

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

### *The Lord Our Healer!*

Jehovah (or Yahweh) Rophe is an Old Testament name for God. In English it means the LORD Our Healer. The LORD said to the children of Israel in **Exodus 15:26 (ESV)** *I am the LORD, your healer.* Jesus displayed the *Jehovah-Rophe* role of the Father throughout His mission on earth. However, the healing work of Jesus goes far beyond the individuals that He physically healed during His 3-1/2 year ministry. **Isaiah 53:5 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> *But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

Out of the many miracles that Christ performed, John selected seven to prove His deity. Undoubtedly, there were many more because of John's words in **John 20:30 (ESV)** <sup>30</sup> *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.* David Jeremiah comments, "The miracles of John's gospel are not important because they arouse wonder and amazement in our hearts; they are important because they point us to something beyond ourselves. They point us to God at work."

We have already studied the first sign or miracle – Jesus turning water into wine. This lesson examines the next two signs given: the healing of the official's son and the healing of the paralyzed man. Each miracle is significant because each reveals the deity of Christ.

**Read John 4:43-45 (ESV)** <sup>43</sup> *After the two days he departed for Galilee.* <sup>44</sup> *(For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.)* <sup>45</sup> *So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.*

There are different opinions as to why John added the note *(For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.)* The most reasonable answer is that Jesus is returning to the region of Galilee, but bypassed His local hometown of Nazareth. Much of Jesus' ministry was in Galilee fulfilling the prophesy of **Isaiah 9:6-7**, where the prophet foretold that a Great Light would come to the Galilee of the nations.

**Read John 4:46-47 (ESV)** <sup>46</sup> *So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill.* <sup>47</sup> *When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.*

We are only told that the man is a court official or nobleman. The word translated here for *official* means "someone connected with a king." We are not told whether the man is Jew or Gentile. We are not told what was wrong with his son – only that the son was at the point of death. The man made a journey to find Jesus because He had heard that Jesus could help him in his time of need. The same is true for us today. **Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

**Read John 4:48-50 (ESV)** <sup>48</sup> So Jesus said to him, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.” <sup>49</sup> The official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” <sup>50</sup> Jesus said to him, “Go; your son will live.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.

BibleRef.com explains that “in the original Greek, Jesus' meaning in this verse is easier to see. The word "you" in English can refer to a single person or a group of people. The Greek terms used in this verse are plural.” If Jesus were down south in America, He might have said, ‘Ya’ll want signs and miracles.’ His criticism is of the general attitude people have toward faith. They wanted signs and wonders from Jesus. Today, we want immediate ‘yes’ answers to our prayers! When He does not answer ‘yes’ immediately, we feel that God is either not listening or does not care. This is the Devil’s lie. God keeps His Word. **Hebrews 13:5** ... *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*

Asking Jesus to perform a miracle only showed the man’s hope. What Jesus is asking for is trust. Since the son was that close to death, there would be no time to make a second trip. Either he trusts that Jesus can heal his son now from a distance, or he does not. Walking away without Jesus physically by his side requires the man to trust Christ's healing power and His words. And the man chose to take Jesus at His word. Will you, will I, do the same?

**Read John 4:51-54 (ESV)** <sup>51</sup> As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. <sup>52</sup> So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.” <sup>53</sup> The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” And he himself believed, and all his household. <sup>54</sup> This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

The timing of the healing shows that the man's request was already granted, before he even knew it. There are times when we cannot see the answers to our prayers, but that does not mean God has not answered them. In this case, the man traveled quite some way before getting the news—the servants refer to the moment of healing as *yesterday*. During that time, though he did not know it, God had already granted his request. Most Bible scholars believe that the fever left the nobleman’s child at seven in the evening. What more dramatic time for the fever to depart than at the time of day when most fevers rise!

Faith is not a blind leap – faith is learning to take God at His Word. **Proverbs 3:5 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.*

**Read John 5:1-3 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. <sup>3</sup> In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.

*After this* is a reference to the healing of the official’s son. Here at the pool *lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed*. This pool was near the temple and here huddled a multitude of un-helped people. Maybe not so different from the un-helped people near our own church today.

When John and I visited Israel last year, we visited the ruins at the pool at Bethesda in Jerusalem. It was not quite what I expected since the water and porches were long gone. For years, there was no clear archaeological evidence for the existence of such a pool, which prompted some scholars to argue that the gospel was written later, probably by someone without first-hand knowledge of the city of Jerusalem. But, alas, archaeologists once again proved the naysayers wrong. In the late 19th century archaeologists discovered the pool exactly where the Apostle John said it was — by the Sheep’s gate now located in the Muslim-controlled sector of Jerusalem. Not only that, the pool had five porticoes or porches, just as John said it did.

