

## The Second Sign

John 4:43 – 54

*“the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”(Rev 19:10)*

How refreshing it must have been to Jesus during those two days in the town of Drunken. That’s what Sychar means – drunken. But the Samaritans weren’t the least bit inebriated physically. For two days, they drank of the water of life and without a single sign, not one miraculous healing or casting out of demons, they sincerely believed that Jesus was not only the Jewish Messiah but the Savior of the world. Why? His Word. They heard Him and believed.

This could hardly picture more prophetically the age in which we live and are quickly concluding. You see, for two days, (prophetically, two thousand years -- see 2 Pet 3:8), Christ ministered to these non-Jews, these ‘mongrel half-breeds’ who wanted to know God but were miserably misled by their traditions. In similar fashion those with the Spirit of Christ have ministered to the Lord’s sheep among the gentiles throughout this age, the church age.

But then it was time for Jesus to return to the Jews. Those in Judea were out to get Him, to take Him down, and those in His home town of Nazareth simply could not see Him as anything but the carpenter’s son. So, *“...after the two days He departed from there and went to Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast.”*

Notice the emphasis on seeing the things He did in Jerusalem. These folks were receptive but not in the manner of the Samaritans. They, like all who live by signs, craved more miracles to keep the leaky balloon of their shallow faith filled. Now, please do not think I mean to belittle the miracle working power of our Lord! To the contrary, He has done many, many outrageous miracles in my own life and I reverently treasure each one. Nevertheless, it is the wonderful Word of God that says, *“...faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”* (Rom 10:17) Remember, the book of John is all about believing in Jesus (Jn 20:30,31).

Like the Galileans, the religious Jews of today are looking for a messiah who will fulfill myriad signs such as making it possible for them to build the temple and crushing their enemies. Actually, this is the very thing that will make them so susceptible to the lies and deceptions of the soon coming Antichrist. What they are looking for, he will seem to provide. Meanwhile, his protégé, the “false prophet”, will likely spin an interpretation of the scripture to make it look like the AC is the long awaited messiah and worthy of worship.

Back to our text. *“So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.”* Now, this man was not

seeking a sign out of curiosity. He had a desperate need. He was of the king’s court and had probably exhausted his other options. From Cana, it was about half a day’s walk to Capernaum, and so it was no small thing he asked of Jesus. This stands in stark contrast to the Roman centurion of Matthew chapter eight, also in Capernaum, who insisted that Jesus had but to speak the word for his servant to be healed and that he wasn’t worthy to have Christ come to his home. This father, however was desperately needing help for his son.

*“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.’”* ‘Wait a minute,’ you might ponder, ‘this fellow’s child was near death and yet Jesus seemed to scold him. That appears callous, almost distant.’ But Christ’s priority was and is faith – true faith in God. This man’s desperation had brought him the four to five hours journey from Capernaum to Cana. His first step back had to be in faith.

Notice also, that although Jesus addressed the man, he used the plural “you people”. What people? The Jews? Surely. However, let’s consider this a bit more. Paul wrote that the Jews, as a people seek after a sign, it’s in their nature (see 1 Cor 1:22). For this reason, I believe that Jesus here was speaking both to the Jewish people of His day and prophetically to those in these last days. You see, Jesus didn’t and doesn’t make mistakes... you’ll see what I mean.

*“The nobleman said to Him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies!’”* Jesus said to him, *‘Go your way; your son lives.’* So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. And as

*he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, ‘Your son lives!’* Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, *‘Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.’* So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, *‘Your son lives.’* And he himself believed, and his whole household.”

Jesus had said, *“‘Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.’* But then this man simply believed Jesus as He spoke the words, “your son lives”. In fact, it was only 1PM on the day this happened so if he had any doubt, the father could have easily made it back to Capernaum that evening. But in fact, he spent the rest of the day and the night in Cana before heading back. Clearly, he believed Jesus. The next day, when the servants confirmed the hour of his son’s healing, it served to confirm his faith and give birth to the same among his whole family. So, although Christ spoke to this man about the need for signs and wonders, he wasn’t speaking of him. Jesus was not mistaken! Never was, never is, never will be. Thus, it is likely that Jesus spoke of the Jewish people in general and it’s possible that this nobleman represents typically the group of Jews in the last days described as the ‘remnant’ – Jewish believers who will not be taken in by the AC’s false miracles. (See Joel 2:32, Zeph 3:13, Zech 13:8-10, Rom 9:27; 11:5, Rev 12:17)

Whether that be the case or not, how about the rest of us believers? What does this vignette tell us of our Lord and our faith in Him?

