

Union United Methodist Church
Spring FOCUS Bible School, 2023
FOCUS: Followers of Christ Understanding Scripture
Study: Gospel of John

Week 2: March 8, 2023

Signs Confirming Jesus is the Messiah

This Week's Study: **John 2 & 3**

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1. Recap & Reminder : Overview of the Gospel of John

○ **The Purpose of the Gospel of John**

To appreciate John's Gospel, it helps to start from the purpose of the book as stated by the author:

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But **these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.**" John 20:30-31 NRSV

The table below gives a breakdown of the chapters of John, with themes that we shall be exploring in this study. We shall cover one theme per week.

Week	From	To	Theme
1	1	1	Who Jesus Is; First Disciples Sign 1: Wedding at Cana;
2	2	3	Nicodemus & New Birth; Jesus & John the Baptist Sign 2: Royal Official's Son; Samaritan Woman at the well Sign 3: Healing at Bethesda on Sabbath day
3	4	5	Sign 4: Jesus Feeds 5,000; Bread of Life Sign 5: Jesus walks on water; water & light teachings,
4	5	7	Jesus at feast of tabernacles; Adulterous woman Sign 6: Healing of man born blind/
5	9	11	Sign 7: Lazarus raised from the dead Anointing; Triumphal Entry
6	12	13	Last Supper
7	14	14	Jesus Teaches – good Shepherd, on heaven, keep his words, etc.
8	15	15	Jacob's Family; Reconciliation with Esau
9	16	17	Teaching discourse and prayer
10	18	19	Jesus is arrested, tried, mocked, crucified, buried
11	20	20	Jesus' resurrection; appears to witnesses.
12	21	21	Second ending of gospel; Jesus appears in Galilee

2. John 2 & 3 Overview

- **Sign 1: The Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12)**

- Jesus had a social life!

"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding." 2:1 NRSV

- **Jesus' Humanity**

Jesus was human – as we have seen in John 1, God incarnate (made flesh)

- Relationship with Mary

"When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." 2:3-4 NRSV

There was clearly affection between mother and son.

The Greek word translated "woman" here is not a disrespectful term.

- Why would Mary tell him about the wine supply running out?
 - Clearly Mary knew something about Jesus or had experienced something in the family that gave her the impression that Jesus could do something about the situation.
 - Could it be that Jesus had done miracles at home to meet their needs already?
 - He lived in a family and had brothers.

"After this [the wedding] he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days." 2:12 NRSV.

- **Significance of Mary's Instructions to the servants**

"His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 2:5 NRSV

"His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." NKJV

This is a recurrent theme in scripture: to see God work in our lives, we are to do what the Lord instructs us to do.

- **Significance of this first miracle**

"This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." 2:11 NKJV

God's miracles in our lives manifest or reveal the glory of the Lord.

They should cause us to further believe in God and to also praise and thank God for the Lord's love, grace, and mercies.

- **Jesus Cleanses the Temple: The Jews Ask for A Sign - John 2:13-25**

- **Jesus was a devout Jew.**

"The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

2:13 NRSV

Jesus did not ignore what Moses instructed Israel to do in the Old Testament. He lived in accordance with it.

- **Jesus' Response to Irreverence in the Temple.**

"In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 15 Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

2:14-16 NRSV

- **Jesus fulfilled Scripture.**

"His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume." 1:17 NRSV

Recall: His disciples had been looking for the Messiah, so they knew what to look for, and clearly didn't stop seeking and spotting signs of confirmation of who Jesus was, the Messiah.

- **Jews Ask for a Sign**

In response to Jesus' actions in the temple, the Jews asked him for a sign to justify his actions - in other words to prove his authority for doing that.

2:18The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" 19Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21But **he was speaking of the temple of his body.**

22After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

- **The Temple**

Which is of greater significance?

- The physical temple? In our case, our sanctuary?
- Our body?
- The Temple

"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 19Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies." 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NIV

- **Jesus, the Christ (Anointed One), God's Power & Wisdom**

18For **the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

"Since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, **God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe.**

**22For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom,
23but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,**

24but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

25For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."

1 Corinthians 1:18, 21-25 NRSV

- **Understanding of Disciples - through remembering**

"After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken." 2:22 NRSV

Sometimes we don't understand spiritual things and their significance immediately. The Holy Spirit reminds us, as Jesus said later in John.

"the Helper, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, **and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**" John 14:26 NKJV

- Effect of the Signs & Jesus' Attitude

"When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, **many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing.** 24But **Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people** 25and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone."

- People believed because they saw the signs.
- “Jesus did not commit Himself to them” v24 NKJV.
Jesus clearly did not let others set an agenda for him or try to set the course of his ministry.

