

February 18th, 2018

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS: HIS ILLUMINATING SIGNS

John 20:30-31

The purpose of John's gospel

We are at a very special place in John's gospel. John has interrupted his narrative of the resurrection and has given us his purpose statement for writing this gospel. **v.31** "these are written *so that* you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and *that* by believing you may have life *in his name*."

Last week we looked at who Jesus said He was in His seven "I AM" statements of Jesus. This week we are going to look at the seven *signs* that Jesus performed demonstrating who He was. This issue of signs is central to **v. 30** "Now Jesus did many other *signs* in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but *these* are written *so that* you may believe..." "Many scholars have noted that John's Gospel is like a legal brief, arguing why we should believe in Jesus Christ. At the center of that argument are the seven signs of Jesus."¹

Signs

What is a sign? A sign is a thing that represents another thing. Anthony Selvaggio comments "Imagine a world without signs. Without signs we wouldn't know what a box of crackers cost at the grocery store. Without signs we could not navigate through a hospital to visit a sick friend. Without signs we might get lost when driving around in unfamiliar places. Every day of our lives, we rely on some form of sign."² You could not operate in the physical world without signs. Biblical signs in this respect are no different. We have signs that we use in

¹ Anthony Selvaggio, *The Seven Signs*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 9

² *ibid*, pg. 2

the church today. Signs that point us to deeper realities like baptism and the Lord's table.

Why did Jesus perform signs?

When Jesus performed signs, He was not simply airing out His Divine power. C.S. Lewis once said that “[Christ]³ doesn't do parlor tricks.”⁴ Christ didn't perform miracles *merely* to awe the masses. No Jesus performed signs to point to *Himself*, that He is the true and Living God, the Son of God sent from the Father to save lost sinners. Every sign shows us more deeply who Jesus is. Look with me at **John 2:11**. After Jesus performed His first sign of turning the water into wine, and John records in **2:11** “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and *manifested his glory*. And his disciples believed in him.” Now hold on to that and look back at **John 1:14** “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and *we have seen his glory*, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The connection between these two verses is unmistakable. When did they see *His glory* in **John 1:14**? When Jesus performed His signs in **John 2:11**.⁵ **John 1:14**: “the Word [who is Christ] became flesh and dwelt among us, and *we have seen his glory*.” **John 2:11** “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and *manifested his glory*. And his disciples believed in him.” We see the Jesus' *glory*—meaning His Divine Person, His beauty, His grace and truth, His judgment and mercy, His righteous wrath and tender love in the signs He performed.

Objection

You might say to yourself: “But I didn't see those signs. I wasn't there for the miracles. I didn't see Christ's glory.” That's a good objection. How do we

³ Original “God”

⁴ Anthony Selvaggio, *The Seven Signs*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 22

⁵ In Jesus' last two signs, His glory was the express purpose the man was born blind—John 9:3 and that Lazarus died—John 11:4

answer that? The glory isn't *mainly* contained in the physical sign. When we have the Lord's supper, the glory is not in the physical bread or the physical wine that we eat, or in the physical water of baptism. Likewise Jesus' glory is not in the external signs themselves, but rather in what those signs point to. There were people present at all of these signs that Jesus performed who walked away failing to see what was really happening. After the last sign of raising Lazarus from the dead John says in **John 12:37** "Though he [Jesus] had done so many **signs** before them, they still did not believe in him." Signs are worthless if you don't see what they point to.⁶ Therefore you are at no disadvantage in not being present to see Jesus' miracle. We don't have to be there to see Jesus' glory. The main show is still available for us to see.⁷ That's John's whole point.⁸ **John 20:31** "but *these* are written [these signs] *so that* you may believe..." The signs prove exactly what Jesus says about Himself—that He is the Christ the Son of God. In every sign, that is what He is driving at.

The Big Idea...

This gospel was written for you, so that you would believe and have life in Jesus Christ, the Son of God

⁶ If you are in China but don't speak Chinese, the street signs will be worthless to you.

⁷ The disciples saw the invisible parts of the signs—*where* the glory is—and that is what we are called to see in these same signs (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6).

