

**Take up your bed and walk!****Read John, chapter 5, especially verses 1-18****I / INTRODUCTION: SOME SIGNIFICANCES OF THIS SIGN****There are some distinctive significances to this particular miracle and why John wants to include it here in His Gospel:**

1 / This is now the third of seven distinctive miracle-signs that John chooses to highlight in His Gospel to show that Jesus is the Son of God [ch 20.30-31 – although John specifically numbers only the first and second of them [see ch 2.11 & 4.54]. The seven miracle-signs that John highlights are:

1. turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana / **ch 2.11**
2. healing the official's servant / **ch 4.54**
3. healing the man who had been lame for thirty-eight years / **ch 5.1-14**
4. feeding the 5000 / **ch 6.1-14**
5. walking on the water / **ch 6.16-21**
6. giving sight to the man born blind / **ch 9.1-7**
7. raising Lazarus from the dead / **ch 11.1-44**

2 / Another distinctive purpose for this miracle was NOT just to perform an act of humanitarian mercy and compassion. Note that there were **“a multitude of invalids – blind, lame, and paralyzed”** who were there also, and Jesus did not heal them. But Jesus healed this **‘one man’** who was there specifically to show the Father's compassion toward those who are lame, impotent, unable to help themselves, and who have no one else to help them. And to deliver the message especially that He, the Father, had sent Jesus Christ and Christ had come to redeem us from the crippling and debilitating effects of our sin and its curse upon us / **see v 14.**

3 / He was also proclaiming, introducing, and inaugurating the coming New World of the Kingdom when ALL of our infirmities, diseases, and afflictions will be eradicated. The fullness of that Age to come has not yet come, but Christ came to begin what He will perfect in that Day.

1. Isaiah spoke of that day in **Isaiah 35.3-6: Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. <sup>4</sup>Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; <sup>6</sup>then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.**
2. Jeremiah said it is coming in **Jeremiah 31.7-8: For thus says the LORD: “Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, ‘O LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.’ <sup>8</sup>Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here.”**
3. See also Jesus' testimony to John the Baptist's disciples when John sent them to ask Jesus if He was the Messiah whom they were expecting to come: **Matthew 11.1-6.**

4 / One other purpose for John's including this miracle in his Gospel is to begin marking out the bitter enmity and murderous opposition of the Jewish leaders against Christ. They will begin from this miracle on to carry out their intentions to kill Him / **see vv 16-18.** John will continue to develop this murderous plot throughout the remainder of his Gospel / **chs 7.14-31 ff; 8.37-40; 11.45-53; 12.9-11.**

**II / vv 1-2 / THE FEAST AT JERUSALEM & THE POOL OF BETHESDA [or BETHSAIDA]**

1 / Since this was **‘a feast of the Jews,’** we know that numerous pilgrims were making their way to Jerusalem to keep the feast and worship. There were three prominent feasts [Passover, Pentecost,

Tabernacles] when all the Jews were required to attend. Jesus came to fulfill all the Law and the prophets, so He obediently went and attended the feast. Jerusalem would have been ‘packed out’ during these days.

2 / This pool, Bethesda, [or some manuscripts identify it as ‘Bethsaida’ was just inside one of the main entrance gates into the city. It was one of several reservoirs the Jews had dug inside the city walls to retain water supplies. In **chapter 9.7**, Jesus will tell the man to whom he gave sight to go wash in the pool of Siloam – another such reservoir. Bethesda also served as a kind of ‘rest area,’ especially on Feast occasions where the travelers and pilgrims could rest and refresh themselves upon entering the city. John tells his readers, many of whom would be Gentile readers and unfamiliar with Jerusalem, that there were colonnades/columns supporting roofs which would shelter those at the pool from the heat of the sun.

3 / Also, if indeed the name of the pool was ‘Bethesda,’ which means ‘house of compassion/mercy,’ then the very name of the venue will give commentary on this act of compassion and mercy Jesus will perform for this poor lame man.

