

'Signs of life'

The seven 'signs' in the public ministry of Jesus

"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 Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

[John 20.30f]

John records seven incidents during the public ministry of Jesus which he describes as 'signs'. 'Signs', as John presents them, both *authenticate* (see Acts 2.22 for a similar perspective) and *illustrate*: that's to say they point clearly to who Jesus is and the significance of what He has come to do.

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".. 'Go' Jesus replied, 'your son will live' .."

John 4.43-54

The 'signs' which John records are intended to help us place our trust in Him, and in so doing to know life (see John 20.30f).

This third 'sign' highlights both the life-bestowing nature of Jesus' power and the word-believing nature of the faith we're called upon to exercise.

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1. **Read John 4.43-54.** Whereas the previous two 'signs' have been set at a wedding (2.1-11) and at a festival (2.12-25), the setting of this sign is a crisis, with a royal official's son 'close to death'.

If you were asked to summarise the thrust of this passage, what would you say was its basic message?

If this is indeed a 'sign', to what is it pointing?

2. **Read John 4.39-45.** The response of the Galileans (vv.43-45) is contrasted here with that of the Samaritans (vv.39-42): it's not quite a game of 'spot the difference', but it's something similar!

In what ways does the response of the Galileans differ from that of the Samaritans?

What does Jesus mean by His observation in v.44? And how does that square with the immediately following statement that 'the Galileans welcomed Him' (v.45)?

3. **Read John 4.46-49.** A royal official's son lay ill, 'close to death': the official took the chance to go and plead with Jesus to come and heal his son.

You would think that what the man did was exemplary: why do you think Jesus replied as He did in v.48?

Read **Jn.2.23-25** & **20.24-29** and compare those passages with v.48: what do these 3 passages teach us about faith?

4. **Read John 4.50-54.** Jesus was nowhere near the official's son: His word, comprising a command and a promise, was sufficient to effect healing.

In what sense is the gospel both a command and a promise?

What are the 'stages' in the developing faith of the official which are indicated by the narrative here?

How has your faith in Jesus grown?