

THE SECOND MIRACLE AT CANA

John 4:43-54

He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. (Isaiah 25:8).

In the hill country of central Galilee lay the small village of Cana. It was a small, insignificant town, named after the marsh reeds which grew nearby. Well off the main highways, it was merely a small backwoods town in a third class province on the outer fringes of the Roman Empire.

It was here that Jesus had performed His first miracle. It had taken place during a wedding feast. In the midst of the celebrations, the host had run out of wine. When Jesus had heard of the situation, He went to the household servants and instructed them to fill six waterpots to the brim with water. He then told them to take a cup of this water to the headwaiter for him to taste. When the headwaiter had tasted it, not realizing its source, he proclaimed it to be the best wine served during the entire celebration.

Now almost a year has passed since that event. Once again, Jesus is coming to Cana. The village is alive with the news. By now, the gossip of the servants has spread the story of that first miracle to every house for miles around.

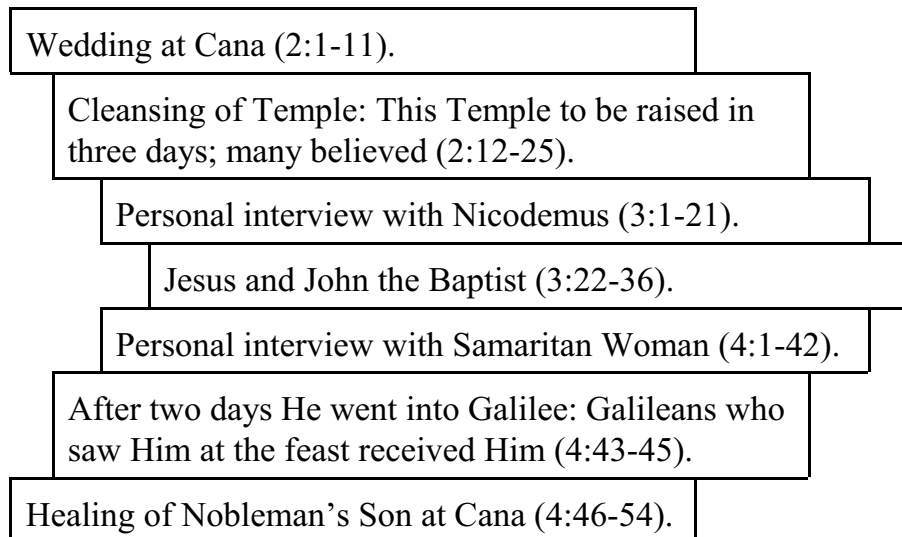
But this is not all. Many of the Jews living in Galilee have traveled to Jerusalem in the year past to attend the various feasts. Many have seen the signs and the miracles of Jesus that were being performed there. The ministry and following of this young Jewish prophet has grown.

Finally, He is returning to Cana. This was the scene of His first miracle. It will also be the scene of a second miracle.

The First Miracle at Cana	The Second Miracle at Cana
Performed in a setting of joy and rejoicing	In a setting of mourning and sorrow
Brought wine from water	Health to the dying
A miracle of creation	A miracle of healing

The result of each miracle will be the same -- belief will be produced in the hearts of those who see.

This is the summation of a chiasm that began in John 2.



THE RETURN TO GALILEE

⁴³ And after the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. ⁴⁴ For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. ⁴⁵ So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast. (John 4:43-45).

In our last chapter, we examined the incident at Sychar. We saw there how that by one woman's testimony an entire town came to know Christ. It marked the official close of the early ministry of Jesus.

And yet, these events recorded in John 4:43-54 will be seen to be more related to the events of the year just past than the Galilean ministry that is about to begin. And so, I want to suggest that we take this second incident at Cana as a transition which brings us from the first year into the second year in the ministry of Jesus.

The reason for the return of Jesus is given in verses 43-44: *He went forth from there into Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country (4:43-44).*

This verse presents us with an interesting problem. It tells us that the reason Jesus now returns to Galilee is because a prophet has no honor in His own country.

Now we come to the problem. It is that Jesus' own country is Galilee. This proverb of a

prophet having no honor in his own country is repeated in all three of the synoptic gospels, and in each case, it is clear from the context that "his own country" is a reference to Galilee, specifically Nazareth (Matthew 13:54,57; Mark 6:1,4; Luke 4:16,24).

If this is the case, then why is His purpose in returning to Galilee at this time based upon the truth that a prophet has no honor in His own country.

I think that the answer is found in verse 45: *So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him* (4: 45). Jesus comes to Galilee only after He has first been recognized and has won acclaim in Judea. Notice that verse 45 goes on to state that the reason Jesus was received in Galilee was that the Galileans had first seen His signs in Jerusalem.

But this is not all. We must also note that the reason Jesus had first departed from Judea was because of His growing popularity in Judea and the growing resentment of the Pharisees: *When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), ³ He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.* (John 4:1-3).

