

## The Unique Miracles of John

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The Gospel writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John record no less than 40 miracles of Jesus. In addition, there are incidents where a writer may indicate many people were healed. Therefore, it is impossible to determine an exact number of the miracles of Jesus during His three-year earthly ministry. But we do know there are no less than 40 miraculous events recorded within the pages of the Gospels. Some miracles are found in two or three of the Gospels, and two miracles are recounted by all four writers. However, each book contains some miracles unique to their narrative. John records a total of ten miracles, of which six are found only in his writing. I believe these six miracles – unique to John – each present a special lesson for us beyond just informing us of an event in the earthly ministry of Jesus.

### Miracle #1 - The Wedding At Cana

Nearly every culture places a high degree of celebration around weddings. Following some sort of official ceremony, there is usually a joyous gathering of family and friends with the newly wedded couple. The first-century Jewish community was no different.

The wedding may have been a larger gathering as a "master of the feast" coordinated the event. Usually, in charge of the music, food, and drink at weddings, he would have to give his approval to anything served. While the family provided for the festivities, the "master of the feast" was hired to make sure everything served was of the quality needed for the event.

Running out of food or drink at a modern wedding is a significant embarrassment. However, in first-century Jewish culture, this type of oversight would not only cause a social catastrophe it might lead to a degree

of long-lasting damage to a family's reputation.

The number of people who knew about this impending disaster could not have been many. Since Mary, the mother of Jesus, knew about the situation, this may indicate she was a close relative to one of the wedding participants. She communicated the situation to Jesus, who responded in a curious way. In verse 4 of John 2, Jesus asked her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with me?"

In our culture, one would not call their mother "woman", but the term used here is one of deep respect and tenderness. Jesus used it again when He referred to His mother as "woman" while on the cross in John 19:26.

She did not respond to His question but seemed to ignore Him and told the servants to do whatever He said. Was the question of Jesus to His mother really an invitation for her to demonstrate her knowledge of His Messiahship to the wedding party? She seemed to have heard His response and promptly turned to the servants and gave them directions surrounding the soon-to-be-offered instructions from Jesus. Would they have followed His instructions if Mary had not told them to do so?

Jesus was allowing His mother to put her belief in Him to the test. When Jesus asked her what her concern had to do with Him, Mary's answer, as demonstrated by her words to the servants, was "everything." Her concern had everything to do with Jesus. She knew deep in her soul who Jesus was. It is why she came to Him in the first place. She knew He could resolve this problem of the lack of supplies. She knew Him.

Jesus asks us the same question. What is of concern to you? Do you try to fix all your problems and relieve all your stresses with your own ingenuity? Or do you have the same level of confidence and faith in Jesus to understand how all your problems, worries, or concerns have everything to do with Him? When we turn to Jesus to address all those issues in our life, we are putting our trust in Him.

Jesus is the answer to all our concerns.

### Miracle #2 – The Nobleman's Son

In John Chapter 4, Jesus returned to Cana. He journeyed from Jerusalem north to Samaria, where there was the famous encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well. After speaking with her, He resumed His northward trek and stopped at Cana (of Galilee). While there, a "nobleman" approached Him and implored Him to heal his son. The boy was sick and evidently bed-ridden in the village of Capernaum, roughly 15 miles away.

It is likely the nobleman was a member of the Roman ruling class and a relative of Herod Antipas, one of the descendants of Herod the Great. Herod Antipas was ruler, or tetrarch, of the Galilean area during the earthly ministry of Jesus. The nobleman probably lived in Capernaum, and when he heard Jesus was returning to the area, he made the 15-mile journey to Cana to meet with Jesus.

The nobleman's son was in a serious condition. We're told the boy was "at the point of death" in verse 47. Notice how desperate the situation was as this ruling class gentile sought help from an itinerant ex-carpenter who traveled back and forth from Jerusalem to Galilee, speaking on the

Kingdom of God. A dying child will drive a parent to try nearly anything to find help.

The comment of Jesus to the nobleman over his son seems dismissive in verse 48 when He said, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe." Yet notice how the nobleman responded, "Sir, come down before my child dies!"