⁸ "In His post-resurrection appearance to Thomas, Jesus made it clear that belief would no longer come as the result of observing visible signs. From that point on, people would be blessed by believing because of the proclaimed testimony of the disciples, not the signs they did. Given the transition from visible signs to verbal testimony, it is not surprising that John inserts his purpose for recording the seven signs immediately after Jesus' meeting with Thomas. Notice how John emphasizes the transition from signs to what is "written" in his purpose statement." Anthony Selvaggio, *The Seven Signs*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 110

I've had to be extremely selective in what points I'm choosing to make in each of these signs, because in reality, these seven signs make up the first half of the book of John. Hopefully these points will drive our hearts to a deeper belief and admiration and love of Christ.

The First Sign: Jesus Turns Water Into Wine—John 2:1-11

Let's look at v.1-2 "On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. [2] Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples." Weddings in Jewish culture were major social community wide events, often lasting seven days, much more significant than weddings of our day. Therefore it is curious that John doesn't mention whose wedding this is. But this is part of the sign. Look at v.3 "When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." This was a serious problem. This wedding, being the social event it was, meant that a lack of proper hospitality could potentially shame the family's social status.⁹ So Mary brings this to her Son's attention. v.4 "And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." Let's note three things here. **First**, Mary is speaking on one level—the physical. Jesus is speaking on a completely different level—the spiritual. Mary is worried about the family being embarrassed by a botched wedding. Jesus is hinting at a greater wedding to come. **Secondly**, when Jesus responds to her by calling her "woman" it certainly wasn't how a son normally addressed his mother in the first century, but it was indicative of the fact that His role with her was decisively changing. Yes she was His earthly mother, but He was her Lord. This greeting marks this change. **Thirdly**, in the Messianic promises in the OT, wine was promised symbolically as part of the riches of the New Covenant.¹⁰ So while Mary is talking about ordinary wine, Jesus is hinting at New Covenant wine. But this wine will not come until Jesus' glorification. Which is why Jesus says "My hour

⁹ This "might also potentially subject the groom to a lawsuit." *ibid*, pg. 17

¹⁰ cf. Isaiah 25:6-9, Jeremiah 31:12; Hosea 14:7; Amos 9:13-14

has not yet come.” Yet Jesus is going to fulfill this request in order to show us who He is.

Picking up in v.6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. v.7-8 then tells us that Jesus had the servants fill these jars with water and the water turned to wine. It is not without significance that it was these *very jars* used for purification that Jesus chose. He is showing that the old covenant was ineffectual. It was empty. No amount of cleansing or ceremonies or rituals or good works could purify the people from sin. Only wine—pointing to Jesus’ blood—would suffice.¹¹ The reason why this is the first sign is because Jesus is signaling to the world that the New Covenant has arrived even as He arrived to this wedding.

How does this sign end? The master of the feast tastes the wine and says to the bridegroom in v.10 “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Notice the master goes to the bridegroom. Why? Because it was the bridegroom’s responsibility to provide the wine. When Jesus provided this wine, He was identifying Himself as the true Bridegroom. The one to whom the church would be forever united to.¹²

The implications of this sign is clear. You must drink the wine that Jesus offers. Nobody will be invited to the great and final wedding with Christ if they are depending on their own purity. But for all those that drink the wine that Jesus offers, they will discover a Bridegroom that whispers in your heart “*I am here to save you.*”¹³ And this wine only gets better for all eternity. This is the first sign.

¹¹“The pots once used for the ceremonial washing of the Jews have been transformed into vessels of fruitfulness and joy.” Anthony Selvaggio, *The Seven Signs*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 22

