

## A Nobleman's Son Healed – The Power Over Distance

John 4:46-54

### Introduction

1. The miracles of Jesus testify to His nature and relation to the Father (**cf. John 20:30-31**).
2. The recorded cases of miracles teach us great lessons about Jesus, our relation to Him, and what He can exclusively do on our behalf.
3. **John 4:46-54** records the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 7 miracles in John's gospel. In it we see the Lord's power over distance displayed, and the incredible implications we can gather from it.

#### I. The Miracle

##### A. The Desperation (**vv. 46-47**)

- a. The nobleman's son was **"at the point of death" (v. 47)** – this is said of the man who had made the 25-mile trip from Capernaum to Cana.
  - i. Time is precious, and not only had it passed from the trip to Jesus, but would have to pass (in the man's mind) in the trip back to his son.
  - ii. **(v. 49)** – demonstrates furthermore the desperation – we must get going to get there in time.
  - iii. Jesus later shows His power over time, but here He demonstrates His power over distance which makes time a problem – the distance may make the solution too late if they don't get going.
- b. **Nobleman** – *basilikos* – royal.
  - i. This man was in some way connected to the king – most probably in connection with Herod Antipas.
  - ii. The greatest, and most noble are humbled by desperation, and left only with the solution of the Christ. (**v. 47** – he not only heard of Jesus' travel history, but of His track record)

##### B. The Insight (**vv. 48-49**)

- a. **(v. 48)** – Jesus sees where this man is spiritually and views him as a representative of the rest of the people – **He does not act to satisfy the man's desires, but his needs.**
  - i. The man coming to Jesus shows an admirable measure of faith.
  - ii. However, his insistence in **verse 49** manifests a deficiency in his faith which Jesus has already perceived, and which He intends to provide for.
  - iii. Are the events discussed about Jesus thus far indicative of a power or nature that is limited by an adversary like distance?
  - iv. Is His "miracle-working" subject to anything?
- b. **"you will by no means believe"** – it is not that Jesus is too shallow to see that the actions of this man show some faith.
  - i. Jesus is too focused on His mission to be satisfied with the level of faith displayed in this man. (**cf. John 2:23-25** – shallow)
  - ii. Jesus does not want this man to simply believe that He is some great Rabbi, or a manifestation of Jewish lore.

- iii. **Jesus wants the man to see His true character and nature – which a miracle will show, but a miracle despite the man's concerns about limitation would show further (v. 49 – He thinks Jesus must "come down").**
- C. The Sign (vv. 50-54)
  - a. What had convinced the man to come to Jesus with his problem?
    - i. Rumors of others, and desperation – what was left to do?
  - b. (v. 50) – it was not something the man physically saw which provoked faith, but what he heard.
    - i. Cf. Matthew 7:28-29 – He speaks as one having authority.
    - ii. Contrast with what the Centurion understood – Cf. Matthew 8:8-9 – "only speak a word"
    - iii. The fact that Jesus only speaks a word here shows that "unless you people see signs..." (v. 48) has a greater import to it than mere physical sight – cf. John 6:26
  - c. (vv. 51-53) – the servants confirmed the power of Jesus's words with the testimony of time – when Jesus says, matter obeys.
    - i. "Yesterday" – the urgency with which the man approached Jesus left after Jesus spoke His healing words – the man did not rush to get back the same day, but the following day.
  - d. (v. 53) – was this belief different than the belief which brought him to Jesus, or which he went away from Jesus with (v. 50)?
    - i. (v. 54) – again connects the event to the first miracle.
    - ii. John 2:11 – the disciples' belief was different than that of others (2:23-25)
    - iii. This man and his household "saw the sign."
  - e. **Healing this man's son, who was in Capernaum, from Cana– a distance of 25 miles – showed Jesus to be the One with power over distance.**
- II. Jesus is the Lord of Space and Matter
  - A. As Creator, Jesus is Not Limited by Creation
    - a. Genesis 1:1 (cf. John 1:1-3) – beginning (time), heavens (space), earth (matter).
    - b. The creator is not subject to creation – Revelation 1:8 (time); Psalm 139:7-10 (space); Matthew 3:9 (matter)
  - B. Physical Distance Illustrates Spiritual Distance Which Jesus Vanquishes
    - a. This miracle completes, or at least elaborates on the lesson presented in the case of Nathanael – John 1:47-51
      - i. (vv. 48-49) – Nathanael was baffled because He understood Jesus' knowledge to be impossible because of His absence (distance, space).
      - ii. (v. 50) – Jesus said he would see greater things.
    - b. (v. 51) – ultimately, the greater thing Jesus would show consists in the gap between heaven and earth being bridged by Jesus' revelatory work.

