

The Role of Jesus' Healing According to John's Gospel

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Introduction

It is generally accepted that the events of Jesus' ministry had been already set for the authors of the gospels.¹ Therefore, to "convey the significance of the story, [evangelists] shaped, and arranged material so that its sequence established a certain progression and causality ...to cooperate in conveying the meaning of the story".² Thus, the selection of the events, including healing miracles, reflects the author's purpose. In the gospel of John there are three healings: of the official's son (4:46-54); of the paralytic (5:2-47); of the man born blind (9:1-41); and one resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-46). John does not record the acts of casting out demons, or healing of multitudes. One possible explanation for such a selection is because these had not been recorded in the circulated Synoptics. However, this is difficult to assume that it is the only reason. At the same time, it is clear that healing is important for John's purpose. John's own statement is, "these [signs]³ have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31a). Therefore, healing, being a major or prominent part of the 'signs',⁴ must play significant role in bringing the readers to faith in Jesus.⁵ The purpose of this paper is to analyse the role of healing in the presentation of John's Gospel.

Considering the aim, each recorded healing will be analysed. Firstly, attention will be paid to the context and to the story itself. A consideration of the presentation of each narrative will help define John's emphasis, which will serve as the basis for the analysis. Subsequently, the relationship between healing and John's Messiah statement will be considered. This work does not presume to be a comprehensive analysis. The questions concerning the historicity, authenticity, and the relationship of the stories to the Synoptics will not be considered, as these issues are outside the boundaries of the current research.

I. Healing of the Official's Son (4:46-54)

The miracle takes place in Galilee⁶ after Jesus' arrival from Samaria. At once John brings readers to the central episode of the story: Jesus comes to Cana⁷ where there "was a certain royal official⁸, whose son was sick⁹ in Capernaum" (v. 46). Then, John explains that the man came out to Jesus, to ask Him come down and

¹ A. Culpepper. Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 84.

² Ibid., 85.

³ 'σημεία' means sign, authenticating mark, signpost, that emphasises the 'aspect of the miracle as an indication that the supernatural power is involved' (Jn.2:11; Acts.4:16; 1Cor.1:22). See "Miracles". In Expository Dictionary. (Zondervan Reference Software; Version 2.6); L. Morris. Jesus is the Christ. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989), 22; R. Schnackenburg. The Gospel According to John. (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 1. 155f..

⁴ Although commentators count the 'signs' differently [Morris (p.22) and Schnackenburg (p.516) — 7; Fossum — 12 [See J. Fossum. "Understanding Jesus' Miracles". In Bible Review. 10.2 (April, 1994), 17.]; Bernard — 6 [See J. Bernard. The Gospel According to St. John. (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1928), 1. clxxvii.]] all agreed four healings are their part that also confirmed by the text (4:48, 54; 12:37). See C. Barrett. The Gospel According to St. John. (London: SPCK, 1978), 77.

⁵ J.C. Thom.. The Devil, Disease and Deliverance. (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1998), 91.

⁶ May be echo of Isaiah (9:1-2). See M. Soucy. "Miracles and Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God". In Bibliotheca Sacra. 153.611 July/September, 1996), 288.

⁷ The place of the first 'sign' possibly indicates the base of man's faith.

⁸ Probably king's (Herod Antipas) officer. See R. Bultmann. The Gospel of John. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 206. An indication man's position possibly to show the reason of only not initiative of Jesus in the Gospel. Carson suggests the man is a gentile [See D. Carson. The Gospel According to John. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 238]; whereas Morris supposes him to be a Jew [See L. Morris. The Gospel According to John. (Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 1987), 288]. However, although, man's perception of would depend on his nationality, the text presents the way of his perception the miracle thus the base for the consideration is provided.

⁹ 'ἡσθενε' in Synoptics is the most common relating to sickness; may refer to a weakness or absence of strength. See J. Wilkinson. Health & Healing. (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1980), 28. Here, the sickness is uncertain. The only indication: the son 'was about to die'(v.47).

heal his son who “was about to die” (v. 47). However, instead of healing Jesus reacts negatively towards the man¹⁰ that he would not believe unless he saw “signs and wonders” (v. 48). The man, without arguing, persists in asking Jesus to come before the “child dies” (v. 49). In response, Jesus commands, “Go! Your son lives” (v. 50).¹¹ This is the end of healing but not of the story. The official meets his slaves on the way home who report, “Your son lives” (v. 51). Then, John includes the question about the time at which the son “got better”¹² (v. 52). From their words the man knows that it was the “hour” when Jesus had told him, “your son lives”. The report of the slaves brings the culmination of the story. John particular stresses that “he himself and whole his household believed” (v. 53).

The Authority of Jesus

Firstly, Jesus has the authority to heal.¹³ Morris rightly admits that the words, “Go! Your son lives” (v. 50) are not a supernatural knowledge of what has happened but the words of powerful healing,¹⁴ which bring into reality what has been said.¹⁵ It is confirmed by the slaves’ answer (vv. 52-53). Plus, the command and obedience of the official indicate the authority with which Jesus speaks (Mt.7:29//Mr. 1:22). Moreover, the healing happens at a distance. John stresses it in the introduction (v. 46), in the man’s asking him to come (vv. 47, 49) and in the way man goes (vv. 50- 51). Furthermore, the whole narrative shows that Jesus has the authority to heal where, when, and how He wishes, independent of human requirements. Thus, the above-mentioned aspects of this healing provide the opportunity to reveal Jesus in a new, comprehensive way,¹⁶ not only to the family of the official but also to the onlookers, the disciples¹⁷ and John’s readers.

The Theme of ‘Life’

Throughout the narrative John uses contrasted antithesis, “about to die” (vv. 47, 49)¹⁸ and, “your son lives” (vv. 50; 51; 53) in order to emphasise that Jesus is the One who brings ‘Life’. Brown suggests that this may serve as an image of the eternal life.¹⁹ If this is right, then Jesus demonstrates a foretaste of what is to come. Finally, although the theme is present from the beginning of the gospel (1:4; 3:16; 4:10), it rightly may be suggested that the healing plays role more as an introduction to this theme since it has larger accentuation of the rest of the gospel²⁰ (5:21; 6:35; 8:12; 10:10ff.; 11:25; 12:25; etc.).

