

Healing a Nobleman's Son

John 4:46-54 - Part 1

Introduction

1. After Jesus turned the water to wine, He left Cana of Galilee and “went down to Capernaum” along with “His mother and {His} brothers and His disciples.” (Jn. 2:12).
 - a. They remained in Capernaum only “a few days. (Jn. 2:12).
 - b. John then affirms “The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” (Jn. 2:13).
 - c. During the Passover feast “many believed in His name, **observing His signs which He was doing.**” (Jn. 2:23).
 - d. Nicodemus soon came to Him exclaiming He must “have come from God as a teacher” because “no one can do **these signs that You do unless God is with him.**” (Jn. 3:2). See also Jn. 3:2.
 - e. Jesus then traveled “into the land of Judea”... “spending time with them and baptizing.” (Jn. 3:22).
 - 1) He was already in Judea. A literal translation is “the Judea land.”
 - 2) McCord translates “the Judean country,” and the ESV has “Judean countryside.”
 - f. The Pharisees “heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John. (Jn. 4:1).
 - 1) They were upset with the great success of John the Baptist and his refusal to baptize them. (Matt. 3:5-9).
 - 2) The success of Jesus created even more anger and jealousy and even hatred from the Pharisees who loved the spotlight and did not want to share it with any other.
 - g. John the apostle added Jesus was not baptizing people personally, but His disciples were doing the baptizing. (Jn. 4:2).
 - h. Jesus left Judea for Galilee, but to get there He had to travel through Samaria.
2. Many Samaritans were converted to Christ because of the words of the Samaritan woman and the words Jesus spoke to them. (Jn. 4:39-42).
3. Jesus then traveled to Galilee where He was well received by the Galileans “having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast. (Jn. 4:43-45).

Jesus' Return To Cana Of Galilee

John 4:46 Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a royal official [nobleman] whose son was sick at Capernaum.

1. It is not known exactly the amount of time between these two visits of Jesus to Cana of Galilee. It may have been only a few weeks or months. It would appear from John 6:4 that it was less than a year.
2. John made it known that “a royal official” from Capernaum came to Jesus. (Jn. 4:46,49).
 - a. “Royal official” comes from the Greek adjective “basilikos” [bah see lee **ka**hs] meaning “a person attached to the king, a courtier.” The NKJV and ASV translate this word “nobleman.”
 - b. This adjective appears 3 times in the New Testament - twice in this passage and once in James 2:8 where it is rendered “royal” and translated “royal *law*.”
 - c. The NIV has the same translation as the NASB “royal official.”
 - d. It denotes an official under the command of the king - a person of authority and wealth.
 - 1) It is not so stated, but this man was likely a Jew.
 - 2) When a Gentile is discussed in the gospels, the writers usually reference that fact.
3. His “son was sick at Capernaum” - It was about 20 miles between these two cities.
 - a. This would be about a day’s journey on foot. It would be much less on a horse.
 - b. We do not know his mode of travel.

Notes:

1. Some have alleged that this account of the nobleman’s son is another version of the healing of the centurion’s servant. (Matt. 8:5-13; Lk. 7:2-10).

Matt. 8:5 And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him,

Matt. 8:6 and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented."

Matt. 8:7 Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

Matt. 8:8 But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.

Matt. 8:9 "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

Matt. 8:10 Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.

Matt. 8:11 "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;

Matt. 8:12 but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matt. 8:13 And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very moment.

Lk. 7:2 And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.

Lk. 7:3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.

Lk. 7:4 When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him;

Lk. 7:5 for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue."

Lk. 7:6 Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; Lk. 7:7 for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.

Lk. 7:8 "For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

Lk. 7:9 Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith."

Lk. 7:10 When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

2. There are many differences between this account and the one recorded in Matthew and Luke.

John	Matthew and Luke
He records the healing of the son of an official who served king Herod of Galilee. (Jn. 4:46). He was likely a Jew.	In these gospels a Roman centurion comes to Christ. (Matt. 8:5; Lk. 7:2,3). This man was a Gentile.
John records a son who is ill to the point of death. (Jn. 4:46, 47).	Here the one healed is a servant. (Matt. 8:6; Lk. 7:2).
Here the nobleman begs Jesus to come to his home. (Jn. 4:47).	Here the Roman centurion asks Jesus not to come to his home. (Matt. 8:6,7; Lk. 7:3,6).
Jesus is in Cana of Galilee. (Jn. 4:46).	Jesus is in Capernaum. (Matt. 8:5).
Here this official pleaded in person.	There the elders pleaded for him. (Lk. 7:3).
The son is ill with a fever. (Jn. 4:52).	The servant has the illness of paralysis and was at the point of death. (Matt. 8:6; Lk. 7:2).
Nothing is said about the father's faith though he demonstrated amazing faith.	Jesus commended the centurion for his great faith. (Matt. 8:10; Lk. 7:9).

