

SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

SECOND SIGN (4:3-54)

A Nobleman's Son Healed

By Arlen L. Chirwood

The second of eight signs recorded in John's gospel has to do with Jesus healing a nobleman's son while in Cana of Galilee, at a particular time.

Jesus had left Judaea enroute to Galilee and had spent time ministering in Samaria, the region lying between Judaea and Galilee (John 4:4-42).

Jesus remained in Samaria and dealt with the Samaritans for two days. He then left Samaria and continued His journey into Galilee, where He was received by the Galilaeans, who had previously witnessed His performance of miraculous signs at the feast of the Passover in Jerusalem (vv. 43-45; cf. John 2:13, 23).

Once in Galilee, He returned to Cana, the site of His first sign. And it was in this village, in Cana, that Jesus also performed the second sign recorded in John's gospel (vv. 46-54).

A nobleman, whose son lay sick at Capernaum, heard that Jesus had returned into Galilee. He sought Jesus out, found Him in Cana, and requested that He come down to Capernaum to heal his son, who was at the point of death. Jesus, rather than going to Capernaum — after emphasizing a point pertaining to "signs and wonders" and hearing the nobleman again request that He come down to Capernaum to heal his son — simply told the man, "Go thy way; thy son liveth" (vv. 46-50a).

The nobleman, *believing* that which Christ had said, began his return journey to Capernaum. Then, before reaching Capernaum, he was met by his servants who told him, "Thy son liveth." The father

then inquired about the time of day that his son had begun to improve, and he was told that the fever had left his son the preceding day, "at the seventh hour." He then knew that healing had occurred *at the exact time* Jesus had told him, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." And this resulted in *belief* on the part of not only the nobleman (who had previously expressed belief) but his family as well (vv. 50b-53).

(The Greek word translated "nobleman," *basilikos*, is a diminutive of the Greek word for "king" [*basileus*], denoting a "royal official" [ref. NIV].)

To provide a proper setting for this second sign in John's gospel, the entire sequence of events leading into the sign must be viewed. This sequence of events has to do with *a two-day period*, and it has to do with both *that which had occurred* preceding the two days and *that which was about to occur* following the two days.

Preceding the two days, Christ had spent time with the Jewish people in Judaea.

Then, coming out of Judaea, Christ spent two days with the Samaritans (a mixed race, Jew and Gentile), who were generally despised by the Jewish people throughout the remainder of the land.

And, following this two-day period, Christ left Samaria and went into Galilee, where He was received by the Jewish people, where the nobleman's son was healed, and where belief was expressed because of this man's son being healed.

The events depicted by the two-day period spent with the Samaritans foreshadow God's dealings with the Gentiles during the present dispensation. The present dispensation is a two-day period, a 2,000-year period, lying between God's past and future dealings with Israel (*dealings foreshadowed by time spent in Judaea before the two days and time spent in Galilee following the two days*).

And, accordingly, Christ's actions at the end of the two days spent in Samaria — returning to the place where He had performed His first sign, returning to Cana in Galilee, being *received* by the Jewish

people, *healing* a nobleman's son, and those in the family *believing* on Him — depict that which will occur following the present dispensation.

Christ, after spending two days, 2,000 years, with those foreshadowed by the Samaritans (the Gentiles), will return to the place where He performed signs 2,000 years ago. He will return to the land of Israel, *be received* by the Jewish people, *provide healing* for the Jewish people (Divine healing for God's son, typified by Divine healing for the nobleman's son [cf. Hosea 5:13-6:2]), and the Jewish people in that day *will believe on the One Who will have provided this healing* (cf. Isa. 1:5, 6; 53:1-5).

(It is evident from Christ's words to the nobleman in John 4:48 that this man was a Jew, not a Gentile:

Christ told the nobleman, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

It is the Jew who requires a sign [I Cor. 1:22], not the Gentile. Words of the preceding nature, *pertaining to the type signs being performed*, would not only have held no meaning for a Gentile but they would also have been out of place being performed among Gentiles [cf. Matt. 10:5-8].)

Thus, the whole of the account pertaining to the second sign in John's gospel has to do with *the Jewish people*, as do all of the signs in this gospel. They were performed for and among the Jewish people, for a Divine purpose; and they were then later recorded by John for the same Jewish people and the same Divine purpose, which is something clearly stated near the end of John's gospel.

Two Days in Samaria

In the account at hand — events surrounding *the second sign* in John's gospel — *signs were in evidence* only during time covering part of the overall account seen in the text and context. *Signs were in evidence* before Christ went to Samaria (John 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:45), *they were not in evidence* during the time Christ was in Samaria (John 4:4-42), but *they were once again seen as part of Christ's ministry* after He had left Samaria and returned to the Jewish people in Galilee (John 4:45, 54).

Within the dispensational scheme of the matter, note that foreshadowed by events surrounding the second sign in John's gospel:

Signs were in evidence when Israel was being dealt with in relation to the kingdom at the time of Christ's first coming.