Encouragement to Believe

Brown’s suggestion²¹ that the story has twofold significance: to stress faith, and to emphasise Jesus’ authority to give life, is valid. The official’s actions in looking for and asking, already, presume the presence

¹⁰ ‘πιστευσετε’ is plural, may refer to Galileans; as the context shows: although they “receive”(v.45) [εδέξαντο] Him they did not “receive” [παρελάβον]- as the Christ (1:12).

¹¹ ‘ζη’ is important in John (17-times), being in present tense serves as affirmation. In the early church the term was used as characterisation of the Salvation. See L. Schottroff. “ζωη”. In Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. H. Balz, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 2. 105.

¹² ‘καμφοτερον’ - ‘feel on the way to improvement’. Ibid., 2.307.

¹³ In the Old Testament only God heals (Ex.4:11; 12:12; 15:22-27; 23:25-26; Lev.26:3-13; Num.33:3-4; Dt.7:14-15; 28:1-14; Ps.103; 146; 147). See M.L. Brown. Israel's Divine Healer. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 67ff.. Here, the idea is not contradicted but rather supports Jesus' divinity (20:31).

¹⁴ Morris, 291.

¹⁵ Dickinson, 11.

¹⁶ Warrington, 126.

¹⁷ Brown, 197.

¹⁸ Plus indications of sickness (vv.46, 47).

¹⁹ Brown, 198.

²⁰ Ibid., 190.

²¹ R. Brown. The Gospel According to John. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), 1. 197.; Barrett, 248.

of faith in Jesus' ability to heal. However, the words, "you will not believe unless..." (v. 48), characterise to a particular faith, which will be encouraged by seeing the "signs and wonders". This faith cannot simply indicate a belief that Jesus will heal.²² Therefore, the only belief that this could refer to is that Jesus more than a healer²³, but the Son of God (20:30).²⁴ This becomes clear when the official, now seeing the 'sign', believes (v. 53). Barth states that the word's precise usage refers to 'become a Christian'.²⁵ Thus, the healing is a means for the man's faith development and perfection in the high status of Jesus.²⁶

The result shows that the words, "Without seeing you will not believe," are true. Although, the statement is negative, Jesus Himself encourages faith on that basis (10:38//4:111).²⁷ Barrett comments, "blessed are those who believe without seeing," does not imply, "cursed are those who believe because they have seen".²⁸ The theme of faith is emphasised in chapters 2-4 by responses of individuals (2:11; 3:2; 4:28-30, 39-42). Within this context may be seen a parallel of story to the Samaritans' response. Firstly, based on woman's words, the Samaritans believed in Jesus' supernatural ability to know what is inside a person. Later, their faith developed as they recognised Jesus' higher status when they themselves heard Him speaking (4:39-41).

The authority of Jesus and the theme of Life are clearly emphasised, however, it seems that faith is dominant issue in the story. Therefore, it may be concluded, as noted by Warrington, "the place of signs in the possible achievement of faith is not recorded as being inappropriate, but neither is the development of faith an inevitable response to the signs".²⁹

II. Healing of the Paralytic (5:2-47)

The story follows the healing of the Official's son, where "After some time later" (v. 1) Jesus comes to Jerusalem for the Jews feast.³⁰ John, describing the setting, presents a place by the pool called "Bethesda"³¹ with five porches (v. 2).³² The place is occupied by a "great multitude" of invalids, "waiting for the stirring of the water" (v. 3). The author explains that the first who enters the pool is healed (v. 4). Then John introduces the man who was laying there, having been suffering his illness for thirty-eight years³³. Jesus, already knowing this,³⁴ asks the man whether he desires to be whole.³⁵ The man complains he has nobody

²² Such faith is obvious in receiving the command from Jesus, yet it is different from latter one (v.53). See K. Warrington. Jesus the Healer: Paradigm or Unique Phenomenon. (Lancaster: Paternoster Press, 2000), 126.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Morris, 292.

²⁵ Barrett, 248. Such meaning becomes in aorist 'ἐπιστεύσεν' (Act.4:4; 8:13; 11:21; 13:12; 15:7; etc.). G. Barth, "πιστις". In Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament. 3. 93.

²⁶ Warrington, 126-7.

²⁷ Carson, 239.

²⁸ Barrett, 247-8.

²⁹ Warrington, 127.

³⁰ The feast is uncertain: Passover [Bernard, 1.225]; or Tabernacles [Bultmann, 240].

³¹ The location is uncertain, possibly: north of the Temple (Neh.3:1; 12:39). See Bultmann, 240; Carson, 241. The name means 'House of Mercy' [has different variations in MSS. See B. Lindars. The Gospel of John. (London: OLIPHANTS, 1972), 212]. Here, the superiority of Jesus is seen in ability to heal without water stirring.

³² The description of water may recall the positive associations with water (1:25ff.; 2:1-11; 3:5, 23; 4:2, 9-15). See Warrington, 128; Thomas, 96.

³³ 'ἀσθενεία' - See p.2 (4:46). Morris gives acceptable suggestion that the number makes some allusions to the years of Israel in the wilderness: lack of faith and homelessness (Deut.2:14). The years indicate that illness was not temporary one. See Thomas, 97.

³⁴ 'γινώσκει' is aorist, important in John (57-times). Barrett assumes that it illuminates the supernatural ability to get knowledge what is workable (2:24-25//4:17-18). See Barrett, 254.

³⁵ May also relate to the spiritual side of man. Thomas, 99.

to help him (v. 7).³⁶ Unexpectedly, Jesus commands the man, “Rise up! Take your coat and walk” (v. 8).³⁷ Immediately, he becomes well and obeys (v. 9). The story does not end at this point for John adds, “it was the Sabbath” (v. 10). Thus, the healing leads Jesus into religious opposition. Here, John includes Jesus’ monologue as a defence addressed to the Jews (vv. 19-47).

