

# John 20:30 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

**John 20:30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: men oun polla alla semeia ho lesous kai epoiesen (3SAAI) enopion to matheton ha estin (3SPAI) ouk gegrammena (RPPI) en touto ho biblio: ([NASB: Lockman](#))**

- **many other:** Mt 1:17. Jn 21:25. Lk 1:3, 4. Lk 3:18. Ro 15:4. 1Co 10:11. 2 Ti 3:15-17. 2Pe 3:1, 2. 1Jn 1:3, 4.
- **signs:** John 2:11, 23
- **in the presence:** Acts 10:41
- **this book:** Acts 1:20

In the four Gospels Jesus performed 35 miracles and John has only recorded 7 (or 8) of miracles.

**Therefore** - This is a **term of conclusion** and begs the question of what is John concluding? In this **context** while it is a conclusion, it is also in a sense an explanation. Recall Thomas' declaration of faith in Jn 20:28 - "Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus responded by declaring "to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." (Jn 20:29) So John concludes (and explains) in Jn 20:30-31 how it is possible that one could not see Jesus in person and yet still believe in Him. And of course the answer is by reading the written record of His ministry, especially the seven signs John recorded in John 1-12. For one who really wants to know Jesus, these signs are more than sufficient for the Holy Spirit to reveal Him to our heart and mind.

**Rich Cathers** - Scholars have concluded that the gospels only record about 50 days of Jesus' ministry in all the combined gospels. Yet Jesus' total ministry of 3 ½ years comes to about 1080 days. That means that we only have record of 4.6% percent of Jesus' ministry. Imagine the teaching, conversations, and ministry we've never heard about.

**Calvin** comments on **many other signs** - If the Evangelist had not cautioned his readers by this observation, they might have supposed that he had left out none of the miracles which Christ had performed, and had given a full and complete account of all that happened. John, therefore, testifies, first, that he has only related some things out of a large number; not that the others were unworthy of being recorded, but because these were sufficient to edify faith. And yet it does not follow that they were performed in vain, for they profited that age. Secondly, though at the present day we have not a minute knowledge of them, still we must not suppose it to be of little importance for us to know that the Gospel was sealed by a vast number of miracles.

**Many other signs** - Besides the two in John 20 where Jesus passed into the room even though the doors were shut (Jn 20:19, 26). In Jn 20:31 John is alluding primarily to the **seven signs** that were performed in the first 12 chapters, during which Jesus was engaged primarily in public ministry. In John 12:36 it says that after He spoke " He went away and hid Himself from them (the Jews)" John 12:36b to John 17 deals with Jesus' private ministry to His disciples.

In the last chapter John adds that many things relating to Jesus have been excluded from the passages of Scripture - "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." (Jn 21:25) (**Comment:** One wonders if we will someday in heaven be privy to a replay of that incredible 3 year ministry of Jesus the God-Man?)

**Adam Clarke** notes that "The other miracles which our Lord did, and which are not related here, were such as were necessary to the disciples only, and therefore not revealed to mankind at large. There is nothing in the whole revelation of God but what is for some important purpose (cf 2Ti 3:16-17), and there is nothing left out that could have been of any real use."

**What is a sign?** Something that points beyond itself to something greater. In other words it was not enough for the people to just believe in Jesus' works, but they had to believe in the Worker Jesus. And this is why Jesus often added a **sermon** to the **sign** and in that **sermon** interpreted the **sign**. For example, when performed the sign of healing the paralytic in John 5 of the **Sabbath**, this opened the way for a message on His deity as the "**Lord of the Sabbath**." Similarly when performing the sign of feeding the 5000 in John 6, it led to His sermon in which He described Himself as the Bread of life. So we see the point of the sign was that Jesus miraculous works would point to the divine Worker Jesus!

**W H Griffith Thomas** commenting on John's words describing the first sign of turning water to wine in John 2 (*This beginning of [His] signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.* - Jn 2:11) says "If we take this as characteristic and typical of the rest, we may say that the signs were intended to manifest certain aspects of our Lord's glory. They were to show something of that glory which He had received from the Father for the purpose of accomplishing His earthly work." **Thomas then concludes** "We seem, therefore, to be led to the conclusion that the signs were intended primarily for the

confirmation of the existing faith of disciples rather than for the eliciting of faith in those who did not believe. We may see this in the contrast of the two passages: "So many signs before them" (emprosthen auton, John 12:37), the Jews: "**Signs in the presence of His disciples**" (enopion ton matheton, John 20:30)...With few exceptions, there was a general disregard of these signs by the great mass of the people, and so far as the direct effect was concerned the result was just the opposite of that which might have been expected. Whether intended primarily for outsiders or not, in effect the signs did not lead in many cases to faith on the part of those who were not already prepared to receive Him without them. Their chief effect was clearly to assure believers and to confirm faith which had already been elicited by personal contact with Christ (John 2:11 after John 1:39, 45, 49; John 14:11 after John 14:10)."  
[\(The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel - Part 1\)](#)

**W H G Thomas** adds that Jesus' "public ministry is summed up in a sad but pregnant comment (John 12:37 - '*But though He had performed so many signs before them, [yet] they were not believing in Him.*') showing the comparative fruitlessness of the signs wrought so far as conviction of His claims was concerned." ([Ibid](#))

**Milne** gives us some insight on Thomas' comments in his discussion on the verb **believe** in John 20:31 - It needs to be added, however, that there is a possible alternative reading in the Greek for '**believe**' in this verse. The reading followed in the NIV reflects an **aorist tense** expressing a decisive act of believing: 'that you may (come to) believe (Greek. pisteusēte)'. By this reading John's purpose is **evangelistic**; he writes to produce decisive commitment to Christ. The alternative reading is a present tense (Gk. pisteuēte), and would give a meaning like 'these are written so that those who believe may go on believing', i.e. may hold on to their faith and grow in it, a **discipling** purpose. On balance the textual support for the former appears stronger. Certainly there can be no doubt as to John's intention to confront his readers with the claims of Christ and to challenge them to respond. The proven evangelistic power of this gospel needs no documentation. While acknowledging this to be the primary purpose, however, it is not impossible to affirm a number of secondary aims as well. There can be little doubt that John is conscious of addressing Christians as well as non-Christians through his gospel, and hence of encouraging Christians **to continue and grow in their faith**. The 'upper room' discourses in particular are replete with teaching for the disciple of Christ. It is also likely that John is not unaware of the docetic tendencies in the Greco-Roman culture within which he wrote, so the clear stress which John places on the true humanity of Jesus may well have had that heretical tendency in view. Above all, however, John is an evangelist in the classical sense; he writes to win lost people for Christ. At a time when world evangelization is again on the church's agenda John's presentation of his Master is truly a 'tract for the times'. ([Milne, Bruce - The Message of John - Bible Speaks Today](#))

There are several references in John to '**many other signs**' (although admittedly these were not ONLY in the presence of the disciples in John 1-12)...

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. (As the context shows their belief was merely intellectual and not a heart belief that results in genuine conversion and changed conduct).

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."

