

General Comments on John 4

This chapter addresses culturally normative behaviors which have no basis in Scripture. Jesus attacks bigotry based on race, sex, and self-righteousness. His intent in doing so is to set the stage for the imminent proselyting to take place among all nations.

The IV has substantial significant changes over the KJV in the first half of the chapter.

KJV

1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

3 He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.

4 And he must needs go through Samaria.

5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey,

sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water:

Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew,

IV

1 When therefore the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,
2 They sought more diligently some means that they might put him to death; for many received John as a prophet, but they believed not on Jesus.

3 Now the Lord knew this, though he himself baptized not so many as his disciples;

4 For he suffered them for an example, preferring one another.

5 And he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee,

6 And said unto his disciples, I must needs go through Samaria.

7 Then he cometh to the city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph; the place where Jacob's well was.

8 Now Jesus being weary with his journey, it being about the sixth hour, sat down on the well;

9 And there came a woman of Samaria to draw water;

Jesus said unto her, Give me to drink.

10 Now his disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat.

11 Wherefore he being alone,

the woman of Samaria said unto him, How is it that thou being a Jew,

askest drink of me,
which am a woman of Samaria?
for the Jews have no dealings
with the Samaritans.
10 Jesus answered
and said unto her,
If thou knewest the gift of God,
and who it is that saith to thee,
Give me to drink;
thou wouldest have asked of him,
and he would have given thee
living water.
11 The woman saith unto him,
Sir,
thou hast nothing to draw with,
and the well is deep:
from whence then hast thou
that living water?
12 Art thou greater than
our father Jacob,
which gave us the well,
and drank thereof himself,
and his children,
and his cattle?
13 Jesus answered
and said unto her,
Whosoever drinketh of this water
shall thirst again:
14 But whosoever drinketh
of the water that I shall give him
shall never thirst;
but the water that I shall give him
shall be in him a well of water
springing up into everlasting life.
15 The woman saith unto him,
Sir,
give me this water,
that I thirst not,
neither come hither to draw.
16 Jesus saith unto her,
Go,
call thy husband,
and come hither.
17 The woman answered and said,
I have no husband.
Jesus said unto her,
Thou hast well said,
I have no husband:
18 For thou hast had
five husbands;
and he whom thou now hast
is not thy husband:
in that saidst thou truly.
19 The woman saith unto him,
Sir,
I perceive that thou art a prophet.
20 Our fathers worshipped

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21 The woman said unto him,
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22 Our fathers worshipped

in this mountain;
 and ye say,
 that in Jerusalem
 is the place where men
 ought to worship.
 21 Jesus saith unto her,
 Woman,
 believe me,
 the hour cometh,
 when ye shall neither
 in this mountain,
 nor yet at Jerusalem,
 worship the Father.
 22 Ye worship ye know not what:
 we know what we worship:
 for salvation is of the Jews.
 23 But the hour cometh,
 and now is,
 when the true worshippers
 shall worship the Father
 in spirit and in truth:
 for the Father seeketh such
 to worship him.

 24 God is a Spirit:
 and they that worship him
 must worship him
 in spirit and in truth.
 25 The woman saith unto him,
 I know that Messias cometh,
 which is called Christ:
 when he is come,
 he will tell us all things.
 26 Jesus saith unto her,
 I that speak unto thee
 am he.

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 for the Father seeketh such
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 26 For unto such
 hath God promised his Spirit.
 And they who worship him,
 must worship
 in spirit and in truth.
 27 The woman said unto him,
 I know that Messias cometh,
 who is called Christ;
 when he is come,
 he will tell us all things.
 28 Jesus said unto her,
 I who speak unto thee
 am the Messias.

The rest of the verses in the chapter are insignificantly different when comparing the KJV and IV.

Comments on John 4

1 WHEN therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, **2** (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) **3** He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. **4** And he must needs go through Samaria.

v1-4 The KJV is obscure on these verses. They suggest that when Jesus hears of the envy of the Pharisees (v. 1), he decides to move out of Judea into Galilee (v. 3), thereby passing through Samaria (v. 4). The IV explains what is happening more clearly. The issue is indeed the envy of the Pharisees, but the envy has grown murderous.

v2 Again, the KJV is obscure, but the IV clarifies. The IV inserts a verse after the KJV v. 2 which says, "For he suffered them for an example, preferring one another". The reason Jesus was permitting his disciples to baptize more than him was because he was teaching them by example. The phrase "preferring one another" means they were setting one another before themselves, cp. Rom. 12:10. Thus, Jesus was setting his disciples before himself as an example to them.