From the presentation of the story, it is possible to draw out several particularities to which the author wants to draw readers’ attention. They are the authority, power and teaching of Jesus, which serve to encourage the faith in Him. Further discussion will analyse on what basis such a conclusion has been made.

The Authority of Jesus

Jesus has the authority to heal. He does it in Jerusalem where people understand healing no less as the act of God only.³⁸ The authority of Jesus is presented in His sovereignty choosing whom to heal. John stresses the multitude and enumerates the variety of illnesses. The initiative of Jesus shows that He has a free will, which, as Witkamp admits, is His Father’s,³⁹ according Jesus’ own statement (v. 17). Furthermore, there is no indication of request or faith from any person. The man does not even recognise Jesus’ ability. Moreover, although in Jesus’ question the offer has been given clearly, it is misunderstood (v. 7). Therefore, Jesus is not limited by any human requests,⁴⁰ or faith but does what He intends,⁴¹ as concluded by Lindars that that initiative belonged to God⁴² and demonstrated Jesus’ divinity.

Later, Jesus finds the man and gives an instruction, “sin no more” (v. 14). Besides John’s indication of Jesus’ supernatural ability to find the man,⁴³ he presents Jesus’ care for people and His authority to deal with sin.⁴⁴ Witkamp states that in the story the relationship between healing and forgiveness is obvious. He supports the idea by the word ‘Lva’ (v. 14) indicating that Jesus has forgiven.⁴⁵ Moreover, in Jewish understanding the healing itself assumes previous forgiveness. The Talmud states that “the sick arises not from his sickness until his sins be forgiven”.⁴⁶ However, in the gospels there is no clear indication that Jesus identifies an illness as a direct consequence of sin.⁴⁷ In this instance, there is no link to the particular sin, notion of repentance or forgiveness. Jesus does not refer to the man’s past life but rather shows concerns for the future. The words, “something worse” (v. 14), most likely indicate the “eternal consequences of sin”.⁴⁸ Therefore, Thompson’s suggestion is valid as the text presents Jesus as the Judge whose divine authority is over the consequences of sin and the bestowing of eternal life (5:22, 27-29, 30).⁴⁹

³⁶ The hopelessness even to try. See Lindars, 215. However, he sees the solution in someone (now, likely, in Jesus) to help him down — irony. Thomas, 100.

³⁷ ‘κράββατον’ — is a coat, not heavy for a well person to carry. See Brown, 208. In this command the first two verbs (rise, take up) are aorists whereas the verb 'walk' is imperfect that expects the continuation of the man ability to walk. See Warrington, 129.

³⁸ B. Witherington. *John's Wisdom*. (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1995), 180; See ref. 29.

³⁹ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁰ Morris, 304.

⁴¹ Witkamp, 24.

⁴² Lindars, 219.

⁴³ Witkamp, 22; Thomas, 98.

⁴⁴ *Divine Healer*, 230.

⁴⁵ Witkamp, 28; Barrett, 255.

⁴⁶ Taken from Bernard, 234.

⁴⁷ Larson gives possible suggestion that Jesus considers illness as the result of falling human kind than a sin of individuals. See E. Larson. "A Philosophy of Healing from the Ministry of Jesus". In *Faith and Thought*. 112.1 (1986), 67.

⁴⁸ Lindars, 217.

⁴⁹ M. Thompson. "Signs and Faith in the Fourth Gospel". In *Bulletin for Biblical Research*. 1 (1991), 99. See Thomas, 104-7.

After the healing, John indicates that the day was the Sabbath. By doing so, the author discloses the authority of Jesus over the Law.⁵⁰ Jesus does not wait for the end of the day but commands, “take your coat and walk” which draws attention to the superiority of Jesus over the Sabbath not only in His own life but also in the lives of others. Bernard’s suggestion that the healing shows Jesus’ authority that belongs only to the Fathers⁵¹ is sound. God the Father being the initiator of the Law alone has the right to change it. Soucy’s suggestion about the Sabbath may be accepted as possible,⁵² although it is not clear. He states that as the Sabbath closely relates to the year of Jubilee (Deut.15:2; Lev.25:13), Isaiah’s prophecy (Is.58; 61:1-3) and indicates Jesus’ messianic status because Jubilee is associated with the eternal future of Yahweh’s salvation.

The Theme of Power

The story shows that Jesus possesses divine power. The miracle happens as a direct result of a command (v. 8). Barrett rightly determines that, “just as the thirty-eight years prove the gravity of the disease, so the carrying of the bed and walking prove the completeness of the cure”.⁵³ It is difficult to determine the illness which been restored. However, Wilkinson states that limbs being effected for thirty-eight years by ...long-time immobility would inevitably have resulted in waste of muscles and constructors of joints.⁵⁴ The saying, “became well” (aorist; v.9a) is to show the reality of the restoration as the man healed “instantly”,⁵⁵ and permanently (vv. 10, 14).⁵⁶ Therefore, the suggestion is right that the healing is no less than a miraculous,⁵⁷ creative, divine act⁵⁸ (2.4; 4:47). In this case, Carson’s⁵⁹ suggestion that the command “anticipates the powerful voice of the Son of God on the Last Day” may be relevant and thus this is exemplified in the story.

The Conflict as a Means for Uncovering Jesus’ Identity

The story serves as an introduction to the essential theme of the gospel: the conflict of belief and unbelief. Jesus is accused of disobeying the Law. In His defence, Jesus announces, that the authority to heal comes from His relationship with the Father.⁶⁰ In other words, the Father is the initiator of healing whilst Jesus depends upon and is obedient to His (Father’s) will.

