



SIGNS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

Believe – Part 1

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"[The Gospel of John] is the profoundest of all writings." - William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury

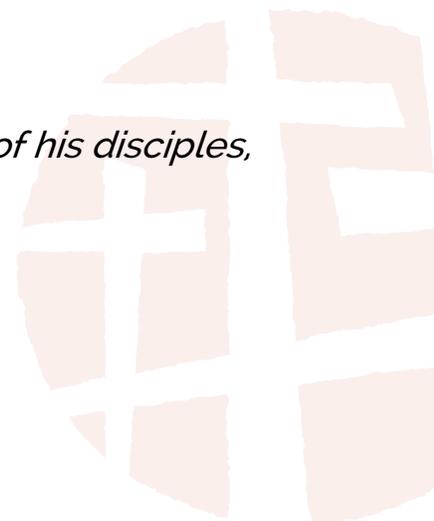
Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:30-31

signs, believe, life

1. SIGNS

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. John 20:30

A sign is a miracle with a message



The Book of Signs – chapters 1-12

The Book of Glory – chapters 13-21

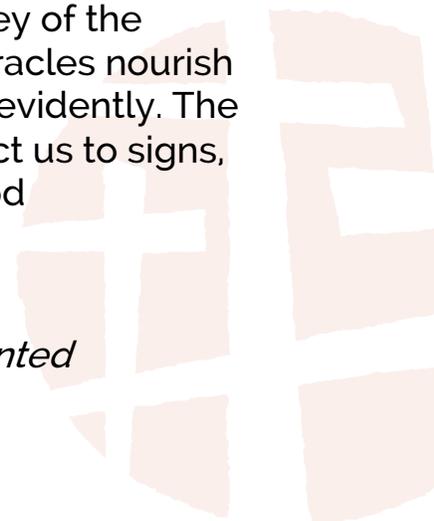
There are only 36 total miracles recorded in the gospels

“The whole point of signs is that they are moments when heaven and earth intersect with each other. The point is not that they are stories which couldn’t have happened in real life, but which point away from earth to a heavenly reality.” – N.T. Wright, John for Everyone

The ultimate purpose of a sign is NOT to draw attention to itself but to direct one’s attention elsewhere.

“Some Christians long for a world well-stocked with miracles and spectacular signs of God’s presence. I hear wistful sermons on the parting of the Red Sea and the 10 plagues and the daily manna in the wilderness, as if the speakers yearn for God to unleash his power like that today. But the follow-the-dots journey of the Israelites should give us pause. Would a burst of miracles nourish faith? Not the kind of faith God seems interested in, evidently. The Israelites give ample proof that signs may only addict us to signs, not to God.” - Philip Yancey, Disappointment with God

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me... Luke 4.18a



The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Luke 4.18-19

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. John 1.18

I AM WHO I AM. Exodus 3.14 (RSV)

2. BELIEVE

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God... John 20.31a

The Greek verb for believe appears 98 times in John

To believe something is to understand something and confess that it is true. To believe is to fully trust our lives to what we know about Jesus.

...may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God... John 20.31 (ESV)



Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. John 2.23-24

You can believe all you want that there is one true God, that's wonderful! But even the demons know this and tremble with fear before him, yet they're unchanged—they remain demons. James 2.19 (The Passion Translation)

"It would be easier, I sometimes think, if God had given us a set of ideas to mull over and kick around and decide whether to accept or reject. He did not. He gave us himself in the form of a person."
- Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*

The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." John 10.33

"Jesus practiced magic and led Israel astray." - Sanhedrin 43a (95-110 AD)

"Jesus. . .has now been celebrated about three hundred years; having done nothing in his lifetime worthy of fame, unless anyone thinks it a very great work to heal lame and blind people and exorcise demoniacs in the villages of Bethsaida and Bethany." - Emperor Julian



The problem for Jesus was not persuading people about the veracity of his miracles, but in getting them to see past the miracles to the deeper meaning.

3. LIFE

...and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20.31b

What you believe has always been a matter of life and death.

I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. John 10.10

"...life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, that which the Father has in Himself..." - Vine's Expository Dictionary

This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. John 17.3



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Miracles, or as John calls them "signs," always point to a larger reality – a bigger truth. As Pastor Keith pointed out, there is something about the spectacular that causes us to become enamored with the miracle more than the larger truth the miracle is revealing. But a sign, by its very nature, is always directing our attention someplace else. Why do you think people become so engrossed by the supernatural that they miss the meaning altogether? Can you think of any other examples in the Old or New Testament of people who missed the point of the miracle? If you would like a couple of passages for further study, consider looking at the healing of the 10 lepers where only one of the lepers returns in recognition of Who Christ actually is. Or the feeding of the 5000, where people were drawn to the allure of daily fish and bread but failed to recognize the One Who is the bread of life.
2. John's gospel is often called "The Gospel of Belief." The verb for believe is mentioned 98 times in the 21 chapters of John. But belief is so much more than mere mental assent to a truth. Belief – real faith – is total commitment of a person to the truth of Who Christ is and trusting our lives to Him. The seven miracles John catalogs are intended to aid us in our belief. But even more important than the supernatural acts Christ performed are the messages behind those miracles – what they say about Who He is. Take a few moments and look at the miracle of changing water into wine (John 2:1-12). In your own words, try to explain what that miracle might be telling us about Who Jesus is and what He came to do. Next week, we'll be looking at this miracle in more detail but it will benefit you greatly to be already familiar with it and reflected on it.



3. Life, the kind of life God offers to us when we believe, is described in many ways in Scripture. It is first and foremost God's life. It is abundant life. It is eternal life. In each and every way this life is described in the pages of Scripture, the emphasis is on a quality of life not quantity. Everyone knows this to be true in their personal experience. What makes life so enjoyable, so worth living, are the quality of relationships we enjoy; family, marriage, children and friendship. Think about your best relationships and what makes them great. Describe them to one another. In what ways do they parallel your relationship with Christ? Does this change the way you think of eternal life? If you were talking to someone who was not a believer, what could you tell them about the abundant life promised in Christ?

