

REVERENCE JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD

4 ⁴³After the two days he went from there to Galilee; ⁴⁴for Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. ⁴⁵So when he came into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all the things that he had done in Jerusalem at the [Passover] Feast; for they also had attended the Feast. ⁴⁶He came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. Now there was at Capernaum a certain nobleman whose son was sick. ⁴⁷When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸Jesus said to him, Unless you see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe. ⁴⁹The nobleman said to him, Sir, come down before my child dies. ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, Go your way, your son lives. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and he departed. ⁵¹While he was still on his way, his servants met him, reporting that his son was alive. ⁵²He asked them what hour he began to recover. They told him, Yesterday at the seventh hour [of the day] the fever left him. ⁵³The father realized that it was at the hour when Jesus said to him, Your son lives. Then he believed, together with his whole household. ⁵⁴This is the second sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee. (Jn. 4:43-54)

Introduction

A Christian asks:

When is the last time I simply thanked my heavenly Father? How long has it been since my prayers were praise rather than petition? Do I applaud God simply for who He is—rather than for what He can do for me? (*POWER*, 4/22/90, p. 8)

How is our prayer life? Do we find that the main focus of our prayers is placed on personal requests? Do we spend most of our prayer time asking Jesus to do things for us? When we honestly and carefully analyze our prayer life, do we find that we tend to view Jesus as our wonder-working, problem-solving servant? Do we tend to view Him as our personal divine physician or psychologist whose primary duty is to bless our earthly life with health and happiness?

When adversity or serious illness strikes, do such occurrences take us by surprise? Do we find ourselves becoming angry with Christ? Do we accuse Him of failing us and failing to do His job? Such reactions to adversity or illness are a good indication that we do, in fact, tend to view Jesus as our wonder-working, problem-solving servant whose main duty is to provide for the well-being of our life on earth.

Often times, like the Galileans whom we meet in this passage of Scripture, we tend to view Jesus as our personal wonder working, problem-solving servant, and fail to reverence Him for who He is: the Son of God. Because Jesus is the Son of God, we must reverence Him as such.

I. Reverence Jesus as the Son of God, Rather than Viewing Him as a Wonder-Working Servant

When Jesus returned to the region of Galilee, the Galileans enthusiastically welcomed Him. They did so because they had witnessed all the mighty works He had done in Jerusalem during the time of the Passover (vs. 45.) But it is important to realize that these Galileans are welcoming Jesus as a miracle-worker, they neither recognize Him nor reverence Him for who He really is.

Notice at the outset that, as Jesus enters Galilee, John reminds us of Jesus' own testimony: *"A prophet has no honor in his own country"* (vs. 44.) The truth of that statement may not be so readily apparent until we contrast this present passage with such a passage as 1 Samuel 16:4, *"Samuel did what Jehovah said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the city came to meet him with trembling and said, 'Do you come in peace?'"* The elders of the city greeted Samuel with reverence and godly fear, because they recognized him to be a prophet of God. In the case presently before us, the whole region of Galilee welcomes Jesus as a wonder-worker, because they have seen the mighty works He did in Jerusalem—they fail to recognize that He is the ultimate prophet of God, the very Son of God Himself.

This failure on the part of the Galileans to recognize and reverence Jesus is strikingly brought out when you compare the episode recorded here with another episode recorded in Matthew 8:5-10,

When [Jesus] had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶Lord, my servant lies in the house afflicted with palsy and is suffering terribly. ⁷[Jesus] said to him, I will come and heal him. ⁸But the centurion answered, Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; just speak the word and my servant shall be healed. ⁹I myself am a man under authority, and I have soldiers under me. I say to this one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it. ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those who were following him, I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. (Matt. 8:5-10)