The first word he said, which we usually translate as "sir" or "master", was a remarkable thing for the nobleman to say. The word signifies one in supreme authority. This nobleman humbled himself in a public way to Jesus. As a member of the ruling class, this was an unheard-of gesture and completely out of character for him to publicly address a lower-class Jew in this manner. After he asked Jesus to come with him back to Capernaum to heal his son, Jesus told him, "Go your way, your son lives" (verse 50).

Notice how the nobleman responded. He believed the word Jesus spoke to him. He then took action, demonstrating his belief, and "went his way." On his return trip to Capernaum, he met a servant of his who told him of the miraculous recovery of his son. He asked his servant when did his son's sickness begin to abate, and he was told, "Yesterday at the seventh hour." The man knew this was when Jesus had spoken, "Your son lives." Even the man's household now believed when he returned and heard of His encounter with Jesus (verse 53).

I am intrigued by the nobleman's actions, preceded by his words. After humbly coming to Jesus and acknowledging His authority, he heard the word spoken by Jesus. He believed, then obeyed, not having seen or heard if there was any change in the health condition of his son. His humility was

followed by his belief, which led in turn to his action – his obedience.

John's recording of this important event presents us with a valuable lesson. We need to follow the example set for us by the nobleman. Humility will enable one to believe the Word, even when the outcome is unseen.

Jesus works in our life through the pathway of our humility.

### **Miracle #3 – The Man at the Pool of Bethesda**

In John 5, Jesus is in Jerusalem. The text indicates He was near a pool at the Sheep Gate, which is on the northern part of the Temple Mount area (John 5:2). There was a "great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed waiting for the moving of the water." One of those "sick people" was a man who had been in his infirmity for 38 years.

Jesus was aware of the long-time condition of this man (verse 6). He approached the man and asked him an interesting question, "Do you want to be made well?" It is a curious question as logically, one can easily conclude, of course, he wanted to get well! What sick person doesn't want to recover? Further, the man was there at the place where healings occurred. Yet, Jesus asked him this question, "Do you want to be made well?"

Upon hearing the question, the man responded with an explanation of his predicament. "I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am coming, another steps down before me" (verse 7). Jesus instructed him in verse 8 to rise, take up your bed and walk. Immediately the man was made well and

rose up, picked up his mat, and walked away. (verse 9).

After a testy encounter with the Jewish leaders who chastised him for carrying his bed on the Sabbath, the man met Jesus again in verse 14. Here, we read that Jesus found him in the temple and spoke to him. What Jesus told him may point back to the original question Jesus asked him in verse 6. In verse 14, Jesus told him, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

In this case, there seems to have been a connection between this individual's sin and his physical condition. Is it also possible the man was looking for another answer for his situation, wanting others to fix his problem for him? When Jesus asked him, "Do you want to be well?" was He really communicating to him, "Are you ready to turn away from your sin? Are you ready to take responsibility for your situation?"

Sin is a bad thing, and sin, left unchecked, always leads to disaster and ruin. Sin, in general, affects our world, but individual sin often results in damaging one's physical body. This is especially apparent when one is confronted and refuses to acknowledge their own sinful choices, often looking for others to make everything better for them.

There is, however, a huge cautionary note we must always remember. Sickness does not necessarily indicate someone has unconfessed or unrepentant sin in their life. Many times, sickness or physical infirmities are not connected to personal sin. This is made clear in the healing of the blind man in John chapter 9, which is covered in the next section. We must never assume an individual's alleged sin caused their issue. To do so is hurtful and wrong.

Notice in this opening section of John 5, Jesus seems to have been alone as the disciples are not mentioned as witnessing this event. They do not point out the man to Jesus. He seems to have been the only person aware of this particular individual's sin issue, which caused his physical condition. It was not the role of the disciples to point out the man's sin and pronounce a judgment on him. But Jesus tenderly yet firmly addressed this issue with the man.

We, too, like the disciples, are not capable of determining if another person's physical condition is a result of their sin. We cannot judge the heart. We can, however, always point people to the One who can; the One who died for our sins, who bore all our infirmities.

Jesus alone is the antidote for all sin.

