

# MIRACLES OF JESUS

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Context

1. Warren Wiersbe, *Our Lord's first two miracles recorded by John were somewhat private in nature. The servants and the disciples knew that He transformed the water into wine, and the servants and the nobleman's family knew that He had healed the sick son. The miracle recorded in John 5 was not only public, but it was performed on the Sabbath Day and incited the opposition of the religious leaders.*
2. Charles Swindoll, *When Jesus cleansed the temple, He claimed ownership of Judaism's most visible symbols. His purpose was to restore worship. On His next visit to Jerusalem, He claimed ownership of Judaism's most treasured institution: the Sabbath. His purpose on that occasion was to restore grace.*
3. This event is the beginning of hostility of the Jewish leaders toward Jesus which surrounds Jesus' proclamation of His authority over the Sabbath and His identification of His equality with God.

### B. Jesus' return to Jerusalem (1), *After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

1. He was in Jerusalem during a feast. It was probably Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles.
2. The feast was mentioned by John to explain why Jesus returned to Jerusalem.
3. Leon Morris, *Jesus followed the practice of the pious men of his day by going up to Jerusalem to observe festivals. Indeed, John's indefinite reference to "a feast" may be intended to convey as much (it may imply that it was not only for specific, outstanding feasts that Jesus went up).*

## A HEALING AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA - JOHN 5:1-16

### A. Jesus visits to he hurting (2-4)

1. He went to the Pool of Bethesda (2-3a), *Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed*
  - a. The pool of Bethesda
    - 1) The name *Bethesda* means *house of mercy*.
    - 2) It was located near the Sheep Gate, a gate in the northeastern part of Jerusalem's wall. The gate is now called Lion's Gate. At the time of Jesus, the gate was the entrance for sheep being taken to the Temple for sacrifice.
    - 3) It was just east of Antonia Fortress and just northeast of the Temple.
    - 4) There were two pools with a covered colonnade or portico on four sides of the complex and a fifth colonnade that separated the two pools.



A model of the Pool of Bethesda at the Israel Museum



Looking down into a section of the Pool of Bethesda

- b. The pool attracted disabled people.
    - 1) The pool complex was probably a religious sanitarium identified with Asclepius the Greek god of medicine.
    - 2) Charles Swindoll, *When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, He apparently visited this pagan sanitarium, which lay in the shadow of the great temple built by Herod. The temple authorities, especially the Pharisees among them, would never have entered the place and probably rebuked any Jew who did.*
    - 3) Charles Ryrie, *Under their shelter lay a miserable group of human beings, some blind, some lame, some with withered limbs, many helpless, but all hopeless, or they would not have been there.*
    - 4) Leon Morris, *They thought that a periodic disturbance of the waters was due to an angel and that the first to enter the pool after such a disturbance would be healed ... The disturbance may have been caused by the intermittent bubbling up of a natural spring.*
    - 5) It is a picture of helplessness which can only be overcome by hope that comes through faith in Christ.
  2. Notes concerning contested verses (3b-4), ***waiting for the moving of the water; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had.***
    - a. There is no manuscript before 400 A.D. which contains verses 3b-4.
    - b. Scribes may have added these statements later to explain why the sick people were there, in hope of a miracle.
    - c. Regardless, it gives the background for why people were there and what they hoped would happen.
    - d. Charles Swindoll, *A curious blend of Hebrew religion and Greek superstition held that an angel of God periodically stirred the waters and promised healing to the first invalid able to pull himself into the pool. There could not have been a more fitting image of legalistic religion in all of Israel ... desperately sick people, all waiting to race each other in a pathetic scramble of invalids in which healing went to the least needy person among them.*
    - e. Edwin Blum, *...the Bible nowhere teaches this kind of superstition, a situation which would be a most cruel contest for many ill people.*
- B. Jesus healed a man (5-9)
1. He approached a man and asked him a question (5-6), ***One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 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?"***
    - a. Jesus focused on one man who had been an invalid for 38 years.
      - 1) Thomas Constable, *John's reference to the length of his illness seems to be just to document its seriousness and the man's hopeless condition.*
      - 2) His illness was some kind of paralysis that left him unable to walk according to verse 7.
    - b. Why did Jesus pick this man out of all those in desperate need at the Pool of Bethesda?
      - 1) Jesus knew the man's condition and chose Him for blessing.
      - 2) Merrill Tenney, *Jesus' selection of this man from the large number of invalids at the pool indicated His interest in restoring those who have been reduced to utter helplessness both in body and spirit.*
      - 3) The purpose of a miracle is to authenticate God and His message.
      - 4) We will see that Jesus' work in this man's life was more than the miracle of healing but when He performed the miracle. It would become the beginning of the nation's rejection of Jesus as Messiah.
    - c. Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be healed.
      - 1) Warren Wiersbe, *You would think that the man would have responded with an enthusiastic, "Yes! I want to be healed!" But, instead, he began to give excuses! He had been in that sad condition for so long that his will was as paralyzed as his body.*
      - 2) Edwin Blum, *Jesus' seemingly strange question, Do you want to get well? was designed to focus the man's attention on Him, to stimulate his will, and to raise his hopes. In the spiritual realm man's great problem is that either he does not recognize he is sick ... or he does not want to be cured.*
      - 3) William Barclay, *The first essential towards receiving the power of Jesus is to have intense desire for it ... If in our inmost hearts we are well content to stay as we are, there can be no change for us.*
      - 4) Charles Ryrie notes that Jesus' question parallels every person's confrontation with the Gospel. Christ took the initiative, He sought the man. It exposed human inability, grace. The question implied human responsibility, faith.
  2. The invalid responded to Jesus question (7), ***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."***
    - a. The man hoped for years that someone would help him into the pool at the right time.
    - b. R. Kent Hughes, *He desired to be healed, but he realized he could not do it himself.*
    - c. Maybe, the man thought Jesus would be the one who would help him into the pool.
    - d. Charles Swindoll, *While the invalid clearly recognized his own helplessness, he placed his faith in the wrong object. He lay in a pagan temple, relying on a bit of superstition ...*