5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with [his] journey, sat thus on the well: [and]

it was about the sixth hour. 7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. 8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) 9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. 11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? 12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? 13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. 15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. 17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: 18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God [is] a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth. 25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. 26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am [he].

v5-26 In traveling through Samaria to Galilee, Jesus and his disciples come upon Sychar wherein is Jacob's well (v. 5-6). Jesus rests at the well while the disciples go into town to buy food (v. 8). A Samaritan woman comes to the well, and Jesus asks her to fetch him water (v. 7). She is stunned by his request and questions him as to why he is speaking to her (v. 9). The result is a theological conversation on the nature of God and those who truly worship Him (v. 10-26).

v6 Jacob's physical well provided water to keep his family and sheep alive. But, the Lord was Jacob's spiritual well from which he extracted the true water of life. The Samaritans at present are only drinking from Jacob's physical well and not his spiritual well.

"about the sixth hour", or the middle of the day.

v7 That the woman is coming to draw water in the middle of the day indicates she is avoiding the other women of the town. In an arid desert environment tasks such as this were performed in the cool of the morning or evening, not in the heat of the day (cf. Gen. 24:11). It would be immediately obvious to anyone the woman was an outcast, yet Jesus speaks to her.

v9 According to the Anchor Bible (AB) Pharisaic custom considered Samaritans ritually impure from birth. Additionally, the custom at that time among Jews was that no man would ever speak to a woman in public (this tradition is still adhered to today by Hasidic Jews). So, this is a doubly bad according to Phariseeism because he is talking to a Samaritan woman. Jesus is disregarding race and sex based conventions. Note the woman's shock at Jesus' defiance of these norms.

v10-11 "living water", the translation "living" is a literal one, but the Greek would permit something along the lines of "flowing" or "moving" using a metaphorical application. Here is the Strong's entry for the term:

2198 zao {dzah'-o}

a primary verb; TDNT - 2:832,290; v

AV - live 117, be alive 9, alive 6, quick 4, lively 3, not tr 1, misc 2, vr live 1; 143

- 1) to live, breathe, be among the living (not lifeless, not dead)
- 2) to enjoy real life
 - 2a) to have true life and worthy of the name
 - 2b) active, blessed, endless in the kingdom of God
- 3) to live i.e. pass life, in the manner of the living and acting
 - 3a) of mortals or character

- 4) living water, having vital power in itself and exerting the same upon the soul
- 5) metaph. to be in full vigour
- 5a) to be fresh, strong, efficient,
- 5b) as adj. active, powerful, efficacious

The entries under 5) would be the metaphorical usage intended here. Entry 4) is obviously based upon the present appearance.

The spiritual interpretation on this passage has its roots in the OT, see Isa. 33:16, Isa. 44:3, Isa. 55:1-2, Jer. 2:13, Jer. 17:13.

v11 There is some debate among commentators as to whether the woman is naive to the symbolism Jesus employs here or if she is perceiving it and is initially skeptical of Jesus. Talmage favors the woman being naive in Jesus the Christ. The context tends to favor the reading that she is perceiving yet skeptical as she presents a physical interpretation in v. 11 and a spiritual interpretation in v. 12.

Consider how many of us would expect to run into the Messiah out in the middle of the day when fetching water? You meet some seemingly very strange Jewish guy who offers "living/flowing water" in exchange for real water. Who would take this person seriously, especially when he goes around saying he is greater than Jacob?

v12 Typical Johannine irony as Jesus is greater than Jacob, cp. 6:30-31, 8:53.

v13-14 Jesus is clearly referring to figurative spiritual water, the indwelling Spirit, cp. 7:37-38.

v14 "water that I shall give...a well of water", the symbolism used here is derivative of Isa. 12:3, and Zech. 4:14.

