

Place & Importance of John's Gospel

*MUST Precede, NOT Follow, the Three Synoptic Gospels
The Genesis of the New Testament*

“In the beginning God created the heaven [‘the heavens’] and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

The New Testament begins and continues *EXACTLY* like the Old Testament began and continued, *after the SAME structure and with the SAME subject matter*. And attention can be called to at least two main problems which prevent individuals from seeing and understanding the two Testaments in this manner.

Briefly stated, these two problems are:

1) The place which John's gospel presently occupies in the order of the four gospels.

John's gospel has been placed *FOLLOWING* the three synoptics. John's gospel though *should PRECEDE* the three synoptics, *NOT ONLY* introducing the three synoptics *BUT* the New Testament as a whole.

2) *NOT* seeing and understanding that the subject matter, beginning the gospel accounts and continuing throughout the New Testament has been recorded in parallel fashion to that previously seen beginning and continuing in the Old Testament.

Properly seeing and understanding this parallel subject matter correctly can be accomplished *ONLY if John's gospel occupies its proper place in relation to the three synoptics.*

(The first part of this article [pp. 2b-12a] will deal with the two preceding problems, under separate headings, *which will necessitate continual reference to the O.T., particularly to Moses.*

Then, the remainder of this article [pp. 12b-20] will deal with the central message in the four gospels, introducing Acts and the epistles, *also necessitating continual reference to the O.T., particularly to Moses.*)

Place Which John's Gospel Occupies

As previously stated, John's gospel is out of place in the arrangement of the New Testament books, *which doesn't help matters at all when picturing and understanding the gospels TOGETHER, as a UNIT.* John should — actually, *John MUST* — *BEGIN* the New Testament, placed at the beginning of the four gospels, *NOT* placed at the end.

John's gospel parallels Genesis. Both books begin and continue after the same fashion.

Both begin *EXACTLY* the same way, "In the beginning..."; both then continue with a septenary structure set forth in the opening two chapters (cf. Gen. 1:1-2:3; John 1:29, 35, 43, 2:1); and both deal with *EXACTLY* the same subject matter throughout — "Genesis" from the standpoint of *types*, and "John" from the standpoint of *signs*, with that foreshadowed by both *ending at EXACTLY the same place, the seventh day, the Messianic Era.*

John's gospel, in the preceding respect, is *the ONLY one* of the four gospels which begins in the correct place in relation to the unchangeable foundation established in the opening thirty-four verses of Genesis.

And, *IF* John's gospel is *NOT* placed at the beginning, introducing the gospels and New Testament as a whole (much like Genesis introducing Exodus through Joshua and the Old Testament as a whole), *THEN* the New Testament *CANNOT* possibly be seen beginning and continuing in a completely correct manner, paralleling the Old Testament, continuing the same subject matter.

BUT, note something about this parallel, something inherent within the septenary structure, something completely indispensable.

And this, as the preceding, is *NOT* seen in the synoptics at all. It is seen *ONLY* in *John's* gospel.

John *BEGINS* with that foreshadowed by events occurring on day one in the first chapter of Genesis (having to do with *the FIRST* thing that God does when restoring a ruined creation [vv. 2b-5]).

THEN, John moves on to that foreshadowed by events on days two through six (having to do with God's continued work in the restoration of a ruined creation), with a view to the seventh day (carrying matters to completion, showing that which follows His complete work of restoring a ruined creation [vv. 6-25]).

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to Chapter I, "Genesis and John," in the author's book, *Moses and John*.)

The three synoptics though are quite different. The synoptics pick up *BEYOND* that foreshadowed by events on day one, *BEGINNING* with that foreshadowed by events on days two through six, with a view to the seventh day.

And an individual simply *CANNOT* begin at the point seen in the synoptics. He *MUST* begin with events foreshadowed by God's work on day one, *NOT* with God's subsequent work foreshadowed by events on day two or beyond.

THIS is the central reason WHY John's gospel MUST occupy its proper place in relation to the synoptics and the New Testament as a whole.