3. The differences are too great to make John's account another version of the account in the Synoptic gospels. **John was recording a different miracle.**

4. He was not perverting the encounter with the Roman centurion into the healing of the nobleman's son.

Royal Official Implored Jesus To Come And Heal His Son

John 4:47 When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring *Him* to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.

1. News travels fast and he had heard of the healing powers of Jesus.
2. In desperation he came to Jesus being confident Jesus could heal his son who "was at the point of death"
3. Here the word "huios" [hwee ahs, son] is used. Again this word "uios" [hwee ahs, son] was used by Jesus in John 4:50.
 - a. He used the word "paidion" [pi dee ahn, little child] in verse 49 and there translated "child."
 - b. The servants used "pais" [pais] meaning "child" in verse 51.

- c. All of these terms point to a young son whose age is not given.
4. The word “imploring” is in the present tense in the Greek [denoting continuous action] and suggests this man asked Jesus more than once to come and heal his son.
- a. Some editions of NASB have “was requesting.” NIV has “begged.”
 - b. The Greek has “erotao” [eh rah **ta**h oh] meaning “to ask, request, beg, beseech.”
 - c. It would seem this royal officer believed Jesus could heal his child, but he likely did not believe Jesus could raise him from the dead. This may be why he was so urgent Jesus come and heal his dying son.

Jesus Spoke To Him

John 4:48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you *people* see signs and wonders, you *simply* will not believe."

1. Jesus did not want faith in Him to depend solely on miracles.
 - a. The Samaritans had believed Jesus without signs. (Jn. 4:41,42).
 - b. The Galileans, including this “royal official,” would not believe without signs [miracles, wonders].
2. He wanted men to believe in Him because of His words.
 - a. The words of Jesus were the words of His Father.
 - b. Jesus spoke the words of life eternal. (Jn. 6:68), and **those who are wise believe and obey His words.**
3. The words of John 4:48 were not addressed exclusively to the nobleman.
 - a. The pronoun “you” is plural in Greek.
 - b. The NASB has attempted to make this clear by placing in italics the word “peoples” to clarify the plural pronoun “you.”
 - c. It was addressed to Galileans who refused to believe unless they saw “signs and wonders.”
 - d. This man was included because he was a Galilean.

Royal Official Responded

John 4:49 The royal official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

- One had to go down to travel from Cana of Galilee to Capernaum very near the Sea of Galilee.
 - Cana of Galilee was in the hills of Galilee whereas the Sea of Galilee and Capernaum were some 682 feet below sea level.
1. The word “Sir” literally meant “Lord.”
 - a. The Greek is “kurios” [**koo** ree ahs] meaning, “lord, Lord.” It could have the idea of “sir” and this seems to be the meaning here. NASB translates “Lord” as “Sir.”
 - b. The word, as used by the “royal official,” can be used to denote a superior or as an expression of respect.

- c. It is obvious he did not yet believe Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God when he came to Jesus with this urgent request, but like Nicodemus believed was a great man from God. See Jn. 3:2
2. We do not know how much he knew about Christ.
 - a. It is evident by his actions he had great faith in Jesus and His power to heal.
 - b. Like Nicodemus it is clear he believed Jesus must be from God because of His “signs.” (Jn. 3:2).
 3. Without question he had heard about the miracles of Jesus and came to Jesus in desperation to save his dying son.
 - a. He used “paidion” [pi dee ahn] meaning “a little child.”
 - b. It was also a term of affection, and was used by Jesus and John as an expression of love for the disciples. (Jn. 21:5;1 Jn. 2:1, 18).
 4. **Though he had an unwavering faith in Jesus**, he believed it was necessary for Jesus to come to his son and likely touch him and command his healing.

Jesus Assured Him That His Son Lived

John 4:50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off [to his home].

