

JOHN 5

The Purpose of Miracles

Although John's Gospel is best known for its miracles (or "signs"), the long teaching sections are equally memorable. These passages often explain the purpose of the miracles and the explore the primary message of Jesus. John 5 is an example of this as it includes both a miracle and a long preaching section from Jesus.

The Miracle

Following his two encounters in chapters 3 and 4, John gives us another miracle story. In this account, a handicapped man seeks to heal himself by resting in the Pool of Bethesda. It was believed that doing so would heal him. Jesus, however, offers to heal him on the spot without the means of the pool. This is clearly an example of Jesus as Logos.

The Message

The conflict of the story regards its timing: the Sabbath. The Jewish Oral Law (in contrast to the Mosaic Law) had very strict mandates on the Sabbath. Healing was considered work, thus violating the law. This ordinance is found nowhere in the Bible but was added later. This is the essence of religion – adding regulations to God's Revelation and robbing others of his grace.

For Jesus, however, the point of the miracle was to demonstrate the power of the gospel. "Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, 'See, you are well! Sin no more'" (vs. 14).

Jesus's exhortation should not be missed. The miracles of Jesus illustrate the power and beauty of the gospel which is the work of a powerful Creator-Redeemer. Although the miracles have humanitarian implications, they are not primarily about charity, but grace. The man at Bethesda could not, on his own, heal himself. What he needed was a Savior to intervene.

Jesus explores this deeper by using Life language. "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself" (vs. 25-26). Notice how the dead live but the living are dead. This is the language of grace. Though dead, in Christ we are made alive. Though alive, apart from Christ we are dead.