



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Recognizing Jesus—Miracle-Worker &/or Savior?

Bible Reading: John 4:43-54

[Watch LIVESTREAM at 10am](#)

SUMMARY:

Jesus' healing the official's son completes the series of signs beginning with changing water to wine. These 2 episodes form a matching pair of 'Miracle-Quest' stories.' Both begin with a request, followed by Jesus' rebuke, before he responds with a miracle—here a 'remote healing'—which becomes a catalyst for faith in Jesus. Such miracles are 'signs' highlighting Jesus' identity as more than a miracle-worker, as God-incarnate. Not all Jesus' 'signs' resulted in such recognition and saving faith; Nicodemus takes Jesus merely as a miracle-worker; this official goes beyond that. Some depreciate 'signs-based belief,' linked with miracles, as "*suspect, preliminary, immature faith*," inferior to 'word-based faith,' founded on Jesus' teaching. But why is the official's faith (produced by Jesus' healing-miracle) inferior to the Samaritans' faith, resulting from Jesus' 2-day visit? *All* of Jesus' signs—including healings, miracles, etc.—are recorded so we "would believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and... have life in his name." Today the same Jesus still heals and helps in order to draw people into a saving relationship with him.

I. The Cana to Cana Cycle (Jn. 2:1-4:54)

- A. The first major unit in John's narrative
- B. An *Inclusio* ['Bookends'] marking a Literary Unit
- C. "First Sign" (2:11); "2nd Sign" (4:54)—Ambiguous Signs
- D. John's concept of appropriate faith
 - "Faith in the Gospel of John is not simply belief in miracles..."—D. Moody Smith

II. Matching Pair of 'Miracle-Quest Stories' (Jn. 2:1-11; 4:46-54)

- A. The Royal Official's Quest (Jn. 4:46-54)
- B. Request—Rebuke—Response—Result Pattern
 - 1. The Official's Request (4:46-47)
 - 2. Jesus' Mild Rebuke, his use of "*Signs & Wonders*" (4:48)
 - 3. Jesus Response—his healing word; the Official believed Jesus' word (4:50)
 - 4. Result: Confirmed by the Official's slaves (4:51-53)
 - 5. Result: The official "believed along with his entire household." (4:53)
- C. Two instances of '*believed*' (4:50, 53)
- "The distinction between 4:50 & 4:53 [is] a *difference between 'belief in Jesus' word' & belief in Jesus himself.*"—Gail O'Day
 - 1. Believing Jesus' word of miraculous healing—"your son lives" (4:50)
 - 2. Believing in Jesus Himself

III. Recognizing Jesus in the Cana Cycle

- A. Recognition Type-scenes
 - John's Gospel is "a series of...attempted, failed, and occasionally successful recognition scenes."—Alan Culpepper
- B. The Cana Wedding— a (partial) Recognition scene
- C. Jerusalem Temple Incident—*Failed* recognition scene Nicodemus—
- D. *Failed* Recognition scene
- E. Samaritan Woman—Recognition scene
- F. Healing the Royal Official's Son—Recognition scene

IV. Jesus' Signs (miracles) as a Basis for Belief (20:30-31)

- "Scholars place *far too much emphasis upon a handful of verses like 4:48* that give a negative impression of signs."—David Woodington
- A. The Issues—What's the value of '*Signs-based Faith*'?
- B. Negative Views of Signs-based Faith—"inferior, suspect, preliminary, inadequate, immature faith"
- C. Is 'Sign-faith' inferior to 'Word-faith'?
- D. Faith sufficient for Salvation
 - "*Faith that recognizes the true identity of Jesus, whatever the basis of that faith—seeing the miracle-signs, hearing [Jesus'] words, witnessing the risen Lord, or none of these—is sufficient for...salvation...We cannot say that all faith...based upon the signs [miracles] is insufficient.*"—Graham Twelftree
 - "The clear statement of Jn. 20:31 means that signs [miracles] alone are adequate for salvation"—Graham Twelftree
- E. Signs & Believing in John—a Paradox?
 - 1. Signs (miracles) can elicit True Faith
 - 2. The Problem with 'signs-based faith' is the Person

V. Across the Evangelical Spectrum—Diverse Views on Healing, Miracles, etc.

Questions

1. Jesus healed the official's dying son; that was a *miracle*, however in John 4:54 it's called a "*sign*."
 - a. What's the difference between a "*miracle*" and a "*sign*" in John's Gospel?
 - b. What is the author trying to convey by using the word "*sign*"?
2. In John 4:43-54 we can identify the elements of Request—Rebuke—Response—Result
 - a. What is the 'request'?
 - b. What is the "rebuke"?
 - c. What's Jesus' "response"?
 - d. What is (are) the "results(s)"?
3. In considering Jesus' "rebuke" (4:48)

- a. What might the phrase “*signs and wonders*” signify in an OT context? [Search for this phrase on a Bible website; what shows up?]
 - b. The pronoun “you” in 4:48 is plural—“you people;” so is the rebuke aimed at the official, the ‘crowd,’ or both?
4. The verb “believed” occurs twice—in both 4:50 and also 4:53. What (if any) is the difference? How would you describe the official’s faith in each case?
5. Several influential scholars distinguish between “*signs-based faith*” (engendered by *seeing* a sign/miracle) and “*word-based faith*” (resulting from *hearing* Jesus’ teaching/preaching). Plus, some claim “*signs-based faith*” is inferior &/or inadequate compared to “*word-based faith*.”
- a. Do you agree or disagree with this claim (why/why not)?
 - b. Does John’s Gospel support this distinction and this ranking?
6. Read the “purpose/theme statement”—John 20:30-31.
- a. What are the various “signs” provided by John in this Gospel; do they include miracles, healings, works of power? What else is indicated by “signs” in this “purpose statement”?
 - b. Does this statement support or refute the claim “*signs-based faith*” is inferior to “*word-based faith*”?
7. Does God/Jesus still perform miracles (e.g. healings) today or was that only in the era of Jesus & the first apostles?