

JESUS' AUTHORITY TO PREACH AND HEAL

John 4:43-54 / Yeshua §§38-39

Last week our special speaker Alan Shlemon taught on *Bad Arguments Against Religion*. The first bad argument with which he dealt was *confusing faith with wishing*. Often, religious people are caricatured as having an ability to believe things that are contrary to reason or evidence. Having faith is represented as having the ability to wish things really intensely.

But biblical faith is based on reason and evidence. It is putting confidence in someone or something that has proven trustworthy. In fact, Alan suggested that trust might be a more helpful word to use because it's easier to understand. Biblical faith is active trust in what we

have good reason to believe is true. If we just met, you have no basis to trust me. But if over the next year I keep my word and follow through on what I say I'm going to do, you have good reasons to trust me.

As we resume the story of Jesus Messiah King we will encounter a man who gives us a great example of faith and we will learn more about the awesome nature of Jesus that should increase our faith in Him.

JESUS RETURNS TO GALILEE

As we resume Jesus' story, Jesus and His five disciples are returning to Galilee in northern Israel. Previously they had traveled south to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feasts of Unleavened Bread, Passover and Firstfruits. While there, Jesus revealed Himself to the nation Israel for the first time to be her Messiah King. He cleansed the temple and did many "signs" to validate His claim. Though He made enemies of the high priest and Sadducees, many Jews responded favorably to Him (John 2:23-25).



Enroute to Galilee, Jesus and His disciples spent time preaching and baptizing large numbers in the Jordan River (3:22-36). Jesus next journeyed into Samaria where He presented Himself to a Samaritan woman and her village of Sychar. Many Samaritans believed (John 4:1-42). John 4:40 informs us Jesus stayed two days in Sychar; John 4:43-44 explains why Jesus left after only two days when they were experiencing such a harvest:

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.)

Verse 44 is John the author's comment. At some time over the course of the three years Jesus taught His disciples He must have taught them this general principle *that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown*. It is a general principle; it can apply to a prophet or it can apply to Jesus. The point of the saying is that no prophet should stay in one place so long that it becomes his *hometown* and he wears out his welcome. In the context it is the town of Sychar. The point is simply that Jesus' ministry was an itinerant one. He did not stay in any one place long enough to make it his home. To do so would have been to wear out his welcome and have "no honor" there. This is why they left for Galilee after only two days.

Jesus returned to a Galilee that was positively disposed towards Him based on what He done in Jerusalem at the Passover. John 4:45 tells us:

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.

Jesus took advantage of this positive atmosphere to launch a preaching tour in Galilee.

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JESUS' AUTHORITY TO PREACH

MARK 1:14-15 (ESV)

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

MATTHEW 4:17 (ESV)

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

LUKE 4:14-15 (ESV)

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

Luke informs us Jesus taught in their synagogues. Every village or town that had at least 10 Jewish families had a synagogue. The synagogue was the community building; it was used seven days a week. School was held there. Community meetings, functions and festivals were held in the synagogue. Some synagogues were built with guest rooms to provide temporary lodging for travelers. In other words, in addition to Sabbath services, the synagogue was a multi-purpose building. Therefore, when it says Jesus taught in their synagogues it does not mean He only taught on the Sabbath. When He came to a village, the natural place to hold a meeting was their community building – their synagogue.

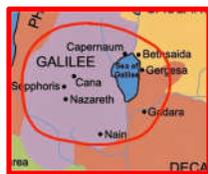
What was Jesus preaching? Mark tells us Jesus was proclaiming *the gospel of God*. The word *gospel* means "good news". Today, when we use the word *gospel* we are usually referring to the good news that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). But at this time, these things had not occurred. What good news was Jesus preaching? Jesus was preaching that the Kingdom of God was at hand. If they would repent and believe, they would receive the Messianic Kingdom promised in the Scriptures. The Kingdom of God was at hand because He, the Messiah King, was present with them. This kingdom was both a spiritual and physical kingdom. If Israel will accept Jesus as their Messiah He will usher in the Messianic Kingdom. This is the good news Jesus was preaching.

