

John, 4:43-5:47

2. Jesus presents proof of his authority, mission and Godhood

Sign #2 - Healing of the Nobleman's son

Sign #3 - Healing the crippled man on the Sabbath

Explanation and Misunderstanding of the Signs

Jewish leaders criticize him for working on Sabbath and this time don't misunderstand as much as they reject the implications of the signs that Jesus is equal with God

Further Explanation and Elaboration

Jesus offers witnesses that he is telling the truth

An alternative outline possibility is that this begins a section where Jesus is portrayed as being greater than the various Jewish festivals, beginning with the Sabbath, the one holy day that was most esteemed by the Jewish people.

John 4:43-45 - And after two days He departed from there and went into Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own native-place. Then when He had come into Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did at Jerusalem at the feast; for they also went to the feast.

Jesus has spent two days in Samaria where the multitude of people believed him, not because of any miracles or signs and wonders, but because of his words. This is often held up in John as the highest form of faith.

He now comes back in his own land where he has spent his time being misunderstood and having conflict with the authorities, where he has already cited the proverb that a prophet has no honor in his own homeland.

Yet it sounds like he is received by the Galileans, but notice the source of their reception: they saw the things that he'd done in Jerusalem during the Passover. We're not told what these things were, but this is the same source of Nicodemus' faith.

John 4:46-50 Then Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When He heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and begged Him that He would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe. The nobleman said to Him, Sir, come down before my child dies. Jesus said to him, Go, your son lives. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken to him, and he went away.

Notice another common pattern in John. People cannot approach Jesus on their own terms. You don't order Jesus around or even assume that you know what He should do. Mary didn't get the answer she was expecting, Nicodemus didn't get the answer he was expecting, the Samaritan woman didn't get what she was expecting. Now the certain nobleman doesn't get the answer he was expecting. But the rebuff isn't just directed at him. The "you" used is plural which means that he's addressing not just the nobleman but the crowd that must be around him.

The nobleman has no interest in this debate; his only interest is in his son. That perhaps is the flaw in his appeal. He's not appealing to Jesus out of faith or worship, but out of desperation. His son is sick and he's heard that there's a miracle worker nearby. Notice how he ignores the rebuff and repeats his plea.

The “come down” shows a knowledge of the area. Cana is higher in elevation than Capernaum, so you would have to come down to get from one to the other.

Jesus’ reply has more to it than we might first notice. “Your son lives.” That’s not a statement, that’s not wishful thinking, that’s not a prophecy, that’s not a reassurance or a comforting thought. That is the Word that creates the healing, that brings the miracle into being, that makes something that was not, in this case the boy’s health. It is a command to make something happen just as much as his command to the official to “Go.” That’s a God-thing. You and I can’t speak something into being, but remember how God created the world and everything in it and the entire universe in Genesis. He spoke the Word.

We’re going beyond a claim of Messiah. Now we’re getting into a step beyond what they were expecting and we’re beginning a claim of deity. The Jewish people believed that there were certain areas that God had reserved for himself, things that only God could do. Among them were the power of life and death, power over the rain, giving sight to the blind, and the power of judgment and the right to forgive sin. Hmmm.

John 4:51-54 And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, Your son lives. Then he asked of them the hour when he began to get better. And they said to him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, Your son lives. And he himself believed, and his whole house. This is the second miracle Jesus did, when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

This little section reveals the faith of the father. When he meets the servants they tell him that his son was healed yesterday. That means he had enough belief in Jesus’ words that he didn’t hurry back to his son. Capernaum was just twenty miles away and he left Jesus at 1:00 in the afternoon. That would have given him plenty of time to get home that evening or even if he’d waited until the morning to start he would’ve been home before long. We’ve given an image of a person hurrying and rushing for all he’s worth to receive something and once he receives it he’s calmed and relieved and willing to take his own sweet time because he doesn’t have to see it to believe it. The father’s belief in Jesus’ word now becomes a stronger belief in Jesus’ claim along with his whole house. That should make you think of the jailer who believed in Jesus along with his whole household because of Paul and Silas and the earthquake.

The last verse doesn’t mean that it was the second miracle that Jesus ever did, just that it was the second of the miracles that John is recording to prove his thesis of who Jesus is.

John 5:1-9 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is a pool at the Sheep Gate at Jerusalem, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of those who were sick, of blind, lame, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. (4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and troubled the water. Then whoever first stepped in after the troubling of the water was made whole of whatever disease he had.) And a certain man was there, who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying, and knowing that he had spent much time, He said to him, Do you desire to be made whole? The infirm man answered Him, Sir, when the water is troubled, I have no one to put me into the pool. But while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus says to him, Rise, take up your bed and walk. And immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked. And it was a Sabbath on that day.

