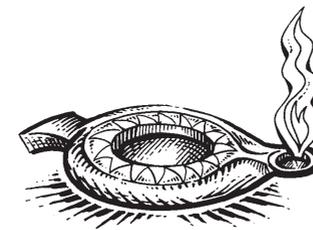


BASIC BIBLE STUDY

An Introductory Guide To Understanding The Scriptures

PART NINETEEN

The Gospel Of John



"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path"
PSALM 119:105

William Temple, a former Archbishop of Canterbury (1881-1944), wrote a suggestive little book on the Gospel of John in which he said that what you have in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is something that more closely approximates a photograph, but what you have in John is a portrait.

ADVANTAGE OF A PORTRAIT

Obviously a good photograph is better than a bad portrait ... but an accomplished artist can give us more than we could ever get in the very best photograph, for a portrait painter can give us the whole man all at once.



INCOMPLETE BIOGRAPHIES

The writers of the four Gospels have given us 'snapshots' of our Lord's life on earth, for no complete biography could ever be written. As John himself admits (**John 21:25**), "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

Yet John was the greatest painter for whom the Lord Christ ever sat! In his Gospel we have one of the best, most beautiful and compelling portraits of the Lord Jesus Christ in all the Bible.

There are some rather:

1. UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THIS GOSPEL.

- **There is no mention by John of the birth and early years of Jesus.**

While Matthew, Mark and Luke provide either the details of our Saviour's birth, including a long list of names in His 'family tree,' or draw attention to some Jewish prophecies fulfilled by His appearance in this world, John begins in an altogether different fashion, making some tremendous theological statements about our Incarnate Lord.

- **Nor is there any description of His baptism, no mention of His temptation, or of His transfiguration, or of His ascension.**

b. "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25) as Aaron's Rod that Budded.

c. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51) as the Golden Pot of 'Hidden' Manna.

We cannot improve on John's conclusion; **John 20:30&31**: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

FULL OF CHRIST

This fourth Gospel is so full of the glory and grace of Christ! As we travel through it, the words of John Newton seem to fill the air:

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear!

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,

And drives away his fear.

Dear name! the Rock on which I build,

My Shield and Hiding-Place;

My never-failing Treasury, filled

With boundless stores of grace.

• **Many of the events related in John are found nowhere else in Scripture.**

'HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS'

There are charts that scholars use which place the four gospels side by side in parallel columns on the page. In this way you can compare at a glance how the gospel reports are similar, and how they differ, when they are reporting/describing the same thing. The ordinary name for this kind of chart is a 'Harmony of the Gospels.'

When you consult these famous four-column charts, you will discover that only John gives an account of:

- * the first miracle at Cana,
- * the first cleansing of the temple,
- * Nicodemus' visit with the Lord,
- * Lazarus' resurrection, etc..

• **Over against 20 miracles that are recorded in Matthew, 18 in Mark, and 21 in Luke, there are only 8 in John.**

John himself is fully aware of these omissions and states this in **John 20:30**: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book." They are not neglected areas; they have been by-passed on purpose so that John can concentrate on the main theme of his book.

• **Whereas the first three Gospels major on describing events in the life of Christ, John emphasised the meaning of these events.**



For example, all four Gospels record the feeding of the 5000, but only John records Jesus' sermon on 'The Bread of Life' which followed the miracle when He interpreted it for the people (**John 6:32-59**).

• **A great amount of attention is focused on our Lord's final instructions to the apostles.**

Think too of the:

2. UNIVERSAL APPEAL OF THIS GOSPEL.

- Matthew wrote with his fellow Jews in mind and emphasised that Jesus of Nazareth had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies ... He was the Messiah - the King - the prophets had long anticipated.

- Mark wrote for the busy Romans, and whereas Matthew emphasised His role as the King, Mark presented Him as the Servant, ministering to needy people.

- Luke wrote his gospel for the Greeks and introduced them to the sympathetic Son of Man.

Question is: who did John write for?

Answer both Jews and Gentiles (Greeks)!

GLOBAL REACH

John's Gospel has a universal global emphasis - and global reach!

- We know that John had Gentiles in mind as well as Jews, because he often "interpreted" Jewish words or customs for his readers (**John 1:38, 41&42; 5:2; 9:7; 19:13&17; 20:16**).