Consequently, in saying, ‘my Father’ (v. 17)⁶¹ the Jews suspect that Jesus partook the nature of God.⁶² Lindars is right noticing the irony where although the Jews claim it to be a blasphemy for the readers it is clear that the statement is true.⁶³ Gradually the theme of Sabbath is left. Further (vv. 19-47), the text presents Jesus as the one who is greater than John the Baptist, the one who is the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Son of Man and the Saviour of the world. Lindars rightly states that, “Jesus’ teaching

⁵⁰ Warrington, 130.

⁵¹ Bernard, 236.

⁵² Soucy, 288.

⁵³ Barrett, 254.

⁵⁴ Wilkinson, 447.

⁵⁵ L. Witkamp. "The use of Traditions in John 5.1-18-. In Journal for the Study of the New Testament. 25 (October/1985), 26. The word is rare in John therefore it is emphasised. See Morris 303.

⁵⁶ ‘τεθεραπευμένω’ (v.10); ‘γεγονάω’ (v.14) - are perfect that shows the 'present state resulting from the past action'. See Wenham, 139.

⁵⁷ Warrington, 129.

⁵⁸ Carson, 243.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Lindars, 219.

⁶¹ In Jews tradition —'our' (1Ch.29:10; Is.63:16; 64:8). See Morris, 309.

⁶² Ibid., 310.

⁶³ Lindars, 219.

in John's handling becomes a Christological affirmation".⁶⁴ Thus, the healing becomes the cause of the conflict and provides a good opportunity for Jesus to present His identities not only as His defence against the religious leaders, but also as a testimony to the healed man and the bystanders.

An Encouragement to Believe

On the basis of the previous discussion it may be concluded that the healing provides an opportunity to believe for the healed man, for the onlookers and for the readers of John as well. Healing evidently transforms the life of healed man. Although, some suggest that the man remains in his unbelief (as he betrays Jesus v.15)⁶⁵ there are some references, which suggests the opposite. Firstly, the man's obedience may indicate the existence of faith. Secondly, man's response (v. 15) contains only the name 'Jesus' which presumably was enough as for the man and for the Jews to recognise Who is meant. Thirdly, in the discourse the Jews emphasise Jesus' act of breaking the Sabbath, while the man stresses healing (vv. 15-16).⁶⁶ Therefore, although it is unclear that the man's life had been transformed not only physically, the faith of bystanders and the mention of the crowd may suggest that the healing was widely witnessed.⁶⁷ Therefore, Warrington's suggestion is correct that the obvious result and consequences of healing may have influence on the lives of many.⁶⁸ Considering the role of the healing, it is worth mentioning that in patristic period (Tertulian; Chrisostom) it was suggested that the story conveys the baptismal idea.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it is difficult to prove that the symbolism was meant by John, since there is no internal evidence.⁷⁰

To conclude the consideration may by suggestion that the story affirms Jesus' high status as the Son of God in conflict, Who giving the life acts in divine authority⁷¹ and power in healing, thus making the healing ought to issue of faith in the whole story.⁷²

III. Healing the Man Born Blind (9:1-41)

The story follows Jesus' conversation with the Jews concerning His identity (8:31-59). In the discourse the opposition comes to the conclusion that Jesus acts by demon's power, and consequently attempts to kill Him. In chapter nine, the healed man appears as a 'bridge' in the middle of two sides of the conflict.⁷³ The story starts in the context of Jesus' departure from the temple (8:59). As the disciples were going they asked Jesus about the man born blind⁷⁴ (v. 1). On the question who is guilty of his blindness parents or he⁷⁵, Jesus answers neither he nor his parents but "that the works of God might be revealed on him" (v. 3). Later, Jesus tells about necessity to do the works of the one who sent Him while it is day (vv. 4-5). Then, saying that He is the 'light of the world', He makes clay out of spittle⁷⁶ and puts it on the eyes of the blind man (v. 6). Then

⁶⁴ Ibid., 218; Witkamp, 32.

⁶⁵ Lindars, 217.

⁶⁶ Morris, 308.

⁶⁷ "Jews feast"(v.1) presupposes presence of crowd (the law: Ex.34:22; Deut.16:13-17).

⁶⁸ Warrington, 131.

⁶⁹ Brown, 24.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Lindars, 220. Morris opinion is valid that the healing may echo Isaiah's prophecy (Is.35:6). See Morris, 302.

⁷² J. Carroll. "Sickness and Healing in the New Testament Gospels". In *Interpretation*. XLIX.2 (April, 1995), 136.

⁷³ Warrington, 134; Bultmann, 329.

⁷⁴ Some give possible suggestion that 'born blind' represents a humankind (1:5; 3:19). See Morris, 477; Carson, 365.

⁷⁵ Jews connect an illness with sin (Ps.89:33; Is.44:9; 56:10; Ez.18:20). It is possible for parents to sin that it would be transformed on their children (Ex.20:5; Dt. 5:9). See Lindars, 342. Genesis (25:22) was the base for the concept that one could sin before the birth, presumably in 'pre-existed soul'(Wis.8:20). See Bultmann, 331.

⁷⁶ Possibly the readers know (Mr.7:33; //8:23). It was a cure in antiquity. Barrett, 296. In this case, some may suggest that Jesus cured with hypnotism and psychosomatic ailments. However, Fossum rightly admits that such suggestion

He sends him to the pool of Siluam⁷⁷ to wash (v. 7). Being an obedient the man comes back seeing.⁷⁸ Instead of ending, John presents the consequences, as the healing again takes place on Sabbath. By expanding following dialogue, the author brings evidence of Jesus' identity and alludes to the symbolic meaning of the story.⁷⁹

The Authority of Jesus

Jesus has the authority to heal the blind. There is no record of healing the blind in the Old Testament, but rather this is associated with God's own activity (Ex.4:11; Ps.146:8),⁸⁰ or it relates to the messianic period (Is.29:18; 35:5; 42:7; 61:1-2). Therefore, for Jesus to heal the blind means to stand in the position of divine or messianic activity. Jesus' authority over religious traditions uncovers in the answer to the disciples' question, is against Jews' interpretation of the illness (Ez.18:20; Ps.89:33; Jn.9:34).⁸¹ The authority of Jesus again is seen as He takes the initiative. Likewise, in the method of healing. Using spittle, Jesus acts in sovereign manner disregarding to any rules,⁸² even when it brings uncleanness (Lev.15:8). Therefore, Carson's remark that the story shows Jesus' authority over the Law is valid.⁸³