God's priority for us is faith and trust. It was the darkest, loneliest and most desperate night of my life. We had brought our 17 year old son, Gabriel, to the USF hospital for emergency critical care. His heart was enlarging and his pulmonary artery pressures were very high. As a consequence, he was struggling to breath and his oxygenation levels had dropped from the 90's to the low 60's. As a teaching hospital, USF didn't assign a single doctor to be responsible for Gabe, but simply rotated interns through. Each one would ask the same questions, but none gave any help or hope. 24 different physicians in three days and only one indicated the least bit of compassion or concern. Gabriel's disease was rare and so they wanted to take advantage of the situation. In the process, they treated him as a guinea pig. The nursing staff was only slightly better but actually made things worse for our boy by mistakenly giving him drugs to which he reacted violently. Clearly, he was getting worse and worse but we had trusted the Lord for 17 years, day by day, for his life and I could not face giving up on him. Four days without sleeping, I fought desperately in prayer. His O2 levels were down in the 50's that night, if I remember right. I'd implored, just like this nobleman for God to intervene miraculously as He had before in Gabe's life. The weeping and desperation left me simply slumping on the floor of the deserted, dark waiting room. Then I knew, just knew, I had to let go. The Lord impressed upon my heart that He hadn't taken Gabe until then because of that. But now, it was time. He said to my heart that I had

to trust Him, that Gabe was indeed in His hands, that heaven was real. I had to believe Him, not for health but for heaven.

To say that I did that full of faith would be a lie. But I did it. I told the Lord, "I trust You, Father. If it is Your will to take Him, and if You're waiting for me to release him in my heart, I do that now."

A few hours later, it was morning. His oxygen was down to the 40's and he struggled for every breath even with the oxygen mask over his face. I took a few moments to go to the waiting room again and pray. Suddenly, my daughter, Star rushed in exclaiming, "Dad! Dad! It's a miracle! His oxygen has gone back up to 93! They've never seen anything like it! The machine is working. They checked it and it's working right. Dad, come and see!"

My heart was pounding like thunder as I entered his little room and sure enough, I saw it with my own eyes – 91 and steady. Doctors and nurses were scrambling everywhere. The lead physician was dumbfounded. This was impossible. I whispered to Gabe – his eyes were closed and he was still breathing hard but with more peace – "Honey, your oxygen is back to near normal and these folks are amazed. The Lord is indeed here with you." He smiled his big grin.

It was real. The doctors verified it but couldn't explain it. For all of us who loved Gabe, it was a sign, a needed sign, that God was near, very near.

Even when He ushered Babe home later that day, I knew He had shown Himself – that He could do the temporary healing but chose to do the permanent healing.

Even when it means you don't get what you want from God, you must take Him at His word. You must know that you can trust Him for the ultimate good. Faith has never been about getting God to do things our way. It's always been about trusting Him and submitting to His way. When you've heard from Him and your heart is fully assured, that's when you can ask specifically with no wavering. All things are indeed possible to him who believes but believing comes from hearing from Him first. Moving mountains, frankly, is not the big deal – He's literally done that for me as well (someday I'll share that story, perhaps) – the greater thing among the "all things" which are possible is when you can truly let Him have His way even when it is completely contrary to everything you desperately desire.

Next point, although the man implored, he also directed. Directing God is a sign of two things really. First, it reflects a fundamental distrust of Him. You see, if you truly believe He is Who He says He is – all good, all powerful, on your side, etc. – you can be confident that He will answer your prayers in the time and way that will ultimately and throughout eternity be best for you. Second, it shows that your relationship with Him is backwards – you're trying to make Him submit to your will rather than finding your peace under the 'shadow of His wing.' For the nobleman, this posture had to change. As a member of the royal family or court, he was likely used to giving instructions to most of the people in his life.

Jesus didn't go to the man's home but He did save his son. Now, to his

credit, the nobleman did not need a sign. He experienced a sudden change of heart and simply took Christ at His word. Believing His word without the tangible proof so to speak is always the guidepost that directs us along the narrow road of salvation. And this is as true for the newest believer as it is for the most aged saint. *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen."*

As we consider Hebrews 11 and all the wonderful saints who are mentioned therein, we note that they all exhibited the same thing, the same "I'll take You at Your word, Lord" attitude. That's why we call it the 'Hall of Faith'.

Finally, Jesus acted when the nobleman addressed Him as Lord (Sir in the KJV). God is always concerned that we have the relationship right. Not because He needs the 'strokes' of our praise. But we will never be complete inwardly until we know Him as Lord. He is the Potter; we are the clay. If you're like me, you will find yourself sometimes jumping off the potting wheel and landing splat on the floor. That's a terribly humbling place to be, all mushy and disfigured – not because of what God did but what I did. It happens every time I try to be lord. How about you?

God may give us a sign from time to time. But the desire of His heart is that we learn to trust Him apart from signs, that we learn to relate to Him without directing or instructing for He indeed is our Lord. He truly does know what He's doing.

*"This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee."*