It was not a part of the plan of Jesus to come into open conflict with the Pharisees of Judea at this time. His hour had not yet come.

In this way, we can view the incident at Sychar as an interlude -- a parenthesis separating John 4:1-3 from 4:43-45. It would look something like this:

When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (4:1), He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee (4: 3); for Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country (4:44).

Thus, although there will eventually be a reception among the Galileans, it will not bring about the immediate confrontation that will later occur when Jesus returns to Jerusalem.

There is a point here that I don't want you to miss. It is that Jesus is controlling the date of His future crucifixion. Events were happening too fast, so He took deliberate steps to slow them down. Likewise, when the proper time comes, those same circumstances will be reversed to bring about the desired process.

There is a principle here, and it is an important, one. The death of Jesus was planned by Jesus.

For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate,

along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. (Acts 4:27-28).

The death of Jesus was planned by Jesus. It was no accident. It was ordained in past eternity and it carried to pass exactly the way in which it was planned.

THE REQUEST OF THE ROYAL OFFICIAL

⁴⁶ He came therefore again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷ When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him, and was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. (John 4:46-47).

As Jesus carries back to Galilee, He directs His steps to that little town of Cana. This was the home of Nathanael (John 21:2). It had also been the scenic of His first miracle. Perhaps it is because of this that a man now carries and asks for a second miracle to be presented.

1. The Royal Official: *And there was a certain royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum (4:46).*

We are now introduced to a new character. His name is not given. He is only called a “royal official.” This same term is used in the writings of Josephus to describe the officers in the service of Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee.

This is the third individual that we have seen coming and interacting with Jesus. An interesting contrast can be developed.

Nicodemus	Samaritan Woman	Royal Official
He was a Jew	She was a Samaritan	He was a Galilean
High society and a leader of the Jews	An outcast from her society	Held in high esteem by the Romans
A Pharisee	An immoral woman	A Roman official
He came to question Jesus	She came to draw water	He came to have his son healed

His questions were answered	She went away with the water of life	His son was healed and his entire family believed
-----------------------------	--------------------------------------	---

Though they came for different reasons, all three came to Jesus. All three had their needs met in Him.

2. A man in need: *When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him (4:47).*

Picture the setting. This man's home is in the city of Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A tragic shadow has come over his household. His beloved son is sick to the point of death. This man has tried everything, but to no avail. He has all but lost hope.

Then one day, he hears the news that Jesus, the healer and miracle-worker who has drawn so many people down in the territory of Judea has now returned to Galilee. Upon inquiring, he finds that Jesus is staying in Cana.

And so, this man sets out for Cana. It is a trip of about 16 miles. He does not send a servant, although a man in his position has many servants. Instead, he goes himself. He can only hope that he will not be too late.

3. A Frantic Request: *And was requesting him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death (4:47).*

As we examine this man's request, we can see that he had two misconceptions about Jesus.

- First, he thought that if Jesus were to heal his son, He would have to come down to Capernaum. It never entered into his mind that Jesus might be able to heal someone who was 16 miles away. His problem was one of a limited view of Christ.
- His second misconception was that Jesus would only be able to heal his son if they were able to return before the boy had died. He looked upon death as final. He reasoned that Jesus might be able to heal the boy if he were sick, but that if the boy were to die, then it would be beyond the power of Jesus to do anything about it. Once again, his problem was one of a limited view of Jesus.

There is a principle here. We often fall into the same trap. Our view of God and

of Christ is often far too limited. This is reflected in our prayer life.

Have you ever prayed like this? "Father, I want to ask You to solve this problem if You are able to." What are we saying? That the Creator of all of the universe, the one who holds the galaxies together by His own power might not be able to answer our microscopic problems? We need to learn the same lesson that this man is about to learn. It is the lesson of the power of God.

This man had another problem which he did not even know about. It was a problem far greater than the sickness of his son. These two misconceptions were merely symptoms of a far greater illness. It was the problem of his own spiritual condition. He had come seeking help for his son's condition; he will go away, having found life for his entire family.

THE ANSWER OF JESUS

48 Jesus therefore said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."

49 The royal official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." 50 Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off. (John 4:48-50).

Up to this point, this man had seen Jesus only as a healer who might be able to succeed where physicians had failed. His thinking was characteristic of many in Galilee. Jesus answers him accordingly.

1. A Need for Faith: *Jesus therefore said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe" (4:48).*

Notice that, although Jesus speaks to the man, His answer is directed to the entire crowd. Like the people in general, this man is looking only to the miracles of Jesus. He is focusing on the miracles. He does not see the one behind the miracles. He only wants his immediate problem solved. He is an unbeliever. He is spiritually dead. His son is only sick. He does not realize it, but he has a much greater need than a sick son. Both he and his son are in need of spiritual life.

Jesus is going to deal with the whole man. He will heal the son, but first, He teaches the man about faith.