IF John's gospel DOESN'T occupy its proper place in the New Testament, the way that the New Testament begins (with one of the synoptics) would be out of line with the unchangeable foundational base set forth beginning Genesis, leaving it out of line with NOT ONLY Genesis BUT the Old Testament as a whole (dealt with in the next section, pp. 7b-12a).

In other words, *IF the Gospel of John is NOT recognized as the introductory gospel, introducing the other three gospels and the New Testament as a whole, there would be NO foundational base for ALL which follows.*

And without this base, the beginning and continuing structure of the New Testament *would be completely out of line with the beginning and continuing structure previously seen in the Old Testament.*

In the preceding respect, with the Gospel of John following the three synoptic gospels *in almost ANY printed edition of Scripture*, and, consequently, *almost NEVER* seen in its correct light in relation to the Old Testament, the other gospels, and the New Testament as a whole, *is it any wonder that conditions have become as they presently exist in Christendom today?*

(John is the Genesis of the N.T. as Genesis is the John of the O.T.)

John's gospel, the one non-synoptic gospel, is different from the other three gospels in numerous ways, and individuals down through the years, *NOT understanding this gospel, have NOT known what to do with it in relation to the other three.*

In past years, New Testaments have been printed at various times with John's gospel different places among the other three gospels, even first, where it belongs. But, somehow, the gospel has ended up where it is today — following the other three rather than preceding them.

This would be somewhat equivalent to placing Genesis somewhere *other than at the beginning*, with Exodus beginning the O.T.

This, of course, *WASN'T DONE* in the arrangement of the O.T. books, but something very similar *HAS BEEN DONE* in the arrangement of the N.T. books.)

Along with the preceding, moving John to its rightful place at the beginning of the New Testament would allow Acts to follow Luke's gospel. Luke began Acts *EXACTLY* where he left off when finishing his gospel account, and none of the other three gospels provides this same smooth continuance into Acts, though Mark would be similar.

As well, with this proper transition from Luke into Acts, and seeing Acts as somewhat of a fifth gospel (which, in actuality, it is), the New Testament, as the Old Testament, would begin with a Pentateuch, covering the complete account of both the offer and the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel before moving into the epistles.

Then there is another central thing about placing John first, preceding the other three gospels.

Placing John's gospel *first*, with its statement regarding *THE PURPOSE* for "signs" (20:30, 31) would set the stage for the appearance of "signs" in the three subsequent gospels, along with Acts, *allowing THE PURPOSE for the manifestation of signs throughout all five books to be properly understood.*

(*NOT* having John's gospel occupying its proper place among the other three gospels and *NOT* recognizing the proper place that signs occupy in all four gospels, continuing into Acts, would undoubtedly account, in no small part, for a current widespread, erroneous teaching concerning John's gospel and the synoptics.

Though that taught often takes different forms, some uniformity exists.

It is often taught that the synoptics have to do with the offer of the kingdom to Israel, but John's gospel is seen separate from this offer.

John's gospel, on the basis of the statement in 20:30, 31 [revealing the purpose for the eight recorded "signs" in this gospel] is said to be the one N.T. book written to tell an unsaved person how to be saved.

And with the Jewish people seen as mainly unsaved at the time these signs were being performed, *John's gospel would relate the signs first to the Jewish people, then to unsaved man today, with these signs having to do with a salvation message for both groups [a message pertaining to eternal salvation, NOT salvation in relation to the kingdom, as seen in the synoptics].*)

In the light of this whole scenario, had John's gospel been placed first by those arranging the N.T. books, a number of presently existing problems, such as the preceding, may very well have never existed in the first place.

BUT, this would necessitate individuals *correctly understanding particularly two things*:

- 1) *The stated purpose for "signs" in John 20:30, 31.*
- 2) *The saved status of the Jewish people to whom Christ came (ref. the author's article, "Salvation — Old and New Testaments" and "Salvation Message in the Gospels").*

But, with John's gospel in the wrong place, coupled with the way Christians think today — seeing only saved or unsaved, heaven or hell issues throughout practically all Scripture, particularly in John's gospel — all of the preceding has been thrown to the winds.

