

SESSION SEVEN

The Miracle Worker: *Finding Security in an Uncertain World (John 4:43-54)*

“Faith is a reasoning trust, a trust which reckons thoughtfully and confidently upon the trustworthiness of God.” ~ John Stott

I. Setting the Scene (4:43-45)

vv. 44-45 . . . *without honor . . . the Galileans welcomed him . . .* These two verses seem to contradict one another as Jesus’s home country is Galilee. However, closer observation reveals that the “welcoming” is contingent on what Jesus had accomplished not upon who Jesus is. A sign never accompanied the Samaritans’ belief in Jesus!

II. Healing of the Royal Official’s Son (4:46-54)

v. 46 . . . *royal official . . .* Capernaum was an important political and economic center. The city was located on a major highway on the border of Herod Antipas’s and Philip’s territories. Thus, one should not be surprised to find tax collectors (e.g., Matthew), Roman soldiers (e.g., centurion), and royal officials in this fishing village. Antipas, more commonly known as “Herod” in the Synoptics, served as ruler of the western portion of Galilee and Perea—a territory that included Capernaum. This royal official was most likely a representative of Herod Antipas.

While the ethnicity of this royal official is uncertain, that Antipas employed Gentiles, that the Jewish rulers’ despised Antipas’s pagan ways (e.g., building his capital, Tiberius, over a graveyard, marrying his brother’s wife), that Gentiles served in political offices in Capernaum (e.g, Matt 8.5), and that this royal official was not in Jerusalem for the Passover (v. 47), indicates that this royal official was most likely a Gentile. One commentator suggests that while his ethnicity is unclear, John may have wanted his audience to envision this man as a Gentile to continue the contrast between the faith of the Samaritans and the unbelief of his own people (see Kysar, *John*, 73).



Coin minted by Herod Antipas

v. 47-49 Twice the royal official requests Jesus to come; and twice he reminds Jesus of his son’s impending death.

v. 48 Jesus’ rebuke appears to be directed to the Galileans (use of the plural), rather than solely to the royal official. The Galileans had welcomed Jesus because of all that he had *done* (v. 45); whereas the Samaritans welcomed Jesus because of what he had *said* (vv. 39-42). One commentator writes, “Jesus detects in the royal official a welcome and faith that desires a cure but that does not truly trust him. Indeed, the royal official, in Jesus’ view, exemplifies what is wrong with the Galileans as a whole” (Carson, *John*, 236).

v. 50 The royal official believed Jesus' word. Again, this was the same response on the part of the Samaritans. They believed simply because of Jesus' words (vv. 41- 42).

vv. 51-52 The distance from Cana to Capernaum is 15 miles—approximately a day's journey by foot. Since the hour of healing was around 1:00pm, the royal official would most likely have waited until early the next morning to travel back to Capernaum. Traveling by foot normally occurred during daylight. Some scholars argue that his lack of urgency demonstrated his confidence in Jesus' ability to heal his son.

v. 53 John repeats Jesus' words, "Your son lives." (vv. 50, 53). "The healing highlights Jesus' power to give life, whether physical or eternal life (see 3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36), and this will be the overriding theme of the chapters to follow" (Michaels, *John*, 285).

v. 54 . . . *second sign* . . . The mention of the first and second signs occurring in Cana "bookend" chapters 2-4. These two signs demonstrate the importance of faith and the necessity of a proper recognition of who Jesus is.

III. Intersect

A. Faith rests securely in God's reputation.

Hebrews 11:1 –

James 1:2-8 –

"My faith has no bed to sleep upon but omnipotence."
~ Samuel Rutherford

B. Faith demands trusting in God's Word.

1 Peter 1:18-21 –

“Scripture does not merely contain truth. It is not a sublime statement of our understanding of God. It does not mark the forward progress that the human spirit has taken. It is not the result of the questing human spirit reaching out for something absolute. It is not a human guess. It is not just an approximation of what is there. No. It is instead, the result of the supernatural work of God in the human writers, and what we now have is ‘the truth.’ It is not partial truth, or incomplete truth. It is the full, accurate, and complete revelation of all that God wants the church to have. This written truth is fully sufficient for the church’s life in this fallen world.”
~ David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*, 83-84

C. Faith results in the privilege of witnessing God’s power and provisions.

Hebrews 11:24-26 -

“Growth of faith is seen by doing duties in a more spiritual manner . . . When an apple hath done growing in bigness, it grows in sweetness.”
~ Thomas Watson