

Healings that signpost Jesus as Messiah

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[0:00] Right, we're in John chapter 4, verses 43 to 5 and verse 15. It's coming up on the screen. And we're looking at healings as the signposts to Jesus the Messiah. I'll explain all that. A lot of words there.

Okay, John chapter 4, verse 35. After the two days he left for Galilee. Now Jesus himself had pointed out that the prophet has no honor in his own country.

When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover feast. For they also had been there.

Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son.

He said, Who was close to death. Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, Jesus told him, you will never believe. The royal official said, Sir, come down before my child dies.

[1:14] Jesus replied, You may go. Your son will live. The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on his way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living.

When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour. Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, Your son will live.

So he and all his household believed. This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee. Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews.

Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda, and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie.

The blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lie in there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, Do you want to get well?

[2:34] Sir, the invalid replied, I have no one to help me. Sorry, just a moment. I've lost my place.

Where am I? That's what happens when you read from a screen. Sir, the invalid replied, Apologies. I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred.

While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me. Then Jesus said to him, Get up, pick up your mat and walk. At once the man was cured.

He picked up his mat and walked. The day in which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, It is the Sabbath. The law forbids you to carry your mat.

But he replied, The man who made me well said to me, Pick up your mat and walk. So they asked him, Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk? The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

[3:39] Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, See, you are well again. Stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you. The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Amen. And the Lord will bless to us this reading of his word. Next slide, please. Those of us who are drivers need to learn to read the signs.

I'm thankful that I passed my test before. There was a compulsory kind of written test. Well, it's not really written, is it? It's done on a computer screen. And I'm grateful that at the end of my test, the

guy pulled out his Green Cross code book and asked me about three questions.

And on it went. It didn't involve a great deal of study. You just had to know road signs. Knowing road signs, of course, that's essential for drivers because you kind of need to know what to do in any given circumstance.

If there's any danger, or if there's a speed limit or something else, you need to be able to read those signs. And, of course, signs always are useful if you're traveling somewhere that you don't know, if you're going to a particular destination.

[4:53] Now, again, we have sat-navs, so that helps a great deal. But it's always good when you're driving along the road and you're getting nearer to Newcastle and you see it's about three miles away and you begin to realize that the air changes and everything around you just is so much nicer.

signs, of course, are really important. But signs are not the destination. Signs are pointing to the destination. But the destination is somewhere you intend to arrive at.

Now, John uses the word signs, particularly in his gospel, seven times. And that's significant because seven is the number of perfection.

He could have chosen lots of other signs, but he decided on seven. And the first one was the miracle of Cana in Galilee. And then, in this passage, there are two more.

And they're not events that happened after each other. They're events that were separated over time. Sometime after he went to Jerusalem, the first one takes place again in Cana in Galilee.

[6:06] And so, they're connected because of the significance of the sign, not because the events were in any way chronological. They're going to tell us something because, like all signs, they point to something.

And they're going to tell us not something about the power of Jesus to perform miracles. They're going to tell us something about Jesus himself.

And the importance of realizing that our destination of faith is not in signs, but in Jesus. We are not brought into a religion.

We are not brought into ritual. We are brought into relationship with a person. And that person is Jesus Christ. And as I've often quoted to you now in this series, that's John's purpose.

These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and by believing, you may have life in His name. Jesus is the destination. He is the one we believe in for eternal life.

[7:11] And He's going to speak His Word. And His words are powerful, and they're true, and they're life-giving, and they're set us free. He's going to speak His Word.

But He is the Word. It's not just that He has words to speak. He is the very Word of God. And the words that He gives us are truth, and they're life.

He brings us into relationship. So let's look at these signs. The second sign, remember, the first one was the changing of water into wine.

The second sign is healing at a distance. And we're told there's a royal official's son. And because he's in Cana in Galilee, he's the royal official of the household of Heron Antipas, who was a Jewish king, kind of part Jew, part Perea.

And he was in power there, and this guy worked for him. It's a very simple story. He comes to tell, he discovers rather, when he's back at home in Capernaum, that his son is very sick, so sick that he fears he's going to die.

[8:22] And then he thinks, okay, I'll go and ask for Jesus' help. But horror of horrors, Jesus, who is normally in Capernaum, is not there. He's gone to Cana of Galilee.

That's 17 miles away. Now, you imagine how he's feeling now. He thought Jesus just found the corner, discovers he's 17 miles away, and there's no cars, no trains, no buses.

That's a long journey. And so he sets out immediately, desperate now, desperate. He's a desperate father. Next slide, please. A desperate father, and he wants to find Jesus.

And so he eventually discovers Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and he desperately says to him, my son is sick. He's about to die.

Come and do something. Come and heal him. Now, John tells us, and we shouldn't overlook this, John tells us, just as an incidental it seems, but it is important, that Jesus was not going to be widely accepted in his own country.

[9:28] He says in a parenthesis, a prophet is without honor, except in his own place. Now, Jesus is in his own place, and the crowds are coming, and they're all responding to him. So why does John say that?

It seems odd. He's saying Jesus is not going to be accepted in his own place, and yet on the surface, he's being accepted. Ah, but we have to look deeper, you see. He's just being accepted, widely accepted in Samaria, and yet in Israel, where they had the knowledge of the truth going back generations, when they had the revelation of God's Word in the Old Testament, when they were waiting for the Messiah to come, in Israel, by and large, he was being rejected.

He came to that which was his own. His own did not receive him. And actually, we're going to see this underneath the surface of these two events, these two healings.

Here's a man, and he comes to Jesus, and he says, I'm desperate, Jesus, for you to heal my son. And Jesus says something quite odd. He says, You people, you just need signs, don't you?

You'll not believe unless you get miracles, unless you see signs. Now, contrast this with what happened in Samaria. When Jesus spoke to the woman in Samaria, he'd give her no sign.

[10:43] He told her only that he had water to give, that she could drink, that would satisfy her thirst, so she would never thirst again. He did no miracle, and yet the whole village believed on the basis of his Word alone, without a sign they believed.

And Jesus is saying to these Jewish people, You will not believe unless you get a sign. You need a miracle to convince you to come to me. You will not merely believe in my Word.

And when Jesus says, Unless you people, even though he's speaking to the royal official, he's not speaking to him alone. He's speaking to everybody. This is a regional and a national problem for the Jews.

They claim to want their Messiah. They prayed every day that he would come, and yet when he was in front of them, they rejected him. How like us that is.

I will only believe in God if he gives me a sign. If he shows me some miracle, I believe, and we think that's clever and rational. It's foolish. For faith is not dependent upon miracle.

[11:58] Faith is not dependent on singing signs. Faith is believing in the Word of God. And the Word of God, remember, in John, is the Word who became flesh, Jesus, and whose words speak truth and life to our souls.

It is not about the sign. It is about coming to the destination. That is Jesus. The way, the truth, and the life.

So this desperate father says, Jesus, do something. And Jesus says, Go your way. Your son will be healed. So there's no sign.

But what do we read next? We read that the man acted on the words of Jesus. He believed the words of Jesus. And at once, he got up and he went home.

And as he got home, toward home, his servants came out and they said, Your son's better. He's fine. And he said, When did that happen? They said, Oh, about seven hours ago.

[13:10] What? The seventh hour. What? It's just when Jesus spoke to me. Faith, you see, acts upon the word of God.

Faith does not need a sign to convince one. Faith believes in what Jesus says. And the writer of Hebrews says, Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

For the one who comes to God must believe that he exists. And he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Faith is about acceptance. It's about saying, Yes, I will surrender, including surrender, all of my doubts and all of my fears and all of my questions.

I will surrender those and lay them at your feet. And I will believe what you have said. And I will act upon your word. This was a man of true faith who didn't need a sign, but like the Samaritans, believed.

But then we have this next incident in chapter 5. Here we have a man, and by the way, believing in the word of God is a deepening of faith.

[14:21] I should have said, Next slide, please. Just move on. In the third sign, there is this healing at the pool of Bethesda, and we're told

that he was here for 38 years.

Now, that's significant. 38 years is a very long time to be unwell. A very long time. And in 38 years, he had been in various places, undoubtedly, but pretty much on a daily basis, he was being brought to a pool that was thought to have special powers.

It was by the sheep gate. 38 years, I say, he'd been paralyzed. And Jesus knew that. Jesus knew that, not because somebody had taught him, but because he had supernatural knowledge.

Remember, John says, he knew what was in man. He also knew Nathaniel, who was sitting beneath the fig tree. He knew him before he'd even met him. And he knew the Samaritan woman. He knew all about her, her bad record, her sinful past. He knows us. You see, we can't hide anything from him. He knows what's going on inside our hearts.

[15:35] He knows our motivations, our thoughts, our deepest desires, our deepest needs. He knows us. He knows us. And he wants to draw us out. And so he draws this man out.

This man who had been here all of that time. 13,879 days. 330,108 hours.

20 million minutes. 1.2 billion seconds of paralysis. Imagine. Imagine how weak and frail this man was.

And here he is at a pool. And there's a superstition that goes around that this pool, which is a deep pool, you can still see its ruins. It's in Stephen's Gate in Jerusalem.

It was a big pool. It was actually two pools joined together. He was there and he was told, like everybody else, that if the water stirred, that was the evidence that there was an angel who was suddenly coming to stir the waters and if you got into the pool first, you would get better.

[16:46] Which is great if you're fit and fast. But it's not great if you've been paralyzed for 38 years. And here is this guy at this pool hoping that somebody will pick him up and put him in.

He's got no chance. What a waste of time. But this man is asked a question by Jesus which appears cruel on the surface. Do you want to get better?

Do you want to get better? What a thing to ask a man paralyzed. But it is an important question. For this man had no faith.