Signs continued to be manifested for about the first thirty years following His ascension, because God continued to deal with Israel in relation to the kingdom.

Signs then occupy no place in God's work throughout the remainder of the dispensation, while Israel is set aside and God removes from the Gentiles "a people for his name" (Acts 15:14; Rom. 11:25).

Signs will once again be in evidence after God completes His purpose for the present dispensation and resumes His national dealings with Israel (Acts 15:15-17; Rom. 11:26).

(Note the exact wording of the text in John 4:43-54 in relation to "signs." It is "...out of Judaea into Galilee" [vv. 45, 47, 54]. There is no mention of Samaria simply because Christ's activities in Samaria, unlike His activities in both Judaea and Galilee, had *no connection* with "signs."

Refer to the author's three pamphlets, "Signs, Wonders, Miracles.")

In that future day, when God once again resumes His national dealings with Israel and signs come back into view, both Israel's reappearance in this respect and the emergence of the final form of Gentile world power under Satan are seen as *signs* (Rev. 12:1, 3). Then, in that day, *signs will be in evidence* within both camps (Jew and Gentile). And these *signs will be manifested* after the same fashion and for the same purpose as that previously seen during Moses' day when Moses appeared before Pharaoh, *at the time when signs in relation to Israel and the kingdom were introduced in Scripture*.

But prior to that future time, God has temporarily suspended His national dealings with Israel. God, so to speak, has stopped the chronometer marking

off time in Daniel's Seventy-Week prophecy; and during this time when Israel has been set aside, God is taking out of the Gentiles "a people for his name."

God has set aside an entire dispensation to accomplish His purposes pertaining to the Gentiles in this respect, which, as the other two dispensations during Man's Day, will last exactly 2,000 years. And, according to the clear teaching of the type in Genesis chapter twenty-four, along with related Scripture, God's central purpose pertaining to the Gentiles during the present dispensation has to do with *the Spirit's search for and acquisition of a bride for His Son*.

At the beginning of this time, on the day of Pentecost in 33 A.D., God sent His Spirit into the world to accomplish this purpose. And today, very near the end of the 2,000 years, the search is almost over. Christians will shortly be removed from the earth; and the bride, for whom the Spirit has searched throughout the dispensation, will be revealed at the judgment seat.

(In events surrounding the second sign in John's gospel, *it was necessary* for Christ to go through Samaria and remain there for two days [4:4, 40]. And seeing that which these events foreshadowed, the reason is obvious.

Then note that Christ, after two days, left Samaria and returned not only to Galilee but to Cana in Galilee [4:43-46]. And *signs* were again seen within His ministry.

In short, Christ's ministry in Samaria *came to an end*, and *He then returned to the Jewish people*. And, in like manner, God's present work among the Gentiles is going to *come to an end*. Then, God will *turn back to and complete His national dealings with Israel during Man's Day, with the Lord's Day in view*, which is depicted in the remainder of the account from John's gospel.)

Then, in Cana of Galilee

It is only fitting that Christ is seen returning to the site of His first sign in order to heal the nobleman's son. It is here, through the meaning of the word "Cana" (the thought of "jealousy" [see previous pamphlet in this series dealing with the first sign]), that *the jealous nature of God toward Israel* is seen through both *the location and the signs performed at this location*.

A jealous nature exhibited toward an individual would portend *expected exclusive devotion on the part of that individual*, which is the picture Scripture presents of *the Husband-wife* (or, on the other hand, *the God-son*) relationship existing between God and Israel. God expects *exclusive devotion on the part of His wife* (or *first-born son*), something which does not presently exist.

But, because of the nature of God seen in the name of the village where the first two signs in John's gospel were manifested, He has decreed in His unchangeable Word that matters will not continue indefinitely as they presently exist.

The present dispensation *will come to a close*. Christ's time spent in Samaria (two days) *came to an end*, exactly as the 2,000 years comprising the present dispensation *will come to an end*. Then that foreshadowed by these first two signs in John's gospel will occur.

Both signs provide time-lines concerning that which will occur in the camp of Israel through the outworking of God's jealous nature toward the Jewish people.

The first sign showed *the restoration of God's adulterous wife, after six days, on the seventh day*, through a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

The second sign shows *the healing of God's firstborn son, after two days, on the third day* (which would be the last three days seen in the complete time-line in the first sign, *i.e.*, after six days, on the seventh day), through the healing of a nobleman's son. And events surrounding the Jewish people's *reception* of Christ and *belief* on Him are seen inseparably connected with His return to Galilee and the exhibited sign.

That revealed in these two signs *cannot change*. That seen in and surrounding these two signs *will come to pass*.

That is to say, God's jealous nature relative to Israel *cannot change; nor can it ever fail*. And that would be to say, the things revealed in God's Word *cannot change; nor can they ever fail*.

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