Another aspect of Jesus' authority over the Law is that the healing takes place on the Sabbath. Any healing was forbidden unless life was in danger (SBk.I; pp.623ff.). However, it seems that Jesus purposely continues breaking legislation in making clay; mixing (Shab.7:2; 24:3); and placing (14:4).⁸⁴ The reason for such action, rightly pointed out by Calvin is, "in order that the resultant offence to the orthodox would give more publicity to the matter and so the truth of the miracle shine more brightly".⁸⁵ Another aspect that helps the author to convey the idea of Jesus' authority is the fact that the blindness of the man was from birth. It seems that John deliberately includes the astonishment of the people to show the man's incredibility of man's change in order to affirm the healing and its testimony to Jesus (vv. 8-12).⁸⁶ Lindars concludes that the healing is not only a restorative act but also a creative act, which remains permanent (//Gen.2:7).⁸⁷ If such an assumption is right then the story presents the divine power of Jesus.

The Theme of 'Light'

tells nothing concerning theological meaning. See Fossum, 18. If Morris' suggestion is right that it links to Genesis (2:7), then Jesus acts as a creator. See Morris, 480-1.

⁷⁷ The concept: 'been sent'-is important in John as it frequently used referring to Jesus (3:16; 4:34; 5:23, 30 etc.), and therefore refers to the Sent One. Morris, 481; Carson, 365. Carson sees some parallels: as the Jews rejected the waters of Shiloah (Is.8:6) so here they reject Jesus. Similarly Genesis (49:10), "the sceptre will not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes". Carson, 365.

⁷⁸ 'ἀναβλέφα' (v.12//v.7) means to look up [see Wilkinson, 456.] that may be associated, as acceptably points Derrett, with the OT messianic prophecy where the closed eyes became opened up (Ps.146:8Ms.29:10//35:5). See Derrett, 253.

⁷⁹ Carroll, 135. Wilkinson rightly admits that the presence of discourses in healing stories is typical to John (in distinct from the Synoptics) that helps to convey story's significance. [Concerning first healing Morris considers the presence of dialogue of the 'water of life' (4:1-42; //4:50, 51, 53). Jesus is the Christ, 23.]

⁸⁰ Witherington, 180.

⁸¹ R. Schnackenburg. The Gospel According to St. John. (London: Burns & Oates, 1979), 2. 240. Blindness especially in the Old Testament is seen as the result of sin (01.28:29; 2Sam.5:6; Is.44:9; 56:10).

⁸² Morris, 480.

⁸³ Carson, 364.

⁸⁴ Morris, 480.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 484.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Lindars, 341, 343.

The theme of "I am the Light" (8:12), which started in the previous chapter develops and is demonstrated in the story of healing the blind.⁸⁸ Bultmann rightly suggests that in the healing the concepts 'light' with 'darkness' are symbolised in the concepts 'seeing' and 'blind'.⁸⁹ Moreover, Derrett⁹⁰ interestingly comments that the story is startling, as for Jews the 'light' is no less than Jehovah Himself (in Him the 'Light' gives the life and salvation). Therefore, it surely signifies Jesus' divine status. The point is valid as the healing illustrates John's proclamation, "the light shines ...and the darkness did not comprehend it" (1:5). The healed man standing against religious hostility comes to deeper realisation of the Healer instead of into failing capitulation. Therefore, Bultmann's suggestion is sound that the discourse proves the 'unchallengability' of the event, which, Schackenburg adds, is unable to overpower faith (12:37).⁹¹ On the other hand, Morris' statement is also right that the miracle, "inevitably results in judgement for those whose natural habitat is darkness. They oppose the light and they are condemned thereby" (9:15-17; 18-23, 27, 29, 34, 39, 41).⁹²

An Encouragement to Believe

It is appropriate to claim that the prime purpose of the story is to encourage faith. It seems that John wants to highlight the importance of having spiritual sight by exemplifying it in healing the physical.⁹³ The healing is the means that leads the man to the faith in Jesus. The whole story presents the progressive awareness of the man in the significance of Jesus. An allusion to faith may be noticed in the man's obedience to Jesus. Further, although, he knows Jesus' name, the words 'I do not know' (v. 12) indicate that the man does not yet understand Who Jesus is.⁹⁴ Barrett rightly comments that the man has much to learn before he gains full recognition (v. 38).⁹⁵ First he thinks of Jesus as a man (v. 11);⁹⁶ then, he testifies about Him as a prophet (v. 17/14:19).⁹⁷ Consequently, he recognises Him as the One to whom devotion may be given (vv. 27f).⁹⁸ Finally, the faith of the healed man overcoming the threat of excommunication, he comes to acknowledge Jesus' status as the Son of Man (vv. 35-39).⁹⁹

Morris rightly suggests that the miracle not only transforms the life of the man but it also provides a more extensive opportunity to believe for those who witness his restoration (v. 38).¹⁰⁰ Schnackenburg remarks on three particular questions asked by onlookers. Concerning the identity of the man 'is that man who was blind?' (v. 8-9); the way of healing 'how has he become healed?' (v. 10); and theological consequence -Is it evidence for Jesus' divine origin?' (vv. 16ff.).¹⁰¹ Presented by the author the interest of onlookers alludes on their potential ability to find the answer. The identities of the man are confirmed by the man himself and his parents (vv. 9, 20). The way of the healing is affirmed by the repetition of the man's description (vv. 11,

⁸⁸ Schnackenburg, 238; Carson, 363.

⁸⁹ Bultmann, 340; Thomas, 118-9.