#### **Miracle #4 - The Man Born Blind**

The entire chapter of John 9 is devoted to one miracle of Jesus and the surprising consequences of the event. A child born with any physical malformation is unfortunate, but in ancient days, a child in this condition was relegated, at best, to a much shorter life span or, worse, abandoned. But the parents of this man raised him as best as they could, and he probably existed off the kindness of them and others.

Jesus and His disciples were proceeding on their way when they passed this blind man. The disciples, curious as to the cause of the man's blindness, succumb to the same temptation many of us do as they look to affix blame for his condition onto someone. "Rabbi," they ask Him in verse 2, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus quickly dismissed their assumption and told them, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned." Because of our fallen world, sometimes sickness or, in this case, blindness occurs. But He followed up His statement when He said, "The works of God should be revealed in him." This man's physical blindness was going to reveal other people's spiritual blindness and would ultimately proclaim God's glory and power.

Jesus wasn't asked by the man to be healed. The disciples didn't intervene and encourage Jesus to heal this man. Jesus just saw him, and after this brief conversation with His disciples, He did something which appears only here in this passage. He spat on the ground, made some mud, and put it in the eyes of the blind man. He then instructed the man to go wash in the Pool of Siloam (verse 7). The passage does not indicate Jesus, nor any of the disciples, led the man there. He just went, on his own, to the pool with mud made from the spittle of Jesus covering his eyes.

"So he went and washed and came back seeing" (verse 7b). The healing of a man born blind is an extraordinary event, yet this miracle wasn't warmly welcomed by all people. The formally blind man was questioned about his identity by his neighbors and those who knew of his blindness. When pushed for an answer about his newfound sight, he informed them in verse 11, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight."

Not satisfied with his answer, the man was brought before the Pharisees and questioned further. Because the man's healing took place on the Sabbath Day, they pronounced that Jesus was not from God (verse 16). Additionally, some of the leaders didn't

believe his story at all and even dragged the man's parents into the ruckus to question them (verse 19).

All throughout this confrontation, the man was adamant. He proclaimed to anyone who asked him how a man named Jesus made clay, told him to wash, and when he did, he could see. He rightly labeled Jesus as a Prophet (verse 17), and he knew Jesus was from God (verse 33). He could not state with any degree of certainty much about the character of Jesus (verse 25), but he knew this encounter with Jesus changed his life! Even though he was healed and had become a walking testimony of the power of God, his vigorous defense of Jesus to the religious leaders relegated him to being cast out of the temple (verse 34).

This healing disrupted the status quo of many people beyond just the man who was healed from blindness. The neighbors who knew him, the Pharisees, and even his parents, all had to face the fact of how his healing disrupted their world. They were all spiritually blind, and Jesus came there to open the eyes of everyone.

In verse 35, Jesus finds the man who had been cast out of fellowship by the Jewish leaders. He asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" The man proclaimed he believed and worshiped Him (verse 38). This is followed by a pivotal statement from Jesus in verse 39. He said, "For judgment, I have come into the world that those who do not see may see and that those who see may be made blind."

Jesus is the crux of the matter. Knowing Him as the Son of God and humbling one's self before Him is the means to really see things: to no longer go about in spiritual darkness but to walk in the light of the Gospel. Jesus defined true blindness as a

blind man who could now see, and to the Pharisees who defended themselves as being sinless, He proclaimed them to be blind. They saw no need for any instruction from someone not within their group. They were not interested in the blind man's healing nor in the One who pointed out their blindness.

Jesus defines true blindness. Only those who believe in Him can really see.

### **Miracle #5 – The Raising of Lazarus**

Possibly one of the most famous of Jesus' miracles is the raising of Lazarus in John chapter 11. As with many well-known biblical events, it's easy to gloss over this narrative as most of the basic facts are well known. But if one takes a deeper look into the text, you will often find greater insight and application from a familiar passage of Scripture.

The purpose of the miracle was greater than just raising Lazarus from the dead. Jesus stated in verse 4, that it was so "the Son of God may be glorified." Jesus had something beyond the immediate situation of the death of Lazarus to address; He was communicating that belief in Him had eternal consequences. The resurrection of Lazarus and everyone else is based upon Jesus. It is a belief in Him which generates the result of eternal life.

