

Fall November 18, 2012

THE SIGNS AND MIRACLES OF JESUS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

David C Taylor, Jr, *Liberty University*

THE SIGNS AND MIRACLES OF JESUS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

David Taylor, Jr.
BIBL 323: John
November 18, 2012

THE SIGNS AND MIRACLES OF JESUS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

Introduction

The Gospel of John is also known as the “Miraculous Gospel” or the “Gospel of Signs.”¹ In his book, John records 8 signs that prove the Deity of Christ. Jesus came to display His Deity to the world. Though the other Gospels record many other miracles, the eight that will be explored here are specific to proving that Christ is the Messiah.

Water into Wine

The first sign we see in the book of John is the turning of water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11). Jesus and his disciples had been in Galilee and decided to go to the wedding. Jesus' mother was in attendance. During the festivities the kitchen ran out of wine for the guests. Towns suggests that it was due to the unexpected visit from the disciples that the wedding did not have enough wine on hand.²

One can assume the severity of the problem created by the shortage. The wedding host was set for embarrassment and the bride and groom would have been devastated by the lack of preparation. Jesus' mother recognized the need and told him that something needed to be done (v.3).

Jesus instructed the servants to fill jars with water and to take them to the guests of the party (vv. 7-8). When giving the water to the guests, it poured out wine. The miracle had taken place and everyone was astonished at what had just occurred. The passage even states that his disciples then believed in him (v. 11).

¹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, "Ryrie Study Bible: New International Version," no. Expanded ed. (1994).

² Elmer L. Towns, *The Gospel of John : Believe and Live*, Twenty-First Century Biblical Commentary Series (Chattanooga, TN.: AMG Publishers, 2002). 18-19

Towns claims that the sign shows Jesus' power over creation.³ He shows that he can change the very properties of whatever is set before him. He is not bound by the rules of creation as He is the Creator. Hutchison makes the following observations,

We have seen that this first sign represents the glory of the Incarnate Word. He who created the universe has come to our world to manifest His glory in re-creating it for Himself. We have seen how this conception of the miracle is that which also appears in different forms in the isolated utterances, the discourses, and the incidents which in the Gospel cluster around it.⁴

It can be agreed that the miracle at the wedding in Cana of turning water into wine shows the miraculous power of Christ as the Creator of the Universe, and as with all of the signs, it shows the glory of Jesus as the chosen Messiah.

Healing of a Nobleman's Son

After Jesus displayed his power over creation in Cana, he encountered a Samaritan woman and told her that He was the source of life and the Messiah. She had faith and believed. Later, Jesus took his disciples back toward Cana where he had turned the water into wine. Once he arrived in Galilee, a royal official approached him pleading with him to heal his son who was close to death in Capernaum (John 4:46-47).

Unlike the Miracle at Cana, Jesus did not have a "hands-on" approach to this sign. He told the man to go back home because his son would live (v. 50). The official had to have faith for this miracle. He believed, went home, and his son lived just as Jesus had told him that he would (vv. 51-53).

³ Ibid, xiii

⁴ John Hutchinson, *Our Lord's Signs in St. John's Gospel : Discussions Chiefly Exegetical and Doctrinal on the Eight Miracles in the Fourth Gospel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1892).

This miracle shows Jesus' deity by displaying his power over space, or distance.⁵ The argument has also been made that this miracle shows Jesus' desire for the preservation of life.⁶ Jesus is able to help anyone from anywhere. He does not have to be physically present to perform a miracle. He has divine power over all time and space.

Healing of the Lame Man

The Bible says that after some time later they were in Jerusalem at the pool of Bethesda which was used by people with ailments for healing (John 5:1-3). Here he met a lame man, one who had been lame for thirty-eight years (v. 5). Jesus asked the man if he wanted to get well but the man said there was nobody to help him into the pool. Jesus then told him to pick up his mat and walk and the man was healed (vv. 6-7).