"I shall give him", cp. 6:27.

v15 The woman obviously has some knowledge of scriptural and religious things and is probably subtly mocking Jesus here after his blatantly spiritual statement in v. 13-14. She doesn't believe he is greater than Jacob and can provide this spiritual water, so she is teasing him based on the physical interpretation. Also, compare 6:34.

v16 Jesus gently rebuffs her mockery by stating she should go and call her husband in order to drink the spiritual water. The intent here is probably to show her current sex immorality is precluding drinking the spiritual water as well as indicating

that a man and a woman must be joined together in God through marriage in order to fully drink the spiritual water he offers.

v17 The woman is honest and confesses her position rather than acting the deceiver, and Jesus commends her for her forthright nature.

v18 The Jews were allowed a maximum of three marriages. Some commentators see Jesus' reference to 5 husbands as not intended to be taken literally but more figuratively as being a statement of "several". This is unlikely as 5 is not used in the Scriptures as a term for "several", as 4 and 7 are. It is more likely Jesus had the actual number by revelation as well as the fact of her current immorality. Note Jesus does not attack her person or character, but only presents the facts and then closes with the compliment that the woman has answered him truly and is being honest.

This act of prediction also serves to convince the woman that he is not just some eccentric claiming to be greater than Jacob, but is in fact what he claims. She believes a relatively simple sign. Contrast this with the major signs the people in his hometown are after later in v. 48.

v19 The woman is taken aback by Jesus statement and is convinced he is a true prophet. Compare this with the unwillingness of the Jews to believe that Jesus is a true prophet regardless of the many healings and other much more spectacular miracles he performs.

v20 The woman recognizes Jesus as a true prophet of God and asks him to settle a longstanding dispute between the Samaritans and the Jews, namely the correct place of worship (i.e., Mt. Horeb which the Samaritans favored over the Temple in Jerusalem which the Jews favored).

The Samaritans had copied and modified the Jewish customs of ritual worship according to what they felt the Law stated, and worshiped at Mt. Horeb. Jesus' reply to her is that the method of physical worship is not the issue.

v21-24 Jesus' reply to the woman's question concerning the correct location of worship. Jesus' response is what the Father really wants is persons who worship in spirit and truth and not in outward physical performances or locations. The Father wants persons who are motivated by inward convictions, whom reconcile their will to the Father's will via the Spirit. For what it means to worship "in spirit", see D&C 46:28-30, D&C 50:28-30. The subject of these verses is also addressed by Paul in 2 Cor. 3.

v22 "salvation is of the Jews", here Jesus is most likely using Isaiah's concept of "Jews" (i.e. the righteous covenant people, the righteous remnant, cf. Isa. 19:18; a concept also employed by Nephi in 2 Ne. 29:5, 2 Ne. 30:4, 2 Ne. 33:8) as elsewhere Jesus attacks the literal Jews at Jerusalem for their self-promoting rebelliousness.

v23 Jesus predicts the end of the Law of Moses and the advent of the New and Everlasting Covenant, which de-emphasizes physical worship in favor of spiritual worship.

v24 Those who argue that God has not got a physical body use this verse to support their point of view. They interpret the phrase "God is a Spirit" to literally imply that God the Father is a disembodied spirit. Such a reading is incorrect as the construction of the Greek statement "pneuma o theos" can not in any way legitimately be used to say it is a statement on God's corporal nature. It simply doesn't afford that interpretation.

Additionally, the context of the discussion is an exposition on how people are supposed to worship God, not a thesis on God's corporeal nature. This is manifested by the inverted parallelism in which the comment is embedded:

Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when you shall neither
in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship:
for salvation is of the Jews.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true
worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and
truth:

for the father seeketh such to worship him. God is a
Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit
and in truth.

Thus, the parallelism follows the pattern:

A - The time is coming when physical worship will be done
away

B - The Samaritan's physical imitation of Jewish
religious customs has resulted in ignorance

B - True worshippers will worship God in spirit

A - The time to worship in spirit and truth is now.

The descending portion of the parallelism focuses on the futility of performing the ritualistic works the Samaritans have copied from the Jews. The ascending portion states the inward spiritual conviction of the worshiper is to be the motivating factor in worshiping God. This being the case, the use of the statement "God is a Spirit" as a proof to support the idea that God hasn't got a physical body is acontextual.

As non-LDS people will certainly be skeptical of all of this, below is a review of what several prominent non-LDS scholarly commentaries have to say on the interpretation of this verse:

Strong's A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek/New Testament, page 78:

PNEUMA: pnyoo'-mah from pneo, a current of air. ie. breath (blast) or a breeze; by anal. or fig. a spirit. ie. (human) the rational soul (by impl) vital principle, mental disposition etc. or (superhuman) an angel, demon, or (divine) God, Christ's Spirit, the Holy Spirit - ghost life, spirit(-ual, ually), mind.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 9, page 56:

"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth" carries one of the four descriptions of God found in the New Testament. The other three are "God is love" (1Jn 4:8,16) "God is light" (1Jn 1:5) and "God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29)....