- His appeal to the Jews centred on the truth that Jesus not only fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, but He also fulfilled the types - those majestic word-pictures in the Old Testament every good Jew would have been familiar with, that, in so many of their particulars, point to aspects of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For example, John emphasised how Jesus is:

- the Lamb of God (**John 1:29**),
- the Ladder from heaven to earth (**John 1:51**; cf. **Genesis 28**),
- the New Temple (**John 2:19-21**),
- the Serpent lifted up (**John 3:14**),
- and the Bread of God that came down from heaven (**John 6:35ff**).

Even from his opening sentence in **John 1:1**, it is apparent that he is making his appeal to both Jews and Gentiles.

the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth").

Regarding the Tabernacle:

1. Jesus says of Himself: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (**John 10:9**);

2. John the Baptist announces Jesus in these terms: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (**John 1:29**) - at the Altar of Burnt Offering.

3. The Laver is brought into view by the water at the wedding at Cana in Galilee (**John 2:1-12**); by the water of the Holy Spirit in salvation (**John 3:5**: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"); and also when Jesus washes the disciples' feet and tells them to wash one another's feet (**John 13:1-17**).

4. To guide us through the Tabernacle Sanctuary (from the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies), Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (**John 14:6**).

5. Regarding the Holy Place, Jesus says of Himself:

a. "I am the Bread of Life" (**John 6:35**) on the Table of Shewbread!

b. "I am the Light of the world" and "the Light of Life" (**John 8:12**) at the Candlestick!

c. "I pray for them: I pray ... for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine" (**John 17:9**) as the High Priest at the Golden Altar of Incense!

6. "... the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (**John 6:51**) at the Veil (cf. also **Hebrews 10:20**).

7. As to the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies:

a. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (**John 1:1**), as the Stone Tablets of the Law;

kept him, and what he did and what he said, treasured up not merely in his mind but in his heart; and his understanding had ripened as the years fled by – for ‘it is the heart that makes the theologian.’ In his old age, he brings out of the treasures of his teeming memory, words of life for the healing of the nations. Would these things have perished from the memory of man, had it not been for him? The Gospel could not have been written save by him who leaned on Jesus’ breast. It can be understood only by those who lean on Jesus’ breast” (Warfield, ‘The Gospel of John,’ Selected Shorter Writings, ii, 645&646).

SUB-SECTIONS

(a) Instructions by the Son of God, 13:1 - 16:33;

(b) Intercession of the Son of God, 17:1-26;

(c) Crucifixion of the Son of God, 18:1 - 19:42;

(d) Resurrection of the Son of God, 20:1 - 21:25;

α. The empty tomb, **20:1-20.**

b. His appearances afterwards, **20:11-21:25.**



I cannot leave this section (or the Book) without drawing attention to:

JESUS AND THE TABERNACLE IMAGERY IN JOHN

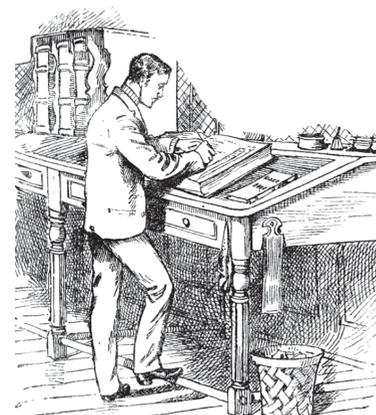
The Tabernacle, the Offerings, the Priesthood and the Feasts that we read about in the Old Testament books of **Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy** are hinted at in a very real way throughout John’s writings.

In John’s gospel, Jesus is first presented as the Word, Who is God, in Whom is life, Who then became flesh and dwelt (literally “tabernacled”) among us (**John 1:1,4&14**: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of

(a) The book begins with the words “**In the beginning ...**,” which any Jew would immediately recognise as the opening words of his Torah (Old Testament). John is going back to **Genesis 1:1**, he is starting his story from there.

THE WORD ... TO ALL MEN!

(b) But the next few words would have reeled-in the Gentile: “**In the beginning was the Word ...**”



Identifying Jesus with the Word – “the Logos” – would have immediately caught the ear of a Gentile hearer, who was used to the idea of the “logos” — an important principle of philosophy in the Greco-Roman world and culture. Similarly, the contrast that John draws between light and darkness in this opening section of the book would instantly have struck a chord; it was everywhere in the ancient world of that time.

So this Gospel issues a global call!

The substance of this call is also clear ...

3. THE UNITED AIM OF THIS GOSPEL.

The book opens with an affirmation that eternal life is to be found in Christ (**John 1:4**: “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men”) ... and there is no doubt that the Gospel of John has a plain evangelistic purpose, presenting Jesus and calling upon men to make a decision about Him.