⁹⁰ M. Derrett. "John 9:6 Read With Isaiah 6:10; 20:9". In The Evangelical Quarterly. LXVI.3 (July, 1994), 75.

⁹¹ Schnackenburg, 247.

⁹² Morris, 483; also see J. Painter. "John 9 and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel". In Journal for the Study of the New Testament. 28 (October, 1986), 31.

⁹³ Painter, 47; Saucy, 284; Warrington, 135.

⁹⁴ Schnackenburg, 247.

⁹⁵ Barrett, 359.

⁹⁶ 'άνθρώπος' is often used referring to Jesus (5:12; 8:40; 9:11; 10:33; 11:47; 18:14; 19:5; etc.) possibly to stress His manhood. See Morris, 275.

⁹⁷ Possibly the highest level by which the man could characterise Jesus. See *Ibid.*, 486.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Painter, 37.

¹⁰⁰ Morris, 486.

¹⁰¹ Schnackenburg, 246.

15).¹⁰² The theological issue raised is breaking the Sabbath (vv. 14ff.). Consequently, although the debate is controversial, some recognise Jesus as one from God (v. 16).¹⁰³

The same success might be reflected in John's readers. Right from the beginning in the description of the setting John indicates the name of the pool - 'Siluam' ('been sent' v.7). Bultmann correctly notices that this is important in John's narrative (3:17, 17; 5:36; etc.).¹⁰⁴ Carson rightly concludes that the healing came from the Pool called 'Sent' but from the Sent One Himself.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, seeing the parallel between Jesus and 'Siluam' it is worth noting that the latter in the Old Testament was associated with the Messiah: "the sceptre will not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes" (Gen.49:10).¹⁰⁶ Therefore, on the basis of analysis it is right to suggest that the significance of the story is to present Jesus as the expected Messiah (vv. 30, 31).¹⁰⁷ Even though Jesus is outside the narrative until verse 35 and the healed man is in the centre of the debate, the 'stone offence' - is Jesus Himself.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, it may be concluded that the healing illustrates the authority and power of Jesus (vv. 25, 31-33), that He is the 'Light of the world' (v. 5) and it points to His messianic and divine status.

IV. The Resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-46)

The story precedes the description of another wave of opposition that developed into an attempt to kill Jesus (10:22). The event takes place in the small village of Bethany near Jerusalem.¹⁰⁹ At the beginning John introduces Lazarus¹¹⁰ who was sick, and the main characters; the sisters Martha and Mary (v. 1). After introducing Mary (v. 2) the author tells about the message that was sent to Jesus: "the one You love¹¹¹ is sick¹¹²" (v. 3). Jesus does not go immediately but waits several days. He explains to His disciples that the sickness is not to death but for the Glory of God and the Son (v. 4). When Jesus decided to go on the way to Judea He tells his disciples that Lazarus died (vv. 11-14).¹¹³ Here, in verses 6-16 John introduces the conversation with the disciples.¹¹⁴ At the time of Jesus' arrival at Bethany He knows that Lazarus had been in the grave for four days (v. 17). Verses 20-32 contain Jesus' conversation with Martha¹¹⁵ and meeting with Mary. The actual resurrection is recorded in the verses 33-44. In verse 33 Jesus sees the people coming and

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Bultmann, 333.

¹⁰⁵ Carson, 365.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Morris, 475; Carson, 363.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 365; Blank, 255.

¹⁰⁹ Three of the four healings take place in Judea and one in Galilee. Therefore John is more interested in Judea than Synoptics (17 out of 22), possibly wanting to stress that Jesus came to His own and they did not receive Him (1:11).

¹¹⁰ 'God has helped'. See "Λάζαρος". *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*. Ed. J.H. Thayer. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 367. Possibly may have etymological significance. Barrett, 389.

¹¹¹ 'Φίλεισ' // 'ἀγάπη' (v.5) - most likely indicates more the spiritual relationship. See Schnackenburg, 323.

¹¹² The word 'ἡσθένει' - see (4:46); p.2.

¹¹³ 'fallen asleep' is classical Greek expression, refers to death (1Cor.15:6). See Lindars, 391. The text may indicate the divine knowledge of Jesus. See Schnackenburg, 325. Wilkinson offers possible suggestion that Jesus gives a new understanding of death for believers.

¹¹⁴ Here, are included: teaching concerning the light of the world (v.9); the necessity of doing the work at that time (v.9).

¹¹⁵ Here is seen that Martha believes in Jesus' ability to heal before the death (v.21); in response to the statement, 'will raise again'(v.23) Martha indicates that she believes it will happen in the 'resurrection'(v.24). Then John includes two important statements, "I am the resurrection and life ...whoever believes in Me shall never die"(vv.25-26); and, "I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God"(v.27).

weeps Himself being “moved in spirit and trouble.”¹¹⁶ (vv. 38). He asks about the place where Lazarus has been put. When Jesus comes to the tomb He commands them to take away the stone (v. 39). Mary tries to hinder Jesus however He reminds her, “Did I not tell you¹¹⁷ that if you believe, you would see the glory of God?” (v. 40). When the stone had been taken, Jesus prayed (vv. 41-42). Then, with a ‘loud voice’ He commanded, “Lazarus, come out!” When Lazarus came out Jesus told the people to “take off the grave clothes and let him go” (v. 44). The rest of the chapter tells about opposition and the decision to arrest Jesus (vv. 45-54).

The purpose of the resurrection according to Jesus’ words is for the ‘glory of God’ (vv. 4, 40) and in order that witnesses ‘may believe’ (vv. 15, 25-27, 40, 42). In the Old Testament the understanding of ‘glory’ relates to the presence of God or His manifestation (Ex.16:10; 29:43; 33:19-34:8; Is.6:3). If such interpretation is right then attention should be paid to how God presents Himself in the story that it encourages faith in Him.

