

# Jesus Heals an Official's Son

## John 4: 46-54

**DIG:** Now that Jesus is back home again, what motivates the people to welcome Him? How do you account for the contrast between the crowd's welcome in John 4:45 and Yeshua's comments in John verses 44 and 48? How are the Galileans like, or unlike, the Samaritans in John 39-42? Why? What motivates the royal official to travel so far? How would you have responded to what the Messiah told him to do? What was the result of his action? What does this **miraculous sign** point to about the Lord?

**REFLECT:** Why did the royal official travel to Cana? How did **the miracle** at the wedding compare to the healing of the man's son? How did the royal official ask Christ to come with him? What was unusual about that? Why was Yeshua so abrupt with him? What was the difference between believing in the words of Jesus and believing in Him as the Messiah? What convinced him to **believe**? Do you need a **sign** from God to know He is there for you? When was the last time you fully trusted the Lord in a crisis?

The brief harvest in Samaria was, as Yeshua had indicated to **His** apostles, also the beginning of sowing-time. It formed an introduction to His great Galilean ministry when they had seen all that He had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival (John 4:45a). His first miracle (see Bq - **Jesus Changes Water to Wine**), was not for the public to see. It was so that **His** talmidim would have faith in **Him**. The Suffering Servant, however, had already started **His** public ministry in Jerusalem when He cleansed the Temple (see Bs - **Jesus' First Cleansing of the Temple**). Now that John had been imprisoned, Christ took up the message of His forerunner, only with a wider scope, urging the multitudes to believe the Good News that He championed.

The Master had warned the twelve, saying: **Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in His hometown** (Luke 4:24). And this was **His** boyhood home! This would highlight the irony of the Jew's rejection so soon after Jesus had enjoyed such great success among the Samaritans. While on this occasion the Galileans treated Yeshua hospitably - perhaps they felt proud of their hometown hero - the renegade Rabbi kept their goodwill in perspective.

When people get what they want, belief comes easily. But how do they respond when confronted with the Truth? When Christ confronted their misconstrued expectations, which would they choose? The days ahead would reveal a clash of wills - human expectations versus the sovereignty of ADONAI. Yeshua's encounter with the royal official illustrated the kind of faith He was looking for then, and now.<sup>377</sup>

Once more He visited Cana in Galilee, where He had turned the water into wine (John 4:46a). When we place these two **miracles** side-by-side we can see that there is some connection between them, something they have in common. As we study them both there are seven striking comparisons. First, they both happened on **the third day**. In Yochanan 2:1 we read: **On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee**. And in John 4:43 we are told: **After the two days [in Samaria] He [went into] Galilee**.

Second, when Mary came to Jesus and told Him they had no wine He seemed to rebuke her, but His comments were actually for her own good (Yochanan 2:4); so when the royal official asked the Lord to come down and heal his dying son, Messiah's reply seemed rather harsh, but again, it was ultimately for his own good (John 4:48).

Third, in each case we see the obedient response made by those to whom Jesus commanded. Jesus said to the servants: **Fill the jars with water**; so they filled them to the brim. Then He told them: **Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet**. They did so (Yochanan 2:7-8a). To the royal official the Lord replied: **You may go. Your child will live**. The man believed what Yeshua said and left (John 4:50 CJB).

Fourth, in both **miracles** we see the word at work; in each, our Savior did nothing but speak. He replied to Mary . . . (John 2:4a CJB), and to the official, He told him . . . (John 4:48). There are two primary words in the New Covenant that translate "word." *Logos* primarily refers to *the total inspired Word of God* (John 1:1; Luke 8:11; Philippians 2:16; Titus 2:5; Hebrews 4:12; First Peter 1:23). *Rhema*, however, refers to *a word that is spoken*. Sometimes it is used explicitly, but many times it is inferred. In my commentaries, I use **Word** for the written expression, and **word** for the spoken utterance.

Fifth, in both narratives the servant's knowledge is pointed out. At the wedding, the servants followed Christ's orders and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew (John 2:8-9). While the royal official was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living (John 4:51).

Sixth, the consequence in each case was that those who witnessed **the miracle** believed. At the conclusion of the wedding we read: **And His talmidim believed in Him** (Yochanan 2:11), and as for the royal official, **he and his entire household believed** (John 4:53b).

Seventh, there is a designed similarity in the way each narrative ends. At the conclusion of the wedding we are told: **What Yeshua did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which He revealed His glory** (Yochanan 2:11a). And after the royal officials' son was healed we learn: **This was the second time that Yeshua came from Judea to Galilee and performed a miracle** (John 4:54 CJB). Here we have a comparison

between two **miracles** that, though separated in time, are the only **miracles** recorded in the **B'rit Chadashah** that occurred in **Cana**.<sup>378</sup>

And there was a certain royal official who lived in **Capernaum** and heard that **Jesus** had returned from **Judea** (**John 4:46b**). The term translated **royal official** (Greek: *basilikos*) generally refers to something or someone associated with royalty - **royal clothing** (**Acts 12:21**), **royal territory** (**Acts 12:20**), **royal law** (**James 2:8**). This **royal official** may have been a member of **Herod Antipas's** extended family. It's more probable, however, that **he** was a **Jew** who was in charge of this particular area. Regardless, **he** was a **man of influence, wealth and privilege, who exercised considerable authority**. We are told that **his son lay sick at Capernaum** (**Yochanan 4:46c**).

When this man heard that **Jesus** had arrived in **Galilee** from **Judea**, **he went to Him** (**John 4:47a**). Traveling from **Capernaum** to **Cana** was about eighteen miles. Not only that, but **Capernaum** is 600 feet below sea level and **Cana** is 1,500 above sea level, so it was an uphill walk all the way. It was a very difficult trip, but **the man's need was great**.