¹² This is why John the Baptist identifies Jesus as such in John 3:29-30

¹³ Augustine, *Confessions*, (New York, NY.,: Penguin Books, 1961), pg. 24

The Second Sign: Jesus Cleanses the Temple—John 2:12-22

There are two parts to this sign. The first part is when Jesus enters the temple and cleans house. It is Passover, and Jesus travels to Jerusalem. Passover was one of the high holy days on the Jewish calendar in which every Jew was to participate by traveling to Jerusalem in order to sacrifice an animal for their sins. If you are taking a long journey it wasn't always convenient to bring the animals along with you, so you would buy them once you reach Jerusalem. Of course there was nothing sinful about buying or selling these animals in itself. But something else was wrong. Look at v.14 "In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. [15] And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. [16] And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." Now the question is why did Jesus get so angry? Some have suggested it was because these merchants and money changers were swindling those buying animals, and if this dishonest practice ceased, then Jesus wouldn't have chased them away.¹⁴ But this is not the case, although I'm not arguing that thievery wasn't happening. But the issue was *not* thievery, it was worship. Jesus tells them in v.16 that His Father's house had become a house of trade. Worship is supreme in Jesus' mind, because worship is the supreme act in all the universe. There is nothing more paramount in the mind of God than worship.

God created all things so that He would be worshiped (**Romans 11:36**).

God commands that everything in your life be defined by worship (**1 Cor. 10:31**).

¹⁴ "In the parallel Synoptic accounts (Mt. 21:12-17; Mk. 11:15-18; Lk. 19:45-46) where in most translations Jesus accuses the merchants and money-changers of turning the temple into "a den of robbers," the Greek expression does not suggest thievery but zealotry: by setting up in the court of the Gentiles, they have excluded the Gentiles who might have come to pray, and have turned the temple into 'a nationalist stronghold.' D.A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According To John*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), pg. 179

God has determined that all who do not worship Him will go to the lake of fire (**Rev. 20:15**).

God has planned that Heaven be a place of everlasting pleasure because of worship (**Rev. 5:9-10**).

Worship defines reality. So when Jesus goes into the temple and finds that worship is being overrun by the bleating of sheep and commerce, He is indignant that His Father is not being honored.¹⁵ Dear congregation, does worship define your life?

The second part of this sign is in the conversation that follows. **v.18** “So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” They are asking Him “By what right, by what authority¹⁶ are you doing these things?”¹⁷ So Jesus answers in **v.19** “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” [20] The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple,^[c] and will you raise it up in three days?” [20] But he was speaking about the temple of his body.” Jesus is making two points here. **First**, He’s saying ‘I am the Temple. That’s my authority. The real Temple has arrived and I determine what is true worship.’ **Secondly**, He’s saying that access to the Father can only come through His death. That’s why he says in **v.19** “in three days I will raise it up.” Everything else is polluted worship. When Jesus cleansed the temple, He was striking a blow to Judaism and every other man-centered religion. How ironic that sometimes the church is often the most dangerous place to be.

¹⁵ John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

¹⁶ “The irony is that the cleansing of the temple was the sign authenticating His authority!” Anthony Selvaggio, *The Seven Signs*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 35

¹⁷ “Jesus demonstration in the temple was an attack on the whole of the financial arrangements for the sacrificial system, and thus an enormous threat to the priestly authorities.” D.A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According To John*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), pg. 179

The implication of this sign is clear. Our worship is so broken, that it took the death of the true Temple, Jesus Christ to make us acceptable to God. Any worship outside of Christ is not acceptable to God. That's the second sign.

The Third Sign: Jesus Heals the Official's Son – John 4:46-54

This sign forces us to ask “Which Jesus do we seek?” A.W. Tozer once said “For you know there is the romantic Christ of the romance novelist and there is the sentimental Christ of the half-converted cowboy and there is the philosophical Christ of the academic egghead and there is the cozy Christ of the effeminate poet and there is the muscular Christ of the all-American halfback.”¹⁸ I wonder if it would be a stretch to say that perhaps there are just as many Christs as there are Christians in the world.¹⁹ That's what was happening in John 4. People were seeking Christ to meet their felt needs. Don't get me wrong. Often times our needs drive us to Jesus. But Jesus must graduate in our hearts from the means to the end. Let's look at v.45 “When he [Jesus] came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.” Now just before this verse, we read that Jesus testified “that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.” But in v.45 the Galileans welcomed Him. What's going on? Why did the Galileans welcome Jesus if it wasn't to honor Him? Because they had seen His miracles and they reasoned that Jesus could do some miracles for them. Utilitarian Jesus. “I'll welcome Jesus because perhaps He can do some things for me. I'll welcome Jesus because perhaps He will be useful to me.”

