
Signs of Christ's Power

DAVE BAST

Jesus said some of the most beautiful things in the history of the human race: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. But, he also said many things that were puzzling, off-putting, even shocking; hard sayings, in other words. Some were hard because they were difficult to understand; some were hard because they were difficult to accept; and some were both. We will look at some of these hard sayings and the signs they accompany today on *Groundwork*. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and Scott, now we are on the third program of a seven-part series that we intend and have planned to cover the Gospel of John, which is difficult to do; but as we pointed out, John has several major components to it. There is a prologue, and we looked at that in the first program. There is an epilogue, Chapter 21, that we will save for the last program; and in between, there is a book of signs, and then a book of glory.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The book of signs is from Chapters 2 to 12; and that is really the public aspect of Jesus' ministry. The book of glory will be Chapters 13 through 20, and that includes that long stretch of verses in the upper room on Jesus' night of his betrayal; and then, of course, his arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection...that is all in the book of glory, and a lot of that is a little bit more the private part of Jesus' teaching of the disciples. But we are still in the book of signs in this program. We looked at the wedding at Cana, where he turned water into wine. This was his first sign. We looked at the cleansing of the Temple. We looked at one of long stories in John, the woman at the well; and we are going to take two...in this program alone...two of the next longest ones we will get to in this one; but, we are going to start in Chapter 6.

DAVE BAST

Right; so, we have actually skipped a couple of the miracles that Jesus performed in John 4 and John 5. Those involve some healings; one of a young man, a servant of a Roman soldier; the other of the man by the pool of Bethesda, and those are wonderful stories, too, but as we said, in seven programs, we don't have time to do everything. So, there are seven signs, and we are going to look at three of the biggest of those in Chapters 6, 9, and 11. So, we start right out in John Chapter 6, with a story that is told...a miracle in all four gospels...the only miracle that is told in all four gospels aside from the resurrection, and that is the feeding of the five thousand.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Obviously a significant event, sort of for the same reason, Dave, that the water-into-wine in John 2 was significant, because all of the Old Testament prophecies associate the Messiah with abundance: an abundance of bread, and an abundance of wine—feasting. You think of passages in Isaiah where the mountains flow with wine, and you know, the banquet table that the nations are invited to. So, these miracles of an abundance

of wine and an abundance of bread...these are significant; and again, as you said, Dave, the feeding of the five thousand is in all of them...all the gospels. John devotes a very long chapter to subsequent talk of bread and manna; in fact, it kind of goes on and on; and as you said at the beginning, Dave, Jesus ultimately is going to say something here, which is going to turn a lot of people off. F. F. Bruce years ago...the scholar F. F. Bruce published a book titled the *Hard Sayings of Jesus*. A friend of mine...a pastor...said: Really? The hard... I didn't know there were any *easy* ones.

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, there are some that are harder than others.

DAVE BAST

We won't read the story of the miracle that is maybe a familiar story to most of our listeners, but it is what happens *after* the miracle in John, where the conversation takes a different course, and Jesus uses that occasion. So, he feeds the five thousand. They are outside somewhere, along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, kind of on the opposite shore from where Jesus was living at the time, Capernaum; and the crowd in the aftermath of this feeding...this miraculous multiplication of bread and fish...they want to make Jesus a king, right on the spot. In other words, crown him, anoint him as the Messiah; and Jesus doesn't want that; it is not his time yet...that is another theme in John...the idea of his hour, which he is waiting for, but it is not there yet. So he slips away; they go back to Capernaum, and the crowd follows him around on the shore, and then Jesus begins to teach them in the synagogue, and he declares: 6:35-38 paraphrased I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry. He who believes in me will never be thirsty. I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me.

⁴¹At this, the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴²They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, here is one of the famous I AM sayings. We said in the first program, Dave, John is different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke in that it has no parables, but it does have the I AM sayings, and this is one of the big ones: I am the bread of life, but I came down from heaven, which makes it sound like he is manna in the wilderness...a living bread...a miracle bread...but he came down from heaven, and the Jews don't like it. They said: You didn't come down from heaven. You came from Nazareth. We know your folks. But Jesus is saying: This is who I am. This is where I have come from, and I have come to feed you in a way that will mean you will never ever be hungry again. I am the bread of life.

