

Bible Studies on the “signs” in John’s Gospel

Study 4: The Lame Walk (on the Sabbath)

1. **Discuss:** Sometimes doing a good and right thing has unforeseen negative consequences. Sometimes a person can step into a situation wanting to help, but the whole thing ‘blows up in their face.’ Can you think of examples of this to share?

2. **Read John 5:1-9a**

- a. What had the man placed his hope of becoming well in before Jesus’ intervention? (v. 7)
[Also, note the “missing” verse 4, which should be referred to in a footnote]

Note on the ancient manuscripts

We don’t have the original copy of John’s Gospel, written by John – that has long been lost. But what we do have are copies that were made and passed on, and copies from those copies, and so on. There are hundreds of such ancient copies, and occasionally new ones are still discovered. In many cases all we have are fragments, rather than complete documents. When comparing all of these many different copies and fragments, scholars have been impressed with how little they vary from each other. Where variations do occur, scholars have developed a complex process for working out which is the original reading, and which has been changed either deliberately or by mistake. One part of this process, for example, is dating the documents that have been found, working on the principle that the older copies are the more accurate, with more mistakes and changes creeping in as the copying and re-copying process continued [think of the game “Chinese whispers”]. In the case of John 5:4, the oldest and most reliable copies don’t include this verse, so scholars believe it was added in later by an overzealous scribe wanting to explain to his readers what was going on [in a similar way to which today’s Study Bibles offer information or explanations in the footnotes].

- b. What do you make of the first thing Jesus says to the paralysed man? Would you say this yourself if you visited a sick friend? Why or why not? (v. 6)
 - c. What do you notice about the manner of the actual healing the paralysed man receives? (vv. 8-9)
 - d. Do you think Jesus still heals people today?
 - e. How do you explain the fact that he doesn’t heal everybody, either by the pool that day or in your family today?
3. **Read John 5:9b-18**
 - a. When does this incident occur and what is the significance of this? (vv. 9-10, 16)
 - b. Can you explain why Jesus says what he does when he found the healed man a second time (v. 14)? What is the “something worse”? (v. 29)
 - c. Why were the Jews so concerned about these things happening on the Sabbath?
 - d. What is Jesus claiming about himself in verse 17?
 4. **Read John 5:19-29**
 - a. What do we learn here about the relationship between the Father and the Son?
 - b. All of Jesus’ “signs” in John point to a deeper reality about who Jesus is, and what he came to do. How does this raising of a man to his feet point to a greater thing Jesus has come to do (verses 25-29)?
 - c. When does the “hour” (v. 25) come, and in what way does this shed light on our answer to question 2.f. above?