John 6:2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the **signs** which He was performing on those who were sick. (Three of John's seven signs in John 1-12 are related to healing, but this statement implies even more).

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?"

<b>THE SEVEN SIGNS JOHN 1-12</b>				
<b>SIGN</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>BELIEF</b>	<b>UNBELIEF</b>	<b>SCRIPTURE</b>
<b>Water to wine</b>	Jesus' power over quality	The disciples	-	Jn 2:1-11
<b>Healing son of Official</b>	Jesus' power over space	The official and his household	-	Jn 4:46-54
<b>Healing the Paralytic</b>	Jesus' power over time	Paralytic??	The Jews	Jn 5:1-9
<b>Feeding the 5000</b>	Jesus' power over quantity	Some in the crowd	See Jn 6:26-66	Jn 6:1-15

<b>Walking on Water</b>	Jesus' power over nature	The disciples	-	Jn 6:16-21
<b>Healing man born blind</b>	Jesus' power over adversity	The blind man	The Pharisees	Jn 9:1-12
<b>Raising Lazarus</b>	Jesus' power over death	Martha, Mary, Many Jews	The Jewish Authorities	Jn 11:1-16

[From Dr Thomas Constable](#)

**Signs** (4592) (**semeion** from **sema** = sign) a sign is something that serves as a pointer to aid perception or insight. In the NT a sign speaks of a token which has behind it a particular message to be conveyed. In other words, in John's Gospel (where semeion is most concentrated) the apostle recorded certain miracles not for the wonder (cf "wonders") they produced, but because of the message they taught (Jn 20:31).

A sign directs attention away from its unusual nature to the meaning and the significance it points to. It speaks of outward compelling proof of divine authority. In John a sign is generally a "miraculous sign" that points to some deeper spiritual significance in connection with the event (Jn 2:11, 18). Semeion describes a miracle whose purpose is that of attesting the claims of the one performing the miracle to be true.

**Wayne Detzler** on **semeion** - Early in its use this word meant a visible sign which someone saw. For instance, when Constantine was embroiled in battle he saw the sign of a cross and the words, "In this sign conquer." This turned him to Christianity, and he granted toleration to the Christians in 313. So first of all semeion meant a real or imagined visible sign. Later it came to mean the intervention of the deities in our world. This is the meaning which the Bible attaches to miracles, when God breaks into the natural world to accomplish some special feat. ([New Testament words in today's language](#)).

**W E Vine** says a **semeion** (sign) is a "token or indication, whether given by man to man (2Thes 3:17, Mt 26:48) or appointed by God to be observed by man, as circumcision was (Ro 4:11) or whether given by God in natural phenomena (Lk 21:25) or in the trend of human affairs (Mt 16:3) or through His Son (Jn 2:11, 20:30) or His servants (Acts 5:12, 7:36) or whether given by Satan through his agents (Mt 24:24, 2Thes 2:9, Rev 16:14). A **wonder** is "something strange, exceptional, causing the beholder to marvel. 'Power' declares the source to be supernatural; 'sign' expresses the purpose and appeals to the understanding; 'wonder' describes the effect upon the observer and appeals to the imagination."

Most of the 77 occurrences are found in the Gospels (68/77 with 17 in John's Gospel), Acts and Revelation.

A **sign** is a distinctive mark by which something is known. In 2Th 3:17 **semeion** is something that Paul specifically wrote that served as a mark of genuineness of this letter.

**Semeion** was used to refer to the mark of covenant (circumcision) in Ro 4:11 (cf use in the Lxx of Ge 17:11).

In the Gospels and Acts **semeion** was most often used to describe miraculous (supernatural, divinely enabled) events (most performed by Jesus) which were intended to be a pointer (especially that God was involved in the sign) or a means of confirmation as in the Gospel of John where there were 7 (supernatural) signs by Jesus that specifically pointed to the fact the Man Jesus was also the prophesied **Christ, the Son of God!** (Jn 20:31)

It is notable that John did not use the word **dunamis** (often translated miracle in the other Gospels) but semeion for sign. **Signs** are so prominent in John's Gospel chapters 1–12 that some have referred to these chapters as the "**Book of Signs!**" Note that the only other use of semeion in John is in Jn 20:30. Recall that these first 12 chapters are Jesus' public ministry when He performed the 7 signs to which Jn 20:31 refers.

**Semeion** described an apparently previously agreed upon sign that Judas Iscariot (his kiss of our Lord) gave to the men who had come to take Jesus captive (Mt 26:48).

**Semeion** is common in Acts where it is frequently found in the phrase "**signs and wonders**" - (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12) which is interesting as Luke did not use this phrase in his Gospel. **Signs and wonders** occurs only twice in connection with false prophets in the Synoptics (Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22) and once in John (John 4:48). So what is the significance of **signs and wonders**? They can have an eschatological intent, signifying that the new age has dawned (Acts 2:19; cf. Joel 2:28). They are "proofs" of Jesus' divine authority (Acts 2:22). And most significantly, **signs and wonders** (including healings and exorcisms cf. Acts 8:6,13) were carried out by the apostles (and others, cf. Stephen in Acts 6:8) as they were enabled by God (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12). The men were merely the "vessels" through which God's power was manifest. And the **signs** attested to God's activity among the Gentiles (Acts 15:12). It is notable that **wonders** is never used by itself but always with **signs** so the idea seems to be that "*mere marvels have no intrinsic value in themselves except as they point beyond themselves to the divine power behind them and so lead*

to faith." (Polhill - New American Commentary, p. 112). Stated another way, the sign serves to draw the attention or focus away from the wonder or marvel and so that one understands the wonders point to God and His power and authority.

In other contexts **semeion** referred to a sign (or signs) of things to come (Mk 13:4, Lk 21:7). The disciples ask Jesus what would be the sign of His (second) coming (Mt 24:3). Jesus Himself said when He returned there would be a "**sign**" and it would be Him coming in the clouds in power and great glory. He would be the sign! (Mt 24:30).

In several passages **signs** are the work of Satan or his emissaries (Mt 24:24; Mark 13:22; 2 Thessalonians 2:9, Rev 13:13).

A **sign** is an unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature, as of signs portending remarkable events soon to happen or of miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's.

**Semeion** has a number of interesting uses in the **Septuagint (Lxx)** - As a mark of God's covenant (promise) to never again destroy the earth by flood (Ge 9:12-13), as a mark of covenant between Abraham and God (Ge 17:11 - see **Sign or "memorial" as it relates to Covenant**), the slain lamb's blood on the doorposts and lintel of the Jews at Passover, the **sign** resulting in life rather than destruction by the death angel (Ex 12:13), the **sign** of the virgin with child, a prophecy of the Messiah (Isa 7:14), the **sign** on forehead of believers who would not be destroyed (Ezek 9:4).

**Zodhiates** says semeion refers to "finger-marks of God, valuable not so much for what they are as for what they indicate of the grace and power of the Doer."