The encounter begins in the opening verses of John 11, where we read how Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha were from the town of Bethany. We're told how Lazarus was sick, and the sisters sent word to Jesus about his illness. We also read how Jesus had a deep connection with these three individuals. We see His emotional attachment was significant with this family when we are told in verse 5 how Jesus "loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus."

But the stage for the miracle was fully set when we read in verse 6 how after hearing Lazarus was sick, "He stayed two more days in the place where He was."

When He finally arrives at the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, His friend Lazarus has already been dead for four days. He was mildly rebuked by Martha (verse 21) and Mary (verse 32) for not being there earlier before Lazarus died.

Jesus had a conversation with each sister individually. To Martha, He offered comfort to her by saying how her brother would rise again (verse 23). She responded she knew he would rise again in the resurrection on the last day. But it is the next statement by Jesus, which is a turning point in the conversation. In verse 25, Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Martha responded by saying she did believe in Him as "the Christ, the Son of God."

Martha briefly left Jesus and returned to her house to inform Mary that Jesus had arrived. Mary made a quick exit and met Jesus, and she, too, had her own personal conversation with Him.

At this point, the human side of Jesus was on display as He had an emotional response to the situation. He wept in verse 35, and He groaned in the spirit and was troubled in verse 34. He groaned again in verse 38. The word John used here for "groaned" is rather unique as it only appears 5 times in the New Testament. The other three times the word is found – Matthew 9:30, Mark 4:43, and Mark 14:5 – it is used as one person expresses some sort of indignant displeasure with another person or to be sternly warned. But here in John, he used the term to describe

the emotional state of Jesus. It indicated how deeply He was troubled.

Why did Jesus express this level of emotion? Jesus knew He'd see him again in just a few minutes as Lazarus was going to be raised from the dead. He knew the joy Mary, Martha, and others were going to experience as they witnessed life return to Lazarus. The fact Jesus expressed this level of emotion seems to indicate His connection with us. His human side experienced deep emotion surrounding the loss of someone close to Him.

When Mary, Martha, and Jesus arrived at the cave holding the body of Lazarus and the stone was rolled away, Jesus made a statement reflecting back upon something He said to the disciples before they arrived. In verse 4, He said the situation with Lazarus was so "the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now when He is standing at the tomb of Lazarus, He told Martha in verse 40, "If you would believe, you would see the glory of God."

After the mind-blowing result of seeing Lazarus, a man who was dead and buried for four days, walk out of his tomb, you would think everyone would be astonished and happy about the event. But that is not the case. The Pharisees and other religious leaders determined to seize and kill Jesus in verse 53. Even Lazarus became a target of the Jewish leaders. In John 12:10, we read that they "plotted to put Lazarus to death also." The raising of Lazarus from the dead upset the established religious bureaucracy, where they could not recognize anything godly outside of their control. Jesus changed the status quo of their world.

There are many lessons about Jesus, and His relationship with us found in this miracle.

These are just a few I see in this passage of Scripture:

1. Every human condition can be used for the glory of God. He is in the redemption business! As painful and difficult as many human experiences can be, He is always the answer. When we choose to honor Him in spite of our situation, God is glorified. In disappointment, in death, and in any other circumstance we encounter, we gain the victory by realizing the end goal is God's glory.
2. Jesus is the resurrection (verse 25). He is the only one who brings life. It is only through Him we can find peace and purpose. Even in death, we live through Him. It isn't a magic trick or a false sense of security, but it is the real transforming power of God that occurs. In Him – and no one else – resides the resurrection and eternal power to overcome death. It is His power that gives us life and peace.
3. Jesus connects with His creation on an emotional level. His emotion, as displayed in this miracle, shows us how deeply He understands the sense of loss we experience when those whom we love pass away. Sin has done great damage to the human heart and to this once pristine world. The emotion displayed by Jesus is just a small example of how Christ understands and connects with our human emotions.

Jesus changes everything. From relationships to setting priorities to every other aspect of life, Jesus changes everything. To the unrepentant, the change He brings can be a source of great

indignation. But to the righteous, He brings life and vitality. He brings purpose to us. Now, everything is looked at through the prism of Him and His glory. This new way of looking at the world changes our status quo.

Jesus changes everything.