According to Towns, this miracle shows Jesus' power over time.⁷ There are two sets of time to look at here. The first is the time over the 38 years of the man's ailment, and the second is the time in which Jesus performed the miracle, the Sabbath.⁸ The fact is Jesus does healing or a work on his timing and not the world's timing.⁹

Feeding of the 5,000

In chapter six, Jesus and his disciples are at the far side of the Sea of Galilee with a great crowd following them. Jesus tested Phillip by asking where they could buy food for all of these people to eat (John 6:5-6). Phillip's answer was that it was just too much money, too many people. Andrew then spoke up stating that there was a boy who had five loaves of bread and two

⁵ Towns. xiii

⁶ J.M. Cheney and S.A. Ellisen, *Jesus Christ, the Greatest Life Ever Lived: A Unique Blending of the Four Gospels* (Eugene, OR: Paradise Pub., 1999). p. 64

⁷ Towns. xiii

⁸ M. S. Mills, *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record* (Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries, 1999).

⁹ Towns. 56

small fish (v. 9). Jesus asks them to have the crowd sit down and distribute the food to the people (vv. 10-11). After they had fed the crowd of people, Jesus told them to gather the leftover food. The leftovers filled twelve full baskets (vv. 12-13).

This sign shows that Christ has power over food. Though there was not enough food that could be obtained by Jesus and his disciples, an act of the Messiah had no problem in creating the abundance needed to feed the crowd. Little wrote the following:

The abundance of bread resonates with the messianic psalm, dedicated to Solomon, son of David, in which the coming of the messianic king is heralded by an abundance of grain everywhere, especially on the mountain tops, when people will blossom forth from cities like the grass on the field (Ps 72:16).¹⁰

Jesus was their rightful king, though most would not see it, and this sign showed that as king, Christ would take care of all of their needs. His power over food was to show that he is the God of abundance with complete deity. It was to show that he was the source of life.¹¹ Also, with respect to the boy, this miracle shows that God is always willing to use what we have to bring Him.¹²

Jesus Walking on the Water

John chapter 6 gives the account of Jesus walking on the water. The disciples had just witnessed an amazing miracle with the feeding of the 5,000 and were on their way across the lake to Capernaum (v. 16). Strong winds started to rock the boat and crash waves against its side when they saw Jesus walking on the water towards them (v. 19).

¹⁰ Edmund Little, "Jesus, Sacrificial Victim and Divine King: The Feeding of the 5000 in John's Gospel," *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought & Practice* 17, no. 2 (2009).

¹¹ Leon Morris, *Jesus Is the Christ : Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1989). p. 31

¹² Towns. 60

This sign shows Jesus' power over natural law.¹³ Specifically, this shows Jesus power over wind and water.¹⁴ Being the Creator of all things, He is not bound to the laws that govern the natural earth. This is how he is separate from humans with regard to the earth. He can control the natural law, we cannot.

Healing of a Blind Man

In chapter nine, Jesus encounters a man who was born blind. Jesus' disciples asked him what the cause of this man's blindness was. Who sinned so that he would be blind? Jesus replied that it was the sin of no one, but rather, it was so he could show the works of God through him (John 9:1-4).

Jesus proceeded to spit and make mud and place it over the man's eyes. He told the man to go wash the mud off in the pool of Siloam. The man did what Jesus had told him to do and was healed (vv. 6-7).

In this sign Christ is shown to have power over the physical law.¹⁵ Specifically this shows Christ's power over sickness and ailments and once again his power over time as it was on another Sabbath.

This miracle also created a problem for the local Jewish leaders. The Pharisees questioned the man to find out who had healed him. They also questioned his parents. When they found out that it was Jesus who had healed him they did everything they could to discredit him. What was the reason for this? If Jesus could heal the man who had been blind from birth, he must be the Messiah.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid. xiii

¹⁴ Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Ausburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Ausburg, 2001). p. 512

¹⁵ Towns. xiii

¹⁶ Alfred Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah* (New York, NY: Anson D. F. Randolph and Co., 1890). pp. 331-

Raising Lazarus from the Dead

Chapter 11 examines the sign of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus was a friend of Jesus and his disciples. He had become sick and his sisters, Mary and Martha, went to seek out Jesus (John 11:1-3). When they found him they told him that their brother was sick. Jesus decided to stay where he and his disciples were for an additional two days (v. 6). After two days Christ told his disciples that they were going back to Judea. This was a problem for the disciples and they reminded Jesus that the Jews had tried to kill him in Judea (v. 8). Jesus told them Lazarus had fallen asleep and he was going to wake him up (v. 11).