Famous preacher, J. Sidlow Baxter, explains: “John’s raison d’être flashes like a torch all the way through his Gospel and finds final expression at the end: ‘But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.’ (**20:31**). The three synoptists [Matthew, Mark and Luke] simply set forth the facts, and leave them to make their own impression on the reader. Not so John: all is statedly

selected and directed to the securing of a verdict. ... By the time anyone has gone through Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the biggest of all decisions must be made. It may have been made before John is reached, but if not it can no longer be side-stepped. The reader is directly challenged, and must choose – to receive and be saved, or to reject and perish forever.”

The feathers of his pen guide the good news of Jesus Christ across the world - to the head and heart of both Jew and Gentile.

As John Hart put it:

**Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity joined with power;
He is able,
He is willing; doubt no more!**

**Saints and angels joined in concert,
Sing the praises of the Lamb;
While the blissful seats of heaven
Sweetly echo with His name!
Hallelujah!
Sinners here may sing the same.**

This evangelistic thrust is why we advise new converts to begin their daily reading of the Bible by systematically reading and studying their way through the Gospel of John.



**[1] PROLOGUE
... THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD;
John 1:1-18.**

This fourth Gospel begins with a quite magnificent prologue.

INDIVIDUAL MIRACLE IS NEEDED!

Jesus speaks of the “new birth” in **John 3:1-21** and expresses the truth that a man must be born again - or from above - to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

THE PRIVATE DISCOURSES

While this is by no means a hard and fast rule, it is still true by and large that the Synoptic Gospels record the Lord’s public speeches and discourses and utterances while John specialises in His private ones, to individuals and to his disciples.

It is in John, for example, that we have:

- the Lord’s interview with Nathanael (**John 1:47-51**);
- with Nicodemus (**John 3**);
- His conversation with the woman at the well in Samaria (**John 4**);
- His dealing with the woman taken in adultery (**John 8:1-11**).

Our Lord comes through with great messages of salvation and sustenance for His people in this Gospel!



**[3] PASSION
... THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION
OF THE SON OF GOD;
13:1 – 21:25.**

This section of the Book presents the events of the Passion Week, culminating in Jesus’ death and resurrection from the dead – the final and climactic sign of His glory.

His Passion is one for which we should have a passion!

Famous theologian, B.B. Warfield, has said: “... In the highest and best sense of the word, John’s is the Gospel of passion. It is the Gospel of passionate, never-failing, brooding love. He who wrote it understood his Master as only love can understand. Long years he had

Jesus:

- worked miracles in the absence of faith;
- worked a variety of miracles, including control over nature, multiplying food, raising the dead;
- and His mighty works were never done for selfish gain.



7 MIRACLES TO BRING LIFE TO OUR HEARTS

These seven miracles recorded in the Gospel of John are illustrations of miracles that Christ is currently doing in the life of each of His people.

1. Turning wedding water into wine:
The New Christian is now clean and becomes filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. Healing the Nobleman's Son:
Our cured Life and Nobility in Jesus Christ.
3. Healing of the lame man:
The saved soul can now walk in newness of life in Christ.
4. Feeding the Thousands with Bread and Fish:
Fellowship of strengthening, building up, and nourishment in the faith among the believers.
5. Calming the storm around the disciples:
Jesus calms our fears during the storms of life.
6. Blind eyes opened:
With our eyes opened to the hopeless plight of humanity, we are sent out to bear witness of Jesus to those perishing in nature's night.
7. Resurrection of Lazarus from death to life:
Resurrection of the believer from physical death to eternal life.

These seven signs of Jesus' ministry all illustrate His purpose in coming into the world, which was "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (**John 10:10**).

They emphasise that an:

John crafts his introduction superbly. You may have noticed in reading through this section of **chapter 1 (verses 1-18)** that the Lord's name, Jesus Christ, is not mentioned until the very end.

BRUSHSTROKES ON JESUS

John lifts his brush for portraiture, applies several bold strokes, ... and while he paints One who is:

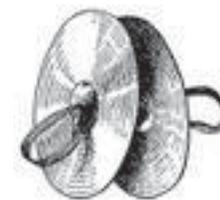
- "The Word" (**1:1&14**);
- "The Light" (**1:4-9**);
- The Creator of the world (**1:10**);
- The Saviour of men's souls (**1:12**); ...

... still we have not been told precisely who it is that John is speaking about.

In other words, we are forced to think deeply about the identity of John's subject. Who is he picturing?

