

“Believing the Word of Jesus” (series #10)

By Pastor Rand Lankheet, for New Horizon URC, April 23, second sermon

Bible text: John 4:43-54

Introduction: The gospel writer, John, uses the number seven.

John gives us seven “I Am” statements of Jesus. Exactly seven of them. And, John gives us exactly seven miracles of Jesus. He calls them “signs.” Miraculous signs. Exactly seven of them. Seven is the most significant symbolic number in the entire Bible. The number seven appears in almost six hundred places throughout the Bible. {ISBE, vol3, p. 559}

We read about the number seven in the first chapters of the Bible. There were six days of God creating all things. And he rested on the seventh day.

Later in the OT, we read of seven lambs offered as special sacrifices (献祭) .

Also, there were seven candlesticks in the Temple.

On the special Day of Atonement, blood was sprinkled (洒) seven times in the Most Holy Place.

The Sabbath day (安息日) is the seventh. And the Sabbatical year is the seventh.

And seven times seven is 49, which then brings the 50th year, the Year of Jubilee (禧年) .

In the NT, we read about seven loaves, in one of Jesus’ miracles. And seven baskets of leftovers. Jesus tells us to forgive seventy times seven times.

In the Book of Revelation (启示录) , there are “seven spirits” before God’s throne, in heaven. And seven churches. And a book with seven seals. And seven trumpets.

What is it with the number seven? Well, in God’s plan, the number seven, generally,

indicates **fullness and completion**. A bringing of something to completion and conclusion.

John gives us exactly seven miracles (神迹) of Jesus. And he numbers them for us, sometimes.

Vs. 54: “this is the second sign [miracle] that Jesus did....” The second of a total of seven.

John is telling us that Jesus eventually completely all the work the Father gave Him to do.

On earth. To be our redeemer (救赎主) . Nothing happens by chance. Everything is planned exactly.

Seven I AM statements. Seven miracles. Right down to the number of miracles.

That we would see Jesus: Jesus as the fulfillment, the completer, of His Father’s plan.

1. And remember **THE PURPOSE** of a “sign”? A sign points away from itself...a sign explains something, teaches something important. The miracles, as signs, are also pointing us to Jesus. The miracles are not for themselves...not to merely amaze us. Nor to first of all help a person. But to show us, beyond all doubt, that Jesus indeed is the Son of God.

That we must believe in Him. To have life. Life in this world, and Life in the world to come.

So, what’s the Purpose **of this sign**, this second miracle Jesus performed?

Remember, Jesus has been traveling from the south, to the north. He’s making his way to the northern province of Galilee. That’s where Jesus is from—He was raised in Nazareth, in Galilee. And most of his disciples are, likewise, from Galilee.

In vs. 44, John reminds us that Jesus was given no honour in his home town, nor in the region of Galilee. The other gospel writers make that even more clear. Luke tells us about the time the Jews in Nazareth tried to kill Jesus. They tried to push him over a steep cliff. (Lk 4:24, 28-30).

Here in John chapter 4, it seems that Jesus is going back to Galilee. For a second time.

He knew how the Galileans had rejected him. They were so hard of heart. But that also meant that those people needed Jesus all the more. Jesus was on a mission. Jesus had to show those unbelievers something of God’s grace and truth. So Jesus went back. He would not give up....

Illus: There’s a lesson here, for us. We mentioned it last week, from the first part of John

chapter four. That sowing the seed of the gospel is hard work. Very hard work. Jesus spoke about those sowing the seed who labored so hard. That’s true for pastors, preachers, missionaries (宣教士) . And not just in far-away places. Sometimes the hardest work is with people who already know the Bible. Jesus hardest work was with the Jews...those who already had the OT Scriptures. He often faced more resistance from the Jews, than from the Gentiles (外邦人) . Today, it can be very hard work for a pastor to serve in an organized, established church. With its 40, 50, 60 or more years of rigid tradition. With a sometimes closed culture. With an unwillingness to reach out into the community.

But here is Jesus, going back to Galilee. To that very difficult region. With such hard people.

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Jesus is encouraging us to press on, to keep at it, as long as we are able, by His grace.

It's an encouragement, also, to parents...to keep on with your children. Even if in later years some of them show some rebellion. Or some hardness of heart. Keep on praying. Keep on with wisdom and patience. It is your calling, as Christian parents. Eventually, there will be a harvest.

So that's the **PURPOSE** of Jesus' second miracle.

2. Note, secondly, the POWER of the miracle. The power of it.

Earlier, Jesus had been in the town of Cana of Galilee. Remember, in John chapter 2? Jesus want to that wedding celebration. And in his first miracle, he turned the water into wine.

Jesus returns to Cana. And while he is there, a man comes to visit him. He's from a nearby

town. The man visits Jesus, because the man's son is seriously ill. We read that the boy is "near to death."

This is not the flu, not a chronic condition; not a disability. This is something that will kill the boy. He will be dead in a few days, unless something happens.

The man is a "nobleman," (贵族) a "royal official" of some kind. Perhaps he was an officer in the government, under King Herod Antipas. This nobleman is used to having power. And exercising that power---both political power and military power.

So the man has his own idea, about how Jesus can help his son. He insists that Jesus go with him, to his house.

But we can see that man has no real sense about Jesus' power. This royal official thinks that Jesus must

physically come with him, to his house. That Jesus must stand at the bedside of his son. To heal his son. **But Jesus' power is greater than that.**

You see, **Jesus' authority** is far greater than the authority of government officials. Government officials often must go themselves, to the place where they are needed. They must investigate (调查, 考察). They must see for themselves. They must weigh their options, before making up their mind. Jesus power is greater than that. His authority is higher than that.