**Thoralf Gilbrant** makes an interesting observation that "we see clearly the paradox of semeion in the New Testament. '**Signs**' in and of themselves confirm God's miraculous power and summon faith in Him. At the same time, however, "**signs**"—counterfeit—are a trick of the enemy to lead believers astray. In the final analysis, Christians are not to put their faith in signs themselves. Although signs can lead people to faith and confirm the truth of the gospel, they are only a starting point for true faith. Any sign pointing away from Christ or pointing toward a human being is not of God. "Sign-seekers" still belong to the "evil and adulterous generation." ([The Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Unger** says a **sign** usually denotes "a miraculous or, at least, divine or extraordinary token of some generally future event. Thus the rainbow was given to Noah as a sign of his covenant (Ge 9:12–13), and for the same purpose circumcision was appointed to Abraham (Ge 17:11; cf. Ex. 3:12; Jdg 6:17). Signs and wonders sometimes denoted those proofs or demonstrations of power and authority furnished by miracles and other tokens of the divine presence (Matt. 12:38; John 4:48; Acts 2:22). The word is used for a miraculous appearance, which would attest the divine authority of a prophet or teacher (see Matt. 16:1; Mt 24:30). (New Unger's Bible Dictionary)

**Vine** on **semeion** - "a sign, mark, indication, token," is used **(a)** of that which distinguished a person or thing from others, e.g., Matthew 26:48 ; Luke 2:12 ; Romans 4:11 ; 2 Corinthians 12:12 (1st part); 2 Thessalonians 3:17 , "token," i.e., his autograph attesting the authenticity of his letters; **(b)** of a "sign" as a warning or admonition, e.g., Matthew 12:39 , "the sign of (i.e., consisting of) the prophet Jonas;" Matthew 16:4 ; Luke 2:34 ; 11:29,30 ; **(c)** of miraculous acts **(1)** as tokens of Divine authority and power, e.g., Matthew 12:38,39 (1st part); John 2:11 , RV, "signs;" John 3:2 (ditto); 4:54, "(the second) sign," RV; John 10:41 (ditto); 20:30; in 1 Corinthians 1:22 , "the Jews ask for signs," RV, indicates that the Apostles were met with the same demand from Jews as Christ had been: "signs were vouchsafed in plenty, signs of God's power and love, but these were not the signs which they sought ... They wanted signs of an outward Messianic Kingdom, of temporal triumph, of material greatness for the chosen people. ... With such cravings the Gospel of a 'crucified Messiah' was to them a stumblingblock indeed" (Lightfoot); 1 Corinthians 14:22 ; **(2)** by demons, Revelation 16:14 ; **(3)** by false teachers or prophets, indications of assumed authority, e.g., Matthew 24:24 ; Mark 13:22 ; **(4)** by Satan through his special agents, 2 Thessalonians 2:9 ; Revelation 13:13,14 ; 19:20 ; **(d)** of tokens portending future events, e.g., Matthew 24:3 , where "the sign of the Son of Man" signifies, subjectively, that the Son of Man is Himself the "sign" of what He is about to do; Mark 13:4 ; Luke 21:7,11,25 ; Acts 2:19 ; Revelation 12:1 , RV; 12:3, RV; 15:1. "Signs" confirmatory of what God had accomplished in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, His resurrection and ascension, and of the sending of the Holy Spirit, were given to the Jews for their recognition, as at Pentecost, and supernatural acts by apostolic ministry, as well as by the supernatural operations in the churches, such as the gift of tongues and prophesyings; there is no record of the continuance of these latter after the circumstances recorded in Acts 19:1-20 ([Sign - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words](#))

**Vine** - His works are called "signs." The word **semeion**, "sign," is more than a mere miracle. A miracle is that which excites wonder, but a sign is a significant appeal to the heart of man, used in this case by God to produce an acknowledgment of His existence, power, or character. So the miracles wrought by Christ were testimonies to the fact that He was the Son of God. Three in John's Gospel are recorded in a way which shows that they were specially wrought with a view to convince the Jews of the Lord's Divine Sonship and mission. The first of these three was that of the lame man by the pool of Bethesda. It was that miracle that led to the discussion now under consideration, in which the Lord spoke so much of the witness borne to Him. The second was the healing of

the blind man, which led to the discussion as to whether Jesus had come from God or not, and which was followed by His declaration, in answer to their request that He would tell them plainly whether He was the Christ, "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in My Father's Name, these bear witness of Me" (Jn 10:25). The third is the resurrection of Lazarus. That was, as we have already seen, His last testimony to them by this special means....(Comment on John 2) The word **semeion** is rightly rendered "sign"; it is more than a miracle; it is a miracle with a significance. Christ's signs were (1) evidences of His combined Godhood and manhood, (2) evidences of the character of His mission, (3) symbolical of spiritual truths. Eight are recorded by John. This at Cana was the first, and being a sign, its details conveyed the spiritual teachings above mentioned. In this, too, He manifested His "glory." The glory of the Lord is the shining forth of His character and His power, the presentation of His nature and His actings. The manifestation of His glory was at the same time the manifestation of the glory of His Father. ([The Collected Writings of W. E. Vine](#))

**Barclay** - is John's favourite word. To him a miracle was not simply an astonishing happening; it was not simply a deed of power; it was a sign. That is to say, it told men something about the person who did it; it revealed something of his character; it laid bare something of his nature; it was an action through which it was possible to understand better and more fully the character of the person who did it. To John the supreme thing about the miracles of Jesus was that they told men something about the nature and the character of God. The power of Jesus was used to heal the sick, to feed the hungry, to comfort the sorrowing; and the fact that Jesus used his power in that way was proof that God cared for the sorrows and the needs and the pains of men. To John the miracles were signs of the love of God. In any miracle, then, there are three things. There is the wonder which leaves men dazzled, astonished, aghast. There is the power which is effective, which can deal with and mend a broken body, an unhinged mind, a bruised heart, which can do things. There is the sign which tells us of the love in the heart of the God who does such things for men." ([Daily Bible Study - John](#))

#### Other Resources that discuss "Sign":

- [Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Hasting's Dictionary of the NT](#)
- [ISBE](#)

**Semeion** - 77x in 69v - **NAS Usage:** distinguishing mark(1), miracle(2), sign(35), signs(39).

Matthew 12:38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see **asign** from You." 39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a **sign**; and yet no **sign** will be given to it but the **sign** of Jonah the prophet;

**Comment:** Their seeking of a sign was evidence of their unbelief.

**MacArthur:** Jesus knew the true motive of the Pharisees and Sadducees was to entrap Him, **not to be convinced of His messiahship**. He also knew that another **sign**, no matter how astonishing, would not convince them about that which they were determined to reject. It was for this reason He spoke to them in **parables**, as indicated in Matthew 13:13-15. He would not capitulate to their hypocritical and wicked demand. "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a **sign**," He told them; "and **asign** will not be given it, except the **sign** of Jonah." **The sign of Jonah** was the final **sign** Jesus gave to the world, the **sign** of His victory over sin, death, and Satan through His resurrection. As He had declared to a group of scribes and Pharisees on an earlier occasion, "Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here" (Matt. 12:39-41; for further explanation, see the author's commentary volume Matthew 8-15). **That sign, too, would be rejected by the Jewish religious leaders**. When they heard of Jesus' resurrection, they bribed the soldiers who guarded His tomb to say that His body was stolen by His disciples (Matt. 28:11-15). ([Matthew 8-15- New Testament Commentary](#))

Matthew 16:1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a **sign** from heaven.

