

The Latter Sign

The Sign God Gave Moses That Revealed His Redemption Plan for Mankind by the Visitation of God Himself in the World

PREFACE

A Sign Hidden in Plain Sight

Among the many signs and wonders granted to Moses at the burning bush, one has received comparatively little attention in the history of Christian exposition — and yet it stands as one of the most astonishing prefigurations of the gospel embedded anywhere in the Old Testament. It is what we call the Latter Sign: the divine command that Moses thrust his hand into his bosom, and the miraculous transformation that followed.

The First Sign — the rod becoming a serpent — has captured the imagination of commentators for millennia. But it is the Second Sign, the Latter Sign, that carries within it the very architecture of the incarnation, the atonement, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This article is an apologetics exposition of that sign: its historical and covenantal context, its typological structure, and its fulfillment in the person and work of the Son of God.

The argument presented here is not one of allegory imposed from outside the text. Rather, it is one of organic typology — a correspondence deliberately embedded by God into history itself, confirmed by apostolic interpretation, and coherent only in the light of Christ. We address this exposition to the mature student of Christian apologetics, one who is already acquainted with the biblical covenants and who wishes to press deeper into the internal coherence of God's revelatory design.

Historical and Covenantal Context of Moses' Signs

The Burning Bush and the Commission of Moses

To understand the Latter Sign, we must first understand its covenantal occasion. In Exodus 3–4, Moses encounters the LORD at Horeb, the mountain of God. The context is one of divine self-disclosure: God identifies Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — invoking covenant continuity across generations. The purpose of the encounter is redemptive: Israel is in bondage in Egypt, and God is moving to fulfill the Abrahamic promise of national deliverance and inheritance of the land.

Moses, confronted with the commission to return to Egypt, raises a pointed objection in Exodus 4:1: 'But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.' The issue is credibility and authentication. The people of Israel need evidence that Moses' message originates with the God of the covenant, not with Moses himself. This is where the signs enter the narrative — not as spectacles of power for their own sake, but as divine credentials authenticating the messenger and the message.

The Three Signs and Their Authenticating Function

God grants Moses three signs in Exodus 4. The rod becomes a serpent and is restored (vv. 2–5). The hand becomes leprous and is healed (vv. 6–7). Water becomes blood (v. 9). Each sign is a sign of judgment and restoration — ruin and recovery, curse and cleansing. They are arranged in an ascending order of severity, and each one is tied to the credibility of the divine word Moses carries.

Crucially, God states in Exodus 3:19–20 that He already knows Pharaoh will not release Israel without compulsion: 'And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no,

not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that he will let you go.' The signs are not designed primarily to persuade Pharaoh — they are designed to authenticate Moses to Israel and to execute divine judgment upon Egypt. This distinction is critical for understanding their typological weight.

Leprosy in the Ancient World and in the Law

The choice of leprosy as the vehicle for the Latter Sign is not arbitrary. In the ancient Near Eastern world, skin diseases classified broadly as 'leprosy' (Hebrew: tzara'at) carried a constellation of meanings: ritual uncleanness, divine judgment, social exclusion, and a kind of living death. The leper was expelled from the community (Leviticus 13–14), cried out 'Unclean!' wherever he walked, and was treated as one already dead to society. Miriam's leprosy in Numbers 12 and Gehazi's in 2 Kings 5 are both presented explicitly as divine judgments.

The condition was thus a visible embodiment of the human condition before God: excluded from the holy presence, bearing the marks of divine displeasure, socially dead. That God would use leprosy — the very emblem of sin-induced estrangement — as the vehicle for His greatest sign is itself profound. And that the healing of leprosy would be precisely the credential Jesus offers in response to John the Baptist's inquiry ('Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see... the lepers are cleansed' — Matthew 11:4–5) is not coincidental. The typological thread runs from Moses at Horeb all the way to the ministry of the Son of God.

PART TWO

Understanding Biblical Typology: Sign, Symbol, and Type

Distinguishing the Three Categories

One of the most important — and most frequently confused — distinctions in biblical hermeneutics is the difference between a sign, a symbol, and a type. For the apologetics student, precision here is not pedantry; it is the difference between sound interpretation and eisegesis.

A symbol is a literary or visual representation that points to a concept or reality, often without historical grounding. The dove may symbolize peace; the lion may symbolize strength. Symbols are arbitrary in the sense that they depend on cultural convention rather than divine appointment embedded in historical events.