Now on to another small controversy! A portion of verse 3 and verse 4 is omitted from some translations. In others, these verses are either bracketed or footnoted. In order to see what the omitted verses say, let’s read them from the King James version.

***Read John 5:3-4 (KJV)*** <sup>3</sup> *In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, **waiting for the moving of the water.*** <sup>4</sup> ***For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.***

Why are the bolded words left out of some translations? The answer is that they are not there in the oldest and best manuscripts. John Piper explains, “There are thousands of Greek manuscripts or fragments of Greek manuscripts and the way we arrive at our amazingly reliable Greek and Hebrew and English versions is that these texts are compared with each other in painstaking and complex ways so that when some manuscripts have different wording, we can tell almost all the time which is original. And in the few places where we can’t, there is no significant historical or doctrinal issue at stake.

The healing powers at Bethesda (meaning house of mercy) were a long held pagan tradition. The Bible does not teach that this actually happened. The story of the angel stirring the waters may have been written into a margin, as an explanation of why the pool was a gathering place for invalids. At some point, the note might have been inadvertently copied into the main body and been absorbed as part of the text itself in a few manuscripts.

Since there was an underground spring there, this could have caused the stirring of the waters. It was in fact common throughout the Hellenized (Greek) world to build “healing baths” next to natural springs, enclosed by columns. In our own state over the decades people have gone to Hot Springs, Arkansas, for the ‘healing’ properties of the hot water there. How the pool worked is not essential to the story. The fact that Jesus worked is essential to the story. It was not a natural spring that healed the paralyzed man! It was Jesus.

***Read John 5:5-6 (ESV)*** <sup>5</sup> *One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.* <sup>6</sup> *When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?”*

The lame man had been waiting at the pool for 38 years. Thirty-eight years was the length of time the Jews had wandered in the wilderness as found in ***Deuteronomy 2:14 (ESV)*** <sup>14</sup> *And the time from our leaving Kadesh-*

*barnea until we crossed the brook Zered was thirty-eight years...* Spiritually speaking, Israel was a nation of impotent people, waiting hopelessly for something to happen.

*Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time* – Jesus knew this man’s situation without having to be told. Jesus, our Healer, knows everything about us inside and out!

**Read Psalm 139:2-4 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> *You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.* <sup>3</sup> *You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.* <sup>4</sup> *Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.*

Our Lord knows all about us. We cannot deceive Him. As we consider His knowledge of the paralyzed man and of us, we also see His compassion. Jesus chose to go to this pool and single out this one man there. Jesus went to this pool the same way he went to Samaria to find the woman at the well, and the same way he went to Galilee to find an official with a sick son. Piper says, “Jesus moves toward need, not comfort — toward brokenhearted sinners, not the self-righteous.”

When you are feeling unworthy of God’s mercy remember **Ephesians 1:4 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup> *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.* If you are worrying about what you have done or have not done, claim the truth of the Bible that God chose YOU even before He created the universe. When Jesus questioned the man regarding whether he wanted to be healed, the man replied by giving excuses.

**Read John 5:7-9 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> *The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.”* <sup>8</sup> *Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.”* <sup>9</sup> *And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.*

You would think that the man would have immediately answered, ‘Yes, I want to be healed.’ Instead, the man focused on his tragic situation. The man might have been trying to get into the pool for healing, or he might have been content to simply sit and wait for the charity of others.

His response is much like the response of many today we encounter when sharing the gospel – they are full of excuses for not accepting Christ. It seems that this healing is not a response to anything religious or faithful about the man. It looks like Jesus healed him simply because his situation was so miserable for so long and Jesus felt compassion and mercy towards him. Jesus swept aside all superstition and bypassed altogether the need for magic water with one command. The very thing the man was unable to do, Jesus commanded him to do. Because of the wonder-working power of Jesus *he took up his bed and walked!* What an ending to a man’s tragic story that had lasted for 38 years. Then, we read: *Now that day was the Sabbath.* And this brings us to next week’s lesson and the people who saw the healing and did not have one shred of compassion for the lame man. Instead they were upset that Jesus was healing on the Sabbath!

**Jehovah-Rophe – the Lord, our Healer!  
Trust Him!**