

John's Use of Signs in his Gospel

In Greek, Sign is Semeion say-mi'-on from Semaino see-mah'-ee -no - to signify a legal term used in evidence or a scientific term used in a proof. John used the signs in his Gospel as evidence of the divinity of Jesus. In John's mind, the signs were miracles and wonders by which God authenticated the one sent by Him. John uses the word "Sign" 18 times in his Gospel.

In John's own words - Why he wrote his Gospel:

John 20:30-31

30Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

He wrote the Gospel for unbelievers, so that they might have life in Christ's name.

Why use Signs?

1 – Signs were used as an evidential proof. John's signs are not necessarily meant to show acts of compassion, but deeds which demonstrate the glory of Christ.

The works that Jesus did were an evidential proof that he came from the Father (John 5:36); this explains why John called the miracles "signs" (semeion).

2 – The signs were intended to be a window into eternity, to show the reality of God, expressed in His only begotten son. John's signs were often accompanied by a lengthy discourse:

- The feeding of the 5,000 in Chapter 6 was accompanied by the Bread of Life discourse.
- The healing of the blind man in Chapter 9 was accompanied by the Light of the World discourse.
- The raising of Lazarus from the dead in Chapter 11 was accompanied by the Resurrection and the Life discourse.

3 – It was probably never John's intent to write a historical (synoptic) Gospel. He used signs to share the truth and to write a spiritual Gospel, that demonstrated God's Glory (placed in a human body) through His son.

Eighteen uses of the word sign in the book of John

1. John 2:11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.
2. John 2: 18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"
3. John 2: 23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.

4. John 3:2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, " Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."
5. John 4:8 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."
6. John 4:54 This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.
7. John 6:2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.
8. John 6:14 Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."
9. John 6:26 [*Words to the People*] Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.
10. John 6:30 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?"
11. John 7:31 But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"
12. John 9:16 Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath " But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them.
13. John 10:41 Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true."
14. John 11:47 [*Conspiracy to Kill Jesus*] Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.
15. John 12: 18 For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.
16. John 12: 37 But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.
17. John 18:32 to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.
18. John 20: 30 [*Why This Gospel Was Written*] Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Continuing to John Chapter 21: 24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

The Seven Signs of the Book of John

1st sign John 2:1-11

John 2 The Miracle of Cana - Changing the water to wine.

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there;

2 and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.

3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."

4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."

5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.

7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim.

8 And He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to him.

9 When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from but the servants who had drawn the water knew, the headwaiter called the bridegroom,

10 and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."

11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

2nd sign John 4:46-54 - Healing a nobleman's son

Healing a Nobleman's Son

46 Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.

48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."

49 The royal official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off.

51 As he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living.

52 So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

53 So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed and his whole household.

54 This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

3rd sign John 5:1-9 - The Healing at Bethsada

The Healing at Bethesda

1 After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.

3 In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters;

4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]

5 A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?"

7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

8 Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk."

9 Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.

10 So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet."

11 But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'"

12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk?'"

13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you."

15 The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

16 For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

17 But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

Jesus' Equality with God

18 For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

20 "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.

21 "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

22 "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

23 so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Two Resurrections

25 "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

26 "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;

27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.

4th sign John 6:1-14 - The five thousand fed

Five Thousand Fed

1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee or Tiberias .

2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.

3 Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples.

4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.

5 Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?"

6 This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little."

8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,

9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?"

10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11 Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.

12 When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost."

13 So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

14 Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

5th sign John 6:15-21 - Jesus walks on the water

Jesus Walks on the Water

15 So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

16 Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea,

17 and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

18 The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.

19 Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened.

20 But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

21 So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

22 The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone.

23 There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

25 When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"

Words to the People

26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

27 "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."

28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?"

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

30 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?"

31 "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'"

32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.

33 "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

36 "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.

37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

6th sign John 9:1-7 - Healing the man born blind

Healing the Man Born Blind

1 As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.

2 And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

3 Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

4 "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.

5 "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."

6 When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes,

7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" which is translated, Sent So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.

8 Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?"

9 Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one."

10 So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?"

11 He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight."

12 They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

Controversy over the Man

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind.

14 Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

15 Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

16 Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath" But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them.

17 So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."

7th sign John 11:1-45 - Raising Lazarus from the dead

The Death and Resurrection of Lazarus

1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

3 So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

4 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

6 So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.

7 Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

8 The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?"

9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

10 "But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

11 This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep."

12 The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."

13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.

14 So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead,

15 and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him."

16 Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."

17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off;

19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.

20 Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house.

21 Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

22 "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."

28 When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."

29 And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.

30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him.

31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

32 Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,

34 and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

35 Jesus wept.

36 So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"

37 But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

38 So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.

39 Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days."

40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

41 So they removed the stone Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.

42 "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me."

43 When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."

44 The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

45 Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.

46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

Conspiracy to Kill Jesus

47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.

48 "If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."