

## John: 4:46–53

### From Catena Aurea:

46. So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

48. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

49. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

51. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

52. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

54. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judæa into Galilee.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xxxv. 2) On a former occasion our Lord attended a marriage in Cana of Galilee, now He goes there to convert the people, and confirm by His presence the faith which His miracle had produced. He goes there in preference to His own country.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xvi. c. 3) There, we are told, His disciples believed on Him. Though the house was crowded with guests, the only persons who believed in consequence of this great miracle, were His disciples. He therefore visits the city again, in order to try a second time to convert them.

**THEOPHYLACT.** The Evangelist reminds us of the miracle in order to express the praise due to the Samaritans. For the Galileans in receiving Him were influenced as well by the miracle He had wrought

with them, as by those they had seen at Jerusalem. The nobleman certainly believed in consequence of the miracle performed at Cana, though he did not yet understand Christ's full greatness; And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum.

**ORIGEN.** (tom. xvii. c. 57) Some think that this was an officer of King Herod's; others, that he was one of Cæsar's household, then employed on some commission in Judæa. It is not said that He was a Jew.

**AUGUSTINE.** He is called a nobleman, (βασιλικός) either as being of the royal family, or as having some office of government.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xxxv. 2) Some think that he is the same centurion, who is mentioned in Matthew. (Matt. 8:5) But that he is a different person is clear from this; that the latter, when Christ wished to come to his house, entreated Him not; whereas the former brought Christ to his house, though he had received no promise of a cure. And the latter met Jesus on His way from the mountain to Capernaum; whereas the former came to Jesus in Cana. And the latter servant was laid up with the palsy, the former's son with a fever. Of this nobleman then we read, When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would heal his son: for he was at the point of death

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xvi. c. 3) Did not he who made this request believe? Mark what our Lord says; Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. This is to charge the man either with lukewarmness, or coldness of faith, or with want of faith altogether: as if his only object was to put Christ's power to the test, and see who and what kind of person Christ was, and what He could do. The word prodigy (wonder) signifies something far off, in futurity.

**AUGUSTINE.** Our Lord would have the mind of the believer so raised above all mutable things, as not to seek even for miracles. For miracles, though sent from heaven, are, in their subject matter, mutable.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xxxv. 2) And mark his earthly mind, shewn in hurrying Christ along with him; as if our Lord could not raise his son after death. Indeed it is very possible that he may have asked in unbelief. For fathers often are so carried away by their affection, as to consult not only those they depend upon, but even those they do not depend upon at all: not wishing to leave any means untried, which might save their children. But had he had any strong reliance upon Christ, he would have gone to Him in Judæa.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xxxv. 2) Or thus; In the centurion there was confirmed faith and true devotion, and therefore our Lord was ready to go. But the nobleman's faith was still imperfect, as he thought our Lord could not heal in the absence of the sick person. But Christ's answer enlightened him. And the man

believed the word which Jesus had spoken to him, and went his way. He did not believe, however, wholly or completely.

**ORIGEN.** His rank appears in the fact of his servants meeting him: And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xxxv. 3) They met him, to announce what had happened, and prevent Christ from coming, as He was no longer wanted. That the nobleman did not fully believe, is shewn by what follows: Then enquired he of them at what hour he began to amend. He wished to find out whether the recovery was accidental, or owing to our Lord's word. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. How obvious is the miracle? His recovery did not take place in an ordinary way, but all at once; in order that it might be seen to be Christ's doing, and not the result of nature: So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xvi. c. 3) If he only believed when he was told that his son was well again, and had compared the hour according to his servant's account, with the hour predicted by Christ, he did not believe when he first made the petition.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xvi. c. 3) The Samaritans believed on the strength of His words only: that whole house believed on the strength of the miracle which had been brought in it. The Evangelist adds, This is again the second miracle which Jesus did, when He was come out of Judæa into Galilee.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xxxvi. 1) The second miracle, he says markedly. The Jews had not come to the more perfect faith of the Samaritans, who saw no miracle.