### III / vv 3-6 / “DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED?”

1 / Not only was this a gathering place for respite for weary pilgrims and travelers coming into Jerusalem, but it was also a place where the infirm would gather for what was assumed was the healing qualities of the pool’s water. In fact, as Jesus approached these sheltered porticoes, “**...in these lay a multitude of invalids – blind, lame, and paralyzed.**”

2 / One of the primary reasons they gathered there was that it was thought that when the water of the pool was ‘**stirred up**’ [v 7], that whoever could get into the pool first would be healed of his infirmity. Some old manuscripts of John’s Gospel also contain the words “**...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.**”

This would be in **verses 3b-4** if they are in your translation. Other old copies of John don’t have those words, and so it is debated whether those words were originally written by John or added by later editors. Whether the words are genuine or not, or whether an angel really did come down to trouble the waters really doesn’t change the message of the text or the message of Jesus’ sign-miracle. The presence and activities of angels are frequent and prominent in the Gospel accounts. And an angel could have done that. Regardless, the people apparently thought that happened, so they wanted to be there when it did occur.

3 / What we do know from historians and archaeologists is that the pool would have been fed from underground streams and springs, so such movement of the water would have occasionally occurred.

4 / But Jesus singled out this one particular man. “**One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years**” / v 5. Whether his paralysis was from an injury, or he had been lame from birth, we are not told. But he had been this way for thirty-eight years. **What we do know is that his lame condition was the result of sin’s curse upon our world from the time of the Fall in the Garden of Eden ... as are all of our race’s maladies and infirmities. And this is what Jesus had come to address, rectify, and redeem us from!**

4 / **This was no ‘random act of kindness.’** Here is a clear demonstration of Jesus’ compassion for sinners, and on our weakness ... and also of Jesus’ sovereign choice of the recipients of His mercy. There were multitudes of invalids there, but Jesus went directly to this ‘**one man**’ to heal Him of his infirmity. Jesus ‘**saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time.**’ Jesus singled him out to receive His compassion, mercy, and deliverance ... and He also knew from His omniscience how long he had been in this condition.

5 / Jesus posed the question to the lame man: “**Do you want to be healed?**” Jesus asked the man this question to draw attention to his own need of healing and his impotence to do anything about it himself. And Jesus also wanted to draw and fix the lame man’s focus and attention on Him, Jesus! There would

be no question about where the healing came from, and the man must want to receive it from this stranger who was asking him.

#### IV / vv 7-9a / “TAKE UP YOUR BED AND WALK!”

1 / The man’s answer sets up the stark contrast between his own impotence and Jesus’ omnipotence – which is the message that Jesus will deliver and demonstrate. This is the express purpose for every miracle-sign that Jesus performed. **“Sir, not only have I been here in this lame condition for thirty-eight years, and not only have I been here for many of those same years trying to take advantage of the moving of the waters to get in first, but I can’t get in myself due to my paralysis, and I don’t have anyone who is willing to stay here with me to help me get in!”** You can hear the desperation, frustration, helplessness, hopelessness in the tone of his answer.

2 / Jesus exercise His Divine prerogative as the Son of God to command him: **“Get up, take up your bed, and walk!”** This command would have been a mockery of his weakness – IF Jesus had not issued it with the purpose and will to grant the lame man the very healing, power, and strength to act on it.

3 / Such is the nature of God’s Grace. Jesus commanded the man to do the impossible, and then graciously granted to him the power with which to obey.

4 / Such is the nature of true saving faith. When God grants the grace, we obey in the life, power, and strength of the grace He gives! **“And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked!”**

5 / Without a doubt, Jesus is declaring and demonstrating the Grace by which we are saved! He is declaring His mission for coming into our world and prophesying His redemptive mercy and deliverance from all the cursed effects of sin that He would accomplish on the Cross! **“For while we were still weak [without strength], at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” / Romans 5.6.** Again, go back to the **Isaiah 35.3-6** prophecy we quoted above: **“Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong! Fear not! Behold, your God...He will come and save you!’ ...Then shall the lame man leap like a deer....”** This man surely did!

#### V / vv 9b-13 / “NOW THAT DAY WAS THE SABBATH”

1 / When John adds this dateline/time stamp: **“Now that day was the Sabbath...,”** he is letting us know that the fact it was the Sabbath day is going to stir up the enmity and animosity that will follow. **“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.’”**

2 / Well, the Law did forbid unnecessary work to be done on the Sabbath. But Jesus is NOT breaking or violating any Law that Yahweh had given them to observe. You can be sure of that. He came to keep the Law and fulfill it in Himself! These prohibitions were constructed by the Jewish rabbis and teachers as time had gone on.