John 20:30, 31 has been made to reference something other than what is plainly stated (resulting in a misunderstanding of the purpose for "signs"); the Jewish people are seen mainly as unsaved at the time Christ came the first time (resulting in the gospel of John being seen as a book

written to tell the unsaved how they can be saved); and the expressions, “the kingdom of the heavens” and “the kingdom of God” in the gospels, have often been made to be synonymous with *heaven* — e.g., “entering the kingdom” seen as synonymous with *going to heaven*.

In short, a book that has been designed to properly introduce the other three gospels and the New Testament as a whole, dealing with the kingdom that had previously been introduced in the opening verses of Genesis, *has been misplaced and misinterpreted, with its PURPOSE, and, as a result, that of the New Testament as a whole, ALL but DESTROYED.*

And, for the most part, this has been done, NOT by its enemies, BUT by its friends.

The Subject Matter, Beginning with John's Gospel

With John seen as the Genesis of the New Testament, note the parallel subject matter beginning and continuing in both Genesis and John, something which, as previously stated, *would NOT be true at all in ANY one of the three synoptic gospels.*

John *NOT ONLY* begins the same way Genesis begins (“In the beginning...” and opening with a septenary structure) *BUT* John continues *the SAME way* Genesis continues (with events foreshadowed by those occurring on day one in Genesis, then with events foreshadowed by those on days two through six, with a view to those of the seventh day.

The framework of the preceding is set forth in the opening septenary structure of John, *EXACTLY as it had previously been set forth in the opening septenary structure of Genesis* (cf. Gen. 1:1-2:3; John 1:1-2:11).

ALL things beginning both books are the SAME — the restoration of a ruined kingdom, with man created to rule this kingdom; the restoration of ruined man, with a kingdom in view.

ALL is the SAME!

(Again, the foundational base upon which *ALL* subsequent Scripture *MUST* rest was established at the outset in Genesis, beginning the O.T. And John's gospel is *the ONLY one* of the gospels which allows this to be properly seen, beginning the N.T.

In this respect, *IF* John's gospel is *NOT* allowed to begin the N.T., and the subject matter of this gospel is *NOT* understood correctly, *THEN* the N.T. *can ONLY* be seen beginning and continuing in a manner completely out of line with the O.T. foundation[s].

And for the repercussions of this in Christianity today, one need only look around.)

Genesis, beyond two succinct statements concerning God's creation of the heavens and the earth, with the earth subsequently becoming in a ruined state (1:1, 2a), continues by revealing God's initial work restoring the ruined creation — the Spirit moves, God speaks, light comes into existence... (1:2b-5).

Genesis, at the outset, reveals *God's initial and continuing work of restoration* — *restoring a ruined creation, with a GOAL in view*.

And John's gospel, paralleling Genesis, *does EXACTLY the same thing, beginning at EXACTLY the same place*.

In Genesis, the restoration has to do *with the material creation*; in John, the restoration has to do *with ruined man*.

Genesis references light shining out of darkness, as does John (Gen. 1:2-5; John 1:4-9; cf. II Cor. 4:6). Genesis then goes on to explain this in relation to that foreshadowed by God's work on day one (Gen. 3, 4); and John does *EXACTLY* the same thing (1:29, 36).

In Genesis, reference is made to God slaying one or more animals (ch. 3) and to Cain slaying Abel (ch. 4). Death and shed blood are introduced in association with God's initial work when restoring a ruined creation.

In John, *the SAME thing is seen*. Note John the Baptist's statement pertaining to Jesus on two separate occasions in the opening chapter:

“...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

And looking [Gk., *emblepo*, ‘intently looking’] upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:29b, 36).

(Actually, *EXACTLY* as death and shed blood are seen in connection with the restoration of the ruined creation in John chapter one [ruined man] it is also [it has to be] seen in connection with the restoration of the ruined creation in Genesis chapter one [the ruined material creation].

In this respect, death and shed blood are *FIRST* seen at this opening part of Scripture [ch. 1], *NOT* at the first mention of what could only have been death and shed blood in chapter three [God clothing Adam and Eve with animal skins, portending a previous death, with shed blood].

For information on the preceding, refer to “Without Shedding of Blood (II)” in the author's article, “Salvation — O.T., N.T.”)

