christ died for our sins, we buried, and is now risen again, and all who believe on him will be blessed eternally together with him. And that we shall always possess his righteousness, for he has been "raised again for our justification". Amen and amen.***

Summary & Application:

