

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

C. The Second Passover of Jesus’ Ministry

1. Jesus Heals A Paralyzed Man on a Sabbath

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #060

Base Text: JN 5.1-14 (Parallel Texts: None)

1 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish (Passover) festivals.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda, and which is surrounded by five covered courts. 3 A great number of disabled people used to lie here--the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.

[Note: Less reliable manuscripts include the following here: "And they waited for the waters to move. 4 The people thought that from time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after that would be cured of whatever disease they had."]

5 There was a certain man there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight continuous years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and became aware that he had been in this condition for such a long time, he asked him, *"Are you really wanting to become well?"*

7 "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no man to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am still crawling along, trying to get in, someone else always goes down ahead of me."

8 Then Jesus commanded him: *"Get up for good! Pick up your mat, and never stop walking."* 9 Instantly the man was made whole; he picked up his mat and went out walking.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been permanently healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."

11 But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and keep on walking.'"

12 So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?"

13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. 14 Later on Jesus found him at the temple and said to him,

"Look, you have become permanently whole. I command you to stop sinning, or something far worse may happen to you."

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	The Pool of Bethesda, Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April, 31 AD (Month Fifteen)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry

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	C. The 2 nd Passover of Jesus' Ministry
Title	I. Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man on the Sabbath (Miracle #8)

COMMENT:

Today's reading is the first of four that narrate Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem during the second Passover of his public ministry (JN Ch. 5). This text requires a crucial point of interpretation. John placed Jesus' 8th miracle at "the feast of the Jews." This term was used for the two major feasts (or festivals) of the Jewish calendar--Passover, and Tabernacles. We have assumed in the DJN that the feast was Passover, rather than Tabernacles. Why do we think so? There are two major reasons.

First, Tabernacles occurred in early to mid-October. The flow of the Synoptic narrative makes it appear that Jesus made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for this feast *after* his 1st tour ended. There was no way Jesus could speak in 25 different Synagogues on 25 different Sabbaths by early October of his first year of ministry. It was not possible to complete his first tour in time to attend Tabernacles. However, the timing of Passover, in late March or early April, works well with the completion of the 1st tour.

Secondly, but more importantly, the next events in the Synoptics depict the disciples plucking and eating grain in the fields. The grain harvests in Israel occur between April and late June, depending on the crop and the region of Palestine. There are no grain harvests in the Fall months. This makes Tabernacles highly unlikely as the timing for the feast described in John 5.

For these two main reasons (and other unmentioned minor ones) we interpret the "feast of the Jews" in JN 5 to be Passover. Jesus' first tour of Galilee (approximately Sept. to February) apparently ended with the fasting controversy. He interrupted his Galilean ministry to attend the second Passover of his ministry in Jerusalem.

John described Jesus performing multiple miracles during his first Passover (JN 2.23). John's presentation of the second Passover in Chapter 5 revolves around one powerful healing miracle, the extended controversy with the Jewish leadership it caused, as well as the massive Divine claims that Jesus made for himself related to it. This Passover marked another key turning point in Jesus' ministry.

We should note here that the Passovers mentioned in the gospel of John are critical for establishing the chronology of Jesus' ministry. Matthew, Mark, and Luke only mention one Passover--the final one--in the Synoptics. Assuming that JN 5.1 is a reference to the Passover, John related four Passovers (2.13, 5.1, 6.3, 13.1). These references establish a 40 month duration for Jesus' ministry (from his immersion to the ascension), and allow us to establish the sequence of major events within each Passover-to-Passover year.

Today's reading describes the healing miracle (#8) itself. The details closely parallel the preceding healing of the paralyzed man in Capernaum (miracle #7.) Once again, Jesus emphasized that continuing in sin is something far worse than even 38 years of paralysis (5.14). Jesus' view of the enormity of sin is something we need to pay careful attention to, for we tend to take our sin for granted.

In Capernaum, Jesus' claim to have the power to forgive sin was judged to be blasphemous by the Pharisees. At Bethesda, Jesus' decision to perform the miracle on a Sabbath ignited another charge of blasphemy--for making himself out to be God (5.18). That was John's point precisely in including this miracle in his gospel--in healing a man instantaneously on the Sabbath, Jesus was doing what only GOD can and should do, because Jesus IS God.

The paralyzed man was incapable of healing himself, and he was further handicapped by being alone, with "no one" to help him into the waters (5.7) when they were stirred up. It was a common superstition that the first person who got into the water when the waves were suddenly stirred up would be healed. The

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gospel of John does not affirm that superstition to be true--some unreliable manuscripts merely include the explanation of it as a popular belief of the people, so that readers can understand what the paralyzed man was thinking.

Don't miss the powerful irony in the way the paralyzed man told Jesus he had "no one" to help him into wholeness, when he was talking to Jesus!

APPLICATION:

Like the paralyzed man, how often do we assume that we have "no one" to help us, when we are actually standing in the presence of Jesus--the Creator of heaven and earth?

Jesus is the Creator-God who became man, specifically so that he could become our perfect "helper." He has said to us:

"I will never leave you; I will never forsake you.' So we can say with confidence: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" Heb. 13.5B-6.

Jesus is the giver of the breath of life (JN 3), and the mouthful of 'living water' that becomes a well, then a fountain that is the source of mighty rivers flowing out in all directions (JN 4). HE is everything we need, and he is always with us to empower us to follow him.

In what specific way do you need to remember today that instead of having "no one," you actually "have everything" in Jesus?

How will you trust in the abounding sufficiency of Jesus in you today?