Then, once the matter has been dealt with in both books (Genesis and John), in line with events foreshadowed by those on day one of Gen. 1, matters in both books move *FROM* events foreshadowed by those on day one *TO* events foreshadowed by those occurring on subsequent days, with a view to events foreshadowed by the seventh day.

This complete sequence is *NOT seen at all in ANY one of the three synoptics*. The septenary structure is seen places in the body of the synoptics (e.g., Matt. 16:28-17:5; 27:63), but the synoptics are *NEITHER introduced by an “In the beginning” statement NOR a septenary structure*.

NOR, as previously stated, are ANY of the three synoptics introduced by events which were foreshadowed by those occurring on day one in Genesis.

ALL three synoptics begin at a point BEYOND that foreshadowed by events on day one. ALL begin and continue with that foreshadowed by God's work on days two and beyond — NOT on day one — with a view to the seventh day.

Salvation (the restoration of the ruined creation) in the synoptics begins with the deliverance of a saved people in relation to the proffered kingdom. *ALL three BEGIN with that foreshadowed by events on day one in Genesis as having ALREADY occurred. And matters move from THAT point, on THAT basis.*

Thus, John's gospel stands ALONE with respect to paralleling Genesis in ALL respects. ONLY by beginning with John's gospel, among the four gospels, can you begin in a proper manner — *"In the beginning" [same as Genesis], a septenary structure [drawing from the foundation opening Genesis], and salvation by grace [seen in the opening four chapters of Genesis].*

THEN, John's gospel — ONCE the matter surrounding that foreshadowed by events occurring on day one in Gen. 1 has been dealt with — moves beyond these events and begins dealing with EXACTLY the same message seen at the beginning of and throughout the synoptics, introducing the synoptics and the New Testament as a whole.

And, understanding the place and structure of John's gospel in this respect, *a passage such as John 3:16 can readily be seen in a correct respect.*

Attention in this verse is called to God's "only begotten Son," a direct reference to NOT ONLY Christ's Sonship BUT to His Firstborn status (note "Son of man," a Messianic title, vv. 13, 14, introducing v. 16 [cf. Ps. 8:3-9; Dan. 7:13, 14; Matt. 16:13-17]).

John 3:16, contextually dealing with the same thing as John 1:29, 36, does so *in a REGAL setting* (vv. 14, 15); and *the PURPOSE for that salvation is seen in relation to the kingdom being proclaimed* (vv. 2-5) — moving beyond that foreshadowed by events occurring on day one in Gen. 1, to events foreshadowed by those of the subsequent five days, with that foreshadowed by events of the seventh day in view.

ONLY in a secondary interpretative respect can John 3:16 refer to eternal verities and the ages beyond the Messianic Era.

(John 3:16 forms a concluding part of Christ's discourse to Nicodemus, where the subject matter begins through referencing *the coming kingdom*, responding to Nicodemus' question about *the signs being manifested* (vv. 2-5).

"Signs" in Scripture ALWAYS have to do with two inseparable things: ISRAEL, and the KINGDOM. BOTH MUST be present for signs to exist [i.e., God MUST be dealing with ISRAEL in relation to the KINGDOM].

And this overall subject beginning the discourse — SIGNS, the proffered KINGDOM (vv. 2-5) — continues throughout [vv. 6-21], which would include vv. 14-16.

[For information on John 3:16 (set within context) and on signs in Scripture, refer to the author's article, "Jesus' Conversation with Nicodemus"].

Then, referencing *God's firstborn Son* in John 3:16, note the opening, introductory verses in the Book of Hebrews.

These verses form the manner in which the Spirit of God arranged seven Messianic quotations [vv. 5-13], introducing *the subject matter in the book*.

The Holy Spirit, when He moved the author of this book to pen the recorded words, arranged these seven Messianic quotations from the O.T. in such a manner that *Christ's Sonship and His Firstborn status as God's Son* [vv. 5, 6] would be brought to the forefront at the beginning, *forming the foundational basis for ALL which follows*.

Salvation is to be effected through God's "only begotten Son," His firstborn Son, with a view, first and foremost, to the kingdom.