The Authority of Jesus

The story shows that Jesus has authority over death.¹¹⁸ Taking into account that in the Old Testament God Himself is the only source of healing and life (Ex.15:26; Hos.11:3; Jer.14:19; 30:17-22; 31:33) Jesus, thus, refers to His high status. The delay of Jesus shows that He acts in a sovereign manner that again verifies His authority. Possibly, as Carson adds, it also shows the inability of Jesus to be manipulated.¹¹⁹ However, what is most likely, according to Morris’ opinion, is that the delay indicates that Jesus “is determined to do God’s will” (2:1ff. / 7:3-10).¹²⁰ Although, Barrett suggests Jesus delays until Lazarus dies,¹²¹ it does not contradict Morris’ idea, as the Father’s will could have been Lazarus’ death. Warrington validly admits that Jesus’ prayer does not presume Jesus’ need to gain the power but rather highlights His dependence upon and unity with the Father.¹²² The discourse with Martha discloses the recognition of Jesus’ power to give life not only in the present but also in eternity as Judge (vv. 24-25).¹²³ Therefore, Bernard acceptably points out that the story may serve as anticipation of what is to come on the Last Day (5:21, 25, 28).¹²⁴

There is no indication of faith to raise Lazarus from any of the people or of any such request. Instead, it is the result of Jesus’ own initiative. The extraordinary miracle is overcoming the certainty of death. John stresses the fact that Lazarus had been in the grave for four days (vv. 17, 39), which shows that, “all hope of any restoration of life by what might be called natural means, is banished”. Therefore, the assumption that Jesus accomplishes a miracle as a new creative act is evident.¹²⁵ Thus, it may be concluded by Carson’s suggestion, the story confirms Jesus’ statement of He Himself being the ‘Resurrection and Life’ (v. 25).¹²⁶

¹¹⁶ Jesus’ emotions are discussed by commentators. Possible: because of present weeping or to stress His humility (Schnackenburg, 335); or towards death (Morris, 556); anger towards unbelief (Barrett, 398; Lindars, 398) that is more likely (relation to vv.37, 38).

¹¹⁷ Not in the text, possibly was not recorded.

¹¹⁸ In ancient world a death was a most feared thing (Mt.28:13; Lk.22:45; Act.12:6; Job.3:13; 21:13; Ezek.32:19-20, 27). See Morris, 542.

¹¹⁹ Carson, 407.

¹²⁰ Morris, 540.

¹²¹ Barrett, 387.

¹²² Warrington, 140; Barrett, 388.

¹²³ Warrington, 139.

¹²⁴ Bernard, 387.

¹²⁵ According to the Jews’ understanding if death is less than four days the spirit has not left the body. See Morris, 546. The statement is valid, although it puts doubts on Jesus’ resurrection.

¹²⁶ Carson, 412.

An Encouragement to Believe

It is correct to say that the purpose of the incident focuses on the response of the bystanders more than the miracle itself (vv. 4, 15, 19, 40, 42, 45).¹²⁷ In the beginning Martha and Mary knew Jesus as a healer who is able to prevent the death.¹²⁸ Therefore, the incident gave them opportunity to recognise Jesus in a deeper way. It seems that the discourses with sisters are to prepare them for the forthcoming climax where the previous statements (vv. 25-27) concerning the status of Jesus will be dramatically confirmed. Afterwards, John does not fail to mention the faith of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus in their obedience and witness about Christ (15:27; 17:18; 20:21). Lazarus, especially, becomes a living testimony (12:9-10).¹²⁹ Similarly, the resurrection increases the faith of Jesus' disciples (v. 15).¹³⁰ This is important for them because the time for the passion is approaching. Concerning the onlookers, it is right to suppose that the miracle is their opportunity to review their perception of Jesus.¹³¹ As result among the people who are witnesses of the miracle are some who are able to see the significance and to believe (v. 45).¹³² Therefore, the readers are again challenged how to respond to Jesus.

Conclusion

Schnackenburg sees the story as the culmination of 'signs'.¹³³ He continues that John deliberately chooses these healings in order to present Jesus as the one who brings 'Life'.¹³⁴ The suggestion is possible knowing that the theme of Life is the 'central Christological idea of the fourth gospel'.¹³⁵ Thus, the revelation of Jesus is presented in His words and actions within the story. However, Bernard rightly comments that the "irony is that if in this miracle of restoration to life both the Father and the Son are glorified, the supreme moment of glorification comes in Jesus' death" (12:28).¹³⁶ From this it may be concluded that the role of resurrection is to be "stimulus" to believe not only in His abilities but in Him as the Son of God,¹³⁷ through the presentation Jesus' divine authority and power to give life.

V. The Relationship between the Healing of Jesus and Messiah Statement of John (20:31)

All the healing miracles are included to convey a theological message.¹³⁸ Thompson's comment that the prime purpose of the 'signs' in the gospel is to indicate Jesus' divinity¹³⁹ is supported by John's statement (20:31). According to Pointer, John's 'signs' point beyond themselves to the messiahship of Jesus.¹⁴⁰ The probability of the suggestion may already be confirmed by the word's usage. The word 'σημείον' means a mark which differentiates one thing or from another.¹⁴¹ Wilkinson adds that in the "Septuagint ... 'σημείον' rendered the Hebrew word 'oth', and came to mean 'a symbolical anticipation or showing forth of a greater

¹²⁷ Warrington, 138.

¹²⁸ Schnackenburg, 329.

¹²⁹ J.N. Suggit. "The Raising of Lazarus". In *The Expository Times*. 95.4 (January, 1984), 106-8.

¹³⁰ Bernard, 380.

¹³¹ Warrington, 139.

¹³² Ibid., 138.

¹³³ Schnackenburg, 316; Carson, 408.

¹³⁴ Schnackenburg, 316.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Bernard, 374; Morris, 536.

¹³⁷ Schnackenburg, 327.

¹³⁸ Fossum, 18.

¹³⁹ Thompson, 91.

¹⁴⁰ Pointer, 31.