When Jesus and his disciples arrived in Bethany they were informed that Lazarus had been dead for four days (v. 17). Martha was distraught and told Jesus that if he had come sooner, her brother would still be alive. Jesus assured her that she will see Lazarus again. He asks to be taken to the tomb.

When they arrive at the tomb Jesus yells to Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Suddenly Lazarus walks out of the tomb and to the crowd. Jesus told them to clean up Lazarus and let him go (vv. 38-43).

This sign shows Jesus' power over death.¹⁷ Lazarus had been dead for four days. This gave no doubt that Lazarus was more than just sleeping, he was gone. After Jesus raised him from the dead he would treat it as an answer to prayer from God, but this was him being humble as he performed the miracle because he was God himself.¹⁸ Jesus had even made reference that this miracle was to show that He was the life and those who believe in Him will not die (John 11:25-26).

¹⁷ Towns. xiii

¹⁸ Society American Tract, *The Raising of Lazarus from the Dead* (New York: American Tract Society). p.

Miraculous Catch of Fish

The last of the sign miracles performed by Jesus is found in John chapter 21. Jesus had already been crucified, He had already risen again, and now it was time to perform one last sign before His ascension into Heaven. The disciples had been out fishing and Jesus appeared to them once again (v. 1). The disciples did not realize that it was Jesus who was standing on the shore. Jesus asked them if they had caught any fish to which they said they had not. He told them to cast their nets to the other side of the boat. When they did as He told them, they could not pull the nets up due to the amount of fish they had caught (v. 6). After the miraculous display, the disciples knew exactly who He was (v. 7).

Towns states that this sign emphasizes what all of the other signs had stated.¹⁹ Jesus had power over creation, space, time, food, natural laws, physical laws, and death. He was God in the flesh and nothing could prevail against Him (John 1:14). John testifies that there were many other signs and miracles that could have been written about but there were just too many to name in his book.²⁰

¹⁹ Towns. xiii

²⁰ *Esv Study Bible : English Standard Version* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Bibles, 2008).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Esv Study Bible : English Standard Version*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Bibles, 2008.
- American Tract, Society. *The Raising of Lazarus from the Dead*. New York: American Tract Society.
- Cheney, J.M. and S.A. Ellisen. *Jesus Christ, the Greatest Life Ever Lived: A Unique Blending of the Four Gospels*. Eugene, OR: Paradise Pub., 1999.
- Edersheim, Alfred. *Jesus the Messiah*. New York, NY: Anson D. F. Randolph and Co., 1890.
- Hutchinson, John. *Our Lord's Signs in St. John's Gospel : Discussions Chiefly Exegetical and Doctrinal on the Eight Miracles in the Fourth Gospel*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1892.
- Knowles, Andrew. *The Bible Guide*. 1st Ausburg books ed. Minneapolis, MN: Ausburg, 2001.
- Little, Edmund. "Jesus, Sacrificial Victim and Divine King: The Feeding of the 5000 in John's Gospel." *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought & Practice* 17, no. 2 (2009): 23-30.
- Mills, M. S. *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record*. Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries, 1999.
- Morris, Leon. *Jesus Is the Christ : Studies in the Theology of John*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1989.
- Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. "Ryrie Study Bible: New International Version." no. Expanded ed. (1994): pp 1615–1616.
- Towns, Elmer L. *The Gospel of John : Believe and Live* Twenty-First Century Biblical Commentary Series. Chattanooga, TN.: AMG Publishers, 2002.