A sign in the biblical sense is a divinely ordained event or object that authenticates a divine message or agent. Signs point to the power and purpose of God operating in history. Not all signs are types, but all types begin as signs.

A type, in the technical sense of biblical typology, is a divinely ordained historical person, event, or institution that prefigures — by structural correspondence — a later, greater antitype. The key criteria for a genuine biblical type, as articulated by scholars like Patrick Fairbairn and Geerhardus Vos, include: (1) divine intentionality — the type must be appointed by God, not invented by the interpreter; (2) historical reality — the type must be a real event or person, not merely a literary figure; (3) structural correspondence — the type and antitype must share analogous elements; and (4) escalation — the antitype must be greater than the type.

The Latter Sign as Genuine Typology

By all four criteria, the Latter Sign qualifies as genuine typology rather than mere allegory or symbolic reading.

The sign was divinely appointed. God Himself instituted it as a credential and a revelation — it is not Moses' invention, nor the interpreter's imposition.

The sign was historically real. Exodus 4 presents the leprous hand as an actual miraculous event that Moses performed before the elders of Israel (4:30). It is embedded in the narrative of a historical mission, not in a poetic or apocalyptic vision.

The structural correspondence is remarkable and will be traced in detail below: the bosom from which the hand is drawn corresponds to the Father from whom the Son proceeds; the leprous hand corresponds to the Son bearing the sin and curse of mankind; the restoration of the hand corresponds to the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.

The escalation is absolute: Moses' hand merely became leprous and was restored. The Son of God actually bore the sin of the world, died, and was raised to immortal glory. The antitype infinitely exceeds the type.

Apostolic Warrant for This Typological Reading

The hermeneutical approach taken here is not novel. The New Testament authors themselves read the Old Testament typologically and with christological intention. Paul reads the rock in the wilderness as Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). The author of Hebrews reads the entire Levitical priesthood and tabernacle structure as a shadow of the greater heavenly reality in Christ (Heb. 8:5). Jesus Himself reads Jonah in the belly of the fish as a type of His own death and resurrection (Matt. 12:40).

The particular typological connections identified in the Latter Sign — the bosom of the Father, the incarnate Son bearing human sin, the resurrection — are not the invention of this exposition. They are confirmed by direct New Testament statements, as we shall see. The exposition is not reading into the text; it is reading with the canonical grain.

PART THREE

God Said to Moses: The Sign and the Son of God

The Bosom of the Father

The Latter Sign begins with a divine instruction in Exodus 4:6: 'And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.'

The word translated 'bosom' (Hebrew: cheq or cheyq) refers literally to the chest or the fold of the garment — the intimate interior space closest to the heart. In the ancient world, the bosom was the place of intimacy and union. To rest in someone's bosom was to be in the place of deepest fellowship and love, as the beloved disciple reclined on Jesus' bosom at the Last Supper (John 13:23).

The New Testament deploys this precise imagery to describe the eternal relationship between the Son and the Father in one of the most theologically dense verses in all of Scripture:

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

— John 1:18

The Son's eternal position is described as being 'in the bosom of the Father' — the place of infinite intimacy, perfect union, and mutual indwelling. John's Gospel, saturated as it is with Old Testament imagery, uses this phrase with deliberate theological weight. The Son proceeds from the most intimate interior place of the Father's own being. This is not merely spatial metaphor; it is a declaration of the eternal communion of the divine persons.

When God commands Moses to thrust his hand into his bosom and then draw it out, the typological structure is already established: something proceeds from the intimate interior of the self into the world — and what it encounters outside is the condition of fallen humanity.

The Withholding and the Withdrawal of God's Right Hand

The Psalmist, in Psalm 74:11–12, cries out in a time of national desolation: 'Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom. For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.'

This is a remarkable text. The Psalmist speaks of God's saving arm — His right hand — as being withdrawn into His bosom, withheld from acting. And he pleads for it to be plucked out. The imagery is unmistakably connected to the Exodus sign. God's 'arm' and 'right hand' are standard Old Testament idioms for His saving power manifested in history. The

Psalmist is implicitly asking: when will the greater salvation be enacted? When will the hand that was prefigured in the sign of Moses be revealed to the world?

The answer, the New Testament declares, is in Christ. The arm of the LORD is the Son of God, who proceeded from the eternal bosom of the Father and entered the world for the salvation of mankind.