¹⁴¹ As "Judas' kiss"(Mt. 26:48); or "circumcision"(Rom.4:11); See Wilkinson, 458.

reality¹⁴² of which the 'σημείον' is nevertheless itself a part'" (Dt.4:34; 2King.20:9; Is.38:7).¹⁴³ In the Synoptics the word is usually used in an eschatological sense indicating the nearness of the Last Day (Matt.24:3, 24, 30; Mr.13:4), which was again, for Jews, associated with the coming kingdom. Therefore, it is correct to suggest that John's healings are the 'signs',¹⁴⁴ which in the Old Testament prophetic understanding reveal Jesus as Christ,¹⁴⁵ the Son of God.¹⁴⁶

However, Larson believes that Jesus healed out of His compassion and mercy and in order to prove His relationship with God and faith in Him (Matt.14:14; 20:30, 34; Lk.7:13). Larson adds that Jesus saw total health as perfect God's will for all.¹⁴⁷ If this suggestion is right then it is difficult to explain why among 'many' (5:3, 6ff.) Jesus chooses to heal only lame man. Furthermore, there is no indication from John that the compassion of Jesus is the motive for the healing. Dickinson rightly remarks that physical healing was not the prime purpose of Jesus.¹⁴⁸ Instead, as Wilkinson comments, it seems that healing is not complete if the previously afflicted is not motivated to fellowship with God (4:53; 5:14; 9:38; 11:45).¹⁴⁹ Similarly, Fossum states that this aspect of healing is not sufficient to prove that Jesus is the Messiah as His opponents could do the same (Mat.7:15-23; 12:27; 24:24; Luk.11:19).¹⁵⁰

Although, the sufficiency of healing is clearly seen in John's presentation of the individuals' responses, according to the author's statement (20:31) healings are certainly sufficiently in harmony with the other signs. Additionally, the assumption of the opponents' ability to accomplish similar miracles cannot be adequate to belittle the significance of Jesus'. Moreover, the Old Testament messianic expectation clearly may be seen behind Jesus' healing.¹⁵¹ Likewise, the Synoptics consider the presence of miracles in Jesus' ministry as a sign of His divinity (Matt.9:35; 11:1-6; 14:22-33; Mr.6:47, 56; Lk.9:1-6).¹⁵² Furthermore, according to Soucy's research, in the 'intertestament' period the Messiah was expected to be a miracle-worker.¹⁵³ Therefore, Brady is correct to claim that the 'secret' of Jesus' messiahship lies not in the lack of its performance but rather in the lack of its misunderstanding.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, it may be concluded that the healings in John directly relates to the 'signs' in statement 20:31 as the means for confirmation of Jesus' messiahship.

Conclusion

The role of healing is not to show the examples of healing but rather God's own activity in Jesus (3:2; 9:33). Lindars rightly states that "it is not the kind of continuation of his ministry which his disciples, and the

¹⁴² Italics are authors'.

¹⁴³ Wilkinson, 458.

¹⁴⁴ The relationship between signs and healing see p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ "In the day of His coming he will give sight to the blind, hearing to deaf, speech to the dumb, and power to the paralysed" (Is.9:6-7//29:18//33:3-4//35:3- 6/142:7).

¹⁴⁶ Brady sees the title as the most important as the Messiah (2Sam.7:14; Ps.2:7; Is.25:8; 53:5; 61; Jer.30:12-13; 31:8; Hos.5:12ff.; 14:5; Matt.16:16; 26:63; 1Pet.1:10-12). See J. Brady. "The Role of Miracle-Working as Authentication of Jesus as 'The Son of God'". In *Churchman*. 103.1 (1989), 32. See *Divine Healer*, 202ff..

¹⁴⁷ Larson, 67.

¹⁴⁸ R. Dickinson. *God does Heal Today*. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), 10. "9 Wilkinson, 459.

¹⁴⁹ Wilkinson, 459.

¹⁵⁰ Fossum, 18.

¹⁵¹ See ref. 169-170. Ibid., 38.

¹⁵² Brady, 32.

¹⁵³ 2Baruch 72, "...then healing shall descend in dew"; Bar Kachba's messiahship was based on his miracles (Threni R. ad Lam 2:2). Further rabbinic material. See E. Bammel. "John Did No Miracle". In *Miracles*. Ed. C.F.D. Moule (London: Mowbray, 1965), 188-89; Saucy, 298.

¹⁵⁴ Brady, 33.

church after them, will perform after his exaltation; it is a work which forms part of the revelation about himself, without which his full identity as the Son of God cannot be known".¹⁵⁵ From each story various lessons may be learnt. Healing may serve as an illustration of Jesus' teaching that He is the One Who has divine power and authority to heal to, over consequences of sin and over the Law; Who brings life;¹⁵⁶ Who restores people back to the community;¹⁵⁷ symbolises the nature of the future kingdom.¹⁵⁸ In conclusion it may be determined that the prime role of healing as 'signs' (20:31) is to encourage the faith in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God. Jesus is the One who imparts saving faith into those who ask for healing. Where there was no faith and recognition Jesus wanted to initiate it (4:53; 9:35-38) or increase it (11:15; 11:27). Whoever the onlookers were, Jesus wanted them to believe in His higher status (14:11; 10:38).¹⁵⁹

Marinus rightly believes that, 'σημείον' is a demonstration which asks for reaction'.¹⁶⁰ The healing of the official's son encourages faith of the whole household.¹⁶¹ Considering the 'lame man' Wilkinson sees the man coming to faith, on which the forgiveness is based. The physical healing of the blind man brings the same to the full recognition of Christ.¹⁶² Whereas, Lazarus becomes "a walking testimony to the power of Christ" (11:45; 12:9-11).¹⁶³ Wilkinson rightly points that the demonstration of the effects of healings will have the same result on its readers.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁵ Lindars, 343.

¹⁵⁶ Dickinson, 10.

¹⁵⁷ Carroll, 138.

¹⁵⁸ Soucy, 282.

¹⁵⁹ Wilkinson, 452.

¹⁶⁰ Thompson, 105.

¹⁶¹ Wilkinson, 455.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 456.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 457.

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