### **Miracle #6 – The Miraculous Catch of Fish (or Breakfast by the Sea)**

The Gospel of John concludes with the sixth unique miracle of his writing. This takes place sometime within the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension. Only the seven disciples mentioned witnessed this event, and no one asked Him to intervene as He did. In John 21:3, Peter is together with six other disciples of Jesus. Peter announced to the group, "I am going fishing." The rest of them decided to go with him. They fished all night yet caught nothing.

Just as the sun was peaking over the horizon, Jesus appeared on shore (verse 4). Possibly there was so little light at this point, or there was some fog, but for some reason, the disciples did not recognize it was Jesus. He called out to them, asking, "Have you any food?" After they called back, they did not have anything. He told them to fish on the other side of the boat (verse 6). When they did, they were laden with a huge catch.

As they were trying to haul in the overloaded net, John told Peter it was Jesus on shore (verse 7). Peter decided he couldn't wait any longer and jumped out of the boat, swimming to meet Jesus. The rest of the group ended up dragging the large catch of fish to land. When they finally arrived on the beach, they found Jesus there with a fire of coals with fish already cooked and bread (verse 9). Peter rejoined the group and

helped drag the net full of fish. John tells us how many fish they caught (153) and made a point to tell us even with the large catch, the net was not broken (verse 11).

The balance of John centers around a conversation between Peter and Jesus. After the events surrounding Peter's denial and the crucifixion of Jesus, the morning's encounter with Jesus left Peter encouraged and prepared for the work ahead of him.

Within this one miracle, I notice at least four separate mini-miracles. Each of these tells us something else about being a disciple and having an encounter with Jesus:

1. The first thing is how this group of professional fishermen fished all night and caught nothing. Peter, James, and John had all fished for a living, and yet they were completely thwarted in their efforts.

Being a disciple of Jesus requires emptying oneself. Our old ways of thinking, of navigating our world, must change. We must become, as Paul states in 2 Corinthians, "a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

2. Next, there is the command of Jesus to switch the sides of the boat from which they were fishing. This seems illogical, but the disciples followed His command. These instructions of His are much the same as a similar event in Luke 5, where He told Peter to launch out into the deep and let down his nets for a catch. In both situations, He tells the group to fish in an illogical way. Both times they follow His instructions, and both times they are wildly successful.

As disciples of His, we must follow His commands, even if they don't seem to make sense to us. We aren't commanded to understand everything, but we are expected to trust Him and follow His leading.

3. There is another interesting part of this story when they come to shore. Jesus already had a fire, fish, and bread waiting for them. While it is possible earlier, before sunup, He may have stopped on His way to the beach and bought some fish and bread. It is more likely these were a miraculous creation of His. Jesus didn't need the disciples – or anyone else – to provide fish and bread. But He did have plenty of food ready when they came ashore.

When we trust in Him, He provides for us. Often in more and different ways than we can imagine. After a long night of fishing, He provided a fire, cooked fish, and bread. Before He called out to them, they had none of those things. Yet here is Jesus waiting for them on shore, providing everything they needed. He does the same for us. When He calls out to us, He has already provided everything which we need to obey His call.

4. Finally, the net they used to drag all these fish to shore did not break or tear under the great stress of this massive haul of fish. It had to be rather astonishing as John, one of the professional fishermen of the group, made a point to add this seemingly insignificant fact to his description of the event.

When we follow Jesus, when we respond to His voice, He'll do things

in ways we could have never imagined. He will orchestrate even the smallest details. In this case, the net should have been torn with this great load of fish, but it did not. For us, when we submit ourselves to His will in our life, we will see Him work in astonishing ways. Even if those things He puts in place are overlooked by others, to us, they often are indications of God's love, grace, and power.

This miracle shows us, as His disciples, He encourages us, directs us, and prepares us, as no detail of our life is forgotten by Him. He knows what we need to accomplish, what He's called us to do.

Jesus is our encourager and provider.

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These six unique miracles of John reveal a special element of the ministry of Jesus, both at the time the events occurred and for us in our modern-day world. Jesus is always at work and is always providing for His people. We, as His disciples, need to throw ourselves at His feet and surrender to His will. He moves in ways we often don't understand, and His timing is something beyond our comprehension. For His disciples, an encounter with Jesus leaves us changed, informed, encouraged, and renewed.

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