3. Jesus healed the man (8-9a), **Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.**

a. Jesus gave the man a command.

- 1) He didn't tell the man that He would help him get into the pool when the waters were stirred but told him to do something he had not done for 38 years.
- 2) When Jesus tells a person to do something, He gives him the ability to do it.
- 3) Charles Swindoll, *Jesus didn't preach. He didn't correct the man's failing theology. He didn't lecture him on grace. People who lack hope don't need more knowledge; they need compassion. Jesus gave the man what he lacked and so desperately needed. He gave him grace in the form of a command: “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.”*
- 4) William Barclay, ... *miracles happen when our will and God's power co-operate to make them possible.*

b. The man's faith in the words of Jesus was evident by his response.

- 1) Jesus did not grab the man, pull him up, and show that he could now stand and walk.
- 2) The man had to respond by faith to the words of Jesus.
- 3) Grant Osborne, *One can only imagine his feelings as he felt the healing power of God flow through his emaciated body. He could have visibly watched the muscles in his legs grow as he lay there. His crippling disease was not just taken away; his muscles were given a strength they had never before possessed ...*

c. The miracle was a blessing for the man.

- 1) It was an act of mercy on God's part with no indication that the man receive spiritual healing at this point.
- 2) Leon Morris, *This healing differs from many others in that, not only is there no mention of faith on the part of the man, but there seems to be no room for it. He did not even know Jesus' name (v. 13).*
- 3) William Barclay, *When we have intensity of desire and determination to make the effort, hopeless though it may seem, the power of Christ gets its opportunity, and with him we can conquer the things that for a long time have conquered us.*

d. The miracle was confirmation of Who Jesus is.

- 1) Jesus is Messiah, Isaiah 35:4c-6, ...*He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy...*
- 2) Edwin Blum, *Here in Jerusalem was a public sign that the Messiah had come.*
- 3) Thomas Constable, *By carrying his pallet on the Sabbath the man triggered a controversy. By commanding him to do so Jesus was responsible for the situation that followed. Indeed He deliberately created it.*

C. Religious leaders confronted the man (9b-13)

1. They accused the man of breaking the law (9b-10), **Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.”**

a. Their statement was not from the Old Testament but their manmade interpretations.

- 1) Charles Swindoll, *“Oh, by the way, it was the Sabbath.” Anyone who knew anything about Pharisees understood the significance of that simple statement.*
- 2) God's intent for the Sabbath was to free people from having to earn a living seven days a week, a time to rest and worship God.
- 3) Warren Wiersbe, *Instead of rejoicing at the wonderful deliverance of the man, the religious leaders condemned him for carrying his bed and thereby breaking the law.*
- 4) Edwin Blum, *The Jews' rigid tradition (not the Old Testament) taught that if anyone carried anything from a public place to a private place on the Sabbath intentionally, he deserved death by stoning. In this case the man who was healed was in danger of losing his life.*

b. The religious leaders showed no compassion even though God had shown mercy.

