A Paralyzed Man is Healed at the Pool of Bethesda

John 5:1-9

John 5:1-9 - *"After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. 3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. 5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" 7 The 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." 8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." 9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath."*

Background Notes

Some background notes will help us understand the setting for this great miracle. Verse 1 says that this miracle occurred during "a feast of the Jews." We don't know which feast, but Passover is a good possibility.

The Sheep Gate (v2) was a gate in the wall of the Temple complex. Through this gate the sheep were brought for sacrifices on the altar in the Temple. A sheep market was nearby, and that may be the sheep market mentioned here. Until just a couple of years ago a sheep market was held every week in the same 1st century location. Bedouin shepherds came into Jerusalem to trade sheep every Friday. As far as we can trace back, they have been doing this week after week, and this practice may go all the way back to the same 1st century sheep market where the sheep were brought for sacrifice. Quite interesting.

Outside the Temple area near the Sheep Gate was a large pool named Bethesda, which means "House of Mercy." Archaeologists have excavated the Pool of Bethesda, and the ruins can be visited today. The five porches (v2) were five colonnaded porticos, or covered patios, that were located along all four sides, and the fifth went across the center of the large pool.

In these porches a great number of sick and handicapped people waited for the "moving of the waters." There is some question about the moving or stirring of the waters by an "angel." (You can read about the questions in noted study Bibles.) There's no doubt that the sick and handicapped people believed that an angel came periodically and stirred the waters, and the first one into the water was healed. However, in the earliest copies of the original manuscript of John's Gospel, verse 4 is missing. So whether an angel actually stirred the water and the people were actually healed is open to

question. "Angel-stirred water" certainly doesn't seem like God's normal way of operation. And why was only the first person into the pool healed?

In any case, one of the handicapped people waiting for the moving of the waters was a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years. That's a long time! This man was paralyzed before the Lord was born! In His grace, the Lord came to him, sought him out, and healed him. He was healed immediately, picked up his bed and walked away! Of course the bed (v9) was not a heavy four-poster bed with a headboard, frame and box spring! No, it was a pad that could easily be rolled up and carried as a bedroll.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. The healing of the paralyzed man fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

John 20:30-31: *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."*

Seven of the miracles of the Lord Jesus were selected and recorded in the Gospel of John. As John 20:30-32 says, they were chosen to prove to John's readers that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, and the Son of God. The healing of the paralyzed man in John 5 is the third of these "Sign Miracles."

Can you name all of them?

- First, John 2, the changing of the water into wine in John 2.

- Second, the healing of the nobleman's son in John 4.

- Third, the healing of the paralyzed man in John 5.

- Fourth, feeding of the five thousand in John 6.

- Fifth, Jesus walking on water in John 6.

- Sixth, the healing of the blind man in John 9.

- Seventh, the raising of Lazarus in John 11.

This miracle, the healing of the paralyzed man, is right in line with the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament. In Isaiah 35:5-6, we read, *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then*

the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert."

As soon as the paralyzed man was healed, he immediately leapt up like a deer and walked off with his bedroll. Think of it! 38 years of atrophied muscles! Did you ever try to walk on a leg that has been in a cast for only a few weeks? I once was bed-ridden for two weeks, and when I got out of bed I almost fell over because I had lost strength in my legs. And yet this man had immediate strength in his limbs to get up and move on!

Certainly that's evidence of **God** at work. John said that the miracles he recorded were written down so readers, both then and today, might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. The healing of the paralyzed man fulfilled the prophecies about the Messiah.

2. The healing of the paralyzed man pictures the salvation of mankind.

The seven Sign Miracles in the Gospel of John not only attest to the **deity** of person of Jesus Christ, but they are also spiritual pictures of the **work** of Jesus Christ. In this miracle we have a wonderful picture of the salvation of mankind.

The man was unable to help himself. He couldn't walk, he had no strength, his friends couldn't help - all hope was gone! But the Lord Jesus came to where the man was! Jesus knew all about him (v6), and in sovereign grace, the Lord came to him and healed him. The healing was immediate and complete.

In the same way, mankind is paralyzed by sin. We are helpless. We can't save ourselves. Friends can't help us. There is no hope apart from Jesus Christ. But - the Lord Jesus came and found us! He knew all about us, and by His sovereign grace, He healed us from the disease and paralysis of sin. Our salvation was immediate and complete.

What a great picture we have of the salvation of mankind! The healing of the paralyzed man pictures the salvation of mankind.

Practical Applications

1. "Do you want to be made well*?"*

The Lord asks that same question to each of us: "Do **you** want to be made well?" Perhaps you are not a believer. Do you want to be saved? Do you want to be made well?

The decision is up to each one of us. Suppose the paralyzed man had said "No." I imagine the Lord would have passed on by, and the miracle would not have taken place.

Today, lots of people say No when the Lord asks them, “Do you want to be made well?” Why? Possibly they don’t know they are paralyzed by sin. Maybe they would rather continue living in sin. Perhaps they think that they can save themselves. Is it possible that you are in one of those categories? This man knew he **needed** to be healed – he **wanted** to be healed - and he **was** healed!

Verse 7 shows that the man had “come to the end of his rope.” He knew that he couldn’t help himself, and no other help was to be found. He exercised faith when the Lord asked him, “Do you want to be made well?” - and **immediately** the man was made well, took up his bed and walked! Can you imagine his joy, after 38 long years of suffering, lying helplessly on that mat?

Have you experienced the joy of freedom from the penalty and power of sin? That joy is available in Christ - but it is a matter of your will. You must make the decision. Do you want to be made well?

2. "Pick up your bed and walk."

The Lord said to the man “*Rise, take up your bed and walk.”* The Lord says the same thing to us today: “Pick up your bed and walk.”

But too many Christians continue to lie on their beds of self-pity and doubt and small faith. Listen! The Lord has saved us and given us new life. We have the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to deal with all the problems we may have. So let’s get up and move on in the Christian walk! Let’s begin to mature in the faith. Let’s no longer be weak, “basket-case” Christians. Pick up your bed and walk!

Notice that the Lord didn’t carry the man’s bed for him! No! He gave the man the strength to **carry it himself**. And that’s the way it is in the Christian life. The Lord saves us immediately, but He doesn’t immediately remove all our problems. However, He gives us the strength to move ahead and deal with those problems, and He is always there to encourage us.

Jesus said, "Pick up your bed and walk." Let’s pick up our beds and walk!