**MacArthur:** They did not expect Jesus to perform such a **sign**, and if He had given them one, their unbelief would have remained just as strong. They had already seen **sign** after **sign**, the miraculous nature of which was irrefutable. They did not deny His supernatural power but refused to recognize it as being from God, having even accused Him of working as an agent of Satan (Matt. 12:24). Popular Jewish superstition held that demons could perform earthly miracles but that only God could perform heavenly

ones. From heaven indicates the desire to see a miraculous **sign** in the sky. The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded a miracle they thought was beyond Jesus, hoping to prove that His power, and therefore His message, were not divine. He would be publicly discredited, and they would be vindicated. In their blindness they could not see that Jesus Himself was a **sign** from heaven. Nor could they see that they themselves were helping to fulfill that **sign**. As the godly Simeon held the infant Jesus in his arms he prophesied, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a **sign** to be opposed" (Luke 2:34). Because the unbelieving religious leaders refused to recognize God's supreme **Sign**, His only Son, they could not accept His lesser **signs**, despite the evidence they saw with their own eyes. **Physical sight is of no help to spiritual blindness, and had those leaders seen a hundred more miracles a hundred times more dramatic, they would simply have been driven to deeper darkness-as their rejection of the miracle of Jesus' resurrection proved.** As Abraham said of the brothers in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Like Pharaoh before Moses, the more they saw God's power demonstrated, the more they hardened their hearts against Him (Ex. 7–11). Heavenly signs would come in the future (Matt. 24:29–30; Luke 21:11, 25; Acts 2:19; Rev. 15:1), but they would signal the very end. ([MacArthur NT Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

Matthew 16:3 "And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the **signs** of the times? 4 "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a **sign**; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away.

Matthew 24:3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the **sign** of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

**MacArthur:** The disciples' question was about the ultimate end of the age, not simply the end of an era or epoch of history, but the final end to the present world system of darkness and sin—an end they expected soon. It was also, of course, a question about the beginning of a new and eternal age of light, righteousness, truth, and justice. The ungodly would be forever damned, and the godly would be forever blessed. When would that transpire, they wanted to know, and what sign would herald its arrival? ([MacArthur NT Commentary](#))

**Expositor's Bible Commentary - semeion** ("sign") commonly meant "ensign" or "standard," both in pagan Greek literature and in the LXX; and "standard" and "trumpet" are both regularly associated with the eschatological gathering of the people of God (cf. Mt 24:31; Isa 11:12; 18:3; 27:13; 49:22; Jer 4:21; 6:1; 51:27; 1QM 3:1–4:2). Therefore **semeion** has two different meanings in this chapter (Mt 24:3, Mt 24:30)—a phenomenon common enough in the NT. Theologically this means that the kingdom is being consummated. The standard, the banner of the Son of Man, unfurls in the heavens, as he himself returns in splendor and power. ()

Mt 24:24 "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great **signs** and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

Mt 24:30 "And then the **sign** of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

**Comment:** Many of the early church Fathers, such as Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Origen, imagined that this sign would be an enormous blazing cross, visible to the entire world, that would pierce the total darkness then shrouding the world. Other interpreters have suggested it will be the Shekinah glory of the Lord's presence returning to earth. It is likely that the Shekinah glory will be involved, as the unveiled Christ Jesus makes His appearance. But the sign is not just His glory; it is Christ Himself, the Son of Man, who will appear in the sky. The sign of should be translated as a Greek subjective genitive, indicating that the sign will not simply relate to or point to the Son of Man (as with an objective genitive) but will indeed be the Son of Man. In other words, Jesus Himself will be the supreme and final sign of His coming.

Matthew 26:48 Now he who was betraying Him gave them a **sign**, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him."

Mark 8:11 The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a **sign** from heaven, to test Him.

12 Sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a **sign**? Truly I say to you, no **sign** will be given to this generation."

**Marvin Vincent** - As applied to the miracles of our Lord, this word emphasizes their ethical purport, as declaring that the miraculous act points back of itself to the grace and power or divine character or authority of the doer.

Mark 13:4 "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the **sign** when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"

22 for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show **signs** and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect.

Mark 16:17 "These **signs** will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;

20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the **signs** that followed. [And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.

Luke 2:12 "This will be a **sign** for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a **sign** to be opposed--

Luke 11:16 Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a **sign** from heaven.

29 As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a **sign**, and yet no **sign** will be given to it but the **sign** of Jonah.

30 "For just as Jonah became a **sign** to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

**Comment:** Jonah was in a sense a sign because of his miraculous deliverance from certain death. This is an interesting comparison with Nineveh for this pagan city appears to have completely "received" the sign and repented. What a contrast with the religious Jews who did not receive Jesus (nor the signs that pointed to Him being the Messiah, the Son of God - John 1:11, John 20:31, cp "The Great Pause" in Jn 12:36-37 where John records "though He had performed so many signs before them, [yet] they were not believing in Him." What a tragedy!

Luke 21:7 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the **sign** when these things are about to take place?"

11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great **signs** from heaven.

25 "There will be **signs** in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves,

**Comment:** How fascinating that signs pointed to Jesus in John but to those who reject Him, the signs point to God's judgment!

Luke 23:8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some **sign** performed by Him.

John 2:11 This beginning of His **signs** Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

John 2:18 The Jews then said to Him, "What **sign** do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"

**MacArthur:** Their question was not a request for information, but a challenge to His authority. Jesus had taken it upon Himself to disregard their dominion and regulate the temple activities, and they wanted a miraculous sign as proof of His authority for doing so.

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.

John 3:2 this man (Nicodemus) 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."

John 4:48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see **signs** and wonders, you simply will not believe."

John 4:54 This is again a second **sign** that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

John 6:2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the **signs** which He was performing on those who were sick.

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."

John 6:26 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.

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?"

**Comment:** Contrast their query with what Jesus had just stated in Jn 6:26. They had seen a sign (bread for 5000) but they really did not want to believe in Him. If they did, they should have responded to the sign that He had just performed!

**MacArthur:** They were brazenly demanding Jesus' credentials, in response to His claim in verse 29 to be the One sent from God. The people's foolish demand demonstrated their thickheaded and self-centered curiosity, graphically illustrating the spiritual blindness that engulfs the unredeemed. John Calvin observed, "This wicked question clearly shows the truth of what is said elsewhere: 'A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign' (Matthew 12:39)" Jesus' miraculous feeding of the huge crowd just the day before was ample proof of His deity. Unbelief, however, is never satisfied, no matter how much evidence is given. Luke 16:31 says that those who reject the truth of God's Word "will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead." ([Matthew Commentary](#))

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?"

**Comment:** Remember that although John only records 7 signs in John 1-12, during His public ministry, Jesus clearly performed many other signs as Jn 20:30 states. So the truth is that while we don't know the number of signs Jesus performed in Israel, the problem was not with His signs but with their hearts!

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.

John 10:41 Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no **sign**, yet everything John said about this man was true."