Being a **man of significant influence** in the area, we can be certain that **his arrival** did not go unnoticed. But **his behavior** did not match **his lofty position**. **He** immediately went to **Yeshua** and **begged Him to come and heal his son, who was close to death** (**Yochanan 4:47b**). The word **begged** is imperfect in tense, *indicating continuous action*. Because **his son** was almost dead, **the official** abandoned all dignity and *kept on begging and begging* for **the Lord to come**. Notice that **the father** thought **Christ** had to physically be present for any healing to take place.

**Jesus'** reply at first may seem rather harsh: **Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, Messiah told him, you will never believe** (**John 4:48**). But this was addressed to a wider audience than **the royal official**, as **you people** would indicate. It was not so much **the Master's** answer to **the man's** request, as it was a reflection on the reason for the request - **miraculous signs**. This was the typical attitude of **the Galileans**. Because this **man** was an aristocratic Jew, it's likely **he** was a member of the Sadducees (see **Ja - Whose Wife Will She Be at the Resurrection?**), who didn't believe in **Sh'ol** or any afterlife - good or bad. **They believed** people made **their** own decisions and, therefore, deserved whatever fate might come **their** way in this life. So for a Sadducee to beg repeatedly for **his son's** life was unusual to say the least.

It's as if **Jesus** was really saying, "Does your faith depend on some kind of a **sign**? Did you come because you already **believe** that **I AM the Messiah** or did you come because you need to be convinced?" Nevertheless, **the royal official** did not defend **himself**, nor did **he** argue. **He** simply **begged the Lord** again and again, saying: **Sir, come down before my child dies** (**John 4:49**). But **Yeshua** was troubled and abrupt because of **the royal official's** motivation

was wrong. Here it was subtle, later it would be unmistakable (John 6:26-27). He sought the Master as a means of getting what he wanted (even though understandable), not because He was the Messiah who is worthy of worship. As sincere as he was, he was sincerely wrong; the royal official missed the bigger picture for Christ's coming.

The royal official, however, would not give in. At that desperate point, he was not an aristocrat, or an official, or a Sadducee, or even a Galilean. He was a father, sick with worry about his dying son. Yeshua used his vulnerability to teach him a lesson about faith that he would never forget. The Lord replied: **You may go. Your child will live.** Basically He was saying, "Go on about your business; your son is fine."

The man believed what Yeshua said, did not ask for a sign, and left (John 4:50 CJB). He believed in what Yeshua said, but not necessarily in Yeshua as his Lord and Savior. When Yochanan uses the verb believe without an object - as in, many people believed (John 1:7 and 50, 3:12 and 15, 4:41) - he describes saving faith in Jesus as Savior (see Bw - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith). The same is true of the phrase, believed in Him (John 3:16-17). The royal official believed in what Yeshua said, but it was not the same faith that saved the Samaritans (John 4:41). Clearly, Jesus' words were all he needed to hear, so he left without any more begging (Yochanan 4:50 CJB). The Greek word for left is the same verb for go the Lord used earlier.<sup>379</sup>

While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. The natural response would have been for him to hurriedly race back to Capernaum to check on the condition of his son. But the man didn't do that. He apparently went about his business and stayed overnight in Cana before leaving for Capernaum in the morning. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at (1:00 pm) the seventh hour" (Yochanan 4:51-52). The miracle-working Rabbi had told him that his child would live and he believed Him.

This was the second time that Yeshua came from Judah to Galilee and performed a miracle (John 4:54 CJB). This is the second of Yochanan's seven miracles (John 2:1-11; 4:46-54, 5:1-15, 6:1-15, 6:16-24, 9:1-34, and 11:1-44). The first miracle was changing water into wine, and the second sign was healing the royal official's son.

Then the father realized that this was the exact time (1:00 pm) at which Jesus had said to him: **Your son will live.** So he and his entire household believed (John 4:53). Note the absence of any direct object. Before he believed what Yeshua said, now he simply believed. He believed in Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

We know from the other Gospel accounts that the Master performed many more John 21:25 miracles in Galilee and Judea and His growing fame spread like wildfire. Many people

sought **His** physical and spiritual healing. It didn't take long for **Him** to attract countless disciples. Some **believed what He said**, while others **believed in Him as their Lord**. But as **He** presented **Himself** to the nation of Isra'el as **the Meshiach**, what kind of a **Savior** were **they** looking for? What was their motivation? Were **they** looking for forgiveness for their sins, or someone who could give them what **they** wanted? Would they accept the Kingdom **He** promised, or did **they** want a king of their own making? As **the Anointed One** turned toward Yerushalayim, **His** followers faced a difficult choice.

Crises demand decisions that demonstrate the extent of our **faith**. When we face disasters in our lives, do we try to rely on our own ability in controlling events? The human tendency is to grab ahold of that steering wheel and take over - even though we know that when we choose to leave the driving to **the Lord**, we open ourselves to **His** peace, even in the most difficult of circumstances. But that's easier said than done, isn't it?

If your young daughter is raped and goes through life with low self-esteem and all its consequences; if your child is killed in an automobile accident because of a drunk driver; if your spouse has an affair and leaves you for another; if your twelve-year-old son is molested and ends up living a homosexual lifestyle as an adult. I could go down the list . . .

The choice is simple, but it's not easy. Either you **believe** that **ADONAI** loves you and has your best interests at heart, no matter what the circumstances, or not. There is no middle ground. All **the apostles**, save **John**, were martyred - yet they continued to **believe**. No matter what happens, **God** always deserves our **trust**, as **Job** said: **As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth (Job 19:25)**.

*Heavenly **Father**, You are my provider and protector. You gave up Your beloved **Son** for me so that all Your promises would become a reality in my life. I love You and trust You with my life.<sup>380</sup>*