-Jesus rebukes this man. Perhaps Jesus is speaking more to the people in the crowd: Vs. 48: "You people will never believe in me, unless you see signs and wonders. Unless you see some miracle." Jesus is speaking the truth, obviously. Earlier, the Jews demanded that Jesus give them a miracle. Much later, Jesus said to his own disciple, Thomas: "unless you see, you will not believe...Blessed are those who have not seen, but yet, believe in me."

So this nobleman obviously **has a low level of faith**. Perhaps, this man does not yet have

saving faith in Jesus. He might have merely a belief in Jesus' power to do miracles. That's better than nothing.

But mere intellectual (理性的) belief that Jesus does miracles, will not save anyone.

-Yet, notice that Jesus is **not too harsh** with this man. Earlier in this chapter Jesus showed love and compassion to that Samaritan woman. He did not condemn her. Here, likewise, Jesus shows compassion to this man.

Though he was so confused, though he had such wrong ideas about Jesus. Though he was insisting that Jesus come to his house.

Yet, Jesus shows love. He responds with compassion. Jesus will heal this man's son.

But now notice something important. Jesus will heal that son in His own way. How will Jesus do it? **BY**

SIMPLY SPEAKING THE WORD! [Read Vs. 50. Jesus simply spoke the word.

And wonderfully that man "**believed**" the word. He believed the Word of Jesus. Later, the man learns something important. He learns that exactly when Jesus spoke the Word, at that exact moment, his son recovered. What authority! What power! Jesus doesn't have to physically go to his home. He just speaks the Word. And by the power of His Word, new life is given. Restored life.

Brothers and sisters, powerfully brings us back to John chapter 1. [John 1:1, and 4 /

2.B. Something more is going on here. More than physical healing.

[Read vs. 50, first part: "**THE MAN BELIEVED THE WORD.**"

The Word, the Logos (道), is Jesus. And the Word, Jesus, speaks the word. The Word of life. And in believing this Word, this father, becomes a changed man.

He started out thinking Jesus was only a miracle worker. Someone to give a quick healing.

But now this man has become a believer: he takes Jesus at his word. Jesus becomes the life-giving Saviour of this man. And, wonderfully, of the man's household. [Read vs. 53. Life comes to the whole family. Physical life to the sick son, yes. But much more. Spiritual life, new life, comes to the whole family.

And may I remind you how this happens? This new life, inside of us? This new life, from Jesus, the Word made flesh? [Read John 1:12-13. Being born of God, born by God. A miracle of new birth, a change of heart. Dead hearts, dead spirits, dead to God, made alive. In Jesus. To those who "received him" John says in chapter 1:12.

Receiving Jesus by a true faith, a true trust.

-That's the greatest power displayed here. Yes, the boy regained physical life. That's the power of physical

hearts, dead spirits, dead to God, made alive. In Jesus. To those who received him. John says in chapter 1:12.

Receiving Jesus by a true faith, a true trust.

-That's the greatest power displayed here. Yes, the boy regained physical life. That's the power of physical healing. But the father, that government official, was given *new spiritual life*.

As he simply trusted Jesus.

Jesus is the Word. And Jesus speaks the Word. The Word of Life.

3. What about for you, personally, today? At this stage in your life?

First of all, make sure you have personally trusted in this Jesus. We all are under the curse of death...physical death and spiritual death. Because of our sins. Because God must punish our sins. The payment of sin is death.

Look to Jesus. Believe in Jesus. As the very Word of God. The Word who became flesh, and

lived for a while among us. The Word who died on that cross, taking our sin, taking our payment. That we might live. Have you truly trusted in Jesus, the Word?

But then there's much more, practically, isn't there? It starts by being born again, given new spiritual life, by Jesus. Then knowing God as our Father in heaven. But then often, comes even the harder part. Trusting God the Father daily. In all the stress, and struggle of life.

And I am speaking about myself also. Having ended my ministry earlier than I expected, and now mostly sitting around. Wondering. What is next? Is there anything? And like the father in John chapter 4, I have my own ideas. And my own plans. Jesus, why don't you do something, right now? Why don't you do it in the way I want? Come to my house. That's my plan." But Jesus will not take orders from us. We are not in charge. He is. I have to learn that.

And probably you have to learn that, also...in your situation in life. "Jesus I want you to change things in the way I have planned. Do it my way." But Jesus has his way. He is in charge. And, remember, Jesus is full of love, and compassion. He's not letting us suffer, or struggle, to torment us. To punish us. But Jesus is looking for us to trust him with our daily lives. *Children*, that you must trust Jesus to do what is best for you. Not the way you want it. But the way He wants it.

Teenagers...you also must also trust Jesus with the details of your young lives. In your

schooling. In your planning for the future. In the many decisions you will have to make in the next year or two, or three. Trust in Jesus, to take care of you. In his way, in his timing.

And, adults, it doesn't get any easier, as we get older, does it? In fact, maybe the older we get,

the more we think we can tell Jesus what to do. Like that father, that high ranking government official. We have some power, as adults. And we try to use it on Jesus. To do things our way. Will you trust Jesus to do things His way? To work things out, according to His own plan?

Remember, Jesus just speaks the word, and things are changed.

He just gives the orders, and our problem is solved. Completely.

But, will we trust Him? **LET US PRAY.**