

'Signs of life'

The seven 'signs' in the public ministry of Jesus

"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

[John 20.30f]

John records seven incidents during the public ministry of Jesus which he describes as 'signs'. 'Signs', as John presents them, both *authenticate* (see Acts 2.22 for a similar perspective) and *illustrate*: that's to say they point clearly to who Jesus is and the significance of what He has come to do.

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".. 'I too am working' .."

John 5.1-19

This next 'sign' took place on the Jewish Sabbath, and as much as anything else, triggered the hostility which led to Jesus' crucifixion.

The incident at the pool of Bethesda issued in a lengthy discussion between Jesus and the Jewish leaders which throws its own light on the 'sign' itself: it's worth reading the whole of John 5!

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1. Read John 5.1-19. This 'sign' (like the second) took place during a festival (unspecified, but probably either the Passover or 'Tabernacles') in Jerusalem. A long-term invalid was healed.

Like the other 'signs' recorded by John this was a very public act on the part of Jesus: what would have struck you most in the things you saw and heard?

What does the 'sign' tell you about Jesus?

2. **Read John 5.1-7.** It's on one man, among 'a great number of disabled people', that the attention of Jesus is fixed: Jesus starts by addressing a question to the man (v.6).

Why do you think Jesus posed this question to the man?

This was clearly a *physical* healing: what might keep a person from wanting to get *spiritually* well?

3. **Read John 5.8-13.** The words of Jesus are again seen to be powerful in their effect as the man got to his feet immediately in response to the word of Jesus.

Jesus' 3-fold command brings the man into immediate conflict with the Jewish leaders: in what ways might the summons of Jesus bring us into conflict with the 'rules' of our culture today?

The leaders see in the man only a breach of their rules, not a work of God's grace: why do people tend to gravitate back to seeing religion as rules?

4. **Read John 5.14-19.** Jesus sought out the man to warn him about the manner of his living.

How are we to understand Jesus' exhortation to the man in v.14 in way that doesn't encourage a certain 'legalism'?

Was the man wise and right immediately to tell the Jewish leaders that it had been Jesus who healed him?

Would you have done the same?