

John 5 • The Miracle & the Message

Introduction

The Gospel of John limits relating all the miracles of Christ's earthly ministry to just seven as a teaching of different aspects of salvation. The first (water into wine in John 2) shows that salvation is through the Word of God. The second (healing the nobleman's son in John 4) shows that salvation is by faith. The third one recorded here demonstrates salvation is by grace. Together these three miracles show how a person is saved. But as with all the miracles Christ performed, they are meant to teach a message much greater than the signs themselves. In studying the Gospels it's always important to pay attention to what happens before and after a miracle in order to realize the greater spiritual truth behind it.

¹After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

²Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. ³In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the waters; ⁴for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted. ⁵A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

⁶When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?"

⁷The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

⁸Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk."

⁹Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.

Now it was the Sabbath on that day. ¹⁰So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet."

¹¹But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'"

¹²They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk'?"

¹³But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. ¹⁴Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." ¹⁵The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

[Read v.1-16] The Miracle

Q: We have people who could be healed if they could get into the water at the right time, but lack the power to get there. What is the greater spiritual teaching behind their physical problem?

A: First, it's a picture of the sad condition of the unsaved. Second, it's a teaching about how if the sinner could keep God's perfect Law he could be saved but is unable to do so. It's a two-fold picture of the need for salvation by grace – something freely given by the Father although we're helpless and don't deserve it.

Q: How is this illustrated through the physical conditions of those around the unfortunate man?

1. They are impotent, that is without power. "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6)
2. They are blind and unable to walk correctly. "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." (Ephesians 2:1-3)
3. They were paralyzed, waiting for something to happen but with little or no hope. "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12)

Q: What does "Bethesda" actually mean? How might it relate to what's taking place here?

A: It means "house of grace". By definition "grace" means kindness to those who are undeserving.

Q: But what did Christ do which proves that the Law had nothing to do with either the man's physical or spiritual healing?

A: Jesus healed Him on the Sabbath, proving the Law had nothing to do with the cure.

Point: We are not saved by keeping the Law.

Q: How do we know that physical conditions often reflect a deeper spiritual conditions?

A: By Jesus' admonition, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." (v.14) Whether or not this indicates the original illness was caused by sin to begin with is open to interpretation, but what is not is the greater message that sin can

¹⁶For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

¹⁷But He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” ¹⁸For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

¹⁹Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. ²⁰For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. ²¹For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. ²²For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. ²⁵Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; ²⁷and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. ²⁸Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection

result in much more harm than physical illness. The greater call is to repentance.

Q: How might this be revealed by the setting, the pool being located near five porches near the sheep gate?

A: In biblical symbolism, “five” (in this case “*five porticoes*”) is the number of grace. And the pool being located by the sheep gate speaks of sacrifice. The greater message is that the Lamb of God had to die before God’s grace could be poured out on sinners.

[Read v.17-23] The Message

Q: What was wrong with healing on the Sabbath? What Old Testament Laws did it violate?

A: It didn’t violate ANY Old Testament Laws. It was a Jewish tradition added to the Law.

Q: In v.17-21, what is Jesus showing where He and the Father are concerned?

A: He is showing that He and the Father are equal in works. Christ does nothing on His own but “*whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner*”. (v.19) This extends to even giving life to the dead (v.21), which is what Christ did spiritually for the man healed by the pool.

Q: In v.22, what is Jesus showing where He and the Father are concerned?

A: He is showing that He and the Father are equal in judgment. Confirmed again later in v.27, the only way that God could commit all judgment to the Son is if the Son is equal with the Father. Again, that judgment was demonstrated in the healing of the man.

Q: In v.23, what is Jesus showing where He and the Father are concerned?

A: He is showing that He and the Father are equal in honor. No mortal man would dare ask other men to show him the honor that only God deserves, which the healed man ultimately gave to Christ.

Point: *The first part of the greater message of Christ is His threefold equality with the Father.*

[Read v.24-29]

Q: What kind of resurrection is Jesus speaking of in v.24-27?

A: The resurrection of dead sinners today. The man Christ healed was really a “living dead man” until He heard the Word of God and believed, at which time he was given a new life in a new body, a picture of the ultimate spiritual resurrection to come.

Point: *Christ has life in Himself and therefore can give life to others.*

Q: What kind of resurrection is Jesus speaking of in v.28-29a?

A: This is the future resurrection of believers. (See 1 Th. 4:13-18 and 1 Cor. 15:51-58)

Q: What kind of resurrection is Jesus speaking of in v.29b?

A: This is the resurrection of damnation. (See Rev.20:11-15). All who have rejected Christ will be judged not to see if they get into heaven, but to determine what kind of punishment will be theirs in hell, what is often

of judgment.

³⁰“I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

³¹“If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. ³²There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true. ³³You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. ³⁴But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

³⁶“But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. ³⁷And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. ³⁸You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. ³⁹You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

⁴¹I do not receive glory from men; ⁴²but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. ⁴³I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? ⁴⁵Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. ⁴⁷But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

termed “the second death”. This is not a judgment of believers, but non-believers.

Point: *The Bible does not teach a “general” resurrection or judgment, but specifically assigns them each for believers and non-believers.*

Application: *The second part of the greater message of Christ is the threefold resurrection.*

[Read v.30-47]

Q: There are three witnesses listed in this passage. To what do they all commonly testify where Christ is concerned?

A: They all testify to Christ’s deity.

Q: Who is the first witness to Christ’s deity as revealed in v.30-35?

A: John the Baptist.

Q: What is ironic about the way John the Baptist was received by the people?

A: They listened to John and many even rejoiced at his ministry, but ultimately they rejected him and his message which pointed others to Christ.

Q: Who is the second witness to Christ’s deity as revealed in v.36?

A: This is sort of a trick question because it should be worded “WHAT” is the second witness rather than “WHO”, but the answer is “Christ’s works”.

Q: Who else in the Gospel of John admitted that Christ’s miracles proved He came from God?

A: Nicodemus.

this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

John 3:2

Q: Who is the third witness to Christ’s deity as revealed in v.37-47?

A: The Father in the Word. The Old Testament Scriptures are the Father’s witness to His Son.

Q: How is the process of Christ’s rejection by rejection of God’s Word detailed here?

1. They refused the Word. (v.38)
2. They would not come to Him. (v.40)
3. They had no love for God. (v.42)
4. They would not receive Him. (v.43)
5. They sought honor from men rather than from God. (v.44)
6. They would not listen to His Word. (v.47)

Application: *Spiritual deception does not come about because someone has put a “spell” on you, but by steadfastly and continually seeking to live according to your own desires and ways instead of God’s. Ultimately your choices cause you to be given over to deception.*

Point: This threefold witness to Christ's deity was demonstrated literally in the course of His miracles and then spiritually through the teachings supporting them.

Overall Application

A person may experience physical healing which is only temporary, but is still in need of spiritual healing which is eternal. The miracles of Christ point to the greater lessons we're to learn which don't require us to experience any kind of supernatural sign or wonder: Christ's being God (His equality with the Father), Christ as the source of life (the Resurrection), and His sovereignty (or deity). The greater attributes of Christ the Son of God is what our faith is to embrace and put into practice based on His Word.