

Sunday December 11th 2016
For Jews Request a Sign.....
Part Fourteen

1). Joh 5:1 ¶ *After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. 3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. 5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.*

After spending 2 days in Samaria Jesus returned to Galilee and healed the son of 'a certain nobleman' who was at the point of death which pictures for us the Lord's return to Israel following the 2 days, the 2000 years, of this dispensation when He will heal and restore the nation following repentance at the end of the Tribulation. And that which Jesus did upon His return to Cana of Galilee formed the second sign that He did that John recorded in his Gospel.

a). The third sign that we began to read about at the beginning of Chapter 5 deals with exactly the same subject as that seen in the second sign, but adding more detail to it – detail that draws from Israel's past and present while looking prophetically to her future – detail that could have been seen and understood by the Jew for whom the sign had been recorded.

b). At the very beginning of God's dealing with Israel He had set out for them blessings if they would be obedient to His commands and the consequences that would befall them if they were not obedient, recorded both in Leviticus and Deuteronomy - Le 26:14 ¶ *'But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, 15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, 16 I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your*

enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you. 18 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

The spiritual condition that Israel found herself in at the time of the Lord's first advent, a condition that had begun to deteriorate from Kadesh Barnea onwards and continues even to the present day, is no more than the outworking of that which God said would happen should the nation continue in disobedience. And so as we look at the present condition of the Jewish people around the world today, separated from God, secular and persecuted because of centuries of disobedience we can see the faithfulness of God to His Word - Ps 138:2 *I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.*

c). And in God's faithfulness to His Word is great encouragement for us because if God has been faithful to His Word with regards to Israel then that which God has said with respect to the one new man in Christ He will be faithful to also - 2Co 1:20 *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

And for us, as with Israel, there is the certainty of the promise of blessing for obedience and the certainty of the consequences that will befall us if we choose to be disobedient instead.

d). And as we have seen on many occasions the spiritual condition of Israel was described at the beginning of Isaiah's prophecy - let's look at this one more time - Isa 1:4 *Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward. 5 Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment. 7 Your country is desolate, Your cities are burned with fire; Strangers devour your land in your presence; And it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.*

Isaiah's prophecy, in perfect accord with God's promises in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, addresses both Israel the people, and the land and it would not be difficult to see, 'Your country is desolate' and 'strangers devour your land in your presence' during the Roman occupation at the time of the Lord's first advent and the years that followed, during the time in which John's Gospel was written, as well of course as looking to that future day under Antichrist.

e). However, although the picture painted by Isaiah at the beginning of his prophecy is bleak, he also deals with the time when Israel will be delivered and healed, both the people and their land with blessing to follow –
Isa 35:4 Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you." 5 ¶ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert. 7 The parched ground shall become a pool, And the thirsty land springs of water; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, There shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

And so putting these 2 aspects of Isaiah's prophecy together, the Jewish mind as it perceived John's Gospel could have put the whole picture together, especially as the third sign followed by the fourth sign, dealing with the feeding of the 5000, were read side by side pointing to the healing of the nation and pointing to the healing of the land.

2). As we saw last week the description of 'a great multitude of sick people' who are said to be, 'blind, lame, paralyzed [from disease]' takes us back to the nobleman's son in the second sign and back to the spiritual condition of Israel because of her unfaithfulness as shown in Isaiah and promised by God in Leviticus and Deuteronomy if disobedience continued.

a). Then as the eyes of the blind were opened during the Lord's earthly ministry - *Joh 9:7 And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.*

Mt 12:22 ¶ Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw.

And the mute spoke and the lame were healed - Mt 15:30 *Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them.*

Mt 11:5 *"The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

So the second aspect of Isaiah's prophecy with regards to the healing of the nation comes into view. And that seen in the third sign, at the pool of Bethesda, presents the whole picture in microcosm.

3). 'Bethesda' we will remember is a Hebrew name meaning 'house of mercy' and the number of porches that the multitude of sick people were laying in, 5, is associated with grace and so we can see in this the Jewish people not only past but also present, being entirely dependent upon God's grace as they wait for mercy to be shown to them. And within the sign the only One who can extend grace and mercy was present and demonstrated both these attributes to the certain man who had an infirmity 38 years.

a). The nation as a whole though, pictured through those who were blind, was completely blind to the spiritual condition they were in – they could see neither their spiritual sickness, nor the One who possessed the cure Mt 15:14 *"Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."*

We can see this same picture of spiritual blindness for Israel through the experience of Paul on the road to Damascus - Ac 9:9 *And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

Israel's religious leaders were blind to their situation and consequently those whom they led were blind also as they followed their teaching and in this there is a chilling parallel with Christendom at the end of this dispensation - Re 3:17 *"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—*

The Church in a general sense has no more idea of the spiritual condition it is in, because of its unfaithfulness, than Israel did 2000 years ago. And just as

Jesus came to the pool of Bethesda so he now stands at the door and knocks and seemingly He is not seen or heard by those to whom He has come.

b). Now the Lord singling out a certain man who had an infirmity 38 years from the multitude of sick people lying in the 5 porches is not random as the number of years of this man's infirmity should have spoken directly to the Jewish understanding as the Lord draws once more from the experience of the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt - Jos 5:6 *For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people who were men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD-to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, "a land flowing with milk and honey."*

From the time Israel left Egypt to the time they would enter the land under Joshua was 40 years. Now it was 2 years after leaving Egypt that the nation arrived at Kadesh Barnea and refused to go into the land because of the evil report given by 10 of the 12 leaders who went in to spy out the land - Nu 13:32 *And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 "There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight." 14:1 ¶ So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!*

And so after the events of Kadesh Barnea there remained another 38 years until the second generation entered the land with Joshua. And here is the reason for the 38 years seen in John Chapter 5.