The KJV rendering of pneuma ho theos as "God is a spirit" is misleading. Greek grammar has no indefinite article; its inclusion is at the translator's discretion, whose decision, hopefully, is based on context and other scripture. The point Jesus was trying to make here is not that God is one spirit among many. Rather Jesus was seeking to lift the conversation into the sphere of the spiritual and heavenly since the woman kept referring to human ancestry, Mount Gerizin, and traditional worship practices. The anarthrous construction and Gr. word order place the emphasis on the essential character of God; thus the essence of true worship must be on God's terms and in accord with his nature....

True worship is that of the spirit, which means that the worshiper must deal honestly and openly with God. She, on the contrary, had been furtive and unwilling to open her heart to God.

Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 36, page 62:

"God is Spirit" defines God, not in his metaphysical being, but "according to his work in the world." The clause is parallel in this respect with 'God is light' and 'God is love'; "All these statements describe God's mode of action and working" (Schlatter 126, so also Bultman: "The <spirit> is God's miraculous dealing with man which takes place in the revelation... 'God is <spirit> defines the idea of God by saying what God means, viz. that for man God is the miraculous being who deals wonderfully with him, just as the definition of God as <love> refers to him as the one who deals with men out of his love and in his love," 190-92)

A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, page 673:

When Jesus, in His conversation with the woman of Samaria, identifies Spirit with the Being of God, He at once proceeds to foreshadow the abiding result, as well as the condition of man's approach to Him. The arena, so to speak, upon which the activity of the Divine Spirit displays His manifold and world-wide character, is the human spirit. If we are to offer to God a spiritual worship and apprehend clearly the methods by which He quickens human life, the first and last requisite is that we shall be in the Spirit (Jn 4:24 cf Ro 8:15f, Eph 2:18) it is not enough, though it is perfectly true, to say that 'the spirit in man responds to the Spirit of God' (Westcott Gospel of St. John on 4:23) The spirit in man becomes the spirit of man (Ro 8:16) and acting, as it does, in harmony with the Spirit of God, is guided into all the truth. (Jn16:13) Henceforth man's spiritual home is within the region of that absolute truth which the Person and the work of Jesus were destined to disclose and make real.

Anchor Bible, Vol. 29, page 172:

This is not an essential definition of God, but a description of God's dealings with men, it means that God is Spirit towards men because He gives the Spirit (14:16) which begets them anew. There are two other such descriptions in the Johannine writings "God is light" and "God is love." These too refer to the God who acts: God give the world His Son, the "light of the world" (3:19; 8:12;9:5) as a sign of His love.

This is one of the three Johannine affirmations about the divine nature, cf IJn1:5;4:8 "God is light" "God is love". This conception is common to Jewish and Greek thought. Isa 31:3 brings out the Hebraic opposition between flesh & spirit. Yet in relation to the conditions of worship more than this is implied. Moore (Judiasm I:223) warns us against a possible confusion of thought. "The principle that God cannot be seen in any natural object nor imaged by man's hands in any likeness is frequently called a doctrine of the 'spirituality' of God. If 'spirit' were taken in the biblical sense, there would be no other objection to the phrase than its abstractness; but in modern use spirit is the contrary of matter, and 'spiritual' equivalent to 'immaterial.' In this sense the spirituality of God is a philosophical theory derived from the Greeks, not a doctrine of Judiasm in biblical times or thereafter, any more than Jewish monotheism is a doctrine of the unity of God in the metaphysical sense."

The main thought here is that the highest part of a man's nature should be attuned to God, who is spirit, and that his worship must be based upon the reality of the God, who he approaches in devotion. The sense of the divine reality arises from God's own initiative. He it is who seeks such worshipers, and bestows the spirit of truth.

Thus, there are numerous non-LDS scholarly commentaries which flatly contradict the common Christian reading of this verse.

Note the IV on this verse puts it into harmony with the interpretations given in these various commentaries above. The IV addition "For unto such hath God promised his Spirit" is paralleled by 14:16-17.

v25 According to the AB, the Samaritans believed in a "Taheb", a teacher of the Law, who would come and teach the true nature of worship. This was distinct from the Hebrew Messiah. Here, the Samaritan woman is probably either confused or more likely wanting to reject what Jesus has said, and she defers to the Taheb.

v26 Jesus pronounces himself the Taheb employing the emphatic Greek "ego eimi" which is indicative of the Divine name I AM. And note the IV has him stating "I who speak unto thee am the Messiah". Contrast this with the numerous times Jesus dodged the

Jew's questions concerning his messiahship.