Not until the end of **verse 17**, do we hear the name Jesus Christ: "For the law was given by Moses, [but] grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

It is a brilliant rhetorical device to lay emphasis on the identity of the One about whom such wonderful things have been said.



After the opening thunder it falls away, and then is a crescendo to the very end – the roll of drums, growing ever louder, ending in a crash of cymbals. And what is said about him, about this Jesus Christ, is that He is God!

THE GRAND REVELATION ...

This is the great disclosure - the grand revelation - the leading statement of this introduction, this prologue to the Gospel of John. The one who is to be the subject of the Gospel, the one John knew personally, is none other than the Son of God who is God himself.

And this is precisely what the Gospel of John is all about, start to finish!

This thunderous opening salvo announces the great subject of the Gospel – how the Word of God, the Son of God, who was with God in

the very beginning, who is God, came into this world, into time, indeed, into human life itself, to disclose to mankind the glory and the grace of God.

THE “INCLUSIO”

In writing, there is a rhetorical device known as “inclusio” by means of which a writer makes a similar statement at the beginning and end of a section, (or even an entire book), and indicates to his reader his theme, his subject, or his emphasis.

Biblical writers often used this “inclusio” device, (and it was all the more important and effective in a day before the use of titles, chapter headings, tables of contents, or italic type).

Many students of John’s Gospel have pointed out that **John 1:1** together with **John 20:28** – Thomas’ confession of Jesus, “My Lord and my God” – form an inclusio for this entire Gospel.

The book begins with the statement “Jesus is God” and it ends – or nearly ends – with the statement “Jesus is God”, ... and in between, we are treated to plenty of demonstrations of Christ’s deity.

KEY TEXT - JOHN 1:1

I cannot overemphasise the importance of the opening statement in John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (**John 1:1**).

I know that many of you, at one time or another, have had a Jehovah’s Witness tell you that the word “God” at the end of **John 1:1**, in the phrase “... the Word was God” is not preceded by the definite article and therefore should be translated “the Word was **a** God.” That is, Jesus was not The God, Jehovah – but a god, a lesser divine being.

I have spent some time discussing this issue in my book, ‘60 Questions Every Jehovah’s Witness Should Be Asked’ (Qs. 8&9).

But let me quote from Dr. Robert S. Rayburn: “No competent authority on the Greek language of the NT period takes the view that Jehovah’s Witnesses take of the syntax of John 1:1. And a similar thing may be said of the standard authorities on John’s Gospel, evangelical and non-evangelical alike.

This mighty work fulfilled the prophecy concerning Messiah in **Isaiah 42:1, 6&7**: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, [in whom] my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. 6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, [and] them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”

Following this sign, Jesus emphasises His sonship, saying to the blind man He has just healed: “Dost thou believe on the Son of God? ... Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. 38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him” (**John 9:35, 37&38**).

NOT EVERYONE CONVINCED!

Naturally, not everyone was convinced by these tremendous signs, despite their magnitude!

The Pharisees in **John 9**, eaten up by envy and pride, utterly refuse to admit that they have got it wrong about Jesus. Their ego-driven unwillingness to accept their own need drives them to question - even rubbish - the astonishing demonstration of the Lord’s divine credentials that they have seen before their eyes! They are willfully blind. They will not see, because they see so clearly that they must then confess that Jesus is holy God and they are sinful flesh! They are not about to say, as the man who had been healed said, “I was blind, but now I see.”



As Voltaire once wrote of himself, “If in the market of Paris, before the eyes of a thousand men and before my own eyes, a miracle should be performed, I would much rather disbelieve the two thousand eyes and my own two, than believe it.”

“I would much rather”

In those few words lie the key. What any person will believe is so often what that person is willing to believe!

NOT LIKE TODAY’S ‘FAITH HEALERS’!

The point should be stressed that there are obvious contrasts between Jesus’ miracles and the alleged miracles of today’s “faith healers.”

greater witness than [that] of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. ... There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him”;

* and identified Him as the Messiah; **John 7:31**: “And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this [man] hath done?”

• Take the first miracle - the changing of water into wine - for example. Why was it performed? John does not leave us to speculate ... he makes sure that he underlines the purpose behind this miraculous performance in his final line about it; **John 2:11**: “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.”

The miracle displayed Jesus’ glory and caused His disciples to believe in Him, or to believe still more firmly in Him.

• Or take the miracle of the healing of the blind man, for another example.

DEMONSTRATION OF DEITY

Like the other signs, this miracle clearly demonstrated that Jesus is the Messiah and that He came from God:

• **John 9:3&4**: “Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. 4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”;

• **John 9:30-33**: “The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and [yet] he hath opened mine eyes. 31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. 32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. 33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.”