¹⁸ Quoted in Anthony Selvaggio's *The Seven Signs*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 41

¹⁹ “Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist was teaching a theological seminar one day and he made an assertion from Scripture about God. A student in the class interrupted him and said, “Excuse me Mark, but I like to think of God as wise, but not meddling; compassionate but not overpowering; resourceful but not interrupting. That's how I like to think about God.” Mark responded, “Thank you Bill for telling us so much about yourself, but we're here to learn about God from the Bible.” Source: <https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/a-call-to-give-yourself-to-god> accessed October 12, 2017

When He arrives, an official whose son was sick to the point of death came to Jesus and asked Jesus to heal his son. Jesus says in v.48 “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.” This is a rebuke. The noble man didn’t want Jesus for Jesus’ sake, He wanted Jesus’ for His son’s sake. Now it is not wrong to ask Jesus to heal our loved ones. We should do that. But Jesus sees to the heart of this man. This man was using Jesus. He wasn’t looking for salvation, he was looking for a solution.²⁰ Jesus performed signs not so that people could seek Him *merely* as a miracle worker, but so that they worship Him as the Son of God. Jesus is more lovely than your son. Jesus is more valuable than your portfolio. Jesus is more fulfilling than your reputation. Jesus is more precious than your health. It’s Jesus that your heart was made for. If you have Him, you can say “the hell with the world” for my soul has found its resting place.²¹

That is not where this man’s heart was. How does Jesus respond? Husbands how would you respond if your wife said “I don’t care about you, I just need your money for survival?” Wives how would you respond if your husband said “I don’t care about you, I just want your body for pleasure?” That’s what this man was essentially doing to Jesus. But what does Jesus do? He heals the man’s boy! v.50 “Go; your son will live.” And he lived. And then this man and all his household believed (v.53).

There’s much we could take away from this sign, but one thing is clear, Jesus didn’t wait for your heart to be right before He came to you. This man had zero right motives. He was using Christ, not loving Him. And yet Jesus had compassion on the man. Dear believer, you are not a Christian because you had right motives. You are a Christian because Jesus looked past your idolatry and had mercy on you. That’s the third sign.

²⁰ Anthony Selvaggio, *The Seven Signs*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 41

²¹ Oh may your heart cry out to Him like Augustine’s did “Do not hide your face away from me, for I would gladly meet death to see it, since not to see it would be death indeed.” Augustine, *Confessions*, (New York, NY.: Penguin Books, 1961), pg. 24

The Fourth Sign: Jesus Heals the Paralytic—John 5:1-9²²

Again there was a feast happening in Jerusalem, the text doesn't specify, but this is significant because this sign is going to be massively publicized because Jesus is going to perform it on the Sabbath. The setting is pool near the Sheep Gate where a multitude of crippled people—the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed would gather. Picking up in v.5 “One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.” Commentators think this man was paraplegic. v. 7 seems to suggest that. This man knew what suffering was. 38 years of it. That's a life sentence of suffering considering that forty years was the average life span. He probably had open bed sores, his muscles were completely atrophied. He couldn't bathe himself, feed himself or relieve himself. Perhaps, in all of Jerusalem, there was no one more ruined than he. He was the undesirable one, the one beyond repair, the one people act like they don't see.

But Jesus made it a point to speak to him. v.6 “When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, ‘Do you want to be healed?’” Which seems to be a strange question to *this* man. Of course he would. But Jesus was speaking on a deeper level. The man misses it and responds in v.7 “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” Your Bible should have a footnote between v.3 and v.5 reflecting the popular belief that from time to time an angel would come and stir the waters, and whoever stepped in the waters first would be healed. The ESV leaves this verse out because most scholars believe that this was a marginal note added later because it is not in other manuscripts that are considered more reliable. The point is, this the man was beyond cure. Medicine had failed him. The promises of popular superstition had failed him. He was beyond hope. That's why Jesus chose to speak to him. Because no one else on planet earth could possibly remedy his situation. And this is why there is no better news than the gospel. It doesn't