John 11:47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many **signs**."

John 12:18 For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this **sign**.

John 12:37 But though He had performed so many **signs** before them, yet they were not believing in Him.

John 20:30 Therefore many other **signs** Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

Acts 2:19 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND **SIGNS** ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.

22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and **signs** which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--

Acts 2:43 (The first church) Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and **signs** were taking place through the apostles.

Acts 4:16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy **miracle** has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

Acts 4:22 for the man was more than forty years old on whom this **miracle** of healing had been performed.



30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and **signs** and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

Acts 5:12 At the hands of the apostles many **signs** and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and **signs** among the people.

Acts 7:36 "This man led them out, performing wonders and **signs** in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.

**Comment - See signs [semeion in Lxx** - Ex 3:12; 4:8-9, 17, 28, 30; 7:3, 9; 8:23; Ex 10:1-2; 11:9-10; 12:13)

Acts 8:6 The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the **signs** which he was performing.

13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed **signs** and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

**Comment:** Did Simon believe resulting in a new heart? I think the Scripture suggest that indeed he did not express genuine (saving) faith in the Messiah. Peter's warning in Acts 8:19-24 would strongly suggest Simon had not truly repented and believed!

Acts 14:3 Therefore they (Paul and Barnabas - Acts 13:46) spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that **signs** and wonders be done by their hands.

Acts 15:12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what **signs** and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Romans 4:11 and he received the **sign** of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,

Romans 15:19 (Ro 15:18) in the power of **signs** and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

**Wuest** - "Signs" is semeion, one of the seven Greek words which speak of miracles. Here the emphasis is upon the attesting power of the miracle. The primary purpose of a miracle in the first century was to prove that the person performing the miracle spoke or wrote by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that therefore, his words were from God, and authenticated by God. "Wonders" is **teras**, used when the emphasis is upon the extraordinary character of the miracle which draws attention to the miracle and impresses it upon the memory of the beholder.

1 Corinthians 1:22 For indeed Jews ask for **signs** and Greeks search for wisdom;

1 Corinthians 14:22 So then tongues are for a **sign**, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a **sign**, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.

**Expositor's Bible Commentary**- He concludes (hōste, "then," 1Cor 14:22) that tongues can be and really are a sign of something miraculous (sēmeion), an indication of God's presence to the unbeliever (cf. Acts 2). The believer does not need that sign. He already has the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 6:19).

2 Corinthians 12:12 The **signs** of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by **signs** and wonders and miracles.

2 Thessalonians 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and **signs** and false wonders,

2 Thessalonians 3:17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing **mark** in every letter; this is the way I write.

Hebrews 2:4 God also testifying with them, both by **signs** and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

Revelation 12:1 A great **sign** appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars;

3 Then another **sign** appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.

Revelation 13:13 He performs great **signs**, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.

14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the **signs** which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.

Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another **sign** in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

Revelation 16:14 for they are spirits of demons, performing **signs**, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

Revelation 19:20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the **signs** in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

### Semeion - 91v in the Septuagint -

Gen 1:14; 4:15; Ge 9:12-13, 17; Ge 17:11; Ex 3:12; 4:8-9, 17, 28, 30; 7:3, 9; 8:23; 10:1-2; 11:9-10; 12:13; 13:9, 16; 31:13, 17; Num 14:11, 22; 16:38; 17:10; 21:8-9; 26:10; Deut 4:34; 6:8, 22; 7:19; 11:3, 18; 13:1-2; 26:8; 28:46; 29:3; 34:11; Josh 2:18; 4:6; Jdg 20:38; 1Sam 2:34; 10:1, 7, 9; 14:10; 2 Kgs 19:29; 20:8-9; 2 Chr 32:24; Neh 9:10; Esth 4:17; 10:3; Job 21:29; Ps 65:8; 74:4, 9; 78:43; 86:17; 105:27; 135:9; Isa 7:11, 14; 8:18; 11:12; 13:2; 18:3; 19:20; Isa 20:3; 33:23; 37:30; 38:7, 22; 44:25; 55:13; 66:19; Jer 6:1; 10:2; 32:20-21; 44:29; 48:9; 51:12, 27; Ezek 4:3; 9:4, 6; 20:12, 20; 39:15; Dan 4:1-2; 5:9; 6:27

**Semeion** in the **Septuagint** - sign, calendar marks Gn 1:14; sign, token Ex 4:8; sign, miracle, wonder Dt 7:19; (warning) sign Nu 17:25; mark Gen 4:15; signal Isa 33:23; standard, flag Jer 51:12 The translators of the Septuagint predominantly recognized *sēmeion* as the equivalent of the Hebrew term *'ôth* (in various forms), a “sign, mark” (e.g., Genesis 1:14, the sun and the moon are “signs” for marking seasons; Genesis 4:15, the “mark” of Cain). God regularly offered signs as signifiers and reminders of His covenantal promises. This may involve a future circumstance (Exodus 3:12) or a supernatural event calling for belief (Exodus 4:8,9), or a reminder (Exodus 31:13; Numbers 17:10). God empowers His servants to perform signs (Exodus 4:17,28,30) with the result and intent that people can turn to God (Exodus 4:30; Numbers 14:11). But signs are no guarantee that belief will follow (Exodus 7:3,9ff.; 8:23f.; Numbers 14:22; Deuteronomy 29:3). In fact, disbelief or stubbornness may stimulate signs by God (Exodus 10:1; Ex 11:9-10.). “Signs” in and of themselves, however, are no guarantee of the reliability of a prophet or seer (Deuteronomy 13:1-3.). Signs are future oriented, and they are often supernatural (e.g., Isaiah 38:7; Joel 2:30). The prophet Samuel told Saul of certain “signs” he would experience which would be a “signal” that God was with him (1 Samuel 10:1,7,9; cf. 1Sa 14:10). The Lord’s signs were carried out by the prophets (2 Kings 20:8,9-12); cf. Psalm 105:27). Of the Prophets, the Book of Isaiah has the most instances of *sēmeion* (15 times). Apparently, asking God for a sign came to be regarded as “testing God” (Isaiah 7:12; cf. Matthew 4:7; 1Corinthians 1:22). But God gave signs anyway (Isaiah 7:13-15), sometimes to His enemies for war and judgment (“banner,” NIV; Isaiah 11:12; 13:2; 18:3; 19:20). The prophet Isaiah acted out God’s sign against Egypt and Cush (Isa 20:3). (The Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

### Hebrew words translated in Septuagint with semeion:

- אֹת *'ôth*, Sign (Dt 11:18, 1Sa 10:7, Isa 7:11).
- אָתַר *'āth*, Sign (Dan 4:2—Aramaic).
- מוֹעֵד *mô'ēdh*, Appointed signal (Jdg 20:38).
- מוֹפֵת *môphēth*, Miracle, wonder (Ex 7:9, 11:9, 2Chr 32:24).
- מַשְׁעָה *mas'ēth*, Tax, something that rises; fire signal (Jer 6:1).
- עֹלָם *nēṣ*, Pole, mast (Nu 21:8-9., Isa 33:23); standard (Jer 51:12).
- מַסָּבָה *tsiyûn*, Marker (Ezek 39:15).
- תָּוֹ *tāw*, Mark (Ezek 9:4,6).
- תִּקְוָה *tiqwāh*, Cord (Josh 2:18).

