

Seven is a number signifying completeness, it had great significance to the Jews of Jesus' time. In the Gospel of John, the author, John, emphasizes seven miraculous signs performed by Jesus prior to his crucifixion. I am the most qualified person to tell this portion of Jesus' story. I was the seventh of the miraculous signs.

John specifically chose these seven signs out of a large number of miracles that Jesus did for a very specific reason. John wrote, "And Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that by believing you might have life through his name."<sup>1</sup>

John says that the first of Jesus' miraculous signs was turning water into wine. On that occasion, Jesus' mother and family members were attending a wedding in Cana, as were Jesus and his disciples.

The wedding party was going well when a most embarrassing thing happened – the host ran out of wine. In that culture, that would have been a huge social disgrace and a bad omen for the newlyweds. Jesus' mother might have been part of the wedding providers, because she was aware of the problem. She came to her son and simply said, "They have no more wine." Jesus seemingly wanted to stay uninvolved, but like a good mother and friend, Mary just told the nearby servants, "Do as he says." In response, Jesus turned about 150 gallons of water into wine.

The miracle of the wine was an indication that something new was coming to replace the old Jewish religion, and the new would be far better than the old.

The second miraculous sign was a physical healing.<sup>2</sup> Jesus was visiting again in Cana, where he was certain to be a celebrity because of his first miraculous sign of turning water into wine. A royal official from Capernaum heard that Jesus had arrived in the region, and he rushed to ask him a favor.

The royal official begged Jesus to go to Capernaum and heal his young son who was close to death. This powerful official dressed in his royal robes was begging an itinerant preacher in his,

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<sup>1</sup> John 20:30-31

<sup>2</sup> John 4:54

most likely ragged brown robe, to help him. By using the word, "Sir," the official was humbly acknowledging that Jesus had more power than he did. By asking for the favor, he acknowledged that Jesus had the power to grant his request.

Seeing the man's distress... and faith... Jesus told him to return home, his son would live. Jesus' evaluation of the man was rewarded, because the man took Jesus at his word and returned home. While the man was traveling home, his servants met him with the news that his son was living. He was told that the fever left the boy at the same time Jesus had said his son would live.

So, based on receiving a miraculous sign, the man and his entire household believed. What the Bible doesn't reveal, is how many others believed based on this sign.

The third miraculous sign disclosed by John took place by the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. The pool was surrounded by five covered colonnades. It seems there was a legend that an angel would from time to time stir the waters of the pool, and the first one entering the water after that would be healed. A great number of disabled people were crouched by the pool in hopes of beating everyone else into the water, and be healed.

Walking by the pool, Jesus noticed one particular man. He was disabled for thirty-eight years. When Jesus learned his history, he asked, "Do you want to get well?" **What was going through Jesus' mind when he asked that question, do you think? Was he pressing the man to make sure he hadn't given up? Was he allowing the man to express his faith? Was he not going to heal the man if his answer was insufficient?**

Instead of answering Jesus' question, the man said that nobody would help him, so he couldn't get in the water first. Imagine his surprise when Jesus ignored his answer and commanded, "Get up, pick up your bed, and walk!" Imagine his immense joy when he was able to do just that. Imagine his distress when the religious leaders abruptly made him stop. Especially, after not walking all those years!

One of the Ten Commandments was to keep the Sabbath holy, which the Pharisees had interpreted very strictly. They had thirty-nine different activities or works which were forbidden to do on the Sabbath, one group of which prohibited normal household chores. Picking up a mat and walking would have been a violation of their rules. Rather presumptuously, they told the man, "It is the sabbath day: it is illegal for you to carry your bed."

They placed the man in a horrible position. He was on the cusp of recognizing his dreams of being healed, attending the Synagogue, and being a productive member of society. The Pharisees could destroy every one of his dreams. All he could say was, "The man who healed me told me to pick up my bed and walk." They wanted to know who told him to do that, but he could not tell them because Jesus had left.

Apparently, the man went to the temple to have his healing acknowledged by the priests, because Jesus saw him there, and told him to quit sinning or something worse may happen to

him. The man went to back to the Jewish leaders and told them that it was Jesus who had told him to pick up his mat and walk. When the leaders confronted Jesus, he told them that he was doing his works through the Father. This infuriated the Jewish leaders, because it implied that Jesus could break the Sabbath with impunity, and that he was making himself equal with God. This caused them to try even harder to kill Jesus.