- c. **John 14:6** – Jesus is the only passage to the Father, closing a distance that is otherwise impossible to overcome.
- III. Jesus Has Power Over Distance
- A. The Distance Between the Gospel and the World
    - a. God's purpose in the gospel is from eternity – **Ephesians 3:11; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10** – the preparation of eternity is too far away for man to reach – it must come to us.
    - b. **Romans 10:6-8** – distance between us and the good news of Christ is not closed by our impressive travel, but by revelation, by preaching.
    - c. God's plans were not thwarted by the difficulty of distance – **Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:5-6** – the word of truth, the gospel, has come to all the world by Paul's writing to Colossae.
      - i. It may be that man is limited by space and distance, but the gospel will never be – **2 Timothy 2:8-9**
    - d. Some produce hypotheticals to foment doubt about the necessity of the gospel, and Christ's power to bring it to others – **Hebrews 1:1-3** – **"upholding all things by the word of His power"**
      - i. **"Upholding"** – *pherō* – "to 'bear' or carry" (STRONG); "1 to bear or carry from one place to another; 3 to cause to follow a certain course in direction or conduct" (BDAG)
        - 1. Implies the bearing of all things toward a goal.
      - ii. **Jesus not only revealed, but is in complete control of all circumstances to affect them in such a way that an honest heart can come in contact with the saving message** – **Matthew 7:7-8**
  - B. The Distance Between Belief and Unbelief
    - a. In the miracle, Jesus moved the man's faith a great distance – **John 4:47, 49, 50, 53**
      - i. He brought him from a shallow faith which thought Jesus' power was limited, to a greater depth of understanding the nature and character of Jesus.
      - ii. Contrast – **Matthew 8:8, 10** – such great faith – could Jesus bring this Nobleman to a similar faith? Yes, and He knew exactly how! – **John 4:48, 50**
    - b. The fact that this man was a nobleman says something about Jesus' mastery over distance:
      - i. **1 Corinthians 1:26** – not many, meaning it is not absolute.
      - ii. Paul himself – **Acts 22:3; Philippians 3:4-7** – he was brought to faith in Christ because the power of Christ overcame the distance of elitism in Paul.
      - iii. Men such as Nicodemus (Jewish ruler) and Joseph of Arimathea (wealthy man) seemed to have been moved to faith – **John 19:38-42**

- c. Jesus vanquishes the distance created by doubt in providing us with sufficient evidence – **John 20:25, 27, 29-31** – Thomas was brought to belief.
  - d. **Any honest person who seeks truth will be brought to faith, no matter how far away they may seem – atheist, agnostic, those in error, the immoral, etc.**
- C. The Distance Between God and Sinners
- a. The greatest distance to overcome – **Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 3:23; 6:23** – spiritual death is a measurement of distance – it is the complete separation between a man and his creator due to sin.
    - i. The condition of the people is reflected upon by the prophet – **Isaiah 59:9, 12**
    - ii. The Lord of distance takes action to bridge the gap created by the sin of His people – **Isaiah 59:15-20**
      - 1. **(v. 16)** – none seek to help, nor can any if they tried.
      - 2. **(vv. 17-19)** – He puts on His own spiritual armor and conquers the foe (**v. 19** – standard – rallying point which those of faith can come to and find victory being on His side).
      - 3. **(v. 20)** – He comes to us, and as we repent, He saves.
    - iii. Paul demonstrated that even those who were near were actually far, and all are brought to the Father through the cross – **Ephesians 2:13-18**
  - b. Who then can be saved? – **Matthew 19:23-26** – after rich young ruler went away.
    - i. **(v. 25)** – theirs is a response to the difficulty of riches.
    - ii. However, it is a question which might be posed by others in reflection of different circumstances – certain sins, certain upbringings, etc.
    - iii. Nobody is too far to be saved as long as they put their faith in Christ.
  - c. **Luke 5:31-32; 19:10** – Jesus does not distinguish between distances as we might – regardless of how we perceive sin, we were all an insurmountable distance away from God – Jesus seeks out those who want to come to God, and regardless of the distance, brings them to Him.
- D. The Distance that Makes No Difference
- a. In the miracle, Jesus performed a sign without being where the sign occurred – distance makes no difference.
  - b. We are separate from the Lord in the body – **2 Corinthians 5:6-8**
  - c. However, as we walk by faith, Jesus is with us wherever we go – **Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 4:16-17; Hebrews 13:5-6**
  - d. When Jesus, the master of distance, closes this gap it cannot be reopened by another (save a willful departure) – **Roman 8:35, 38-39** – nothing shall separate us.

Conclusion

1. The way in which Jesus healed the Nobleman's son confirms that He has the power over distance.
2. Jesus' very entrance into the world was to close an age-old gap which we were all subject to. We must put our faith in Him lest we remain distant from our God.
3. It is important that we grasp the immeasurable power of Christ in this miracle – nobody is too far from God for Him to save him through Christ if they are but willing to have a faith that moves at God's word.