

The Lord had left the Samaritans of Sychar rejoicing in Him. Returning to Galilee He stated in contrast, "a prophet has no honor in his own country." John did not describe His reception in Jerusalem where He had been before passing through Samaria, but others do. It had not been positive. His attempts to present the gospel had been met with disbelief and scorn. Previously His initial attempts to introduce Himself as Messiah to His neighbors in Nazareth and His countrymen in Galilee had been strongly rejected. The Nazarenes had even tried to destroy Him by pushing Him over a local cliff, but He had simply passed through them, Luke 4:13-40. It was not His time. When He had returned from Jerusalem and Samaria He had avoided Nazareth going to Cana where He was more welcome. He had made water into wine there. John marks that as His first sign particularly marking His Deity.

At Cana He was met immediately by a nobleman, probably in Herod's court.. This man made no mention of his rank but simply pled for Jesus to come to Capernaum and heal his son who was ill and near death. (This was on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee 18 - 20 miles away.) Jesus briefly tested his sincerity, but this man stuck to his plea of faith. No discussion, only an urgent, respectful, "Sir, come down ere my child die." When Jesus told him to go home, "thy son lives," he went. Perhaps he went trembling and fearful until God confirmed his faith when his servants met him with the good news. Comparing times their faith was substantiated and they believed, this time with an awed wonder. This Man was indeed God. John labeled this miracle as the second sign in Galilee marking His deity, Isaiah 9:1,2; Matthew 4:15,16.

Jesus again returned to Jerusalem for a scheduled feast of the Jews. There were seven Feasts of Jehovah instituted by the Law of Moses. While legalistic Jews assiduously kept them in outward form, John faithfully labeled them here for what they had become, feasts of the Jews. Lots of tradition, but little heart for Jehovah. Jesus had another "appointment" to keep. It was at a well known pool just outside of the Sheep Gate of Jerusalem. It was called Bethesda, "*house of mercy.*" There were five porches by it, probably of some architectural significance when built. But though such a pool was meant for refreshing it had become a miserable place where crowded the sick and infirm of the city. They were there because there was healing available to the first one to get into the water on occasions when it was unpredictably suddenly roiled. What hope, what clamor, what joy (for one at least), what disappointment, despair, and depression. We don't read that it was attended by nurses or custodial personnel. With so many unable to move about freely, the stench of their unbathed bodies, their open wounds and their bodily wastes mingled in the surroundings.

What had been built to refresh people had become anything but. Jesus had a better answer. As with the nobleman, f a i t h in a word from Him is all that is needed. The man at most was looking for someone to stay there with him to help him get in the pool before anyone else. When Jesus stopped by He knew the man's needs and long wait. He simple spoke to faith, "rise, take up your bed (a simple mat on the tile) and walk." He did what he was told and found he was made whole.

But being the Sabbath he was disobeying the ordinance against working on the Day set aside by God to honor His completion of the Creation. While we have no record of anyone honoring it for over three thousand years before Moses. It was re-instituted in the Law of Moses. And it had since been neglected again and again. Yet from time to time God had fostered revivals when it was genuinely celebrated in Judah for a while. In Jesus' time it had been revived again and was verbally enforced by the strict sect of the Pharisees. However they had lapsed into following an outward form having lost sight of the real meaning and substance of it. Jesus, faithful to His Father, took advantage of some teaching moments to point out their hypocrisy.

The man, out of circulation for 38 years, reacted simply in his joy. He contacted the leaders to share the news of his good fortune and tell them of the One who had made him whole with a word. He pointed out Jesus to them without hesitation. They sought Jesus with intent to slay Him. Ignored for nearly 40 years, now the man found himself the center of attention. Undesired attention. When accosted by the indignant Pharisees Jesus simply pointed out to them that God had been working all along and He was working too. Indeed God had resumed work as soon as Man, the crown of His creation, had sinned and brought ruin to it. Working to bring man to repentance. Working to fill out His wonderful Plan established before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 3:1-13.

Jesus' statement inflamed them even more for He, by the form of His words, had clearly stated God was personally His Father. Not simply Father of the universe and of them all but Jesus' personal Father. They correctly saw Him claiming equality with God. He revealed and explained at length the unique relationship of the Father and the Son. And the interplay of the Two, Jesus then having become a man. Not that they had any interest in such claims. Nor would they have been able to enter into and comprehend without having first received Him by faith as Herod's nobleman had. Have you?