Union and Glory: The Prayer of John 17

Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 illuminates the typological depth of the Latter Sign from the opposite direction — from the perspective of the antitype looking back at the type. In John 17:3–5, Jesus prays:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

— John 17:3–5

The Son, having proceeded from the Father's eternal bosom into the world, now prays for restoration — to be drawn back, as it were, into the glory He had with the Father before creation. The typological resonance with Moses' hand, drawn out and then restored, is unmistakable in the canonical whole.

Jesus further prays in John 17:21–24 that believers might share in this mutual indwelling: 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us... that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' The eternal union from which the Son proceeded is the same union into which redeemed humanity is invited to participate.

PART FOUR

God Revealed His Arm to the World: The Incarnation and the Atonement

The Leprous Hand and the Servant Who Bears Our Sins

When the hand of Moses emerged from his bosom, it was leprous — white as snow, marked with the very condition that in Israel signified divine curse, ritual uncleanness, and social death. The hand that had been in the intimate place of the Father's bosom came out bearing the marks of human sin.

The christological significance of this is overwhelming when set alongside Isaiah 53, the great Servant Song that describes the suffering of the one through whom God accomplishes redemption:

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness... He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief... Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

— Isaiah 53:1–6

Note the opening question: 'To whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?' Isaiah is asking the same question the Latter Sign answers. The arm of the LORD — God's saving power, His outstretched hand — is revealed in a form no one expected: not in might and splendor, but in the bearing of human sin, grief, and curse. Emerging from the Father's eternal bosom, the Son appeared in the world as one 'leprous' with the iniquity laid upon him.

The Incarnation: God Manifest in the Flesh

The theological logic of the Latter Sign maps perfectly onto the New Testament doctrine of the incarnation. John 1:14 states: 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.' The Word — who in John 1:18 is described as being in the bosom of the Father — entered the world. The hand went into the external domain.

1 Timothy 3:16 summarizes this mystery with breathtaking economy: 'And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.' Paul here traces the same arc as the Latter Sign: God who was hidden (in

the bosom) becomes manifest (in the flesh), and is ultimately received back up into glory — just as Moses' hand was restored.

Galatians 3:13 adds the covenantal dimension with precision: 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.' The leprous hand — the image of divine curse — finds its antitype in the One who became a curse on our behalf. The curse that leprosy signified, Christ bore in reality.

Romans 8:3 makes the mechanism explicit: 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.' God sent His own Son — from the bosom — in the likeness of sinful flesh, bearing what we could not bear for ourselves.

Seen, Heard, and Handled: The Testimony of the Apostles

The Latter Sign's logic — the invisible proceeding into the visible world and being encountered in human flesh — is the very epistemological foundation of apostolic testimony. John opens his first epistle with a declaration that reads almost as a commentary on the sign:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

— 1 John 1:1–3

The eternal life that was with the Father — in the bosom — was manifested. Brought out. Made visible and tangible. The Latter Sign is not merely an interesting Old Testament curio; it is the structural template for the incarnational logic that undergirds all apostolic proclamation.

The Arm Fully Revealed: Isaiah 52 and the Nations

Isaiah 52:10–15 frames this global revelation in terms that directly echo the Latter Sign's language:

The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God... Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

— Isaiah 52:10–15

God has 'made bare His holy arm' — drawn it out from its place of concealment — before all the nations. This arm is marred in form, astonishing in appearance, yet it is through this marred servant that the nations receive sprinkling (atonement) and salvation. The leprous hand, made bare before Israel in the desert, becomes the holy arm made bare before all the nations in the person of Christ.

PART FIVE

The Arm of the Lord is Victorious: Resurrection and Exaltation

The Hand Restored: Exodus 4:7 and the Resurrection

The Latter Sign does not end with leprosy. Exodus 4:7 records the completion of the sign: 'And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.' The leprous hand, drawn back into the intimate interior of Moses' person and brought out again, is restored — identical to his other flesh, perfectly whole.

The typological antitype of this restoration is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Having borne the leprosy of human sin — having died under the curse of God on behalf of mankind — the Son was drawn back, as it were, into the life of God. And He emerged: 'it was turned again as his other flesh.' Not merely resuscitated, but glorified. Not merely alive again, but exalted to the right hand of the Father.

The Victory of God's Right Hand

Psalm 98:1–3 celebrates this victory in terms that resonate with the Latter Sign's imagery:

O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

— Psalm 98:1–3

God's right hand and holy arm have gotten the victory. This is the language of Exodus — the arm stretched out, the wonders done — now applied to the eschatological salvation accomplished in Christ. The right hand that was thrust into the bosom, that emerged leprous with the burden of sin, has now obtained the victory. The sign finds its consummation in the triumph of the risen and ascended Lord.