He had no faith in God. If he had any kind of faith, his faith was in the pool. But the rule of the pool was first in. So you've got to be a Geordie to say that, haven't you?

Rule of the pool. You've got to be first in. He's got no chance. Which is why if you've ever watched *The Chosen*, it's a bit artistic license in *The Chosen* at this point when you see this miracle.

[17:55] The person who plays Jesus turns to this man and says, there's nothing for you here. There's nothing for you here. And that man reminds me of so many people who are desperately in need of miracles in their lives but they're trusting in the wrong thing.

In superstitions. In healing crystals and copper wire wire and all kinds of stuff. Trusting in created things rather than the creator who can recreate them and through whom they can be born again.

Do you want to get well? This man is desperate but he's also been defined by his illness. He's been unwell for so long that he doesn't know what being well would be like.

He's got used to being unwell. Being unwell makes sure he gets fed. It makes, he can be sure that somebody's going to give him money and give him charity because that's required of Jewish people.

Somebody's going to look at him. Somebody's going to care for him. But the reality here is around this pool there are hundreds and hundreds of people who are ill. and nobody sees them because they're so used to.

[19:14] It's like going down London streets and he's seeing all the beggars until you don't see them or hear them anymore. All these ill people they're just ill people. But Jesus sees him and Jesus loves him as desperate as he is.

And can I say to you if you have come in here this morning desperate Jesus sees you and he loves you. And he's asking you a question.

Do you want to get well? Do you want to get better? Do you want to be a different person? Do you want to be a forgiven person?

A healed person? You don't need to get in a pool. You just need to let him heal you. And do you notice something?

Jesus asked him the man never asked Jesus. The man doesn't say please will you heal me like the previous man. That man has this man has no faith at all. He needs a sign just like the rest of the Jews.

[20:22] And Jesus says to him you don't need a sign. You need me. You need me. And immediately Jesus says to him pick up your bed and walk.

Now imagine you're this man 38 years 38 years you've never walked. Do you imagine what his legs are going to be like? He's got no muscle.

He's got no strength. He can't walk. Jesus is asking him to do the impossible but guess what? That is faith. Faith believes in the word of God even though it's impossible to us.

Faith says yes Lord at your word I will obey even though I cannot do it. But at this point he felt something happen. His legs were strengthened and he got up and he walked away.

And he even carried his mat which was against the Jewish law of Sabbath because it was a burden. And the religious people because they're going to be horrible people at times religious people you know.

[21:28] They said what are you doing carrying your mat on the Sabbath? That's a terrible thing to do. They didn't think wow this man after 38 years has been healed. They just thought what a sinner he is.

Who did this? Well he said it wasn't me Guff it was somebody else. He told me I could carry the man who healed me by the way he told me I should carry my mat. Who was that?

They said oh I don't know I don't know him. Now that's important. The man was healed but he didn't know Jesus. And then when he found out it was Jesus he went straight back to the Jews and he said to them it was Jesus.

Why did he do that? Dubbed him in. We assume that this man met Jesus and was saved but it is not necessarily the case.

the man received the miracle but whether or not he believed is an open question. That's an open question.

[22:31] Only God knows. But it suits the context. This man saw a sign he even received the sign but like the Jewish leaders he maybe missed it.

Maybe he got the sign but didn't arrive at the destination. And so Jesus says to him stop sinning or something else something worse will happen to you.

Now I want to ask you what is worse than 38 years of paralysis? The answer is if you reject Jesus the son of God you will be condemned.

For those who believe in Jesus receive eternal life but those who reject Jesus stand condemned. There is something worse than ill help.

There is something worse than poverty. There is something worse than dying and that is dying without Jesus. These Jewish leaders had the Messiah in front of them.

[23:40] Next slide please. The Messiah in front of them. Carry on. I'm way ahead of that. They had the Messiah in front of them but they missed they missed him.

There is none so blind as those who will not see. A refusal to see a refusal to believe means something worse will happen to you.

and so the lesson here is Jesus is the giver of life. The one who comes to me he says I will never drive away.

I am the way the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me. You want to be sure that you're going to be alright at the end. You want to be sure that you get to your destination. Your destination is Jesus. You can start and come to him today. But your faith must rest on Jesus not on a miracle.

[24:51] For a miracle will not save you. For Jesus says neither will they believe if one should rise from the dead. They might even see a resurrection like they did in Lazarus' case but still refuse to believe.

Your faith must not rest on a miracle or an experience or a feeling it must rest on Jesus.

Relationship with Jesus. And Jesus points us to the fact that healing is beyond the physical.

It's not enough for us just to be well. It's not enough just to have our paralysis removed. Our sin sick soul must be healed.

we must let him in to the very core of our being to say Jesus transformed me from the inside out. Change not just my behavior change my nature change who I am cleanse me from within and set me free. Healing signs that point to Jesus.

[26:03] Are you reading the signs? Are you in the right place heading to the right destination? Everything points to Jesus.