**ORIGEN.** (tom. xvii. c. 60) The sentence is ambiguous. Taken one way, it means that Jesus after coming to Galilee, performed two miracles, of which that of healing the nobleman's son was the second: taken another, it means, that of the two miracles which Jesus performed in Galilee, the second was done after coming from Judæa into Galilee. The latter is the true and received meaning. Mystically, the two journeys of Christ into Galilee signify His two advents; (c. 56.). at the first of which He makes us His guest at supper, and gives us wine to drink; at the second, He raises up the nobleman's son who was at the point of death, i. e. the Jewish people, who, after the fulness of the Gentiles, attain themselves to salvation. For, as the great King of Kings is He, whom God hath seated upon His holy hill of Sion, so the lesser king is he, who saw his day, and was glad, i. e. Abrahame. And therefore his sick son is the Jewish people fallen from the

true religion, and thrown into a fever in consequence by the fiery darts of the enemy. And we know that the saints of old, even when they had put off the covering of the flesh, made the people the object of their care: for we read in Maccabees, after the death of Jeremiah, This is Jeremias the prophet of the Lord, who prayeth much for the people. (2 Macc. 12) Abraham therefore prays to our Saviour to succour his diseased people. Again, the word of power, Thy son liveth, comes forth from Cana, i. e. the work of the Word, the healing of the nobleman's son, is done in Capernaum, i. e. the land of consolation. The nobleman's son signifies the class of believers who though diseased are yet not altogether destitute of fruits. The words, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe, are spoken of the Jewish people in general, or perhaps of the nobleman, i. e. Abraham himself, in a certain sense. For as John waited for a sign; on Whom thou shall see the Spirit descending; so too the Saints who died before the coming of Christ in the flesh, expected Him to manifest Himself by signs and wonders. And this nobleman too had servants as well as a son; which servants stand for the lower and weaker class of believers. Nor is it chance that the fever leaves the son at the seventh hour; for seven is the number of rest.

**ORIGEN.** (t. xviii. c. 56) There may be an allusion in the two journeys to the two advents of Christ in the soul, the first supplying a spiritual banquet of wine, the second taking away all remains of weakness and death.

**THEOPHYLACT.** The little king stands for man generally; man not only deriving his soul from the King of the universe, but having Himself dominion over all things. His son, i. e. his mind, labours under a fever of evil passion and desires. He goes to Jesus and entreats Him to come down; i. e. to exercise the condescension of His pity, and pardon his sins, before it is too late. Our Lord answers; Go thy way, i. e. advance in holiness, and then thy son will live; but if thou stop short in thy course, thou wilt destroy the power of understanding and doing right.

### **From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:**

#### **4:46 Jesus Went Again to Cana**

##### **Christ's Presence Confirms the Earlier Miracle.**

Chrysostom: On a former occasion our Lord attended a marriage in Cana of Galilee. Now he goes there to convert the people and confirm by his presence the faith that his miracle had produced. He leaves his own

country of Capernaum and goes to Cana as a self-invited guest this time, showing his preference for Cana as he tries to draw them closer to him. Homilies on the Gospel of John 35.2.

### **A Second Visit to Convert Cana.**

Augustine: There [i.e., Cana], as John himself writes, “his disciples believed on him.” Though the house was crowded with guests, the only persons who believed in consequence of this great miracle were his disciples. He therefore visits the city again [in order to try a second time to convert them]. Tractates on the Gospel of John 16.3.

### **An Officer of Herod’s?**

Origen: A guileless person will think that this royal officer was King Herod’s man; another, equally simple, will say that he was of Caesar’s household, performing some duty concerning Judea at the time. He is clearly not found to be a Jew. Commentary on the Gospel of John 13.395.

### **Matthew’s Centurion?**

Chrysostom: This person certainly was of royal lineage or possessed some dignity from his office, which is why the title “noble” was attached to it. Some think that he is the same centurion who is mentioned in Matthew. But it is clear that he is a different person from the fact that when Christ wanted to come to the centurion’s house in Matthew, the centurion there did not entreat him.... The official here in John brought Christ to his house, although he had received no promise of a cure.... And the centurion in Matthew met Jesus on his way from the mountain to Capernaum, whereas the official in John came to Jesus in Cana. Notice also that the Matthaean centurion’s servant was laid up with the palsy. The Johannine official’s son had a fever. Homilies on the Gospel of John 35.2.

