



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Advanced Study AS012: That You May Believe

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Read John 20:30-31

Introduction: Of the many miracles of Jesus which John observed as His friend and close disciple, John records only seven. He tells us he selected these to engender faith¹ in his readers (John 20:31) and calls them 'signs' (John 20:30). But signs of what? The aim of this study is to try and answer that question and discover how the 'signs' achieve their purpose. Just one thing to note before starting: John's use of the word 'signs' must be distinguished from the 'signs' sought by sceptics in the Synoptic Gospels and refused by Jesus (Mark 8:12). Those were hoped-for visible *proofs* of divine power. The seven 'signs' in John are more like object lessons with a *meaning* revealing theological truths.

1. The Overall Purpose. Read John 20:30-31 carefully, noting what theological truth the selection of signs are all intended to reveal. Keep this in mind throughout your study.

2. The 7 Miracle Signs.

(i) *Turning Water into Wine* (John 2:1-11). Verse 11 tells us that, as a result of this miracle, 'His disciples believed in Him'. What did they believe and why? Can you see a correlation with Colossians 1:16?

(ii) *Healing an Officer's Son* (John 4:46-54). The officer and all His family "believed in Him" (v53). Do you think the previous miracle in the locality had a bearing on the faith that prompted the officer to seek the help of Jesus?

(iii) *Healing a Paralysed Man* (John 5:1-47). Read verses 17-19. How would the miracle support Jesus' claim?

(iv) *Feeding the Five Thousand* (John 6:1-15, 26-71). This miracle (the only one recorded in all five Gospels) was a prelude to Jesus' statement "I Am the Bread of Life" (v35). What did He mean by this?

(v) *Walking on Water* (John 6:16-25). This showed mastery over forces of nature. What does that tell us about who Jesus is? You might like to refer to Hebrews 1:3.

(vi) *Healing a Man Born Blind* (John 9:1-10.42). This was an object lesson for the statement "I Am the Light of the World" (9:5). Refer to Genesis 1:3 for the source of physical light. But what 'light' is meant here (and in John 1:9)? Is the source of this light the same as that for physical light? You might like to refer to Isaiah 9:2.

(vii) *Raising Lazarus for the Dead* (John 11:1-34). This brought forth the statement "I Am the Resurrection and the Life" (v25). No statement could be a clearer claim to divinity. See Genesis 2:7 and Psalm 100:3 for the source of life.

3. The Resurrection. This Study has concentrated on seven miracles as signs. But we cannot leave the subject without mentioning the most significant sign of all – the resurrection of our Lord, in the context of which John reveals his purpose in writing. In what way is it a 'sign'?

To Think About. What else in the Gospels reveals who Jesus is?

For Further Study. Read what you can find about 'signs' in the Fourth Gospel.

¹ John does not use the noun 'faith' (*pistis*) but the verb 'believe' (*pisteuo*). This is stylistic. In the mouth of Jesus and sometimes by the Synoptic writers they are called "works" (e.g. John 1);38; Matt 11:20).