In John 4:46-54 we read of a Jewish nobleman from Capernaum, who, upon learning that Jesus was in Cana, undertook the 20-mile trip to that city. Arriving in Cana he persistently urged Jesus to accompany him back to his home to heal his desperately ill son. In Matthew 8:5-10 we read of a Roman centurion who, upon learning that Jesus was in Capernaum, humbly solicits Him to have mercy upon his servant. But in contrast to the episode involving the Jewish nobleman, we learn the following about the Roman centurion: First, he exhibits a great reverence for the Person of Jesus. From the outset he addresses Jesus as Lord (vs. 6) and expresses his own unworthiness (vs. 8.) From the Gospel of Luke we learn that he actually sent a delegation of Jewish elders to represent him and did not even think himself worthy of holding a personal interview with Jesus: *"The*

centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant” (Lk. 7:3.) Second, the centurion expresses a great confidence in Jesus’ word, this in contrast to the Jewish nobleman. *“The centurion answered, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; just speak the word and my servant shall be healed’”* (Matt. 8:8.) In contrast to the centurion, whom He commends, Jesus must rebuke the nobleman with the words, *“Unless you see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe”* (Jn. 4:48.) Furthermore, the centurion exhibits a great understanding of and respect for Jesus’ authority (Matt. 8:9.) Both men solicit Christ’s mercy and aid on behalf of their loved ones who lay seriously ill; but there is a great difference. The Jewish nobleman saw Jesus’ power, but only focused on how that power might be employed for his personal benefit. The Roman centurion saw Jesus’ power and recognized that the Possessor of such divine authority must be worshiped and must only be solicited with the utmost reverence and humility and submission.

We must reverence Jesus as the Son of God, as opposed to viewing Him as a wonder-working, problem-solving servant whose main task is to do our bidding. Do we approach Jesus in the same manner as the Jewish nobleman, recognizing Jesus’ power, but only focusing on how that power might be employed for our own personal benefit? Or do we approach the Lord Jesus in the same manner as the Roman centurion, recognizing Jesus’ power, and recognizing that the Possessor of such divine authority is to be worshiped, and His aid is to be solicited with the utmost reverence, humility, and submission?

II. Reverence Jesus as the Son of God, If Necessary, Being Taught to Do so through a Crisis

The Galilean nobleman thought he was coming to merely a miracle-worker; maybe you view Jesus in similar terms. Maybe you only look to Jesus to heal your marriage, or to save your troubled family, or to deliver you from drugs or alcohol, or to improve your self-esteem, or to fill your spiritual emptiness—instead of viewing Jesus as the Son of God to be worshiped and the Savior from sin to whom you must entrust your very life for salvation.

That Galilean nobleman came imposing himself upon Jesus, seeking to dictate the terms of his relationship with Jesus, and seeking to define that relationship solely in terms of meeting his own personal needs; maybe you approach Jesus in a similar way. Maybe you seek to dictate the terms of your relationship, seeking to confine that relationship to merely an impersonal “business” arrangement in which you “contract” for Christ’s services when you are in need and for “eternal life insurance” in anticipation of the time when you must finally leave this world—but Christ will not accept such a relationship, as the very Son of God, He insists on setting the terms of your relationship with Him.

So it was that this Jewish nobleman to Jesus. But in the hour of crisis this man was forced to rely solely upon the word of Christ—and in so doing, he came to

know Christ in a far deeper way: he came to know Christ as the divine Savior and the Savior of his whole household:

The nobleman said to him, Sir, come down before my child dies. ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, Go your way, your son lives. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and he departed. ⁵¹While he was still on his way, his servants met him, reporting that his son was alive. ⁵²He asked them what hour he began to recover. They told him, Yesterday at the seventh hour [of the day] the fever left him. ⁵³The father realized that it was at the hour when Jesus said to him, Your son lives. Then he believed, together with his whole household. (Jn. 4:49-53)

Note that Jesus did not submit to the nobleman's request that He accompany him to his home in order to personally heal his son. On the contrary, the Lord Jesus compelled the nobleman to accept His divine word—and when he did, he was confronted with the true Person of Christ and consequently entered into a deeper, saving relationship with Christ.

