

Signs and Wonders...to what end?

John 4:45-54

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Introduction: When it comes to Jesus not a lot has changed since the first century. John's account reveals some common and ongoing human perceptions of God the Son. Like the people in our passage in John, most people have pretty settled ideas about who Jesus is. And...they are not easily persuaded to change their opinion.

The event that John records is no exception. Jesus grew up in the region of Galilee. The towns are very small and rural. They are not far apart and there are relatives living throughout the region. People knew about and talked about one another. AND...Jesus had recently begun His public revelation of Himself in a small village of CANA and at a public event. Water turned into wine? Unheard of!

He then left there for the Passover feast in Jerusalem to which almost every adult male went every year. The people of Cana and other nearby towns went there also and there they saw many of the things Christ did and they heard him preach.

He returned to Galilee when the Pharisees began to take notice of His growing influence among the people. He chose to pass through Samaria to meet an unnamed woman and identify Himself as the Messiah...God the Son....to her and many in that town.

Our story picks up as Jesus comes back into the region of Galilee. He goes right back to the small village of Cana where He did His first miracle and where He is now somewhat of a celebrity. Let's read the account now....

John 4:43-54 ⁴³ After the two days he departed for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) ⁴⁵ So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast. ⁴⁶ So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. ⁴⁷ When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸ So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." ⁴⁹ The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. ⁵¹ As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. ⁵² So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." ⁵³ The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. ⁵⁴ This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

Why am I preaching this sermon: Jesus' pushed people out of their comfort zone. He still does. Most people do believe there is a God...but it is disturbing to think that there is a God who becomes a human man and inserts Himself into the affairs of me. A God

who claims to be the creator and life giver and by logic...the owner of everything in this world including us. That is disturbing and it is uncomfortable.

Jesus was **not** the first miracle worker to appear and He was not even the last. But, He was the only one who claimed repeatedly to be the God of Creation.

John 10:29-33 ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one." ³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" ³³ The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

Matthew 16:13-16 ¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

No one should have to guess what I plan to talk about: Here at the beginning of His public ministry, which was a revealing of Himself to the world, He is already beginning to press home the reality of WHO HE IS! The Gospel of John is written to contend for this point. The preaching of the Cross is intended to make this point as well. Jesus came to do what no man can do. Give Himself as a ransom for your life.

Psalm 49:5-8 ⁵ Why should I fear in days of adversity, When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me, ⁶ Even those who trust in their wealth And boast in the abundance of their riches? ⁷ No man can by any means redeem *his* brother Or give to God a ransom for him - ⁸ For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease *trying* forever—

Psalm 49:12-15 ¹² But man in *his* pomp will not endure; He is like the beasts that perish. ¹³ This is the way of those who are foolish, And of those after them who approve their words. Selah. ¹⁴ As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; And the upright shall rule over them in the morning, And their form shall be for Sheol to consume So that they have no habitation. ¹⁵ But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol,

In order to be your Savior, He must also be your God...because no mere human has the means to pay the costly ransom for your life. Jesus, being God and sinless man has the means to pay and because He is full of mercy for sinners He did pay for those who come to Him.

As Jesus returns to Galilee from His first Passover, He begins to answer the question that few are willing to ask....Who is this man? In the few verses we read we see three possible responses.

- He is a good man and extraordinary teacher...We should admire Him! [43-45]

- He is a miracle worker...we should receive something from Him! [46-50]
- He is God and we should entrust our lives to, and worship Him! [51-54]

He is a good man and extraordinary teacher...We should admire Him! [43-45]

John 4:43-45 ⁴³ After the two days he departed for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) ⁴⁵ So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.

After the two days he departed for Galilee: Jesus stayed with the Samaritans for two days after the meeting at the well. Their own testimony was that they came to believe in Him because of His Words. These would be the Words of God and this is why we still preach from the Word of God. Not because we are stuck in the past, but because they are the means that God has chosen to reveal Himself to mankind. That has not changed or been revoked and humanity...for all its progress....has not changed its foundational nature. They do not know God unless God reveals Himself to them. This was Christ's primary purpose in the world.

John 1:17-18 ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown: This statement seems out of place here at first look. Particularly when you look at what follows in the account. But, the fact remains that in Christ's hometown of Nazareth they actually tried to kill Him after the sermon. I have never really had that happen to me after a sermon....but then....I never claimed to be God during the service either.

Luke 4:16-21 ¹⁶ And he came to **Nazareth**, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

This statement is included here to explain the next one....

When he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast: The people of the region had seen what He did and heard what He said and they welcomed Him because of those things. But, Jesus did not come to "wow" the crowd, gather a following or found

one of the world's great religions. His purpose was to reveal God to men and the way He did that was by becoming a man while being God the Son.

Until this time mankind had a deficient knowledge of God. What they did not know was that God, while just and holy, was also full of mercy and grace for His creation. Jesus revealed that grace and mercy to mankind.

John 1:17 ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

He also solved the problem of how God can forgive men for their sins and still be just. If an earthly judge, hearing an open and shut case were to suddenly say to the guilty defendant... "You know, I am loving and kind and I am just going to let you go....even though you are guilty." The world would rightly have a fit over that. It is not just to let the guilty go absolutely free. It was Christ stated purpose to serve you by paying your penalty and serving your sentence.