²² “Six of the seven signs have the Greek word for sign (*semeia*) in the narrative in which they appear. The narrative of the fourth sign, the healing of paralytic man, does not include this word in the narrative, but it is included by reference in John 6:2.” Anthony Selvaggio, *The Seven Signs*, (Grand Rapids, MI.; Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 6

matter what kind of sinner you are. It doesn't matter if you are guilty of the worst types of sin: of murder, of the worst kinds of cruelty, of gross sexual perversion or other things simply unspeakable. None of those things can disqualify you from the grace of Jesus Christ. "You are no more hopeless than the most moral and respectable person in the world."²³

The question is "Do you want to be healed?" That's why Jesus asked it. For you. Do you want to be healed? If you say 'I'm not good enough, you don't know what I've done.' Why do you think Jesus picked the most pathetic person in Jerusalem? Do you want to be healed? That is the offer that Jesus makes over and over again in this gospel. And He demonstrates His power in how this sign ends. v.8 "Jesus said to him, 'Get up, take up your bed, and walk.' [9] And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked." Everything in this man's natural body was instantly changed. Physiologically his muscles transformed, his paralysis fled away. It was like his body became brand new. This is what happens when Jesus heals you. I don't mean you never have problems again. Of course you will. But the very thing that has destroyed your life the most, namely your sin, has been given a death blow. When Jesus heals you, he heals the most destructive thing about you, namely the penalty and power of sin. Just as this man became new, so the Scripture says of those who have been healed by Jesus: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). That's the fourth sign.

The Fifth Sign: Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand—John 6:1-15

By this time Jesus now had thousands of followers. The first four signs had created a Messianic fever in Israel and now Jesus was a celebrity. Chapter six begins with him on the other side of the Sea of Galilee up on the mountain. Let's begin in v.5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" [6] He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he

²³ Source: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/gospel> accessed February 17, 2018

would do. [7] Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” [8] One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, [9] “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” [10] Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. [11] Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. [12] And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” [13] So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. [14] When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” Now we saw last week how this sign set Jesus up for His I AM statement “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (v.35). We saw how there is ordinary bread and true bread, because there is ordinary hunger and true hunger, so we won't resist that now.

I just want to consider one part of this sign that maybe easily overlooked. v.12-13 tells us that there were left overs, in fact 12 baskets full. I don't know if the number is significant, but I do know that the leftovers are part of the sign. Just as when Jesus furnished the wedding with abundant wine, some 100-150 gallons,²⁴ so here Jesus provides more than enough bread for the massive crowd. What does this mean? It means that Jesus doesn't just give us the True Bread to get us in the Kingdom, He provides enough for our entire journey home. Meaning our salvation is by grace at the beginning, by grace in the middle, and by grace at the end. We never finish the leftovers that Jesus provided. You need to hear this, because you and I are wired for works. It is the most natural thing to believe that God saves us at the beginning by grace, but then we have to earn His favor by our obedience. Dear congregation, if you

²⁴ Anthony Selvaggio, *The Seven Signs*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 21

have tasted the True Bread, you never have to earn God's favor. If you sin, He will discipline you. He will spank you like a good father would his erring child. But He doesn't condition His love of you on your obedience. If He did you would never be in His favor, because your obedience is shot through with corruption. If you came to Him, you are His, and He will never stop giving you the True Bread. "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." That's the fifth sign.