This is one of the few feasts that isn’t identified by John, so we’ll not try to figure out which one it was. When John mentions a feast by name, then something that’s done and/or said relates back to that feast. Since he doesn’t mention it here, then it isn’t very important and is just used as an explanation of why Jesus was in Jerusalem in the first place.

Verse 4 is not part of the original manuscript because it's not found in many of the early copies. It's called an editorial gloss, which is something that the copying scribes has put in the margins of an early copy as something they thought needed additional explanation during their time. John must have thought that it was common enough knowledge that it didn't need any explanation. There's one other place where we'll see a story that was not in John's original text, but I'll keep you in suspense for now.

"Wilt thou be made whole?" Man, how many times have we heard sermons on that? It really doesn't need any more commentary now except to say that it's not a silly question because many people would rather keep their problems than work on trying to change. They get used to their infirmity and a certain lifestyle and that's what they're comfortable with. And we're all the same way, if not with our infirmities, then with something else.

Once again Jesus causes a miracle through His word. He gives the command to get up and the man gets up and starts walking around. Too bad he did that on a Sabbath.

It was a Sabbath doesn't necessarily mean that it was a Saturday. Each Saturday was a Sabbath but there were also other specially declared Sabbaths at different times of the year.

John 5:10-13 Therefore the Jews said to him who had been healed, It is the Sabbath. It is not lawful for you to take up the bed. He answered them, He who made me whole said to me, Take up your bed and walk. Then they asked him, Who is the man who said to you, Take up your bed and walk? And he did not know Him who had cured him, for Jesus had moved away, a crowd being in the place.

One of the commentators said that the Jews, which in this case would mean the religious leadership, saw two things on that Sabbath. They saw that a great miracle had taken place, one that had been foretold by Isaiah as a sign of the long-awaited Messiah. (Isaiah 35:1-6) They also saw that one of their ceremonial, man-made laws was being broken. And that's all they could see. They ignored the miracle that Isaiah said meant that the glory and majesty of God was being revealed as God himself came to save them and could only focus on somebody who dared to go against the way they thought was the proper way to do things.

When the fellow passed the buck and blamed the one who cured him for his carrying around his mat, the leaders became more interested in the one who'd told him to do it because they considered the one who told another to break the Sabbath to be a much worse sinner and more dangerous person than the poor fool who listened to him.

He didn't know who Jesus was. Here is another subtle claim to deity in addition to the miracle itself. Elsewhere the miracles of Jesus are often linked to the faith of the person. Mark 6:4-6 also quotes the prophet being without honor and tells us that when Jesus was in Nazareth "he could do no work of power there, except that He laid hands on a few sick ones, He healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Matthew 13:58 also says that "He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Here the two miracles occur in the presence of this lack of faith and belief. The official's son is healed and then he believes Jesus' words and later in Jesus himself. The lame man does what he's told but has no idea who told him to do it. Just as God operates outside our realm and doesn't need our cooperation, permission or acknowledgement to accomplish his purpose, so Jesus can do a miracle even when there is no or little faith present. Also like God, Jesus doesn't heal everyone, just this one fellow. We are God's for Him to do with as He sees fit and here Jesus claims the same right.

Question of the day, did the man get up because he had faith in whoever was telling him to get

up or did he get up because the power of the word and command of Jesus caused him to get have to get up just as the call of Jesus caused Lazarus to come out of the tomb?

5:14-16 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, Behold, you are made whole. Sin no more lest a worse thing come to you. The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole. And therefore the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day.

Are suffering and sorrow and problems and illness caused by sin? We're clearly taught in Scripture that it is not. However, may some suffering and pain and illness and problems be caused by sinning or as a natural consequence of sin? We're clearly taught in Scripture that it may be. In this case we're pretty well told that this man's paralysis was the result of some sin in his life. We don't know what it was and we don't need to know, but Jesus knew and the man knew.

Here's another interesting parallel. The lame man and the woman at the well were both people who were suffering as a consequence of sin in their lives. They both needed forgiveness and restoration. They were both outcasts, low in society and without much hope of change and a brighter future until they met Jesus. Neither of them were looking for Jesus and neither recognized him when they met him. But unlike Nicodemus and the king's official, Jesus was looking for them and went out of his way to find them. "The son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) The Good Shepherd left the ninety and nine to seek the one that was lost. (Matthew 18:11-14)

But wait, there's more! If you order in the next ten minutes. Oops, wrong direction. But wait, there's more! If the man's problem was caused by his sin, then to effect the cure you have to be able to forgive the sin. That's something that God alone is supposed to be able to do, but if Jesus hadn't done it, then the man wouldn't be up walking around.