○ **Jesus & Nicodemus, and the New Birth - John 3:1-21**

○ **Nicodemus visits Jesus**

3:1 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.”

- A Pharisee - legal scholar and teacher
- Leader
- Contrast with Jesus' first disciples, who
 - Were actively searching for the Messiah
 - Recognized the Messiah
 - Accepted and believed in the Messiah quickly
- Nicodemus came with questions -
 - an inquiring mind
 - was his inquiry combined with faith?

○ **Jesus cuts to the chase: NEW BIRTH IS REQUIRED to see God's Kingdom**

- **You must be born again.**

3:3 Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, **no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.**” NRSV

- **This is new spiritual birth - the human spirit given life by God's Spirit**

3:5 Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being **born of water and Spirit.** **6What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

7Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' **8The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”** 3:3-8 NRSV

Theologians have various names for this experience: Regeneration, Rebirth, etc.

- Jesus teaches on Eternal Life (**zōē** – “**divine, eternal life**” - the life of God¹)
 - a. Jesus must be lifted up for people to believe in him
“just 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.**” 3:14-15 NRSV

Jesus was referring to Moses lifting up a bronze snake which any who looked on did not die after being bitten by a snake during a time of judgement among the Israelites (Numbers 21:9)
 - b. Whoever believes in may have eternal life
“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” 3:16 NRSV
 - c. Jesus came to save, not to condemn.
“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” 3:17 NRSV
 - d. Those who believe are not condemned; those who don’t are.
“Those who believe in him are not condemned; but **those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**” 3:18 NRSV
 - e. Everyone is judged by what they did with the Light (Jesus)
“And **this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.** 20For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. 21But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.” 3:19-21 NRSV.

¹ Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined And Explained

- **John the Baptist and Jesus – John 3:22-30**

At this time, John and Jesus were both baptizing people in the countryside (3:22-24). John's attitude is exemplary for all of us.

When told that Jesus was also baptizing people, he expressed joy (3:29) and concluded:

"He must increase, but I must decrease." John 3:30 NIV

This is an important lesson for all of us as we proclaim the gospel and help people come to Christ.

- **Jesus, the One Sent from God to us: John 3:31-35**

Chapter 3 concludes with affirmations of Jesus, the Christ, being sent to us by God and his status as the Son of God. Eternal life in Jesus and the coming judgement of all who reject him are again affirmed.

"He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. 35The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. 36Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath." 3:34-36 NRSV

3. Daily Study Schedule & Questions

- **Day 1: Sign 1: The Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12)**

As you read and study the verses, here are some suggestions of themes to reflect on:

- Jesus's interactions with his mother, and the kind of relationship they might have had
- Why Jesus would be told by his mother about the party running out of wine
- Mary's instructions to the servants, and the importance of obedience to whatever God instructs us to do.

- How the servants might have felt about being asked to fill the jars with water and then to serve that water to the guests as wine. Would you have obeyed that instruction? Why or why not?
- **Day 2: Jesus Cleanses the Temple: The Jews Ask for A Sign - John 2:13-25**
As you read and study the verses, here are some suggestions of themes to reflect on:
 - Jesus' attitude to what is done in the temple, a place of worship. What should our attitude be?
 - Why were the Jews interested in a sign from Jesus?
 - The significance of Jesus' body - and death and resurrection.
 - How could Jesus's body be brought back to life in 3 days when the temple took 46 years to build?
 - Our attitudes about our own bodies
 - Our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit
- **Day 3: Jesus & Nicodemus, and the New Birth - John 3:1-21**
As you read and study the verses, here are some suggestions of themes to reflect on:
 - Compare and contrast Nicodemus' approach and attitude to Jesus and that of the first disciples who were called in John 1:35-46
 - The significance of being born again
 - What happens during the new birth process?
 - How do we obtain eternal life?
 - What lessons did Jesus teach us about how people come to Christ and obtain eternal life?
 - Condemnation and judgement and why some are not condemned but some will be judged
- **Day 4: John the Baptist and Jesus - John 3:22-30**
As you read and study the verses, here are some suggestions of themes to reflect on:
 - Any thoughts on Jesus baptizing just as John did
 - Why people told John that Jesus was also baptizing

- John's response and attitude to Jesus baptizing as well
 - John's statement: "he must increase, and I must decrease". What does this mean for you personally in your interaction with others who may or might not know Christ?
- **Day 5: Jesus, the One Sent from God to us: John 3:31-35**
- As you read and study the verses, here are some suggestions of themes to reflect on:
- What are the points of emphasis about who Jesus is in this portion of John 3
 - What you have learnt about Jesus in Chapter 3 that is summarized in the last 4 verses
 - What does it mean that Jesus gives the Spirit without measure (3:35)
 - What does it mean to you that the Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands? (3:354)