The fourth of the miraculous signs described by John was also shown in the other three Gospel accounts. Jesus fed five thousand men, along with women and children,<sup>3</sup> with only five loaves of bread and two fish. And, he had twelve basketfuls left over. John says that the baskets were full of the pieces of the five barley loaves.<sup>4</sup> This miracle was so powerful that the people wanted to use force to make Jesus king, although Jesus didn't want that.

The fifth of the seven miraculous signs occurred the night after Jesus went to a mountain to pray, and sent his disciples in a boat to go to Capernaum. About ten hours later, in the middle of the night, Jesus recognized that the disciples were stranded in the middle of the lake, rowing against a very strong wind. Jesus walked about three miles on the water, he was about to walk by the boat when the disciples saw him. They were terrified! "It is I, don't be afraid." Jesus said.

When he climbed in the boat with them, the wind died down immediately. Recognizing his ability to control the weather and nature, and to create bread miraculously, the disciples worshiped him as the Son of God. Incidentally, only Matthew gives us the detail that Peter walked on the water to join Jesus that night, but started sinking when his faith wavered.<sup>5</sup>

The sixth of the miraculous signs was a last straw for the Pharisees. It ensured that they would find a way to kill him. Already on their home turf in Jerusalem, and already in their crosshairs, Jesus found another way to irritate them.

He and his disciples were minding their own business when they walked by a blind man. The disciples asked, "Was this man born blind because he sinned or because his parents sinned?" They clearly thought those were the only two possible alternatives. They still labored under the misconception that physical disabilities were the result of spiritual sin. Jesus replied that the blindness wasn't caused by sin. And, he added the statement that the blindness occurred so that the work of God could be displayed in his life.

Jesus spat on the ground, mixed his saliva with the dirt, and pasted the resulting mud on the man's eyes. "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam," he said. The man walked down to the south end of the City of David and washed. And... came back with his sight.

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 14:21

<sup>4</sup> John 6:13

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 14:28-31

The leaders insisted that the incident was a fraud, they questioned the man's parents. They refused to acknowledge the power of Jesus for fear of being ostracized. The Pharisees continued to harangue the man, but he continued to defend the person who healed him.

When Jesus found out that the Pharisees had thrown the man out of the Temple, he went to find him. Jesus confessed that he was the healer. The man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus remarked that he had come into the world so that the blind could see, which was an obvious dig at the Pharisees' spiritual blindness. When they complained, Jesus told them that if they were truly blind, they would be innocent, but since they claimed to see, they were self-condemned.

And this brings us to the seventh, and last, miraculous sign....me. My name is Lazarus. My sisters were Mary and Martha. Our family lived in the small town of Bethany, about two miles east of Jerusalem. Jesus was our best friend, and he loved us deeply.

One day, I became extremely ill. My sisters sent word to Jesus that the one he loved was sick. Jesus was quite a distance from our house, and when he received word, he said that God and he would be glorified through the sickness, and he stayed where he was for two more days. In that period of time, I died. Then I was buried in a tomb.

Jesus told his disciples I had died, and that now it was time to go visit me. When Jesus arrived, I had been in the tomb for four days. My quick-tempered sister, Martha, chastised Jesus for not coming sooner to heal me. He finally got her to admit that he was the Christ, and she realized he had power over death. She brought Mary to see Jesus, and they all wept over the sadness of my death.

Jesus asked that they take him to the tomb, and commanded them to roll away the stone from the entrance. Martha, ever the bold one, said, "Lord, he has been dead four days. He stinks." Jesus reminded her to believe. They took away the stone, Jesus prayed, then he shouted at me, "Lazarus, come out of the tomb!"

How do I even begin to explain what happened next? I had been in the presence of God and angels, I had been experiencing heaven, or at least what I perceived to be heaven. Then I was sucked back to my old reality. My eyes were open, but they were covered by bandages. My arms and feet were bound to my body, I could hear the binding ripping apart. I stood, as if in a trance, and walked out of the cave and into sunlight and life. I really wasn't too happy about it, but how could I complain when it made my sisters so happy.

Some of the Jews came to believe in Jesus because of my resurrection. Others wanted to kill me, along with Jesus, to hide all evidence of him being the Messiah. My healing sealed the deal for the Pharisees. Jesus would have to die. Soon.

Seven Miraculous signs. John recorded them, the miraculous signs of Jesus. "I wrote these things so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you

might have life through his name.”<sup>6</sup> That’s what he wrote. That’s why he wrote it, so *you* would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and have life. Most of the Pharisees refused to believe, they did not attain life. I’m begging you, me the seventh miraculous sign. Please. Believe, and have life.

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<sup>6</sup> John 20:30-31