c). Reference to the 38 years works in a variety of ways all pointing to exactly the same thing. Firstly, after 38 years in the OT account the second generation of Israel entered the land under Joshua having first kept the Passover - Jos 5:10 ¶ *Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho.*

d). And this entry into the land following Passover foreshadows that future day when Israel will return to the land under Jesus having appropriated the blood of the Passover Lamb who they had previously slain, having kept the Passover. And it is worth noting that Joshua and Jesus are in fact the same name – one is Hebrew the other Greek.

e). Secondly, the events at Kadesh Barnea parallel the events of Christ's first advent – The King had come to take the people into the land, a heavenly land and through the supernatural signs was showing the fruit of that land, but due to the evil report given to the people by Israel's religious leaders they refused to enter both rejecting the offer of the Kingdom of heaven and crucifying their King.

f). Consequently, the man with the infirmity for 38 years then pointed to the fact that there would be a complete period of time, seen through the association with the total of 40 years from Israel's history, before Israel would enter the land under Jesus in fulfillment of that foreshadowed by Joshua and in fulfillment of that seen through the healing of the certain man at the pool of Bethesda. The healing of the man pictures the healing of Israel yet future allowing them to enter the land under Jesus; Joshua leading Israel into the land pictures another facet of the same picture and the 38 years links the two.

g). And this same 40 year period is seen with respect to the first miraculous sign recorded in the Book of Acts as the Kingdom is being re-offered to Israel by the Church - *Ac 3:2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple..... 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.*

h). The location of the pool of Bethesda, by the Sheep Gate, gives echo to that Great Shepherd of the sheep who is Himself the door to the sheepfold - *Joh 10:7 Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 "All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.....11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*

The Sheep Gate through which the Passover Lamb had entered looks to the first feast of Israel that must be kept yet future before entry into the land is

possible, just as it was kept by Joshua before entering the land seen in Joshua Chapter 5.

i). Israel has already slain their Passover Lamb, but they have not yet appropriated the blood and this will not happen until the end of the Tribulation when they will look on the One whom they pierced in the antitype of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis Chapter 45. And as we will remember the 6 feasts leading to the 7th feast, Tabernacles, must be fulfilled so that Israel may enter into that which Tabernacles foreshadows, the Millennial Kingdom.

j). And so with this in mind let's look at how the fourth sign begins – Joh 6:1 ¶ *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. 3 And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. 4 Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.*

And as we look at these first 4 verses of Chapter 6 hopefully 2 things will immediately catch our attention – ‘Jesus went up on the mountain’ and ‘the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.’

4). But before we go to look at this in detail let us first look at some things from the third sign itself and the reaction of the Jews to it - Joh 5:6 *When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" 7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." 9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.*

a). The inability of the man to get up and walk, as with the others seen to be lame in the same location, points to Israel's complete inability past and present to fulfill the reason for the nation's creation - Isa 43:10 *"You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me. 11 I, even I, am the LORD, And besides Me there is no savior.*

Israel, as pictured through Jonah, was to take the message of the One, True and Living God to the Gentile nations, they were to be His witnesses throughout the earth; but as with Jonah Israel had headed in a completely contrary direction and therefore the blessings that were to come to the nations through Israel's ministry have not yet been received.

b). God had divided the nations and distributed them throughout the earth precisely for the purpose of being blessed through Israel - De 32:8 *When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, When He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel.*

Ac 17:26 *"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him,*

But it won't be until Israel is raised from the place of death on the 3rd Day following repentance, as with Jonah, that they will then fulfill that purpose that God has for them - Ge 22:18 *"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."*

c). And in the sign we have seen that the man with the infirmity for 38 years is healed on the Sabbath - 9 *And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.*

And the Sabbath is the 3rd day seen in Jonah, the 3rd day and the 7th hour seen in the second sign and the 3rd day and the 7th day seen in the first sign. Everything points to exactly the same time and exactly the same result and we might thank God for it.

d). Before the Lord healed the man at the pool of Bethesda He asked him a question, 'Do you want to be made well?' And interestingly the man doesn't answer the question, but rather shows why he hasn't and can't be healed - *"Do you want to be made well?" 7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; - There are 2 things we should note from this answer.*

e). Firstly, like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, the man cannot perceive anything beyond the literal and therefore cannot conceive that healing is possible as he has no man to help him.

f). And secondly, and perhaps more importantly, his answer makes a profound statement about Israel's condition – there is no man who can bring about the nation's healing – Israel cannot heal herself and there is no man on the face of the earth who can accomplish that healing for her.

g). Even though Israel will turn to the Antichrist yet future he has no way to bring about her healing either - Ho 5:13 *"When Ephraim saw his sickness, And Judah saw his wound, Then Ephraim went to Assyria And sent to King Jareb; Yet he cannot cure you, Nor heal you of your wound.*

As we have seen already today Israel's 'sickness' is the result of her continued disobedience and has been set in place by God because of His Word in Leviticus and Deuteronomy to bring about repentance – God is responsible for Israel's sickness and God alone can cure her. Which is exactly what takes place in the sign – 7 *The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."* 8 *Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."* 9 *And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.*

Israel's cure can only be supernaturally brought forth from above, just as the Lord told Nicodemus, and just as we witnessed in the second sign and have had confirmed again here in the third sign. Apart from Divine intervention Israel cannot be cured. But the very nature of the signs themselves point to the fact that Divine intervention will take place, Israel will be healed and restored and through her manifold blessings will come to the nations – Zec 8:20 *"Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Peoples shall yet come, Inhabitants of many cities; 21 The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, And seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also." 22 Yes, many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, And to pray before the LORD.'* 23 *"Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"*

Or, as Paul says in - Ro 11:12 *Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!.....15 For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

We will continue with this next year – if the Lord is willing.