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, 29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? 30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. 32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. 33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him [ought] to eat? 34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. 35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and [then] cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. 36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. 37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. 38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. 40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his own word; 42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard [him] ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

v27-42 The woman sheds all of her doubts, her self-consciousness, disregards any animosity towards her, and runs into town and tell all of them the Messiah is there at the well (v. 28-30). With the departure of the woman, and the imminent arrival of the rest of the townspeople, Jesus takes advantage of the agricultural setting of a harvest to draw a parallel between the harvesting of grain and the gathering of souls (v. 31-38). The majority of the Samaritans listen to the woman when she summons them, so they come out to meet Jesus. After hearing him they ask him to stay there with them, and are convinced Jesus is the Messiah (v. 39-42).

v27 The disciples are stunned when they come upon Jesus speaking to the Samaritan woman. John remarks that none of the disciples question Jesus on this violation of the traditions of the Pharisees. This appears to have been done in the presence of the woman as she is not leaving until the next verse. That none of them questioned his interaction with the woman was probably

interpreted by the woman as them deferring to Jesus, and therefore a public act of respect. As none of the men question his behavior then they must respect or revere him, lending credence to his authority claims. She recognizes him as the leader of this group of men.

v28 The woman leaves. Note she abandons her water pot, an inclusion by John probably intended to symbolize her abandonment of physical water in favor of the spiritual water.

v31-34 With the departure of the woman the disciples encourage Jesus to eat, yet he abstains. The disciples do not understand the symbolism employed and he explains it to them. Just as the woman has abandoned the physical water for the spiritual water, so is Jesus abstaining from the physical food in favor of the spiritual food. The theme is derivative of the equation of manna with the Law from Deut. 8:3.

v35-38 Jesus predicts the upcoming ministry to the Gentile nations initiated in Acts 10, again using the physical harvest versus spiritual harvest theme.

v39-42 The literal harvest is presented in the preceding verses and now the figurative harvest is presented. Contrast the believing nature of the Samaritans with the reaction Jesus gets from the Jews in general. Also note the Samaritans plead with him to stay (v. 40) while the Jews in general have not made him welcome (v. 1-3). This subject is then treated at greater length in v. 43-54.

v40 "they besought him that he would tarry", contrast this with the Pharisees in v. 1-3 who are out to have him killed so he has to leave. The Samaritans accept and revere Jesus while the Pharisees hate him. The Pharisees hate the Samaritans as well.

43 Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee. 44 For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country. 45 Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilaeans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. 47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. 48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. 49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. 50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had

spoken unto him, and he went his way. 51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told [him], saying, Thy son liveth. 52 Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. 53 So the father knew that [it was] at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. 54 This [is] again the second miracle [that] Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.

v43-54 After experiencing success in neighboring Samaria, Jesus goes over to Galilee his home town. Unfortunately, his own people have become sign-seekers.

v45 After seeing Jesus perform miracles at the preceding Feast at Jerusalem, the people from his home town are eager to see some more miracles. Note Jesus did no overt miracles in Samaria, they believed him for his words alone.

v46-54 Jesus is confronted with a local nobleman (i.e., a royal official of King Herod, possibly a military leader according to the AB) who has a sick son. Jesus states the people are primarily interested only in seeing signs (the Greek pronouns employed in v. 48 are plural), indicating a group of onlookers eager to see miracles is present.

This rebuke may also have been aimed at the nobleman, probably indicating his motives in having his son healed were mixed. However, in v. 49, the nobleman appears to sincerely plead with Jesus when the matter of sign-seeking is confronted. In reply to the sincere request, Jesus informs the man his son is healed and dismisses him to leave for his home.

Thus, Jesus performs the requested miracle while depriving the thrill-seeking group of the spectacle they are interested in. The nobleman has obviously been strengthened in faith by the episode and his entire house is subsequently converted.

A variety of life symbols are treated in this section of text. These symbols appear throughout this gospel, cf. 1:4, 2:19, 3:3, 4:14, 6:14, 7:37, 8:12, 8:51, 10:28.

v54 This second miracle parallels that of 2:1-11 to some degree as a request is made, the miracle is performed out of the view of the one making the request, the onlookers never see the miracle, and those close to Jesus perceive the miracle.

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