C.K. Barrett, the English scholar, whose commentary on John’s Gospel has been a fixture for scholarship for a generation, writes this: ‘John intends that the whole of his gospel be read in the light of this verse. The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God; if this be not true the book is blasphemous’.”

7 TITLES OF DEITY IN JOHN 1

Within **this 1st chapter** alone, John records seven names and titles of our Lord Jesus Christ that identify Him as eternal God:

1. The Word (**John 1:1-3&14**);
2. the Light (**John 1:4-13**);
3. the Son of God (**John 1:15-28&49** - a title that appears at least nine times in the Gospel of John);
4. the Lamb of God (**John 1:29-34**);
5. the Messiah (**John 1:35-42**);
6. the King of Israel (**John 1:43-49**),
7. and the Son of Man (**John 1:50&51**).

**Jesus is God! The solid earth,
The ocean broad and bright,
The countless stars, like golden dust,
That strow the skies at night,
The wheeling storm, the dreadful fire,
The pleasant, wholesome air,
The summer’s sun, the winter’s frost,
His own creations were.**

**Jesus is God! There never was
A time when He was not
Boundless, eternal, merciful,
The son the Sire begot!
Backwards our thoughts through ages stretch,
Onwards through endless bliss, -
For there are two eternities,
And both alike are His.**

**Jesus is God! Let sorrow come,
And pain, and every ill;
All are worthwhile, for all are means
His glory to fulfil.
Worthwhile a thousand years of life**

To speak one little word,
If by our credo we may own
The Godhead of our Lord. (Frederick Faber 1814-1863).



[2] PRESENTATION
... THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE SON OF GOD;
1:19 – 12:50.

7 WITNESSES TO DEITY OF CHRIST

John presents seven witnesses who give their testimony to Jesus as the Son of God.

1. John the Baptist ... **John 1:34 (1:19-36)**;
2. Nathanael ... **John 1:49 (43-51)**;
3. Peter ... **John 6:69 (66-69)**;
4. The blind man who was healed (**John 9:35-38**);
5. Martha ... **John 11:27**;
6. Thomas ... **John 20:28**;
7. John himself ... **John 20:31** (cf. **John 21:24**: *"This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true"*).

And if you add to these two testimonies to His own Deity by the Lord Himself, in **John 5:25** and **John 10:36 (31-47)**, then you quickly get the idea that this Gospel is the accumulation of testimony on behalf of the proposition that Jesus is the Son of God!

THE SIGNS

From **1:19** to the end of **chapter 12** there is what we might call 'The Book of Signs.' In these chapters John tells of the Lord's miracles and intersperses important discourses (messages).

John includes miracles that the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke) do not include – indeed, **all but two** of the miracles that John reports are known only from John's gospel, including perhaps the most

decisive and historically significant miracle of all the Lord's miracles – the raising of Lazarus from the dead, just days before His own crucifixion.

John presents seven great signs (or miracles) in this section of the book (**1:19 - 12:50**) that serve to prove the credentials of Jesus as the Son of God. (The only other miracle recorded in John appears in the final chapter, **John 21** – that of the miraculous catch of fish).

Because seven is the perfect number in Scripture, the number of completion, we could push a point and say that these seven miracles provide complete demonstration that Jesus is the Son of God!

7 MIRACLES TO PROVE DEITY OF CHRIST

Jesus:

1. changes water into wine (**John 2:1-11**),
2. restores a sick boy's health (**John 4:46-54**),
3. makes a lame man walk (**John 5:1-18**),
4. feeds thousands with practically nothing (**John 6:1-14**),
5. walks on the life-threatening sea (**John 6:16-21**),
6. gives sight to a blind man (**John 9:1-41**),
7. and finally raises Lazarus from the dead (**John 11:1-45**).

SIGN OF GENUINENESS

A miracle (dunamis) is a mighty work or exhibition of extraordinary power ... "an extraordinary work of God in the world which serves as a sign or attestation."

John presents Jesus' miracles as "signs" (semeion) – a distinguishing mark or seal of genuineness (**John 2:23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2&14**). They support His claim to be God.

- Miracles in the Bible served the purpose to accredit a man as being from God (e.g, Moses before Pharaoh, **Exodus 4&5**).
- In Jesus' case, the miracles He performed not merely gained the attention of the people and showed God's compassion for the plight of mankind, but:

* confirmed that He was from God; **John 5:36; 3:1&2**: "But I have