

Notes

12. The Courtier's Child

John 4:43 - 54

⁴³ After the two days he left for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honour in his own country.) ⁴⁵ When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there.

⁴⁶ Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷ When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. ⁴⁸ "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." ⁴⁹ The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." ⁵⁰ Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

⁵¹ While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. ⁵² When he enquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour."

⁵³ Then the father realised that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed.

⁵⁴ This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.

Both miracles (ic Cana) were "private" rather than public. Mary, the disciples, and the servants knew where the excellent wine had come from. The nobleman's son was healed at Capernaum, not Cana.

Long-distance miracles were rare by Old Testament, other Jewish and Greco-Roman standards; people generally believed prophets and Greek magicians more easily if they were present in person. The rare stories of long-distance miracles suggested to ancient readers that these miracle workers had extraordinary power. For Jesus, the only prerequisite for such miracles is seekers' faith in his power.

Jesus' first miracle at the wedding revealed His power over *time*. The Father is always making water into wine, but He takes a season or two to finish the work. Jesus made the wine instantly. In this sense, our Lord's miracles were only *instantaneous* copies of what the Father is always doing. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" ([John 5:17](#)). The Father is constantly multiplying bread, season after season, but the Son multiplied it instantly.

In the second recorded miracle, Jesus showed His power over *space*: He was not limited simply because He was in Cana and the sick boy was in Capernaum. The fact that the father believed the word and did not know the results until the next day is evidence that he had confident faith. He trusted the word that Jesus spoke, and so should we.

45. - They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there

However that may be, this passage and the one before give us the unanswerable argument for Christ. The Samaritans believed in Jesus, not because of someone else's story but because they themselves had heard him speak things whose like they had never heard. The Galilaeans believed in him, not because someone had told them about him but because they had seen him do in Jerusalem things whose like they had never seen. The words he spoke and the deeds he did were arguments to which there was no answer.

Here we have one of the great truths of the Christian life. The only real argument for Christianity is a Christian experience. It may be that sometimes we have to argue with people until the intellectual barriers which they have erected are battered down and the citadel of their mind capitulates. But in the great majority of cases the only persuasion we can use is to say: "I know what Jesus is like and I know what Jesus can do. All that I can ask you to do is to try him yourself and to see what happens." Effective Christian evangelism really begins when we can say: "I know what Christ has done for me," and go on to say: "Try him, and see what he can do for you."

46. - a certain royal official

Here is a courtier who came to a carpenter. The Greek is basilikos which could even mean that he was a petty king; but it is used for a royal official and he was a man of high standing at the court of Herod. Jesus on the other hand had no greater status than that of the village carpenter of Nazareth. Further, Jesus was in Cana and this man lived in Capernaum, almost twenty miles away. That is why he took so long to get back home

49. The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

The man was helped because he persisted. Persistence was absolutely necessary in securing the Lord's help. Persistence shows that one really recognizes and acknowledges his need and really believes God can and will help. Note: if a man ceases to ask, he shows that he does not believe God will answer. He gives up on God, disbelieving Him. This man did not allow the Lord's hesitation to stop him.

50 - The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

Here was a courtier who had faith. It must have been hard for him to turn away and go home with Jesus' assurance that his little lad would live. Yet he had faith enough to turn and walk back that twenty mile road with nothing but Jesus' assurance to comfort his heart.

It is of the very essence of faith that we should believe that what Jesus says is true. So often we have a kind of vague, wistful longing that the promises of Jesus should be true. The only way really to enter into them is to believe in them with the clutching intensity of a drowning man. If Jesus says a thing, it is not a case of "It may be true"; it is a case of "It must be true."

53. - So he and all his household believed

Here was a courtier who surrendered. He was not a man who got out of Christ what he wanted and then went away to forget. He and all his household believed. That would not be easy for him - at the court of Herod to profess faith in Jesus. He would have mockery and laughter to endure; and no doubt there would be those who thought that he had gone slightly mad.