3 / Jesus will make it very clear in **verse 17** that He was performing this act of mercy on the Sabbath day because **“My Father is working until now, and I am working.”** Meaning that God, His Father, was the One who was initiating this work of deliverance, and He, the Son of God, was acting in concert with His Father, God!

4 / What this exchange does also is to set up the conspiracy of hatred and murder that the Jewish leadership set in motion from this very act, occasion, and moment. **John will continue to weave this theme-thread of murder conspiracy throughout the rest of His Gospel.** We will pick up this theme-thread here in just a moment...

#### VI / v 14 / “...SIN NO MORE...”

1 / The poor lame man didn’t know who Jesus was when He healed him. He just knew that this Man, whoever he was, had commanded him to be healed of his lameness. He had just restored rejuvenation,

restoration, revitalization, and strength to his atrophied, immobile muscles, and commanded him to get up and walk and go home on his own ambulation! And to take his bed-mat roll with him! It hadn't entered his mind that there would be a problem of any kind!

2 / Jesus sought him out just a short while later. When Jesus encountered him that time, he was in the temple compound. Again, we don't know whether he had come to the temple to worship, offer thanksgiving offerings, or what. But, **"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.'"**

3 / This raises some interesting questions: Was his former lameness the direct result of some sin he had committed? Or was Jesus just charging him with a sense of responsibility to live the rest of his life remembering that he had been healed by an act of God, and that he should live a life of grateful obedience to God going forward? We don't know. **But Jesus gives us all the rule to follow: Don't forget the gracious mercies of God's compassion which have saved you and blessed you!** How quickly we forget that all of our graces, mercies, deliverances, and blessings come to us by God's free grace!

### VII / vv 15-18 / "...MAKING HIMSELF EQUAL WITH GOD"

1 / For some reason the healed lame man went back to the Jewish leaders who had rebuked him after his healing and told them that he now knew the identity of the Man who had healed him and told him to carry his mat home on the Sabbath day – **it was Jesus!** In all likelihood, it was done in innocence and without any intention of bringing the wrath of the religious establishment against Jesus – as it did.

2 / And now John begins to weave this theme-thread that he will continue through the rest of this Gospel: **"And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I am working.'"** Do you see what Jesus is declaring? He is declaring that [1] He is the Son of God; [2] He is working in intimate concert with His Father, God, in what He is doing; [3] He is the One who instituted the Sabbath day to begin with, and this work that He did on the Sabbath day was very much in keeping with God's purpose for giving it: to give rest to His people!

3 / This very act, and the fact that it was performed on the Sabbath day in 'violation' of their man-made laws will be the 'law' basis upon which they will charge Jesus with crimes against their 'religion' and also 'blasphemy' against God ... because they understood what Jesus meant by saying that God is His Father – He was saying He is equal with God!

4 / **"This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."**

5 / You can follow John's theme-thread that is anchored in this event by these references: **ch 5.16-18 > ch 7.14-31 ff, especially 19-23 > ch 8.37-40 > ch 11.45-53 > ch 12.9-10**

### VIII / vv 19-47 / "THE FATHER HAS COMMITTED ALL JUDGMENT TO THE SON" [v 22]

**In the remaining verses of chapter 5, John will record some of what Jesus said to serve as His Divine commentary on what He had just done. Suffice it to say, we can't elaborate on any of it here. But let me give you just a couple summary statements:**

1 / vv 19-29 / The Father has committed to the Son all authority to act in His Name, to give life to whom He will, and to exercise all judgment at the Last Day.

2 / vv 30-47 / Jesus itemizes some of the witnesses who testify to His Deity ... in spite of all their objections, opposition, and unbelief: [1] His witness to Himself; [2] John the Baptist; [3] the works the Father had given Him to do; [4] the Father Himself; [5] and the Scriptures – especially Moses.

**AND THEY WERE REJECTING AND DENYING THEM ALL!**

**DO YOU BELIEVE?**