Understanding John 3:16 ANY other way would be out of line with NOT ONLY the context BUT with the central message of the book and Scripture as a whole, both Testaments.

[The preceding is the primary, contextual interpretation of John 3:16. The verse is almost always used in a respect which *does NOT recognize this regal setting of the verse at all, used simply as a verse relative to eternal salvation to reach the unsaved.*

There is *NOTHING* wrong with using this verse and other similar verses in John's gospel in this respect, for Jesus is the Saviour, regardless of whether salvation in relation to the kingdom or in relation to eternal life is being dealt with.

BUT, a MAJOR problem arises when the contextual use of these verses is completely ignored and the verses end up being used as simply salvation verses for the unsaved ALONE.

Using the verses *ONLY* in this manner, *the contextual, central reason for one's salvation is NOT seen at all.* And, invariably, the subject matter surrounding salvation becomes heaven-hell issues, *with the true textual issue all but lost.*

Scripture *MUST* be dealt with both textually (*EXACT* wording of the text) and contextually — something almost *NEVER* done when dealing with John's gospel.

And, as a result, Christendom has paid a steep price when it comes to correct Biblical interpretation, *NOT ONLY* in John's gospel *BUT* elsewhere as well[.]

Central Message in the Four Gospels

Since the opening of the New Testament parallels the opening of the Old Testament — in both form and subject matter (as previously seen, evident through comparing Gen-

esis and John) — properly understanding the New Testament becomes relatively simple, *for the form and subject matter have ALREADY been established and revealed in the Old Testament.*

God, through Moses, originally established and revealed His plans and purposes, introducing the Old Testament;

THEN, 1,500 years later, God, through John, set forth these *SAME* plans and purposes, introducing the New Testament.

BEGIN where God *BEGAN*, understand how God *BEGAN* and continued in the Old Testament, *THEN* you can understand how God, through His Spirit, *BEGAN* and continued in the New Testament.

And with the preceding in mind, for purposes at hand — to illustrate parallel and continuing subject matter in both Testaments in order to show the subject matter in the synoptics — *let's begin in the gospels, THEN go back to Genesis in order to show, beyond any possible question, the EXACT subject matter being introduced.*

And, building on a properly established base, *this SAME subject matter, beginning in Moses and continuing in John, can easily be shown to carry through the synoptics into Acts, the epistles, then into Revelation.*

In the gospels, John the Baptist appears as the forerunner of Christ. And his message to Israel can be seen in Matt. 3:1ff:

“Repent ye [a plural pronoun, *ALL Israel*]; for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand...”

This was a call for national repentance on the part of the Jewish people, with a view to a proffered kingdom, “the kingdom of the heavens.”

This was the message which Jesus continued following John's imprisonment (Matt. 4:17ff), the message which He commissioned twelve disciples to proclaim (Matt. 10:1ff), and the message which He later commissioned seventy additional disciples to proclaim (Luke 10:1ff).

("The kingdom of heaven" [KJV, *et al.*] appears thirty-two times in Matthew's gospel, and it is peculiar to this gospel, with the possible exception of John 3:5 [some Greek manuscripts have "the kingdom of the heavens" instead of "the kingdom of God" in this verse (Aleph, *et al.*)]).

In the Greek text, "heaven" is always plural and articulated. Thus, the expression should be correctly translated, "the kingdom of the heavens."

"The kingdom of God" appears in all four gospels, Acts, and the epistles. And, though this expression could cover a larger scope than the kingdom of the heavens [*i.e.*, cover God's entire universal kingdom (Ps. 103:19-22)], it is *NOT* used this way in the N.T.

Rather, "the kingdom of God" is used in a more limited respect, covering the same scope as "the kingdom of the heavens" [*cf.* Matt. 19:23, 24 (also Matt. 3:2; 21:43), where both expressions are used in this respect]. "The kingdom of the heavens" [or "the kingdom of God," as used in the gospels, Acts and epistles] has to do with a segment of God's universal kingdom — *with this earth and its government, NOT with any part or segment of God's kingdom beyond this earth.*)

1) Exactly What Kingdom?

BUT, EXACTLY WHAT kingdom was John the Baptist referencing when he appeared with the message, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand..."?