Stephen's Vision and the Son of Man at the Right Hand

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, provides perhaps the most dramatic New Testament confirmation of the exaltation of the Son. In Acts 7:55–59, as he is being stoned to death, he gazes into heaven:

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him... And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

— Acts 7:55–59

The 'right hand of God' — the place of supreme honor and authority — is precisely where the restored arm of the Latter Sign has come to rest. The hand that went out leprous has been elevated to the highest place. The typological arc is complete: from the bosom (eternal sonship), into the world (incarnation), bearing leprosy (atonement), restored (resurrection), and now at the right hand (exaltation).

The Interrogation Before the High Priest

Matthew 26:63–68 records the moment at which Jesus Himself explicitly claimed the fulfillment of this exaltation before the very religious authorities who condemned Him:

And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him,

Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

— Matthew 26:63–64

The high priest's charge — blasphemy — and the crowd's mockery are the world's response to the leprous hand. But Christ's declaration is definitive: the Son of man shall be seen sitting at the right hand of power. The restoration is not merely personal; it is cosmic and judicial. Every knee shall bow before the One who was 'marred more than any man.'

The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Full Theological Statement

No New Testament text more comprehensively articulates the Latter Sign's typological arc than the opening verses of Hebrews:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

— Hebrews 1:1–3

The Son who is the 'brightness of his glory' — from the bosom of the Father — proceeded into history, purged our sins (bore the leprosy), and then 'sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high' (the restoration). The entire theology of the Latter Sign is contained in three verses.

PART SIX

The Redemptive Goal: Humanity Drawn into the Bosom of the Father

The Purpose Behind the Sign

The Latter Sign does not terminate in the exaltation of Christ alone, as glorious as that is. The New Testament makes clear that the entire arc — from the eternal bosom, through

the incarnation and atonement, to the resurrection and exaltation — has a redemptive goal: to bring humanity into the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

John 17:21–24 reveals this with stunning directness: the Son prays that believers might be one as the Father and Son are one — the same relational unity that defines the bosom. Colossians 1:12–22 places this within the cosmic scope of Christ's redemptive lordship:

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature... And he is the head of the body, the church... For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.

— Colossians 1:13–20

Reconciliation — being drawn back into fellowship with the Father — is the antitype of the hand's restoration. The hand that went out leprous and was restored is the sign that sinful humanity, united to Christ by faith, is brought back into the relational intimacy with God that was shattered by sin. The leprosy of our condition is healed through identification with the One who bore it in our place.

The Honour Due the Son

The redemptive goal carries a doxological conclusion. The One who accomplished this salvation is to be honoured with the full honour due to the Father:

That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.

— John 5:23–24

The restored hand — the exalted Son — is to be honoured universally. This is not an afterthought. It is the designed conclusion of the Latter Sign from the moment God first commanded Moses to thrust his hand into his bosom. The whole of redemptive history is aimed at the glorification of the Son and the communion of redeemed humanity with the Father through Him.

The Coherence of the Latter Sign: An Apologetics Summary

The Latter Sign is not a curiosity at the margins of Exodus. It is a divine capsule containing the entirety of the gospel in embryonic form: the eternal Son, proceeding from the intimate bosom of the Father, entering the world in flesh and bearing the curse of human sin, dying under that curse, and being raised and exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high — all for the purpose of reconciling sinful humanity to God and bringing them into the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

For the Christian apologist, the Latter Sign presents a powerful internal evidence for the divine coherence of Scripture. The sign was given at Horeb, before the Law was codified at Sinai, before the Psalms were written, before the Servant Songs of Isaiah were composed, before the Epistles of Paul and John and the letter to the Hebrews were penned. Yet the single typological structure of the sign — bosom, emergence, leprosy, restoration — is confirmed and elaborated by texts spanning fifteen hundred years of biblical composition.

This is not the kind of coherence that emerges from human literary coordination. It is the coherence of a single divine mind operating through multiple human authors across multiple generations — the hallmark of inspired Scripture. The Latter Sign is, in this sense, itself an argument for the divine origin of the Bible and for the christological centre of all redemptive history.

God hid the gospel in a sign at the burning bush. He revealed it in the person of His Son. He will consummate it in the eternal fellowship of all who are reconciled to Him through the blood of the cross.

The hand has been restored. The sign has been fulfilled. The arm of the LORD has gotten the victory.