Word of His return spread throughout the Galilee. Jesus came again to Cana, the hometown of Nathanael and the place of His first miraculous sign – transforming water to wine. The Galilee grapevine was humming with the news that Jesus was in Cana. When word came to Capernaum almost twenty miles away, a desperate father mounted his horse and raced for Cana, hoping against hope he could get to Jesus in time.

JESUS' AUTHORITY TO HEAL

JOHN 4:46-54 (ESV)

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.



The elevation of Capernaum on the north shore of the lake, is 600 feet below sea level. The elevation of Cana in the foothills south west of the lake is 1700 feet above sea level. The distance between Capernaum and Cana is about 18 miles all uphill.

Obviously the grapevine worked very well because this father in Capernaum heard Jesus was in Cana 18 miles away. John tells us he was an official. The Greek term John used indicates this man was in the service of a king, mostly likely Herod Antipas.

Whether he was Jewish or Gentile, military or civilian, we don't know. What we do know is that his little boy was at the point of death and he was desperate.

When this father came to Jesus he didn't just ask Him once; the form of the verb *asked* indicates the father begged Jesus repeatedly to come to Capernaum and heal his son. Jesus' response in verse 48, "*Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.*" seems like a rebuke.

But I don't think it was.

First, this father has expressed faith in Jesus' ability to heal by coming all the way from Capernaum. I find it hard to believe that Jesus was critical of this man's faith.

Second, the *you* in Jesus' response is plural. What He said, He said not only to the father, but others who were present observing this exchange.

Third, throughout His ministry Jesus did many *signs and wonders* so that people would believe (John 20:30-31). A *sign and wonder* was a supernatural miracle done to validate Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, the Messiah King. Why would Jesus rebuke them for wanting evidence that what He was declaring about Himself was true - evidence that He readily supplied throughout the course of His public ministry?

Fourth, in this incident, Jesus did not give this man a *sign or wonder*.

I think this is the key to understanding Jesus' statement.

What did Jesus do? He told the father, "*Go; your son will live.*"

I think Jesus was challenging the father and members of the crowd to trust Him on the basis of the trustworthiness of His character and word. In other words, He was telling the crowd to trust Him despite the fact that He wasn't going to supply a *sign*.

And what did the father do? Verse 50 tells us, *The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way*. In other words, the father believed without a *sign* and stopped begging Jesus to come to Capernaum. He trusted Jesus' promise and power that his son would live. He trusted Jesus so much that he spent the night in Cana. He was wiped out. He may have nearly ridden his horse to death to get to Cana. He had been worried sick for his son. He hadn't slept in days or eaten a proper meal. Confident his son would live, relief flooded his soul and body. What he needed now was a bath, a hot meal, and a firm bed.

That's genuine faith.

The next day, as he was *going down*, (remember he was descending 2300 feet), his servants met him with the awesome news his son was alive and recovering. They also confirmed his recovery started at 1PM the day before at the exact time Jesus declared his son would live. This did nothing but deepen the man's faith in Jesus. He went home and led his entire family to faith in Jesus. No telling the impact on other members of his community; we can assume many were favorable towards Jesus when He eventually came to Capernaum.

At this point in His ministry Jesus has been received in Samaria and in Galilee.

Through this miracle, Jesus revealed He has the power to heal across time and space. Jesus speaks and the viral or bacterial infection threatening the boy's life twenty miles away is defeated!

We have in the father a marvelous example of genuine faith. Taking Jesus at His word, the father felt no need to rush home in case his son wasn't healed. Jesus said his son would live. The father was confident his son was alive so he spent the rest of the day and night in Cana to recover before returning home to Capernaum the following day. That's genuine faith. That's faith with works, as James describes in James 2:14-26.