5:17-18 But Jesus answered them, My Father works until now, and I work. Then, because of this, the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but also said that God was His father, making Himself equal with God.

"Jesus answered them" - the term "answered" is a legal one, so we're to get the image of Jesus being on trial. This may be just an image or a symbol or it might be a literal trial, if verse 16 is taken as Jesus being brought before either the Sanhedrin or a more impromptu legal gathering. If that's so and even if it's not a real trial, this isn't just a polite debate or exchange of ideas. Either way, Jesus is on trial for his life and maybe the life of the cured lame man because breaking the Sabbath and encouraging another to do the same and then blaspheming were all capital offenses punishable by stoning.

This reply of Jesus bears some explanation so we can see exactly what he was saying and why it made them so mad. Sometimes we get caught up in vain and foolish philosophies and arguments and lose sight of the big picture. Forest for the trees kind of thing. The Jewish rabbis were masters of this. One of the things they loved to debate was God and the Sabbath. They knew that Genesis said that God rested on the Sabbath, but they also realized that this must have been as an example for us because the work of God was never finished. He may have been through creating, but he still had to hold everything together and if he actually rested then the whole universe would fly apart. That meant that God had to be working on the Sabbath. If God is working on the Sabbath then He's breaking His own law. If He's breaking His own law then that makes God a sinner. If that makes God a sinner then He can't be God because God is without sin. Since God is God then he can't be a sinner. Since he can't be a sinner but he still

works on the Sabbath, how can he work on a Sabbath without breaking His own law? Still with me?

They resolved this in one of three ways: either 1) God isn't bound to keep His own laws; 2) God is beyond or above His own laws; or 3) since God is everywhere and work is defined as something you do to something outside yourself (lifting, moving, walking, etc.), then God's work is different from mere man's work because He isn't exerting work or influence beyond himself.

Did you get all that? It doesn't matter, because the way they resolved it isn't important.

The important thing is that no matter which of the three you accept, when you cut through the cloth to get to the cheese, God can work on the Sabbath simply because he is God and not a mere mortal. If Jesus claims the right to work on the Sabbath for the same reason, then he is saying that he isn't breaking the Sabbath by working because neither does God and He is the same as God.

How'd you like to have been his defense attorney? Talk about a client digging his own grave. But Jesus isn't done yet. He's going to dig a little deeper.

John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself but what He sees the Father do. For whatever things He does, these also the Son does likewise.

Did you hear what He just said? That's another "Oh, crap!" moment for the defense attorney. God is above a mere man. No one can look on God's face and live. No one has ever seen God, and even when some O.T. people saw bits and pieces they were overwhelmed and terrified. No one can stand in the presence of a holy and righteous God. No one can do what God can do. Those ideas are all through the Old Testament. Yet here Jesus claims that he is in the presence of God and sees what He does. And not only that, He claims that he can do what God does.

gunfighters – boxers – rodeo champs – sons imitating fathers with little toy tools, Paw Britton and work – just because you watch somebody do something doesn't mean that you can do it too – to be able to perfectly imitate or match what somebody is doing you have to be as good or as strong or as able or as skilled as they are. For Jesus to be able to do the works that he sees the father doing means that he has to be on the same level as the Father.

John 5:20 For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all the things that He Himself does. And He will show Him greater works than these, so that you may marvel.

Oh how marvelous, Oh how wonderful, and my song shall ever be, oh how marvelous, oh how wonderful, is my Father's love for me.

John 5:21-23 For as the Father raises the dead and makes alive, even so the Son of man makes alive whomever He will. For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son, so that all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Remember the things that they believed God reserved for Himself alone: the power to give life; the right to judge; the right to receive worship. The things the Son is claiming can only be done by God Himself.

5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes on Him who sent Me has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death to life.

What does it mean to “believe on Him who sent Me?” First of all, not all translations say ‘believe on’; some have ‘trusts in’ or ‘believes’ So to trust or believe the One who sent Him is to believe the words of Jesus because he says that he just does what he sees the Father doing and he only says what the Father has told him (John 12:49)

5:25 Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they who hear shall live.

The dead who hear and live are not rising from the grave but from spiritual death to life.

