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## The Transcendent "Sign"

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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*"What sign shewest thou...? Jesus answered... Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:13-22).*

In our book, [\*Discipleship in the School of Christ\*](#), we have pointed out two things as to the Gospel by John. One: that his peculiar name for miracles is "Signs", indicating that John was particularly concerned with what the "mighty works" signified in each case, rather than with the works themselves as demonstrations of power. Two: that from what John calls volumes of such works (21:25), he chose seven for his purpose in writing the Gospel.

In referring to the seven we were concerned with what Jesus actually did during His earthly ministry. We therefore did not refer to the greatest "Sign" of all, because it lay beyond the pre-crucifixion time. It is that to which we now turn - the Sign of the Resurrection Body.

To recognize the full force of the fragment quoted above it is necessary to read the whole section, verses 13-22 of chapter two. Jesus went up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. He found commercialism and merchandise in the temple, and cast it all out, calling the temple "My Father's House" ... "His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house shall eat me up. The Jews therefore" (note the "therefore") "answered and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" (note "*these things*").

So, unmistakably, the setting is the temple in Jerusalem. It is therefore only natural that the blind Jews should interpret His words as a reference to the material temple (verse 20). John comments: "But he spake of the temple of his body", and then carries the whole matter over to His bodily resurrection.

Once more, as in every "Sign", John shows that Jesus related everything to Himself. Again and again Jesus postulates the great transition from the material, the temporal, the historical, the traditional, etc., to Himself. John 4:21-24 is a classic example.

Here, then, Jesus dismisses the temple in Jerusalem, with all its history, its tradition, its ritual, its priesthood, its material glory, and, so dismissing it, puts Himself in its place for ever. What an immense "Significance" is embodied in this change! His body was destroyed by men, religious men, representing the destruction of that earthly temple, in which destroying of His body the doom of the earthly was sealed, and the historic system shattered and scattered. In its place a resurrection body, Christ risen, becomes the Temple for evermore. All that was typified by the temple in Jerusalem is taken up in the risen Person - Jesus Christ; a spiritual House of God; a spiritual "My Father's House".

What that significance is will be our occupation in these pages for some time to come, if God wills. We can, at once, be introduced to this new Temple in a fresh recognition of the profound and comprehensive significance of the favourite phrase of the Apostle Paul, and see what he saw when he used it some two hundred times: "In Christ". To be "In Christ" is to be where God is, where we meet God; where God speaks; where all that is true of God is to be found; to be a worshipping and adoring people; to be where heaven and earth meet; to find the seat of mercy and the throne of grace, and infinitely more.

This is the greater, more glorious, and more abiding Temple than that which Solomon built. If all that beheld the temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel, and Herod wondered and praised; if David so loved and longed for "Thy House, O God", and made it the crowning glory of his life; all that and more is transferred to, and is the true glory of, Him who said: "Destroy this temple (sanctuary), and in three days I will raise it up." The glory of Heaven filled that Temple when He was raised and exalted, and "Pentecost" had that as its supreme explanation.

No wonder that one of John's great words is "Glory"! (It occurs twenty-two times in his Gospel.) ... "We beheld his glory." Not only did "the Word become flesh", but "It *tabernacled* among us" (1:14), a transition from the tabernacle in the wilderness as the repository of the Law, or Word, of God, to Himself - God's Son.

In this preliminary word we are faced with the tremendous, challenging, and revolutionary fact that, since Jesus was raised from the dead, the Temple, the House of the Father, and all that it *signifies* is not a place, an earthly location, a ritual, etc., but a Person, and where He is and believers are *in Him*, *there* is the House of God; be it dungeon, garret, simple home, cave or "Wheresoever", that is "Bethel", the House of God.