2. A Pleading Request: *The royal official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies" (4:49).*

Notice the man's reaction. He rephrases the question. In verse 47, he was requesting Jesus to come down and heal his son (Greek: υιος). Now he pleads with Jesus to come and heal his child (Greek: τεκνον).

Notice also that he still has not recognized the issue at hand. He is still only concerned with the physical health of his son. To him, faith is not an issue. He does not see faith as being important. He will only have faith in Jesus if he can first see the miracle.

3. An Assurance of Healing: *Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives" (4:50).*

Jesus does not agree to go with the man. Instead, He responds with a statement: "Your son lives." This is more than just a prophecy, it is the working of a miracle. As He speaks, so it is done at that moment in Capernaum, 18 miles away.

Now the man is faced with a dilemma. He believes that Jesus is able to come to Capernaum and heal his son. Will he believe that Jesus can heal from a distance? This is a test of faith.

We face the same decision today. We are at a distance from Jesus today. We cannot see Him in our presence. We would believe that He could do all sorts of wonderful things if He was here with us. But, will we believe that He can work in our lives, even though we may not immediately see the effects of that work?

4. An Act of Faith: *The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off (4:50).*

This man passed the faith test. He believed that what Jesus said had come to pass. And as a result; of his belief, he acted -- he began his trip back home. He had seen no supernatural sign as of yet to confirm his faith. There would be no confirmation until the next day. But he believed anyway.

This is much like what Jesus does with us today. We are often ready to ask for a sign from God and then we will believe. But He seldom gives us such supernatural signs. Rather, He asks to believe, and then we shall see His supernatural workings. This is a profound truth. Faith precedes sight. We must believe in order to see.

THE MIRACLE SIGN

51 And as he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living. 52 So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. They said therefore to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." 53 So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed, and his whole household. 54 This is again a second sign that Jesus performed, when He had come out of Judea into Galilee. (John 4:51-54).

As Jesus is speaking to this man, something spectacular is happening 18 miles down the road at Capernaum. The household slaves who are watching over the ailing son watch as the sickness leaves him. Some of them set out for Cana with the glad news. It is on the road between Cana and Capernaum that they meet their master.

1. A Timely Question: *So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better (4:52).*

Notice how the question is phrased. He does not ask, "When was he healed?" Instead it is, "When did this gradual recovery begin to take place?" This man had demonstrated faith, but it was still a weak faith that needed to be strengthened.

2. An Immediate Reply: *They said therefore to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him" (4:52).*

It had been as seven o'clock on the evening before that this man had spoken to Jesus. Perhaps he had walked most of the night on his way back to Capernaum.

Notice also how these servants describe this healing. "The fever left him." It was a complete and sudden healing. It was not a gradual restoration. It was so sudden that they could mark the exact time. As Jesus had said the words, "Your son lives," the son had been healed at that very instant.

3. A Response of Faith: *And he himself believed, and his whole household (4:53).*

As a result of this miracle, the faith of this man was confirmed. This is the way God often works with us. After we have believed in Him, then He shows us things which will confirm and solidify our faith. This is not all. As a result of this sign, his entire household believes.

4. A Contrasted Sign: *This is again a second sign that Jesus performed, when He had come out of Judea into Galilee (4: 54).*

We saw the first sign that Jesus did in Cana. It was the sign of turning water into wine. This is now the second sign given within the realm of Galilee. There is an

interesting contrast between the two.

The First Miracle at Cana	The Second Miracle at Cana
Performed in the midst of a wedding	Performed in the midst of sickness and death
The miracle was requested by the mother of Jesus	The miracle was requested by a royal official
Jesus changed water into wine	Jesus changed sickness into health
He demonstrated His power over the physical universe	He demonstrated that distance is no obstacle to the working of His power
The result was that His disciples believe in Him	The result was that the royal official and his entire household believed in Him

There is a tremendous principle that we must not miss as we complete our examination of this miracle. It is the principle of affliction.

You see, this royal official had never before come to Jesus. As much as an entire year of ministry that had taken place up to this point, yet never once did this man take it upon himself to travel to Judea and seek Jesus out. It took a tragedy to bring him to Christ. And he is not unique. This same principle is illustrated in the Psalms.

*Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Thy word. (Psalm 119:67).*

It is often in times of trouble that people will turn to God. When everything else fails, they try God. Prayer is viewed only as the final panic button that reads, "In case of emergency, press here."

It is because of this that God often brings affliction and trials. It is not to punish you. Rather, it is for your good. It is to bring you to a place of total dependence on God. This is the strengthening of faith. Faith begins to grow only when self-dependence has fallen.

Have you been faced with affliction? Have problems confronted you which appear insurmountable? Perhaps this is God's lesson for you. He teaches us to trust through our needs. He strengthens us through our weakness. In our dependence, He is glorified.

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is

perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." (2 Corinthians 12:9).