

The Miracles of the Gospel of John

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The Gospel of John was most likely written in Ephesus around 80-90AD (before the book of Revelation was written). The primary audience was the Churches of Asia Minor – largely converted Gentiles, but also some converted Jews of the Diaspora. The book contains no direct mention of the Sadducees because their influence had ceased with the destruction of the temple. The Sea of Galilee is called the Sea of Tiberias (Jh6:1), not the Lake of Gennesaret (Lk5:1) – Gennesaret was the traditional name; the name ‘Tiberias’ came into use toward the end of the first century. John’s objective was to supplement the synoptic gospels by providing important material which was not covered in them, and to provide a chronological framework of Christ’s ministry. John states:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (Jh20:30-31)

Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. (Jh21:25)

To accomplish this purpose, John structures his Gospel around seven miracles and six feasts. Two of the miracles are paralleled in the synoptic gospels; five are not. There are many additional miracles and much other material in the synoptic gospels. The chronological framework of the feasts is unique to John – without it there would be no chronological data around the ministry of Christ. The synoptic material not paralleled by John can be more or less conformed to John’s chronological structure.

John’s teaching of the life and message of Jesus is very closely tied to the seven miracles. Another significant theme of John is the increasing conflict between Jesus and his enemies (Pharisees, ‘the Jews’, and ‘the crowd’).

Miracle 1: Water to Wine John 2:1-11

- **Location:** Cana in Galilee
- **Time:** shortly before the First Passover
- **Theme:** ‘What Christ brings is better than everything that came before’
- **Related material:** John 1:1-51
- John the Baptist has witnessed to Jesus
 - He is the Lamb of God (Jh1:29, 36)
 - The Holy Spirit descended upon him as a dove (Jh1:32)
 - He baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Jh1:33)
 - He is the Son of God (Jh1:34)
- Jesus has made initial contact with five individuals who would become among his closest disciples: Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathaniel, and John (Jh1:35-50, Mk1:16-20)
- Jesus has witnessed to himself: “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (Jh1:51)
- ... the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” (Jh2:9-10)
- The ‘good wine’ represents Christ and the Gospel

Miracle 2: Healing an Official’s Son John 4:46-54

- **Location:** Capernaum in Galilee
- **Time:** sometime after the First Passover, upon first returning to Galilee
- **Theme:** ‘Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe’
- **Related material:** John 2:13-25, 3:1-36, 4:7-38
- The ‘official’ was probably a Gentile centurion, possibly in the service of Herod Antipas (ESV footnote)
- Jesus teaching in Jerusalem after the first Passover focused on illustrating **John 3:16** ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.’
- **The resurrection:** “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ... he was speaking about the temple of his body” (Jh2:19, 21)

- **Repentance & Baptism:** "... unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God ... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (Jh3:3, 5-6)
- **Crucifixion:** "... as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." (Jh3:14-15)
- **Light vs Darkness:** "... the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light ... whoever does what is true comes to the light" (Jh3:19-21)
- **The witness of John** (the apostle) to John the Baptist and to Jesus in **John 3:31-36:** "... he whom God has sent utters the words of God" (Jh3:34), "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life ..." (Jh3:36)
- **Living Water and True Worship:** (teaching Samaritans) "The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life ... the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth ..." (Jh4:14, 23)
- Jesus has taught a believing Jew (Nicodemus), and a Samaritan, and performs his first public miracle for a Gentile, (see Acts 1:8) but his assessment of these representatives of the 'people of the world' is **"Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."**