The Sixth Sign: Jesus Heals the Man Born Blind—John 9:1-7

In this sign, the main thing I want us to see is how the Pharisees respond after the healing. So let's move quickly through the sign itself. v.1 begins "As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth." It says "As he passed by..." This is a continuation of the narrative starting all the way back in chapter seven. It is the feast of booths. Last week we saw how on the last night of this celebration, the officials would light up these massive torches in celebration of God leading them through the wilderness with a pillar of fire. At that exact moment, Jesus stood up and said in **John 8:12** "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Now here in chapter nine, Jesus gives a sign of that truth with this blind man. In v.2-5, Jesus and the disciples get in a conversation about whose sin caused this man's blindness. Jesus says that the purpose of this blindness was to display the works of God. We then read in v.6 "Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud [7] and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing." Now from here until the end of chapter nine we see four different responses from those involved. **First**, we see the how the neighbors respond in v.8-13. And they missed it, they didn't care about the meaning of the miracle or who did it, but rather they were perplexed by how it happened. **Secondly**, we see how parents respond in v.18-23. They were scared of confessing anything before the Pharisees so when they were questioned by them as to how this miracle occurred, they deferred to their son. **Thirdly**, we see

how the man responds in v. 35-38. He responds in worship and places His faith in Jesus as Lord. That's what the sign ultimately pointed to. This man was cured of spiritual blindness, and Jesus opened his eyes so he could see Jesus for who He was.

But it's the **fourth** response where Jesus reveals the spiritual significance of this sign. Look at v.39 "Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." [40] Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" [41] Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." Coming to Christ for salvation doesn't *merely* require you to confess your sins. It requires you to say that everything about you is wrong. Jesus is indicting the Pharisees here because they think they can see—meaning, they think that they are ok, that they are well, that they have something in them that pleases God. And Jesus is telling them 'because you think you see, because you think you are ok—you are guilty. As John Gerstner once said "The main thing between you and God is not so much your sins; it's your damnable good works." Or as George Whitefield said "Our best duties are as so many splendid sins...There must be a deep conviction before you can be brought out of your self-righteousness. It is the last idol taken out of the heart...Can you say, "Lord, thou mayest justly damn me for the best duties that I ever did perform?"²⁵ Dear congregation, can you say that? Do you realize that even if you never committed that one sin, or that series of sins that you are the most deeply ashamed of, God could equally damn you for all the good things you have done? God has enough on you to send you to hell on the best day that you ever had. Spiritual blindness is the inability to see that everything about you is wrong, and that you're only cure is the Jesus Christ the Light of the world. When Jesus gives you true sight, that is what you see. That's the sixth sign.

²⁵ Quoted in Timothy Keller's *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, (New York, NY,,: Viking, 2015), pg. 62

The Seventh Sign: Jesus Raises Lazarus—John 11:38-44

This is the greatest of all the signs. Last week, we saw how Jesus used this event to set up His I AM statement, **John 11:25-26** “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” Death has a Master. His name is Jesus, and He reigns over death. And the fear of death has been removed from all believers because *ultimately* they will never die. King David is alive. Moses is alive. Marilyn Sullivan is alive. Lizzy Carrier is alive. That’s what the sign points to in the first place. That Jesus will raise all believers from the dead.

But there is a second part to this sign that I want us to see [Please turn with me to John 5]. Jesus makes it clear that there are two distinct resurrections. Listen to how Jesus says it in **John 5:25** “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, *and is now here*, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” Now **v.28** speaks of the final resurrection, at the end of the age. But this resurrection takes place in this age, which is why Jesus says “an hour is coming, *and is now here*,” There are resurrections that take place now. Meaning regeneration, the new birth, conversion. That’s what Jesus says being saved *is*: being raised from the dead. This is not a figure of speech. This is not an analogy to help us to understand. When a person is saved, when a person believes in Jesus Christ, it is because they have been raised from the dead. If you are going to go to heaven, you must be raised from the dead twice. Once in this life, and then again at the end of the age. That’s the backdrop to John 11. The raising of Lazarus is a picture of both resurrections.

So please turn back there with me. Look at **v.38** “Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. [39] Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” [*Those of you familiar with the prophecy in Ezekiel 36 perhaps see the imagery of the heart of stone being removed here.*] Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” This is significant. The Jews believed that the

deceased could be resuscitated during the first three days, but after that they were totally dead. Martha is saying, "It's too late Lord."

So let's sum up the problems facing Lazarus here. His problem is *not* that he hasn't heard the gospel. His problem is *not* that he hasn't had good teachers. His problem is *not* that he is a worse sinner than others. His problem is that He is dead.