And, following John, *this SAME message was proclaimed to Israel for over three years* by Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy, *permeating the entirety of ALL things seen throughout the gospel accounts.*

Aside from identifying the kingdom through referencing the name of the kingdom itself — "the kingdom of the heavens" — the answer to the question is actually quite easy to ascertain, clearly revealing the identity of the kingdom in the process:

WHAT kingdom was in view beginning the Old Testament, referenced as “the earth,” which had been created, then reduced to a ruin (Gen. 1:1, 2a)?

WHAT kingdom was in view in that part of the septenary structure having to do with the restoration of the ruined kingdom (Gen. 1:2b-19)?

WHAT kingdom was in view when man was created to rule the restored kingdom (Gen. 1:26-28)?

WHAT kingdom was in view when the incumbent ruler (Satan) brought about man’s fall so that man would be disqualified to rule this kingdom?

And, following this down to the gospels, 4,000 years later, *WHAT kingdom* was in view when the second Man, the last Adam, appeared in Satan’s presence for forty days and nights to be tested by the one who had brought about the first man, the first Adam’s fall, showing the incumbent ruler that He, as the second Man, the last Adam, was fully qualified to take the kingdom and rule?

WHAT kingdom was offered to, rejected by, and taken from Israel, with a view to *the one new man* “in Christ” being called into existence to bring forth fruit for this kingdom (Matt. 21:18-43; Acts 2:1ff; I Peter 2:9, 10)?

Then, projecting matters out to a time 2,000 years later, still future today, *WHAT kingdom* will Christ, the second Man, the last Adam, take and rule in Rev. 11:15?

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said,

The kingdom of this world became that of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever” (corrected translation).

Throughout, it is the SAME kingdom seen at the beginning in Genesis, a kingdom seen permeating the whole of Scripture!

But, before going back to the expression, “the kingdom of the heavens” in Matthew’s gospel, note a few things about the kingdom seen at the beginning in Genesis, and then 6,000 years later in the Book of Revelation.

This kingdom, “the kingdom of this world” (this earth, a province in God’s universal kingdom) was/is ruled by Satan and his angels (one-third of his original contingent, which followed him in his attempted coup, preceding Adam’s creation, bringing about the ruin of his kingdom).

And Satan and his angels ruled/rule from a heavenly sphere over the earth, over the province, over the kingdom — a restored kingdom today, though under a curse because of Adam’s sin (*cf.* Gen. 3:17, 18; Eph. 1:10-22; 3:9-11; 6:10-18).

The form of this rule prior to man’s creation is unrevealed and unknown; but since man’s creation and subsequent fall, Satan and his angels have ruled through man upon the earth (though this rule has been confined to *the Gentile nations* since the time of Isa. 43:1 [“now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob”], separating Israel, via creation, from the nations [*cf.* Num. 23:9; Deut. 14:2; Dan. 10:11-21]).

(For information on the preceding, refer to the author’s book, *God’s Firstborn Sons*.)

This present kingdom, “the kingdom of this world,” is the kingdom which God will one day give to His Son:

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110:1-4).

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13, 14).

This is the kingdom which Christ will wrest from Satan’s hands upon His return; and, with the Son *THEN* in control of the kingdom, He, with His co-heirs, will ascend the throne (His *OWN* throne, *NOT* David’s throne on earth) and rule over a restored kingdom, a restored earth.

(Christ will have a dual reign, both from His Own throne in the heavens, with His bride alongside, seated on the throne with Him [Rom. 8:16-19; Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21], and from David’s throne on earth, in the midst of a restored Jewish nation [cf. Joel 2:21-32; Luke 1:31-33].)

Understanding the preceding information about the kingdom and understanding that the Old and New Testaments have been established in a parallel fashion, note the simplicity of unmistakably understanding *EXACTLY* what is meant by the expression, “the kingdom of the heavens.”

All one has to do to see WHAT kingdom was in view in the gospels is go back to the beginning and see WHAT kingdom was in view in Genesis.