So, the conversation goes on and on, and then a little bit later in this chapter, you get down to verses in the 50s...verse 53 and following...Jesus doubles down. So, they are not happy with what he said, but he says: ⁵³Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.

And now people get a little grossed out, frankly.

DAVE BAST

Yes, I mean it sounds like cannibalism. In fact, that is one of the charges their detractors laid upon the early Christians in the 1st [Century]...they were cannibals because they had this language of eating the body and drinking the blood of Jesus; but of course, he is speaking symbolically...he is speaking sacramentally...and in the Lord's Supper we actually, in a sense, enact this; but what he is really talking about is the necessity of faith. Here comes another of John's major themes—the necessity of believing in or *into*, even, is the preposition that he uses...believing into Jesus. In fact, we mentioned John 3:16...we are skipping that verse, but it literally says: God so loved the world he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes *into* him will not perish, but have eternal life. And here in this graphic language, it is talking about faith.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and some commentators point out, Dave, that Jesus is being intentionally vivid and graphic here. The verb in Greek that he uses: to eat, is not just the normal verb to eat. It is to chew with your mouth open; and so, Jesus is being really provocative here, and it turns people off, and they leave, and they just think this guy is a little bit too odd: Eat his flesh, drink his blood, ew; so they leave; and Jesus...we are never told how things are said, but I think Jesus had some sadness in his voice, and he turns to the disciples and says: Are you going to leave me too? And Peter replies: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and so the disciples do stay with him.

DAVE BAST

Yes, I cannot tell you how many times I have turned to that same verse and used those same words. You know, when you are feeling like maybe you have failed him or you are just kind of wondering about it all, or even tempted to doubt: Is this even true, all this Jesus stuff? Lord, where else shall we go? You are the one. You are it. I got nothing besides you. I got nowhere else to go. And turn back to him again. So, Peter, good for you. Peter would fail; in the end he would be restored, as we will see later in this series, but here he speaks for all of us, I think, of sticking with Jesus.

So, that is a key and important sign, but there is another one in Chapter 9 that we want to look at next.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this, the third program in a seven-part series on the Gospel of John; and Dave, we are going to go to Chapter 9. We want to get right to it. We said earlier in this series that John tells the longest stories in the New Testament. Chapter 4, the woman at the well, is a long one; the man born blind is a long one, and it goes like this:

As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened that the work of God might be displayed in his life. (Then he goes up to the man) ⁶Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ⁷"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam." So the man went and he washed, and he came home seeing.

DAVE BAST

Wonderful; the healing of the man born blind. Born blind...never saw...never saw the light of day. How terrible. Jesus heals him in this wonderful way. A little bit oddly, he spits, he makes some mud, he anoints the man's eyes and tells him to go wash; and you might wonder, well, why does he...not because he had to use this means, but maybe he just wanted to reinforce...as God so often does with something physical...reinforce his grace and his power to cleanse us...to heal us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And among other things, one of the consequences of him doing it this way is that the man who is healed never saw Jesus. He had not laid eyes on Jesus because he goes to the pool and then he wanders back into the village, and he just tells...grinning like a Cheshire cat...he tells everybody: I once was blind, but now I see. You know, people had only ever seen this man kneeling as a beggar, you know; and now they are seeing him at eye level. It is like, well, this guy looks familiar. Isn't this the guy who was blind? And people say: Nah. People born blind don't get better. This just looks like that guy, and he says: No, no, no, no; it's me...it's me; and then, John lets a shoe drop in this story. The Jews are unhappy with Jesus because then he tells us something he hadn't told us earlier: Oh, it was the Sabbath.

DAVE BAST

Oh, yes; one of the stories we skipped...one of the signs...the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda...that also happened on a Sabbath; and when he says "the Jews" we need to be careful. These are not all the people. These are the ones described in the synoptic gospels as the scribes and Pharisees...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

They are the leadership.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Jesus and the disciples were Jews.

