

**John 4 v 46 – 5 v 30 – Leader’s version**

**More evidence for Jesus’ identity**

**For an hour study, just do the starred \* questions**

**Check in** – ask everyone, including the leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

**What does the passage say and mean?**

Read John 4 v 46-54

1. What was the royal official’s problem and what did he ask Jesus to do for him?

*His son was dying. He begged Jesus to come and heal him.*

2. What did Jesus say to the crowd? (v48)

*That unless they see a sign – miracle – they never believe.*

*He didn’t say this directly to the royal official, the word ‘you’ is plural.*

3. How did the royal official respond? (v49-50)

*He repeats his request, Jesus tells him to go home, and his son will live, and the official goes home trusting Jesus’ word on the matter. This man didn’t need a sign! He took Jesus’ word for it and went home.*

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Have you ever heard someone say that they will only believe in Jesus if He gives them a ‘sign’? Have you said it yourself?

What is the problem with such an attitude?

*God does do miracles! And people do become followers of Jesus having experienced miracles. But the attitude of demanding a sign is unhealthy:*

- *the subtext is that Jesus’ words / the accounts of His life / God’s word revealed through Scripture are not enough*
- *it’s bargaining with God*
- *it’s demanding ‘proof’, not acting in faith*
- *it’s linked to basing your faith on your emotional state, not on the revealed evidence*
- *It implies that you are interested in the spectacle, not in Jesus Himself*

#### 4. What happened to the boy and in what way did the man get a 'sign' anyway?

*The boy got better at the moment that Jesus said he would. The man and his household believed – Jesus had granted them a sign without them asking for it and they put their whole faith in him. (It was usual in Roman culture for the household to follow the religion of the master, that's probably why the man 'and all his household' believed as a result of this miracle).*

#### Read John 5 v 1-15

#### 5. What are this man's two problems? (v5-7)

*He's been paralysed for 38 years and there's no-one to help him get to the pool.*

NB The end of v3-v4 is missing from many translations. It was probably inserted by a later copyist to explain why people waited by the pool for healing (perhaps this was so obvious to the original readers that it didn't need to be clarified) and so is put in a footnote in many Bibles. The end of v3-4 in NIV1984 reads, '...the paralysed – and they waited for the moving of the waters. From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease he had'.

#### 6. On what were this man and all the other sick people basing their potential healing?

*Superstition – they had faith in the healing power of the water when it was stirred by the angel.*

#### 7. Why is superstition contrary to faith in Jesus?

*Superstition is 'belief that is not based on human reason or scientific knowledge, but is connected with old ideas about magic, etc.'*<sup>1</sup>

*In UK culture this includes things like 'touch wood', believing in luck (lucky/unlucky numbers, lucky socks, lucky charms, unlucky colours [green], etc), not walking under ladders, etc. It comes from beliefs about the supernatural and the power of nature to control or mess up your day. The Bible says that Jesus has power and authority over everything and nature has no innate coercive power to do anything. (The power of the wind, for example, is not coercive. Nature is not sentient; it cannot decide to inflict pain or pleasure on us. It does what it does as a result of God-given laws of nature).*

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Are you superstitious in any way? Have you ever thought about how this lines up with your belief in Jesus?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/superstition>

Questions 8-10 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. Let the group work on them in pairs.

8. **SDL** What does Jesus do for the man? (v8-9)

*He heals him and the man walks off with his mat under his arm!*

9. **SDL** What are these two miracles (the healing of the boy and the paralysed man) a 'sign' of?

*Jesus' power and authority to heal sickness and, in the case of the royal official's son, to do it without even seeing the patient! His word was enough. These signs show us that Jesus is God.*

10. **SDL** Read John 20 v 30-31. Why did John record Jesus' miracles?

*'...that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you many have life in his name'.*

*Through His miracles, Jesus revealed His power and authority: the power and authority of God. Jesus gave us His signs, and John recorded them, so that we could believe in Jesus and have eternal life.*

*This is different to demanding a sign in order that you will agree to believe.*

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What is your response to Jesus' miracles?

11. How did the Jews respond to the healing of the paralysed man?

*(The Greek word loudaioi refers specifically to Jewish religious leaders)*

*They don't seem at all pleased for the man who has been healed nor do they give any honour to Jesus for what He has done. They tell the man that the law forbids him to carry his mat on the Sabbath. (The 'law' refers not to OT law as revealed by God, but to one of many additional laws that religious leaders had added in order to make sure people didn't accidentally break the God-given laws).*

Read John 5 v 16-18

12. How does Jesus respond to the persecution from the Jews?

*He's being persecuted for working on the Sabbath and responds by saying, 'my Father is always working (i.e. including on the Sabbath) and so am I'. The Jews know He means God when He says 'my Father' and is therefore making a direct claim to divinity. For this, 'the Jews tried all the harder to kill him'.*

Read John 5 v 19-30 (Ask one good reader to do this, or read it yourself. It's not easy to understand!)

13. Verses 19-23 tell us that God the Father and God the Son work together. This helps us understand the Trinity. What claim is Jesus making about Himself in v21?

*That He is a giver of life. The OT makes it clear that only God can give life or raise the dead so this is a direct claim to divinity. ('Life' – in the sense of creation, eternal life and the resurrection body)*

14. What does v23 tell us about how to honour God?

*We can only honour God the Father by honouring God the Son. (Honour = recognise, worship, respect, love, know etc). This means that we cannot know God if we deny the divinity of Jesus. The way we treat Jesus is the way we treat God.*

*This is a statement of the equal divinity of the Father and the Son.*

15. What divine work has God the Father delegated to His Son? (v27)

*Judgment. This is another statement of Jesus' divinity as only God can (finally) judge people. 'The issue is not our judgment of (Jesus), but his judgment of us' (Moody 2017, p98).*

*(Judgment in court is a delegation of this authority to certain people so that social order can be maintained. These human judges will be accountable to God for the way they have used this responsibility).*

Can we trust Jesus as our judge? Why? (v30)

*Yes, because He judges with justice and seeks to please God the Father in His judgments. 'He will pronounce judgment in accordant with the judgment of God.' (Kruse 2008, p156).*

*Jesus will not judge us based on partial evidence or poor witnesses. As judge of all world Jesus will judge each one of us fairly. Our eternal destination depends on the outcome of His judgment.*

16. What is the amazing promise in v24?

*That whoever hears Jesus' word (the gospel) and believes the Father already has eternal life and will not be condemned! Jesus has already paid the penalty for a believer's sins – there is nothing left to account for before our Heavenly Judge. Our eternal destination is already promised.*

*(NIV1984 'will not be condemned', NIV2011 'will not be judged', ESV 'does not come into judgment').*

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How many claims to Jesus' divinity can you identify in John 5 v 16-30? What do you make of them?

*God is my Father v17, Working on the Sabbath v17, I am the Son v19, As the Father gives life, the Son gives life v21, Judgment entrusted to the Son v22, He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father v23, Eternal life through Jesus v24.*

**Check out** – ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

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