

'The Seven Signs' Exposition of the Gospel of John

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INTRODUCTION

We will be studying John's Gospel throughout the first, second and third terms of this year, in the second session. Notes will not be issued for the John studies, but the NCPI **Commentary on John's Gospel** will be followed. Other Commentaries are recommended below.

PREPARATION FOR THE STUDIES

We suggest you read the entire Book in one or two sittings in some modern version, and then read the Introduction in the NCPI Commentary, especially in order to recognize the purpose of the author in writing the Book-John 20:30-31. Check this with 20:26-29, 4:48, and the fact that the noun 'faith' is not mentioned, but the verb 'to believe' is used almost 100 times.

Since the signs are the main means of fulfilling the purpose of the Book, i.e. that the readers may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and believing thus have life through his name, then we need to see (a) the meaning of signs, and (b) the structure of the Book as related to the signs.

The Outlines and Introductions in the Commentaries are valuable for getting an overall view of the Gospel, and for picking up certain of its main themes, such as the person and work of Jesus as Son of God and Son of Man, the nature and importance of signs, salvation, the people of God, the nature of the world, the glory of God, the person and work of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, and eschatology. If we are to understand this Gospel we really need to give ourselves to study this sort of material.

THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIGNS

(a) The sign (Gk: semeion) in John's Gospel is not really a miracle (dunamis), but the sign of the reality (cf. John 2:22-3:6).

(b) The seven signs are as follows:

1. Water turned to wine. 2:1-11.
2. Healing of the nobleman's son. 4:46-54.
3. The healing of the paralytic beside the pool of Bethzatha. 5:2-15,
4. The feeding of the 5,000. 6:1-15.
5. Christ's walking on the sea. 6:16-21.
6. The healing of the man born blind. 9:1-12.
7. The raising of Lazarus. 11:17-44.

The Book then, generally, is built about these signs, whilst involving the teaching of the Lord regarding them, and the continuity of action which was his, necessarily as 'the Christ, the Son of God'.

Note. The miraculous draught of fishes in 21:4-11 follows the thesis of 20:30-31, and although it is a sign is not included in that thesis, since it relates to Peter's restoration by the Lord.

COMMENTARIES

Those by G. Bingham (NCPI); R. V. G. Tasker (Tyndale); L. Morris (Eerdmans); R. Brown, The Anchor Bible (Doubleday), 2 vols.; C. K. Barrett (SPCK); W. Hendrikson (Banner of Truth); J. N. Sanders & B. A. Mastin (A. & C. Black); B. F. Westcott (James Clarke, London); G. R. T. Beasley-Murray (Word).

Note: Leon Morris's Studies in the Fourth Gospel (Paternoster) covers all materials relating to the Gospel; i.e. Relationship of John to the Synoptic Gospels, the History and Theology of the Gospel, the Authorship, Date of Writing, Features of the Johannine Style, and elements of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel.

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