DAVE BAST

Right; so, this is the Jerusalem authorities; Jesus' inveterate enemies. They saw him as a threat; his popularity disturbed them. They actually decided, in Chapter 5, that they wanted to get rid of him...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

They wanted to kill him because he was breaking their Sabbath taboos by raising up crippled people, lame for thirty years...thirty-eight years; healing a man blind from birth, and Jesus' grace just oozes out of him and brings life and healing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And the sad thing about John 9 is that this great miracle happens and the whole chapter is about as cheery as reading a court transcript, because the Pharisees put this guy on trial to say: What happened? Who did this? They even haul his parents in and say: Was he really born blind? And you know, the parents are afraid because they don't want to be exiled from the synagogue. So they keep coming back again and again... Dale Bruner calls this man the man who always told the truth because every time somebody asked this guy a question, he tells the truth; but they are so busy trying to deny the miracle that nobody celebrates the miracle, and all because it broke the Sabbath, and you cannot be the Messiah if you break the law. The attitude of the Pharisees was: Look, if the Messiah were here, we would know because he would look just like us.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And he would act just like us and he would follow our rules; and this guy doesn't, so he is an imposter. It is a very sad thing that our own rules and expectations sometimes make us miss the glory of God; and Dave, the whole story is a play on who is really blind.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; because as Jesus prepares to heal this man, another of the I AM sayings: I am the light of the world, and clearly we are meant to reflect in our own minds between light and darkness. He had said earlier in Chapter 8:12: I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. So here he graphically demonstrates that by opening these blind eyes; and yet, these authorities, they just cannot see it. So, there is actually even a little bit of humor in this chapter, Scott; as you pointed out, John sometimes tells things that ought to make us laugh, because when the authorities come and sort of grill this guy—give him the third degree—who did this? Who, what's that matter, you know, what? And he says: I don't know for sure, but why? Do you want to become his disciples, too?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; they keep asking him: You seem curious. Yes, and then they lose their minds. That was the last straw, when he says to them: You seem really interested in this Jesus. You must want to be his disciples. Get out! So, they throw him out; and you know what is interesting about this chapter, Dave? Is between Jesus sending

him to wash in the pool and the end of the chapter, while the trial is going on, Jesus disappears. While they are trying to deny the miracle, Jesus is absent; and he comes back only after the man has been tossed out of the synagogue, and then he comes up to the man, but the man doesn't know it is Jesus because he has never seen him.

DAVE BAST

Yes; because he's never seen him, right. So, we read this toward the end of the chapter, Jesus says to this man: ^{35b} "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (Using that great Messianic title from the book of Daniel.) ³⁶ "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." (And he is standing right in front of him; again, kind of funny.) ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." ³⁸ Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him. (And here comes the point.) ³⁹ Jesus adds, "For judgment I have come into this world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

SCOTT HOEZEE

And there are a couple of Pharisees on the edges of this encounter, and they chime in: So, what are you saying? We are blind? And Jesus basically says: Well, you said it, not me. Yes, you are blind. So, the blind man literally sees. The people who think they have 20/20 spiritual vision, Jesus says you are actually blind; and the whole chapter backs that up as they can do nothing but try to deny the miracle that happened; but what a wonderful sign here in the book of signs; but there is one major sign, and in some ways the biggest of all the signs comes in John Chapter 11, and we will turn to that next.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, we are wrapping up this third program of our seven-part series on John, and we just saw one of John's major stories, the man born blind in John 9; and now we are going to move to almost the end of the book of signs, and the last great sign, which is the raising of Lazarus in John Chapter 11, a chapter that contains probably the most powerful of the seven I AM sayings in John: I am the resurrection and the life.

So, we know the setup for the story. Jesus and his disciples are traveling somewhere. He is super good friends with the siblings, Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Lazarus is sick; they send word to Jesus: The one you love is sick. The disciples say: Let's go. You can probably help him, and Jesus says: We will just give it a little bit of time...we will get a little...and in the meantime, Lazarus actually dies, and the disciples cannot figure out why Jesus apparently let this happen.

DAVE BAST

Right; so we will pick up the story at verse 20* of John 11: ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him. ²¹"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again, in the resurrection at the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷"Yes, Lord," she told him. "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

SCOTT HOEZEE

²⁸After she said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "And he is asking for you." ²⁹When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³²When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (And then Jesus says: Well, where did you lay him, and then the shortest verse in the

Bible:) ³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”
Then a few others say: Well, if he loved him that much, he could have healed him...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I mean, he has healed people he doesn't even know! Here is a friend of his... So, there you get this very interesting spectacle of Jesus, who delayed coming; Jesus who knows, presumably, that he is going to call Lazarus back to life, although he has been in the tomb for four days; and yet, he weeps. Why?