1. This nobleman demonstrated much faith and believed the words of Jesus “Go; your son lives.”
 - a. **This was not a prophesy of what might eventually happen.**
 - b. These words were words with power of healing that He was exercising at that very moment.
 - c. The healing occurred at that precise time - “the seventh hour.” (Jn. 4:52).
2. He left Jesus with the assurance his son lived and was healed.
3. He had wanted Jesus to come to his home (Jn. 4:49), but Jesus did not go with him.
4. He left Jesus’ presence without doubting or arguing with Jesus and contending He had to be present to heal his son.
5. Jesus did not use the words “great faith,” but this nobleman demonstrated great faith.

Slaves Meet Him As He Was Returning Home

John 4:51 As he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living.

1. We do not know the number of slaves, but this implied the nobleman was a man of wealth.
 - a. “Slaves” is from the Greek “doulos” [doo lahs] meaning “slave, bond servant.”
 - b. The word “son” in the Greek is “pais” meaning “a child,” but here “a boy.”
 - c. The exact age of his young son is not given and is immaterial to the miracle.

2. It is hard to imagine how excited he was when he heard “his son was living.”
 - a. “Living” is used to mean his son was alive and well.
 - b. This is evident by what is revealed in the following verses.

Royal Official Made Inquiry About The Time Of The Healing

John 4:52 So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour [seven o’clock] the fever left him.”

1. It seems he expected his son to gradually get better.
2. The servants informed him “the fever” had left the son “yesterday at the seventh hour.”
 - a. “The seventh hour” may denote 1:00 p.m. Jewish time.
 - b. Jewish time began at sunset and ended at sunset the next day.
 - c. Some believe John used Roman time that was 12 to 12 either AM or PM.
 - d. If this be the case it would be 7 p.m..
 - e. Scholars have argued both times, but it is difficult to be dogmatic about this.
 - f. This writer favors that John used Roman time.
 - 1) Pilate humiliated Jesus about 6 A.M.. (Jn. 19:14).
 - 2) Mark, who used Jewish time, informed us that the crucifixion began the 3rd hour, that is, 9 A.M. Jewish time. He wrote “and it was the third hour, and they crucified him”.
 - 3) The trial had been about 6 A.M. Roman time. (Jn. 19:14).
 - g. John referred to the hour of the day several times in his gospel. (Jn. 1:39; 4:6, 52; 19:14).
 Jn. 1:39 He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. Perhaps 10 a.m. Roman time or 4 P.M. Jewish time
 - Jn. 4: 6 and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. Perhaps 6 p.m. Roman time or noon Jewish time Six p.m. was the usual time to draw water.
 - Jn. 4:52 So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." Perhaps 7 p.m. Roman time or 1 p.m. Jewish time
 - Jn. 19:14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. Perhaps 6 a..m Roman time or noon Jewish time. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!"
3. “The seventh hour” was the exact hour Jesus had assured him his son was living. (Jn. 4:53).
4. **It was not a gradual healing**, but it was an instantaneous and complete healing.
5. **This is the way Jesus healed with one exception.**

6. The New Testament records Jesus healing one man over a very short period of time. (Mk. 8:22-26).

Mk. 8:22 And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him.

Mk. 8:23 Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?"

Mk. 8:24 And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around."

Mk. 8:25 Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly.

Mk. 8:26 And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

- a. It is obvious that this blind man was completely healed over a very short time.
- b. This healing is not a justification for modern day faith healers who fail to heal immediately, but claim credit if one they prayed over improves or gets well over a period of time.

John 4:53 So the father knew that *it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed and his whole household.*

1. There was no doubt Jesus had healed his son.
2. This man and his whole household [family] came to believe in Jesus because of this marvelous miracle.
 - a. He had faith in Jesus, but his faith was based on what he had heard.
 - b. He and his "whole household" now believed in Jesus because of this sign.
3. There could be no other explanation than Jesus had healed his son.
4. This sign produced saving faith.
5. John was not recording a mere acknowledgment of Jesus by the nobleman, but this must be understood with John 20:30,31 in mind.
6. Often when the head of a family believed it influenced the "whole household" to believe. See Acts 10 &16.

John 4:54 This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

1. John stressed to his readers that this was "a second sign that Jesus performed" in Galilee.
2. John 4:46 sets forth this healing was in "Cana of Galilee."
3. The first sign was recorded in John 2:1-12 and mentioned in John 4:46.
4. This was not the second sign or miracle Jesus had ever performed.
 - a. Jesus had done other signs in Judea prior to this healing. (Jn. 2:23; 3:2).
 - b. This is the second sign John had described in this gospel that took place in Cana of Galilee.

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