Representative OT uses of **semeion** -

Ge 9:12-13 12God said, "This is the **sign** of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; 13I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.

Ge 9:17 And God said to Noah, "This is the **sign** of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Ge 17:11 "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the **sign** of the covenant between Me and you.

Exodus 12:13 (**Passover**) 'The blood shall be a **sign** for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

Exodus 13:9 (also Ex 13:16) "And it shall serve as a **sign** (Sadly the Jews took this literally and turned grace into a work of the flesh!) to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt.

Isaiah 7:14-note "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a **sign**: (Heb = oth; Lxx = semeion) Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Isaiah 11:12-note And He (God) will lift up a **standard** (Lxx = semeion) for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. (**Comment** - This would refer to the Second Coming when the remnant of Israel [1/3] is saved.)

Ezekiel 9:4-note The LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a **mark** (Heb = tav = a mark; Lxx = semeion) on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst."

**Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book**

## MANY SUPERNATURAL SIGNS

The supernatural signs pointed to Jesus' supernatural Being, but tragically most of the Jews who witnessed those signs (and they may have even "believed" them) failed to receive Him as their Supernatural Savior (John 1:11). Belief in signs saves no one. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life to which the signs pointed.

**Jesus** (2424)(**iesous**) is **transliteration** of the Greek **iesous**, which in turn is the transliteration of the Hebrew name **Jehoshua** (**Yehoshua**) or **Jeshua** (**Yeshua**), which mean *Jehovah is help* or *Jehovah is salvation*. Stated another way the Greek **iesous** corresponds to the OT **Jehoshua** (**Yehoshua**) which is contracted as **Jeshua** (**Yeshua**).

**Thomas** writes that John emphasizes the historical person known as **Jesus** noting "it is a simple fact that in not one of the Gospels is the true humanity and historical character of our Lord more clearly set forth. This element of the personal, human life of Jesus Christ is one of the threads running through the Gospel (of John)."

**In the presence of the disciples** - This phrase suggests that these signs were signs seen only by the genuine disciples. However John's wording does not completely exclude signs performed in the presence of disciples who were in the midst of others.

If this does refer just to the disciples' witness of these signs, we see a parallel passage in Acts where Luke records "To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, **by many convincing proofs**, appearing to them over [a period of] forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3) In other words, one interpretation would see John as referring to signs only seen by the disciples. Another way to interpret it would be that Jesus always performed the signs in the presence of disciples, but that others were present.

The **disciples** were eye witnesses to a multitude of signs which were not recorded. One wonders if they will tell us about them in the age to come (Millennium) or age after that, in Heaven.

**Presence** (before, in sight of) (1799)(**enopion** from **en** = in + **ops** = the eye/see [cp optanomai = see, perceive with eyes, look at, implying not only the mere act of seeing but actual perception of what one sees]) means literally in sight, in front of, in the presence of. Being in sight. Before the face and thus the idea of face to face! Of doing something in someone's presence.

**Wuest** writes that **enopion** "was used in such expressions as, "the case will be drawn up against you in the court at Heracleopolis in

the presence of," "deliver personally," "I gave notice in person." It is used of one who does or says something in the presence of someone else, and does it with the consciousness that that one has him in sight and mind. Paul delivered this solemn charge to Timothy, conscious of the fact that he was doing so in the sight of God, and he wished Timothy to ever so regard the charge."

**Disciples** (3101)(**mathetes** from **manthano** = to learn which **Vine** says is "from a root math, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor". Gives us our English = "mathematics") describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf **inductive Bible study**) and thus **mathetes** is more than a mere pupil. A **mathetes** describes an adherent of a teacher. It is notable that **mathetes** is used of superficial followers of Jesus as well as of genuine believers, so one must examine the context to determine to which it refers. Clearly in the present context the reference is to genuine disciples of Jesus.

**Have not been written** (1125)(**grapho**) literally means they were not inscribed producing a record that can be read. **Written** is in the **perfect tense** which signifies they do not stand written.

Clearly John was saying that his Gospel must not be supposed to be a complete account. In addition, the fact that there were many other signs not recorded indicates the magnitude of Jesus' ministry and also speaks of the Father's heart to go to great lengths (many signs) so that none would perish but all would come to repentance (2Pe 3:9-note). While one might argue the signs John refers to in this passage were only in the presence of the disciples, the fact remains that Jesus performed some "many other things...which if they were written in detail...even the world itself would not contain all the books that would be written." (Jn 21:25).

**Charles Simeon** comments on John's language in Jn 21:25 "If all that he performed were distinctly related with all their attendant circumstances, St. John tells us, in the **hyperbolic language of the east**, that the whole world would scarcely be able to contain the books that would be written."

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### [Steven Cole - John 20:29-31 - Blessing for Believers](#)

A question that I often ask couples who come to me for counsel is, "Do you want God's blessing on your marriage?" It's a no-brainer, of course. I've yet to have a couple say, "Nah! We're not interested in having God's blessing." But the second question gets a bit stickier: "Are you willing to obey God's Word as it pertains to your marriage?" Obviously, to enjoy God's blessing, we have to live in obedience to His Word.

His blessings are gracious, in that we can't earn them. He gives His greatest blessing of salvation freely to the undeserving. But if we reject that blessing or respond to His kindness with defiance or disobedience, we can't expect His blessing. He blesses those who obey Him.

By God's blessing, I'm referring to His favor, goodness, joy, or well-being bestowed on us. The Old Testament priests would bless the Israelites (Num. 6:24-26):

The Lord bless you, and keep you;  
The Lord make His face shine on you,  
And be gracious to you;  
The Lord lift up His countenance on you,  
And give you peace.

God's blessings encompass the total well-being that comes from being the object of His favor. They may be material blessings, such as good health and adequate financial provisions. They include harmonious relationships in our families and peace with others, including living in a country that is free from war. But the greatest blessings are spiritual, because they are eternal. In that sense, Paul exults (Eph. 1:3), "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." If we have eternal spiritual blessings, then we are blessed even if we suffer. As 1 Peter 4:14 says, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

During His ministry, Jesus pronounced a number of blessings in different settings. The most well-known are the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-22). He told the apostles they were blessed because they had the privilege of seeing and hearing spiritual truth that was hidden from others (Matt. 13:17). He blessed Peter when he made his famous confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:17). When a woman pronounced a blessing on Jesus' mother, Mary, Jesus corrected her by saying (Luke 11:28), "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." He blessed the little children who were brought to Him (Mark 10:16). He pronounced a future blessing on those who obediently wait for His return (Luke 12:37-38). And, He blessed the apostles just before He ascended into heaven (Luke 24:50).

John's Gospel only records two times that Jesus pronounced a blessing. In the upper room, after He washed the disciples' feet and commanded them to follow His example, He said (John 13:17), "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." And in our text (John 20:29), Jesus tells Thomas, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." That includes all who have believed in Christ since He ascended into heaven, including you and me:

Those who believe in Jesus Christ through the apostolic testimony will be blessed.