DAVE BAST

Yes; some of the Church fathers said he was crying for Lazarus because he had to call him back from heaven to resume this life on earth. That is a little bit precious, maybe, as an explanation. I think the simplest explanation is always the best in these circumstances. See how he loved him. That is what the bystanders concluded; and it was true, and somehow, in the presence of death... In fact, again, we didn't have time to read the whole chapter. It is one of those long ones, but it says he not only wept as he approached the tomb, he shuttered...he shook...and it is as though Jesus who is *the* life...the resurrection and the life...when he comes into contact with death he is just filled, not only with grief and sorrow at all the pain of the world, he...as the apostle would later say...he wept with those who wept.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

But he is also outraged at this thing that doesn't belong. This is not God's will. This is not the way it is supposed to be. We are not supposed to have to stand by gravesides with our hearts broken.

SCOTT HOEZEE

To quote Neal Plantinga's book on sin, this is not the way it is supposed to be. We flash back to John Chapter 1, one of the first verses of the whole gospel: In him was life, and the life in Jesus recoils from the fact that we now live in a world of death; and you know, Dave, you wonder sometimes how often Jesus held back tears in his earthly ministry, because every day he encountered sin, every day he encountered things that must have broken his divine heart, because this isn't what he wanted when in the beginning he said: Let there be light. Not a world of darkness. He said: Let there be light. He was the one who spoke creation into being, John 1 tells us; and so, yes; he weeps because this is wrong. That is the simplest explanation, and I think that is right.

DAVE BAST

And then he goes on to command. So, we all would weep in similar circumstances. We can identify with Jesus in that, but what comes next is absolutely beyond us; and he proves the truth of his I am the resurrection and the life by commanding in a loud voice, ^(43b) “Lazarus, come forth!” And he does. It is just amazing the way this loops back, too. Some of the bystanders had said, ⁽³⁷⁾ “Could not he who had opened the eyes of the blind have saved this man?” There is John 9. He did open the eyes of the blind, and “Lazarus, come forth” reminds us that in the middle of John 5**, Jesus said, ⁽²⁵⁾ “The hour is coming when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live; and so, here it happens in preview.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and it is a preview because Lazarus will die again. In fact, in the next chapter we find out that the Jews plot to kill Lazarus to cover up this miracle. We don't know if they succeeded. They succeeded in killing Jesus. Maybe they did, but whether it happened then or later, Lazarus will die again. This is not the final resurrection like Jesus will have on Easter...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, it is a sign, right? We said all along, Dave, all of the miracles in John are called signs. They are arrows that point to the coming reality of the kingdom; and so, although Lazarus will die again, on *this* day, he brings him back to show Martha the truth of what he said, that I (Jesus) am the resurrection and the life. Death will not have the last word; and so, this is not the final resurrection for Lazarus. His final resurrection will come like all of ours, on the last day when Jesus comes again and raises us all again; but for this day, Jesus performs a sign that is an arrow to say: Life, not death, will have the final say in this creation, and here is an encouraging sign to back that up.

DAVE BAST

Right; and once again, that great theme of faith that is going to run throughout John: Do you believe this, Jesus says to Martha, as he is encountering her in her grief; and she says: Lord, if only you had been here. How often don't we think that? If God had only done something, this wouldn't have happened. Then Jesus says: Your brother will rise... Yes, I know. She thinks it is like the things we say in...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, it's like a Hallmark card.

DAVE BAST

It's like the things we say at funeral homes, this pious sort of assurance; and Jesus says: No, no, no, no. *Do you believe?* Do you believe this? And she says: Lord, I believe you are the Son of God. I believe. Let it be, you know; and so, he shows her the truth that not only resurrection in the future at the last day, but new life here and now for those who will only put their trust in me. And so, I think we are invited in all these signs to ask: How do I see? How do I hear? How do I believe? And he is the life.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Dave Bast, and we hope you will join us again next time as we continue our study of the Gospel of John in Chapters 12 through 14.

Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you, and tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

***Correction:** In the audio of this episode, host Dave Bast misspeaks and says "so we will pick up the story at verse 17 of John 11" when he meant to say "verse 20 of John 11."

****Correction:** The verse Dave Bast reads here, John 5:25, is located in the middle of John chapter 5, not the end as is stated in the audio.

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