Miracle 3: Healing a Lame Man John 5:2-9

- **Location:** Bethesda Pool in Jerusalem
- **Time:** at the un-named Feast, on the Sabbath
- **Theme:** 'Do you want to be healed?'
- **Related material:** John 5:19-47
- The lame man represents the state of humanity in this world: unless people want to be healed, i.e. are willing to respond to God's calling, God cannot help them. Christ's teaching, to the lame man and the Jews in the temple, demonstrates that Christ's work is to heal the world (physically and spiritually).
- "See, you are well! Sin no more ..." (Jh5:14)
- "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (Jh5:17)
- "... the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing." (Jh5:19)
- "... whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life." (Jh5:24)
- "... an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out ..." (Jh5:28-29, see Jh11:43)
- **Witnesses to Jesus:**
 - "... John (the Baptist) ... has borne witness to the truth." (Jh5:33)
 - "... the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me ..." (Jh5:36)
 - "... the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me." (Jh5:37)
 - "... the Scriptures ... it is they that bear witness about me ..." (Jh5:39)

Miracle 4: Feeding 5000 John 6:1-13

- **Location:** East of the Sea of Galilee
- **Time:** Just before the Passover in Galilee
- **Theme:** 'God's plan provides for all humanity – the crowd'
- **Related material:** John 6:14, 25-51
- This is the first time that John parallels the synoptic gospels (see Mk6:30-44, Mt 14:13-21, and Lk9:10-17)
- "... that nothing may be lost." (Jh6:12) spoken here of food scraps, but the implication is that no people of the world should be lost – God's desire for humanity (see Jh6:39)
- "This is indeed the Prophet ..." (Jh6:14) the people recognized this as a work of God
- "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life ..." (Jh6:27) – 'the crowd' was only interested in a free meal
- "... believe in him whom he has sent." (Jh6:29) – Jesus' intent was spiritual
- "I am the bread of life ..." (Jh6:33-35, 41, 48, 51)
- Calling is required for salvation (Jh6:37-40, 44-45)

Miracle 5: Walking on Water John 6:16-21

- **Location:** On the Sea of Galilee
- **Time:** Immediately after feeding the 5000

- **Theme:** 'enhance the faith of the disciples'
- **Related material:** John 6:52-58, 60-69
- This is also paralleled by the synoptics (see Mk6:47-52 and Mt14:24-33)
- Only the disciples in the boat witnessed this miracle (see Jh6:16-17)
- "It is I; do not be afraid." (Jh6:20)
- Jesus foreshadows the New Testament Passover symbols (Jh8:53-57)
- "Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling ... there are some of you who do not believe ... after this many of his disciples turned back ..." (Jh6:61, 64, 66)
- "So Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' ... Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed ..." (Jh6:67-69)

Miracle 6: Healing a Blind Man John 9:1-14

- **Location:** Jerusalem, just outside the temple
- **Time:** After the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day
- **Theme:** 'Even the blind of the world (leaders), will be shown the way'
- **Related material:** John 7:16-24, 28-29, 37-39, 8:12-59, 9:39-41, 10:1-18, Jeremiah 23:1-4, Ezekiel 34:1-15
- During the Feast, Jesus had taught openly in the temple: "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me." (Jh7:16)
- Severe opposition from the Pharisees, 'the crowd', and the 'chief priests' (Sadducees) arose: "The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him." (Jh7:32)
- "On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out ... whoever believes in me ... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (Jh7:37-38)
- "I am the light of the world" (Jh8:12, 9:5)
- Jesus identifies himself as YHWH (Jh8:24, 28, 48-58)
- "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (Jh8:31-32)
- "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." (Jh9:25)
- "Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.'" (Jh9:39)
- "... the Pharisees ... said to him, 'Are we also blind?'" (Jh9:40)
- "... Jesus again said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers' ..." (Jh10:7-8)

Miracle 7: Raising of Lazarus from the Dead John 11:11-15, 38-44

- **Location:** Bethany near Jerusalem
- **Time:** prior to the Last Passover
- **Theme:** 'only through Christ is the resurrection from the dead possible'
- **Related material:** John 10:24-38, 11:1-9, 23-27
- "... believe the works ... the Father is in me and I am in the Father." (Jh10:38)
- "... for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe." (Jh11:15)
- "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live' ..." (Jh11:25)
- "... I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." (Jh11:42)
- "When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out.'" (Jh11:43, see Jh5:25, 28-29)