We tend to think that if only we could have been there in the first century to see Jesus in person when He was on the earth, we'd be really blessed. Especially those who saw Jesus risen from the dead must have been blessed. But Jesus draws an implied contrast between Thomas, who saw Jesus after His resurrection, and all who would later believe the witness of Thomas and the other apostles. The implication is that while they all were blessed, we're really blessed if we believe in Jesus whom we have not seen. I want to explore that blessing and the means to obtaining it.

### **1. The goal of the apostolic testimony contained in the written Word of God is that we would believe in Jesus Christ.**

After reporting Jesus' commendation of Thomas' faith and of the faith of all those who believe without seeing Him, John 20:30-31, "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."

The only source that we have for knowing about Jesus Christ so that we may believe in Him is the written testimony of the apostles contained in the New Testament. Of course, the entire Old Testament pointed ahead to Christ (Luke 24:27, 44), but those truths can be understood adequately only through the lens of the New Testament testimony to Christ. The Holy Spirit inspired the biblical writers to record truthfully all that we need to know about Jesus Christ so that we may believe in Him and be saved.

This means that your feelings about Jesus Christ are not reliable as the source for your faith. You may feel that Jesus is always kind and loving, but that is only true in the sense that the New Testament shows Him to be kind and loving. He was kind and loving when He pronounced woes on the Pharisees and called them hypocrites (Matthew 23). He was kind and loving when He called Peter "Satan" and told him to get behind Him (Matt. 16:23). If your mental picture of "kind and loving" doesn't fit that image of Jesus, then your mental picture is wrong. The written Word, not our feelings, is the source of truth about Jesus.

This also means that experiences, such as dreams or visions are not a reliable source for learning the truth about Jesus Christ. I realize that God is using dreams and visions to bring many, especially in the Muslim world, to faith in Christ. I am not discrediting this. But I am arguing that if these folks or anyone else want to grow to know Jesus more deeply, the only source for such growth is the written Word of God that tells us about Him.

I am also aware that there is a strong movement today to get the gospel to oral cultures by telling Bible stories. These cultures do not learn primarily through reading printed material, so giving out gospel tracts or Scripture portions is not an effective means of reaching them. It's certainly wise to reach these people through means that they understand and relate to. But after these people come to faith in Christ, they will not grow to know Him as they should unless someone teaches them the many didactic portions of Scripture. God saw fit to leave us His written Word so that we may believe in His Son. Our faith will not be properly informed apart from such knowledge.

At the same time, there are Bible scholars and theologians who study God's written Word in depth, but they don't believe in or know the Savior whom that Word proclaims. That is really tragic! The goal of John's writing these truths about Jesus is so that we may personally believe in Him unto eternal life. If we miss that, we miss everything!

### **2. The object of our faith is the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**John here gives us three testimonies to who Jesus is:**

#### **A. Jesus' signs testify to who He is.**

John's word for Jesus' miracles is "signs." This means that we should look beyond the miracle itself to what it points to. Jesus' signs tell us something important about His person and work. John acknowledges that Jesus performed many other signs which he did not include in his Gospel. In the last verse of his Gospel he adds that if everything Jesus did were written in detail, the world itself would not contain the books that would be written. But John selected seven signs, plus the eighth sign of Jesus' resurrection, to paint his portrait of the eternal Word made flesh.

Note also that these signs were performed "in the presence of His disciples." They were eyewitnesses to all of these signs and they are credible men. As Peter testifies (2 Pet. 1:16), "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." They weren't making up good stories. They

actually saw these things before their very eyes. Here are John's eight signs:

(1) Jesus turned the water at the wedding of Cana into wine (John 2:1-11). This shows that Jesus is Lord over His creation and that He provides abundant, joyous salvation for His people. It revealed His glory to the disciples (John 2:11).

(2) Jesus healed the royal official's son (John 4:46-54). Here we learn that Jesus is the Lord who can heal from a distance. And He wants us to move from the foxhole faith that solves our crisis to the saving faith of eternal life.

(3) Jesus healed the lame man by the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath (John 5:1-16). This shows that He is Lord over the Sabbath. And it exposes the impotence of ritualistic religion, while showing that Jesus is mighty to save.

(4) Jesus fed the 5,000 men, plus women and children, with five loaves and two fish (John 6:1-14). This pictures Jesus as the new Moses, who gives the satisfying bread of life to those who are spiritually hungry. Since Jesus used the disciples to distribute the food to the people, this sign also has a profound lesson about how the Lord uses us to meet the needs of the spiritually hungry.

(5) Jesus walked on the water to the disciples as they struggled against the waves (John 6:15-21). They couldn't understand why He had just sent away the crowd who had eaten the multiplied loaves and fish, especially since they wanted to make Him king. So this sign tells us that Jesus is Lord over His creation, including every trial, even when we don't understand His ways.

(6) Jesus healed the man born blind (John 9:1-41). This sign followed His discourse in chapter 8, where He made the astounding claim (John 8:12), "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." So we learn that Jesus is the Light of the world, who imparts spiritual sight to the spiritually blind.

(7) Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-44). Jesus stated the meaning of this sign in His words to Martha (John 11:25), "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" Note that Jesus' pointed question, "Do you believe this?" is the reason why John included this sign: So that you will believe in Jesus and have life in His name.

(8) Jesus Himself was raised from the dead (John 20-21). This capstone of all the signs gives irrefutable proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that we may believe in Him for eternal life. If Jesus is not risen, our faith is worthless (1 Cor. 15:17).

### **B. Thomas' confession testifies to who Jesus is.**

As we have seen, Thomas was entrenched in his doubts about Jesus' resurrection to the point of demanding to touch His wounds before he would believe. But when he saw the risen Savior and heard Him quote words that Thomas had spoken privately to the other disciples, he spontaneously blurted out (John 20:28), "My Lord and my God!" He wasn't swearing, or Jesus would have rebuked him. Rather, Jesus accepted Thomas' confession and his worship and commended him for it. His confession is the model of faith that John sets before his readers. We all should personally confess Jesus as our Lord and God. John began his Gospel by stating that Jesus, the Word, is God. Thomas' confession brings that opening statement to its climax. It's the personal faith that every person who considers John's Gospel should possess.

### **C. John's purpose statement testifies to who Jesus is.**

John 20:31: "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." As the Christ, He is the Messiah or Anointed One promised repeatedly in the Old Testament. He is the One whom God sent to be the Savior of the world (John 3:17; 4:42; 12:47). He is (John 1:29) "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

As the Son of God, He is not the Son in the sense of human sons, who begin their existence at conception. Rather, He is the Son of God by nature, one with the Father from all eternity (John 10:30). He shares all the attributes of Deity, although these were often veiled in His humanity. The Father sent His Son to reveal Himself to us (John 5:19-47). As Jesus told Philip (John 14:9), "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." Concerning these two terms, the Christ, the Son of God, Leon Morris (The Gospel of John [Eerdmans], pp. 856-857) states,

The combination of terms indicates the very highest view of the Person of Jesus, and it must be taken in conjunction with the fact that John has just recorded the confession of Thomas which hails Jesus as "My Lord and my God." There cannot be any doubt but

that John conceived of Jesus as the very incarnation of God.