## **4:48 Signs and Wonders**

### **Miracles Are for the Unbelieving.**

Chrysostom: The fact that he came and asked for help was a mark of faith. He also believed Jesus’ words when he told him, “Go, your son lives,” since he indeed did go. Then why does he say this here? Is he contrasting him with the Samaritans, who believed without signs, or is he rebuking Capernaum in the person of this centurion who was from there?... But notice also how the centurion only believes when his

servants inform him, not when Christ spoke to him. And so Jesus rebukes the state of mind the man had when he first came to him and spoke to him. In this way he also draws him along in his faith since he had not believed as strongly before the miracle took place.... The man says, "Sir, come down, or my child will die." It is as if he were saying that Jesus could not raise his son after death, as though Jesus did not already know what state the child was in. It is for this reason that Christ rebukes him and touches his conscience, in order to show that his miracles were done principally for the sake of the soul. For here he heals the father who was sick in mind no less than the son in order to persuade us to listen to him, not because of his miracles but because of his teaching. Miracles are not for the faithful but for the unbelieving and for people who are not as knowledgeable about the faith. Homilies on the Gospel of John 35.2.

#### **Do Not Wait for Miracles.**

Chrysostom: So what are we taught by these things? We are taught not to wait for miracles or to seek promises of the power of God. I see a lot of people, even now, who become more pious when, during the sufferings of a child or the sickness of a wife, they see any sign of relief. And yet, even if their child or wife did not obtain that relief, they still should persist in giving thanks and in glorifying God. Because right-minded servants and those who love their Master as they ought should run to him not only when they are pardoned but also when chastised. For this too also shows the tender care of God, since "those whom the Lord loves he also chastens." Homilies on the Gospel of John 35.3.

#### **4:49 Come Down, or My Child Will Die**

##### **Fathers Often Carried Away by Their Love.**

Chrysostom: Christ rebukes the state of mind in which the father had come to him and spoken to him as he did because, before the miracle, the father's faith was not that strong. The fact that he came and entreated Jesus was nothing special, for parents often are so carried away by their affection that they consult not only those physicians they depend on, but even people they do not depend on at all. This is because they do not want to leave any possibility unexplored.... But if he had any strong reliance on Christ, he would not have hesitated to go to Jesus in Judea when his child was at the point of death. Homilies on the Gospel of John 35.2.

## **4:50 Your Son Lives**

### **Christ Does Not Reject Us in Our Lack of Understanding.**

Cyril of Alexandria: The nobleman believed that Jesus needed to come [to his son to heal him]. But Christ does not reject our lack of apprehension; rather, as God, he helps even the stumbling. What the man then should have been admired for doing is what Jesus teaches him even when he does not end up doing it. In this way Jesus is revealed both as the teacher of the most lovely things and the giver of good things in prayer. For, in “Go your way,” there is faith. In “your son lives” there is the fulfillment of his longings, granted with both a generosity and an authority befitting to God. Commentary on the Gospel of John 2.5.

## **4:51 Good News of the Son’s Healing**

### **Servants Meeting Him Implies High Rank.**

Origen: His dignity appears in the fact that his servants have already come to meet him while he is going down, to tell him that his child lives, for “servants” are mentioned in the plural. Commentary on the Gospel of John 13.396.

### **The Miracle Is Obviously Christ’s Doing.**

Chrysostom: Do you see how obvious the miracle was? It was not in a simple or ordinary way that the child was freed from danger, but all at once. In this way, what took place was seen to be Christ’s doing and not the work of nature. For when he had reached the very gates of death—as his father demonstrated by saying, “Come down before my child dies”—he was all at once freed from the disease. This fact roused the servants as well, for they came to meet him not only perhaps to announce what had happened but also to prevent Christ from coming since he was no longer needed. Homilies on the Gospel of John 35.3.

### **Two Are Healed.**

Cyril of Alexandria: The one command of the Savior heals two souls. In the official, the Savior’s command brings about unexpected faith even as it also rescues the child from bodily death. It is difficult to say which one is healed first. Both, I suppose, are healed simultaneously. The disease left at the command of the Savior. The official’s servants meet him and tell him of the healing of the child. This shows at the same time the swiftness of the divine commands and how wisely Christ ordered all of this. They speedily

confirmed the hope of their master, who was weak in faith.... When the official learned that the sick child's recovery coincided exactly with Jesus' command, he is saved with "his whole house." He attributes the power of the miracle to the Savior Christ, and he is brought to a firmer faith. Commentary on the Gospel of John 2.5.