And to verify the identity of this kingdom, note again *the kingdom in view WHEN the first man, the first Adam, was created and fell and the kingdom in view WHEN the second Man, the last Adam, was tempted by Satan 4,000 years later.*

And to further reflect on the matter, note again *WHAT kingdom Christ will one day take, when He and His co-heirs reign.*

The message in the gospels, which is carried over into both Acts and the epistles *has to do with a kingdom, introduced in Genesis and realized in the Book of Revelation.*

2) Why Offered to Israel at This Time?

BUT, WHY was this kingdom offered to Israel at Christ's first coming? After all, Israel was *NOT* going to rule in this kingdom.

That is seen in both Testaments (type, antitype, the Prophets [e.g., Gen. 2, 3, 21-25; Num. 14ff; Isa. 2:1-5; Joel 2, 3; Heb. 3, 4; Rev. 2, 3]). Israel is going to rule in the earthly segment of the kingdom, in the kingdom covenanted to David.

The answer, of course, like so many things in Scripture, is quite simple, *IF Scripture is allowed to be its own interpreter. Otherwise, the opposite could ONLY be true.*

In the Old Testament, *Abraham and his seed through Isaac and Jacob were made the repository for both heavenly and earthly promises and blessings* (Gen. 12:1-3; 14:17-20; 21:16-18; 26:3-5; 28:3, 4).

In this respect, at some point in time, the seed of Abraham was to rule in both spheres of the kingdom; and, in the final analysis, this would require, at some point in time, that the sceptre of "the kingdom of this world" be removed from Satan's hand and be placed in Israel's hand.

THAT is what the central message in the four gospels is about.

It is about an offer of *the kingdom of the heavens* — "the kingdom of this world," under Satan's control — to the seed of Abraham, the nation of Israel, *which had been the repository of the kingdom for two millenniums BUT had yet to come into possession of the kingdom, had yet to hold the sceptre.*

Israel, prior to this time — from the days of Moses to the days of the Babylonian captivity, some eight hundred

years — had been in possession of *an earthly theocracy, the kingdom covenanted to David, BUT NOT a heavenly kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens..*

However, because of continued covenantal disobedience, over centuries of time (the Mosaic covenant, containing the rules and regulations governing the people in the theocracy), *matters pertaining to REGALITY* were taken from Israel's hands and given to the Gentiles, with "the times of the Gentiles" then ensuing, lasting until the present time.

But back to the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, beginning with John, then by Christ, the Twelve, and the Seventy...

The time was "at hand," or "had drawn near." The Messianic King Himself was present, with the offer.

BUT, WHAT did Israel do?

The religious leaders of the nation, mainly the Pharisees, with their Scribes (note Matt. 23:1ff) — the largest of the religious sects, controlling the religious life of the people by their very numbers — fought the Messenger and this message at every turn (often joined by the Sadducees). And this ultimately resulted in *NOT ONLY* the nation rejecting the proffered kingdom *BUT* in the crucifixion of the One making the offer, the King Himself.

(Note something often overlooked about Christ's crucifixion. *Matters throughout are REGAL* [the crown of thorns, the caption placed above His head, pilate's statement ("Behold your King"), the chief priests' response ("We have no king but Caesar")].

Israel crucified their King, though in the process they slew the Lamb.)

And because of Israel's rejection, the kingdom (that facet of the kingdom which had been offered), as previously seen, was taken from Israel, and a new entity was called into ex-

istence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected (*the one new man* “in Christ” — Abraham’s seed because of their positional standing, “in Christ,” Who is Abraham’s Seed [Gal. 3:26-29; *cf.* Matt. 21:33-43; I Peter 2:9-11]).

(Refer to the author’s book, *Message in the Gospels, Acts, Epistles*, where the preceding is developed more fully.)

By way of summation:

DON’T begin in the gospels.

Rather, begin in Genesis in order to find out what the gospels are about. *THEN*, and *ONLY THEN*, move on into and study the gospels, beginning with John.

As well, *DON’T separate John’s gospel from the synoptics.*

Correctly understand the statement regarding “signs” in John 20:30, 31; and correctly understand *WHY John’s gospel MUST be placed FIRST, introducing NOT ONLY the three synoptics BUT the New Testament as a whole.*