Thus the apostolic testimony about Jesus that we should believe is contained in the written Word of God. The object of our faith is the Lord Jesus Christ, revealed in the signs that John has recorded, in Thomas' testimony, and in John's purpose statement.

### **3. Those who have not seen Jesus, but who believe the apostolic testimony, will be blessed.**

Briefly, note four things:

#### **A. The blessing is not for seers, but for believers.**

Many saw Jesus and His miracles during His earthly ministry and heard His teaching, but they rejected Him (John 6:36). In Matthew 11:21-24, Jesus upbraids these seers who did not believe:

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you."

You'll hear skeptics say, "If I could just see a miracle, I'd believe." But that's not true. Many in Jesus' day saw His miracles, but they did not believe. Saving faith has three components: First, there must be knowledge of basic facts about Jesus and about human sin. Jesus is God in human flesh. He alone could atone for sins by satisfying God's judgment, which He did when He died on the cross. We all are sinners who are justly guilty before God. Second, we must give assent to these facts as true. We cannot believe if we knowingly deny these truths. But the demons know these facts and believe that they are true.

So, there must be the third element: We must personally apply these facts by abandoning trust in ourselves or in our good works and trusting in Jesus and His death and resurrection to save us from God's judgment. This saving faith necessarily includes repentance, or turning from our sin. It requires commitment and submission to Jesus as Lord.

To illustrate, you may know intellectually that airplanes can fly and you may agree that statistics show this to be true. But you won't get to your destination unless you trust the pilot and the plane and commit yourself by getting on board.

#### **B. The blessing is not for skeptics, critics, or doubters, but for believers.**

You must approach the biblical witness to Jesus Christ with a teachable heart, being willing to obey God if He shows you that the witness is true. Jesus said (John 7:17), "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." Here, the Lord graciously met Thomas' skeptical demands by appearing to him and inviting him to touch Him. That gives hope to all doubters that He will be gracious to you if you seek Him. But if I may put it in non-theological language, don't push your luck! You have the testimony of this doubter turned believer so that you will believe without seeing. Peter wrote to believers who had not seen Jesus, but were suffering persecution for their faith (1 Pet. 1:8-9): "And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." The blessing is for those who have not seen Jesus, but believe the apostolic witness.

#### **C. Believers have more than adequate evidence on which to rest their faith.**

John could have written much, much more. But he selected these signs as adequate to convince us to put our trust in Jesus Christ. As we've seen (my message on John 20:1-10), there is solid evidence to believe in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Thomas' conversion from adamant doubter to worshiping believer to eventual martyr shows that the evidence is trustworthy. Unbelief does not stem from faulty evidence, but from a heart that is in rebellion against the holy God.

#### **D. The blessing for believers is eternal life in Jesus' name.**

There are many blessings for believers that John has already mentioned: We become children of God (John 1:12). We drink the living water that quenches our spiritual thirst (John 4:14). We escape from God's future judgment (John 5:24). We are satisfied with Jesus as our Bread of life (John 6:35). We walk in His light so that we don't stumble in the darkness (John 8:12). Our lives can be fruitful in light of eternity (John 15:1-8). We

enjoy God's love through Jesus, which fills us with joy (John 15:9-11). But all of these blessings and more that could be added are summed up in the term, "eternal life."

We all will die physically (unless Jesus returns first), but as we've seen, He promises that whoever believes in Him will live, even if he dies (John 11:25). Eternal life is God's life imparted to our souls. It means that we will never perish (John 3:16): "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." It means that we know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent (John 17:3). The blessing of eternal life is given "in Jesus' name," which means, in all that He is in His divine-human person and in all that He did in dying on the cross in our place.

## Conclusion

In a sermon on these verses, Charles Spurgeon (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit [Pilgrim Publications], 27:653-664) pointed out that John sticks faithfully to his purpose. He omits some stories about himself which would have made him shine, such as being with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. As John states in verse 30, he left out many things that he could have written.

Rather, he gives a series of testimonies of people who were led to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. In chapter 1, Andrew finds his brother Peter and exclaims (John 1:41), "We have found the Messiah (which translated means Christ)." Then Philip finds Nathaniel and announces (John 1:45), "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And so it goes throughout the book: Nicodemus (chapter 3); the woman at the well (chapter 4); numerous witnesses in chapter 5; in John 6:69, Peter testifies, "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." John wrote so that you "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

So the question is: Have you believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God? Is He your Lord and God? Do you have life in His name? To go back to the airplane illustration, it's not enough to believe the plane can fly; you've got to get on board. It's not enough to believe that Jesus is Lord. You've got to get on board by trusting in Him as your Savior and Lord.

## Application Questions

1. What are some implications of the fact that God chose to reveal His truth in written form (rather than sending angels to tell us about Jesus)?
2. Some argue that to preach that we must submit to Jesus as Lord to be saved is to add works to faith. Is it? Why/why not?
3. What is the difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus? How does a person move from one to the other?
4. How much does a person need to know about Jesus in order to believe in Him for salvation? Can he get saved if he believes in a false Jesus?

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**Barnhouse** on the woman in John 20:15 - **A True Disciple** - She was a 120 pound woman who had been drawn in her soul for 3 days and who had already made the trip between Jerusalem and the tomb 3 times. She was offering to carry the inert body of a man who weighed perhaps 160 pounds. She couldn't have done it, but she would have split her heart trying.

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## A Journey of Belief: John 20:24–31

These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31

Since its first publication in 1880, Lew Wallace's novel *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* has never been out of print. It has been called the most influential Christian book of the nineteenth century, and it continues to draw readers today as it weaves the true story of Jesus with that of a fictional young Jewish nobleman named Judah Ben-Hur.

Amy Lifson, writing in *Humanities* magazine, said that the writing of the book transformed the life of the author. "As Ben-Hur guided readers through the scenes of the Passion, so did he lead the way for Lew Wallace to believe in Jesus Christ." Wallace said, "I have seen the Nazarene . . . I saw him perform works which no mere man could perform."

By believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31

The Gospels' record of the life of Jesus allows us to walk alongside Him, witness His miracles, hear His words, and see His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday. At the conclusion of John's gospel, he wrote, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30–31).



Just as Lew Wallace's research, reading of the Bible, and writing led him to believe in Jesus, so God's Word draws us to a transformation of mind and heart by which we have eternal life in and through Him.

Lord, may the record of Your life be written on our minds and hearts so that we may have ever-increasing faith in You.

Many books can inform, but only the Bible can transform.

By David C. McCasland | See Other Authors [INSIGHT](#):

The Christian accepts the Bible's claims that Jesus Christ came to our world, performed miracles, preached about the kingdom of God, was crucified, and rose from the dead. Although Thomas knew Christ personally, he initially doubted that Christ had risen from the dead. After Thomas saw the nail prints in Jesus's hands and the wound in His side he worshiped Christ and said, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).