5:26 For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given to the Son to have life within Himself,

Verse 26 does not mean that the Father has created the Son or that the Son is inferior to the Father or did not always exist along with the Father. “For as” means just like or in the same way that the Father has life in Himself, that is He is the source of life and brings life to the universe, in like manner He has designated that same power to the Son in the sense that the Son is given the power to create life through salvation.

5:27 and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.

The Defense Attorney just fell over again. Here is a claim of deity that nobody who heard him could possibly have missed. Jesus claims to be the Son of man who has been given authority to execute judgment.

This comes from Daniel 7:9-14.

9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

What’s going on in this vision of Daniel? The Ancient of Days is of course God who is holding a court of judgment on the kingdoms of the earlier verses. None of those kingdoms can stand before Him. Notice that his garment is white as snow, indicating purity and holiness; his hair is white, symbolizing wisdom; his is powerful so that a thousand thousands minister to him in his court; his throne is ablaze with justice and power and holiness and it’s on wheels so it can go anywhere; too many to number stand before him in judgment. Omnipresent, omnipotent,

omniscient, a being so holy that none can stand before him. Remember that even the angels attending to Him are described as covering their faces with two wings, flying with two wings and covering their feet with two wings. If even the sinless angels can't face the holy one, what hope do the countless thousands who stand before Him as judgment is set?

Their only hope is in their lawyer, their advocate, their substitute. One who is like a son of man who is brought into the presence of the Holy One. He can approach the throne and be in its presence and covers us so that we may boldly approach the throne (doesn't mean that we have a flippant or informal approach but that we approach the throne of judgment without fear). Only one who is as pure and holy as the One on the throne can do that. Only such a one is righteous enough to fulfill the promise of the kingdom of David being an everlasting kingdom. Only such a one will rule an eternal kingdom made up of redeemed people throughout the world. And Jesus claims to be that one. No wonder his audience couldn't believe their ears and were marveling at this.

5:28-30 Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil to the resurrection of condemnation.

I can do nothing of My own self. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of the Father who has sent Me.

This is not a Gospel of Works. Those who have done good are not saved by their good deeds. The good deeds are just the proof of their salvation, remember the book of James? and those who practice evil are just demonstrating like proof of their lack of salvation.

Aren't we going to call any witnesses! These are amazing claims! Either Jesus is who He claims he is or he's evil or some sorta nut!

5:31 If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.

Jewish law said that there had to be two or three witnesses for something to be valid and that you couldn't testify about yourself. By that, they meant that you couldn't vouch for yourself.

32 There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.

33 You sent to John, and he bore witness to the truth.

34 But I do not receive testimony from man, but these things I say so that you might be saved.

35 He was a burning and shining light, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.

The first witness called is John the Baptist, who also spoke what he heard from God and testified about Jesus - "behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"

36 But I have greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father has given Me that I should finish them, the works which I do themselves witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

The second witness called are the works that Jesus is doing. The fact that he is able to do them are a proof that God is with him and that he's telling the truth. Remember the man born blind?

37 And He sending Me, the Father Himself, has borne witness of Me. Neither have you heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape.

The third witness is the Father himself, but they haven't heard him.

5:38-39 And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He has sent. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. And they are the ones witnessing of Me,

The fourth witness is the Scripture that they searched and studied hyper-religiously.

Now it's time to turn the tables. Jesus the accused is about to become the Defense Attorney.

5:40 and you will not come to Me that you might have life.

Accusation 1: They will not come to Jesus to have the life He offers. They have rejected their Messiah.

5:41-42 I do not receive honor from men. But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.

Accusation 2: These religious people do not have or practice what they preach. They have missed the whole point of their faith.

5:43 I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive.

Accusation 3: They're so blind that they will accept false Messiahs but will reject the true Messiah who comes from God. By rejecting Jesus they are rejecting God.

5:44 How can you believe, you who receive honor from one another and do not seek the honor that comes from God only?

Accusation 4: Their religion, study and actions are just show because they are seeking attention and honor from other people and don't worry about seeking the honor that comes from God, that of accepting Jesus.

5:45-47 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you, Moses, in whom you trust. For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe My words?

These folks revered Moses and Abraham and the writings of Moses. They claimed to be the heirs and interpreters of Moses and spent their lives studying and debating what the law written by Moses meant.

Accusation 5: They have missed it completely. They are wrong in their study and beliefs. They are blind guides leading the blind. They are hypocrites and liars because they claim to trust and believe Moses but reject the very One he wrote about, and the final proof of just how wrong and blind they are is that they actually don't believe the words they claim to live by because they've rejected the fulfillment of those words.

Perhaps we should ponder more which of those accusations might one day be leveled at us.