

'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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".. these are written that you may believe .."

John 20.24-31

The final 'sign' recorded by John had been highlighted that the resurrection is a Person more than just an event: this is who Jesus is - the resurrection and the life. And to believe in Him is at last truly to live.

In rounding off his gospel, therefore, with reference to the recorded 'signs', John ties his summarizing conclusion to the account of Jesus' resurrection.

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1. **Read John 20.24-31.** John deliberately places his final statement about the 'signs' he's recorded in the immediate aftermath of Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus.

What helped you to the conviction that Jesus is risen?

How does the narrative regarding Thomas help underline the fact that the purpose of 'signs' is faith?

2. **Read John 20.24-29.** Thomas had not been present when the other disciples had met the risen Jesus - their testimony is all he has, therefore, in regard to the resurrection of Jesus.

What sort of 'sign' was Thomas looking for?

To what extent are you aware of the same, or similar, insistence on the part of people today?

3. **Read John 20.26-31.** John picks up on the narrative of Thomas' encounter with Jesus and builds the conclusion to his whole book on the climax to that narrative.

Read again **John 11.25-26 & 41-42** to see Jesus' concern that faith is cultivated in our hearts: why is it so important to Jesus (and John!) that we believe?

How is that brought out in the narrative here (vv.26-29)?

Jesus' words to Thomas in v.29 signal a change in the way faith will now be cultivated - a shift from the part played by visual signs to the prominence of verbal testimony: how is this change highlighted by John in vv.30-31?

4. **Read John 20.30-31.** The 'Gospel of John' is itself a (written) verbal testimony to the Lord Jesus, replacing the visual 'signs' by the very recording of them.

What do the seven 'signs' help us believe?

To what extent over the years have these 'signs' recorded for us by John served to cultivate faith in you?

In what way(s) does our believing issue in 'life'?

What have these seven 'signs' taught you about Jesus?