Matthew 20:28 The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The people of Galilee were impressed with what Jesus could do and say. They admired Him and wanted to see more of His amazing signs. Like them, our world is filled with people who admire Christ. They say things like, He was a great teacher. He set us a great example. He was an amazing moralist and religious teacher.

But the events here change the focus from what Jesus did to why Jesus was able to do such things. Jesus wants a fundamental change in the way the people of His home region think of Him. He wants them to know who He is rather than just be amazed by what He can do.

He is a miracle worker...we should receive something from Him! [46-50]

John 4:46-50 ⁴⁶ So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. ⁴⁷ When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸ So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." ⁴⁹ The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.

He came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine: Jesus came back to the place of His miracle and got a lot of attention. But, the people of the region did not honor Him for who He was, but were anxious to see more miraculous signs performed.

And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death: The news of His coming reached the nearby village of Capernaum....also Peter's home town and came to the ears of this Royal Official [someone in the service of the ruler of that area] When he hears that this miracle worker is back in Cana and he goes there hoping to receive something from Him.

So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.": The situation that Jesus encounters in Galilee needs to be understood in the light of what happened in Samaria. There the estranged and heretical Samaritans had embraced Christ as the Messiah while in Galilee he is welcomed as a miracle worker and charismatic teacher. Belief in a Great Man, outstanding moral teacher and a miracle worker is insufficient faith.

This is why....Jesus is going to lay down His life for you because of His love, mercy and grace. If a mere man does such a thing he is squandering His life. He is throwing it down the drain, because it is insufficient payment for your sin. In fact, it is no payment at all. Each human sinner must pay for his own sin. He has no capitol...no currency with which to pay for your sin or mine.

When Jesus says "you will not believe" he is speaking to the crowd. The Galilean faith was based on curiosity and amazement. They wanted to see a sign. In Samaria they wanted to hear His words and became convinced He was the Messiah who could save. The crowd is hoping that Jesus will go down with the official so they can watch Him heal this boy, but instead he does the unexpected. Here is the perfect chance to get some press, but....

Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way: The official was the one person in this story who trusted Jesus. Jesus said go home your son will live and he trusted him and went home. This is a major change in this man, because he has been incessantly pleading with Jesus to come with him on the 16 mile trip where his dear son lay at the point of death. Now, without any sign or miracle to appeal to, the Royal Official simply stops his begging, turns and begins the journey home.

Jesus, for His part, fails to give the crowds what they want. Why? Because he knows that men tend to make signs and wonders an end in itself. A few minutes on the Religious Broadcasting Network will be sufficient to drive this point home. Men talk a great deal of miracles, signs, wonders, healings and the men who perform them and speak very little of the Christ of Glory who came to earth to seek and to save the lost. Jesus considered such fascination with signs and miracles to be perverse....He even said so.

Luke 11:29 ²⁹ When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation. It **seeks for a sign,** but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.

Jesus did signs and miracles to confirm His claim to be the Messiah ...the Savior of the world. The men of His days were fascinated by His miracles, but became angry and murderous when Jesus force them to the inevitable conclusion...He is the God of heaven!

Mark 2:5-11 ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, **take up your bed** and walk'? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"- he said to the paralytic- ¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."

He is God and we should entrust our lives to, and worship Him! [51-54]

John 4:51-54 ⁵¹ As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. ⁵² So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." ⁵³ The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. ⁵⁴ This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering: Jesus replaces the desire for a sign with an act of grace and mercy. He will not let the crowds see it. What He does here will not satisfy the their appetite for the spectacle, but it will confirm to this man and His family that Jesus is the God of Glory.

So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.": The man left Jesus at 1:00 PM to return home. He stopped somewhere for the night, no doubt and resumed his journey at daylight. As they told him of his son's recovery the official discovers that it happened at the moment Jesus said his son would live.

And he himself believed, and all his household: Jesus is a man, who is capable of signs and wonders, but refuses to do them. He insists that healed lepers not tell anyone who did it. He commands men delivered from demonism, not to follow him. He has his disciples distribute the bread and fish. He declines to play to the crowd, but will quietly give life to a man's dying son. HE is a different man. He is not like any other man. He is not a mere man and He insists that men know who He really is. He is God...He has come....driven by love and filled with grace and mercy....to save us from our sins and from ourselves. He has come not just for eternal life when we die, but to give us an abundant and meaningful life in this world.

John 10:9-10 ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

CONCLUSION: It is crucial that we trust the Jesus who is God the Creator. The Jesus who humbled Himself, leaving heaven, to become an man and die for us. This is the vital distinction between true and bogus faith. Many claim to be Christians, but their passion is for the spectacle. Other claim to believe in a Christ who is just a moralist, or a good example or a great teacher....**BUT NOT GOD** come in human form!

Answer this Questions: Jesus was tireless in His effort to reveal Himself truly to men. In the end those who should have easily identified Him from the Scripture and from His miracles...just asked for another sign. Nothing Christ would do would ever satisfy them because they preferred the benefits God gives to God Himself. They wanted to be saved but they did not want a Savior. Jesus called them on this very thing when He said,

John 5:39-40 ³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Ask for a verdict: But you...who do you say that I am? Will we answer with the crowds?...Show us some sign! Do something for miraculous for us! But do not make claims to have made us...to be Lord over us....to be our only hope of heaven.

Or will we answer with Peter who said

Matthew 16:16 "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

or with Mary who said,

John 11:27 "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

Or Paul who said,

Philippians 2:6-11 ⁶ he was in the form of God, *but* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.