Much of the modern church's approach to evangelism radically misunderstands what it means to be spiritually dead. The unsaved person doesn't need to make a decision for Christ, the unsaved person needs to be raised from the dead. Paul Washer has said "that the greatest heresy in the American evangelical and protestant church is that, if you pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart, He will definitely come in. You will not find that in any place in Scripture."²⁶ Or as Iain Murray has said it "One of the most dangerous errors ever to be made in the churches has been to think that men can arrange the time of regeneration...to treat a decision for Christ as necessarily securing a changed heart...The time of rebirth belongs to God."²⁷ Why did Lazarus rise from the dead? Not because he made a decision for Christ, but because Christ made a decision for him. Jesus said "Lazarus, come out." And he heard the voice of the Son of God (John 5:25) and he came to life. That's why this is the greatest and most controversial sign. No one comes to life, unless they spiritually hear the voice of the Son of God. That's the seventh sign.

²⁶ Source: <https://adidab.wordpress.com/2009/05/05/paul-washer-transcript-02-shocking-youth-message/> accessed February 16, 2018

²⁷ Iain Murray, *The Old Evangelicalism*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), pg. 56

Application

Our Doctrine: Jesus performed the signs in order to lead us to Him

The seven signs of John's gospel as glorious as they are, have no value in themselves. What if I promised my family a trip to Hawaii, and then instead of taking them there, I gave them a bunch of brochures of Hawaii. Great pictures, great signs of what Hawaii looked like. Would they be satisfied with that? No these signs in themselves are worthless if you don't get the substance behind the sign. As Anthony Selvaggio said "Jesus constantly pointed people beyond signs to what they signified. He did not direct people's attention to the wine at Cana or the bread at Capernaum but rather to Himself."²⁸ Every sign points to our desperate need to have our sins cleansed, and our utter inability to do it ourselves. And every sign points to how Jesus is the solution. All of these signs are a dramatization of Jesus's death and resurrection for sinners.

Our Duty: You must believe the way Jesus is calling you to believe

Dear unbeliever, the thing that is evident in all of these signs is that an entire change of life is required. In every sign there was a state of affairs to begin with, and then a completely different state of affairs after Jesus performed the sign. The sick boy was healed, the paraplegic could walk, the blind man could see, Lazarus was raised. That is what is required of you. An entire change of life. You must undergo the greatest change in this world²⁹ if you are to escape the judgment. Jesus said in **John 5:28-29** "an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have *done evil* to the resurrection

²⁸ Anthony Selvaggio, *The Seven Signs*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 21

²⁹ "Conversion is the greatest change that men undergo in this world." Iain Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2008), pg. 24

of judgment.”³⁰ You have done evil. You deserve judgment. How will you escape? John says you must believe in Christ. What does that mean? “[Believing in Christ] is *the opposite* of self-sufficiency: Saving faith appeals to a power outside of itself, and confesses its own weakness. Saving faith looks to the righteousness of Christ, and thus confesses the [lack] of it in itself. Saving faith appeals for all things to an outward source, and thus confesses its own barrenness.”³¹ Therefore if you think you are strong or good or able, you have no faith at all. The very essence of faith is saying “I can’t do it. I’m not strong enough. I’m not good enough. I’m not able. I need Someone else to be strong and good and able for me.” And that Someone else is Jesus Christ.

Our Delight: This gospel was written for *you*

There are some verses in John’s gospel that *generalize* the offer of salvation. **John 3:16** says “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that *whoever* believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” He says *whoever*. But our verse this morning makes it very personal “these are written so that *you* may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing *you* may have life in his name.” This gospel was written for *you*. Salvation is deeply personal. Two crucial things to realize about Jesus’ signs. **First**, they were performed on *individuals*: The official’s son, the paralyzed man, the man born blind, Lazarus, etc.

Second, they were performed on the sickest, most hypocritical, most undeserving, most hopeless individuals in all Israel.

Jesus loves individual people. And He loves the worst type of individual people. People just like you.

³⁰ Also cf. John 3:36 “...whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him”

³¹ Iain Murray, *The Old Evangelicalism*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), pg. 60