- 1) *The Jews* represents members of the religious establishment in Jerusalem.
- 2) Thomas Constable, *This is the first open hostility to Jesus that John recorded.*
- 3) Charles Ryrie, ...*you would think the Jews would be glad to see the man fully recovered. But traditions meant more to them than people.*
- 4) Richard Milne, *Outward conformity replaced heart commitment.*
- 5) Charles Swindoll, ... *the Pharisees turned this wonderful gift of God into a burden, an occasion for severe criticism, an excuse to exercise power ...*

2. The man's response (11), **But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’”**

a. Grant Osborne, *When the leaders accuse him of breaking the Sabbath laws by carrying his mat (v. 10), he shifts the blame from himself to Jesus, who told him to take up his mat and walk (v. 11). He shows little or no gratitude but cares only for himself.*

- b. F. F. Bruce, *The lifting of his pallet, in fact, was one of the conditions for his cure. But in his reply there may be the implication that one who was able to work such a cure must be possessed of peculiar authority, and that to obey such a person's command seemed a clear duty.*
- c. Thomas Constable, *The Jewish leaders wanted to know who had dared to contradict the accepted meaning of the fourth commandment. In their eyes, Jesus was a worse offender than the man who had carried his pallet.*
3. The religious leaders asked who healed him (12-13), ***They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'" 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.***
- a. The religious leaders wanted the healed man to identify the one who healed him.
- 1) Their concern was to protect their manmade regulations and not so they could rejoice that an invalid of 38 years could walk.
  - 2) *Who is the man...?* is still the most important question a person can ever ask.
- b. The man did not know who had healed him.
- 1) Thomas Constable, *The man did not know who Jesus was. This indicates that it was not his faith that had elicited the healing as much as God's grace reaching out to a needy person.*
  - 2) Edwin Blum, *This seems to be a case in which healing was done in the absence of faith. The invalid was chosen by Jesus as an act of grace because of his need and also to display God's glory in him.*
- d. Jesus' healing on the Sabbath was the beginning of the nation's rejection of Jesus as Messiah.
- 1) Thomas Constable, *... the leaders did not show any interest in the man's cured condition. That should have shown them that Jesus was the Messiah, but they saw the Healer as simply an offender.*
  - 2) Charles Swindoll, *Instead of looking for a wonder-worker to praise, the Pharisees went in search of a troublemaker to censure. But Jesus could not be found because of the multitude.*
- D. Jesus counseled the healed man in the Temple (14), ***Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."***
1. *Jesus found him* probably means that Jesus wanted to speak to the man again.
  2. He told the man to sin no more because the consequences would be more severe than what he had already experienced.
  3. Jesus was not identifying the man's illness as a specific consequence of sin, John 9:2-3.
  4. Grant Osborne, *Now that the man has been transformed physically, it is time to be transformed spiritually, to get right with God lest he face "something worse," divine judgment for sin.*
  5. Warren Wiersbe, *It is possible to experience an exciting miracle and still not be saved and go to heaven!*
- E. The beginning of Israel's rejection of Jesus (15-16), ***The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.***
1. The man told the Jews that Jesus healed him.
    - a. Thomas Constable, *It seems that the man's motive for telling the authorities about Jesus was not to glorify Him. He knew that they wanted to find Jesus because they considered Him a lawbreaker. Clearly the ungrateful man wanted to save his own skin by implicating Jesus in what had happened.*
    - b. Charles Swindoll, *This man sought out the temple officials for the purpose of informing on Jesus.*
    - c. Grant Osborne, *Instead of repenting he goes and reports Jesus to the authorities. He is more interested in getting right with the Jewish leaders than he is in getting right with God.*
  2. The Jews persecuted Jesus because of His Sabbath ministry.
    - a. Thomas Constable, *Jesus could have waited until the next day to heal the man. And He could have healed him without drawing attention to Himself. He also could have healed him without telling him to carry his mat. Jesus did all of these things in order to create a public situation in which He revealed that He had the same nature, power, and authority as God the Father.*
    - b. Edwin Blum, *His opponents in the controversy were progressively humiliated while the crowds favored Him. The opponents' response was to persecute Jesus by opposing Him and trying to kill Him (John 5:16, 18; 7:19, 25).*
    - c. Grant Osborne, *This serious opposition will become commonplace in the rest of the Gospel, culminating in the cross.*

### COMMENTS

- God's compassion is not dependent on our worthiness but His grace.
- God's plans are bigger than any one individual.
- May we not be satisfied with physical blessings and miss spiritual blessings which are eternal.