If necessary, the Lord may likewise use a crisis in your life to force you to submit to the authority of His Word and to enter into a much deeper and more spiritual relationship with Him.

III. Reverence Jesus as the Son of God, By Believing and Submitting to His Word

The Galileans received Jesus because they had seen all the things He had done in Jerusalem (vs. 45.) Their "faith" focused on His works, but did not go beyond those works. They welcomed this man, Jesus, because He was able to do mighty works that fascinated them and were of personal benefit to them. They failed to appreciate that these works were "signs" (vs. 54)—intended to be the divine credentials that identify Jesus as the Lord and Messiah so that men might trust in Him and His Word.

Theirs was not only a "faith" based on miracles, it was also a "faith" that was sustained by miracles—for this Jesus rebukes them: *"Unless you see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe"* (vs. 48.) As long as the miracles continued, they would continue to welcome Christ and rejoice in Him. As a contemporary example of such immature faith as that exhibited by the Galileans, consider the case of a young woman named Ruth:

Ruth was a young wife and mother, 25 years old. She and her family lived in Denver and enjoyed the majestic Colorado Rockies. One August day in 1981 her husband and three of his friends went camping in those mountains. Only two of them returned: a lightning storm took the lives of the other two—one of those who died was Ruth's husband. During the awful days that followed, rescue workers sought to locate and recover the bodies, while Ruth's mother sought to console her daughter. It was during this time that Ruth asked her

mother, “Where is my sign from God? I thought that He would let me know if J.R. [her Christian husband] is with Him.” (*POWER*, 8/21/83, pp. 2-ff.)

With all due respect for Ruth, and being sympathetic to her situation, we still may quite rightly ask, “Why did she expect a sign from God? Isn’t it enough that He has given us His Word?” Her husband had received Christ as his Savior, are not Christ’s promises made to those who believe in Him sufficient for us? It Christ Himself who gives words of assurance to those who believe in Him: *“this is my Father’s will, [namely,] that every one who looks at the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day”* (Jn. 6:40.)

To what extent is our faith based upon miracles and dramatic “signs,” as opposed to being based upon the Word of Christ? Consider the faith of Abraham, which was firmly established upon the Word of God, trusting God’s promise that he would have a son, even when that promise appeared as though it would be impossible to fulfill:

And without becoming weak in faith, he acknowledged that his own body was now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and [he acknowledged] the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰Nevertheless, looking to the promise of God, he did not waver through unbelief, but grew strong through faith, [thereby] giving glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that what [God] had promised, he was also able to fulfill. (Rom. 4:19-21)

Notice how Jesus deals with this Jewish nobleman: He puts the man into a position in which he has no other alternative but to believe the word that Jesus spoke to him and then act upon that word in faith (vs. 50.) Rather than accompanying the man to his home and there personally healing his son, Jesus simply speaks the word, *“Go your way; your son lives.”* the nobleman is thus put into a position in which he must accept Jesus’ word, he has no other alternative.

Let us reverence Jesus as the Son of God, by believing and submitting to His Word. Perhaps the greatest form of reverence and honor we can give Jesus is to simply accept His Word and act upon it. Jesus has already provided more than ample credentials: His mighty works are signs that bear witness that He is the Son of God and as such is worthy of our complete confidence. The Apostle John testifies to this throughout his gospel and especially at the conclusion of his gospel:

Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples that are not recorded in this book. ³¹But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and by believing you may have life in his name. (Jn. 20:30-31)

Jesus has also provided the promise that steadfast faith in His Word shall be rewarded with the fullness of assurance:

Jesus said to those Jews who had believed him, If you remain in my word, then you are truly my disciples; ³²and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (Jn. 8:31-32)

Conclusion

Because Jesus is the Son of God, we must reverence Him as such and must never view Him as merely a wonder-working, problem-solving servant. The greatest form of reverence and honor we can give to Jesus is simply to accept His Word and act upon it.