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Sea of Galilee

Mediterranean Sea

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Dead Sea

Episode 11

God at work

JOHN 5:1-29

*In the previous episode:
Jesus showed that He
is the long-promised
Messiah and people
immediately began
to respond to Him.*

*In this episode:
Jesus starts to show
us what God is up to
in this world.*

¹ Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish 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 colonnades.

³ Here a great number of disabled people used to lie – the blind, the lame, the paralysed.

⁵ One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

Modern translations omit John 5:4 as it does not appear in many early manuscripts and was probably added by later copyists.

A desperate situation

John 5 sees the start of a new section that runs through to chapter 10. Like the previous section, it begins and ends with a miracle.

Jesus tells us that both are signs to teach us about God's work. We'll see that both happen on 'the Sabbath'

The word 'Sabbath' simply means 'rest'. It comes from the first book of the Bible, Genesis, when God finishes His work of creating the world and then enjoys His creation. This is significant and we'll shortly see why...

It's another crowded festival in Jerusalem. John's spotlight falls on a desperate scene: a famous pool where miracles were supposed to happen.

It is surrounded by disabled people from the city, hoping for healing from the waters.

Colonnades: the roofed area surrounding the pool, held up by great columns. The columns at the Bethesda pool were rediscovered by archaeologists in 1888.

⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’

⁷ ‘Sir,’ the invalid replied, ‘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.’

⁸ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.’

⁹ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

What happens to the paralysed man?

- Jesus heals him completely. **(v. 8)**
- The man who couldn't move a muscle can now get up and walk.

Remember he had been paralysed for thirty-eight years. It's a miracle.

How did Jesus do this?

- He simply speaks, and the man is instantly healed. **(v. 9)**

*This is Jesus, the creator God,
powerfully at work.*



JOHN 5:1-29

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



How do the religious leaders respond?

- For generations, the religious leaders had been adding more detailed laws about the Sabbath, restricting physical activity as a way of enforcing rest.
 - So they immediately stop this man from carrying his mat. **(v. 10)**
-

But what is the Sabbath really about?

- 'Sabbath' has a wider meaning than a day of rest. It speaks about a perfect relationship with God in His perfect universe. This is perfect rest.
- In our rebellion against God we have never known a perfect relationship with Him or the perfect universe that the Sabbath in Genesis 2 was all about.
- But God promised that one day He would rescue us and give us perfect rest in a new creation. The day of rest was to be a reminder of that promise.

¹¹ But he replied, ‘The man who made me well said to me, “Pick up your mat and walk.”’

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 Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.’