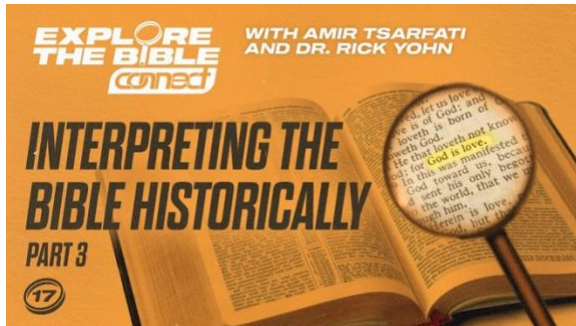




Amir Tsarfati
Dr. Rick Yohn

Explore the Bible: Interpreting the Bible Historically Part 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KolwQnYGu6c>



AMIR: Hey, Shalom everyone. I'm Amir Tsarfati from CONNECT in the Jezreel Valley in Galilee, Israel. And once again, this is *Explore the Bible* with Dr. Rick Yohn. Shalom, Rick. How are you, my friend?

RICK: Shalom, Amir, I am doing quite well and I'm very excited, especially for the next number of podcasts as we look into the Word of God, especially the Gospel of John.

AMIR: Yes, and we began to look into the story behind the story, the way to interpret basically the Bible in a deeper way, and not to just look at what's written but to understand what's beyond it. And we already touched in the first two podcasts, the first two chapters of *Explore the Bible* about that; we touched quite a few topics. But today we want to look into John chapter 5 and on and ask ourselves three questions. What is the story? What is it that we need to look at in the story? And what is the story behind the story? Did I get that one right?

RICK: You got that exactly right. Trying to get the complicated made simple and that's about as simple as we could make it so that our viewers will just, as they go through any of the narrative books in the



Bible, they just have to ask three questions: What is the story? Because “narrative” is a story. And Jesus was such a great storyteller, and the Apostle John picked up on that whole process of telling a story. And then when we look at the story, the question is: “What do we look for in that story?”

And we're going back to observation. "What do I see here? What should I see? What should I look for?" And then there's always the story behind the story. That helps us to interpret the Bible from a historical standpoint to understand what supports what we are just reading right now?

AMIR: Yeah, and another thing that I think we've learned to establish, and we're committed to do on our series of podcasts on *Exploring the Bible* is, is to cause people to always use their Old Testament as well because oftentimes that's the story behind the story. And if you toss that one out through the window, you just lost the story behind the story. And again, it's important, I always tell people, guys, the fact that it's called Old Testament doesn't mean that it's not to be used or it's not to be read or it's not to be taken as the Word of God. It's only old because there's a new and that's what makes it old. But in reality, by the way, what we find is that it's the entire Word of God. And in the first century, people got saved only by reading the Old Testament. And so...

RICK: ...Amir, I think we should call the Old Testament the Foundational Testament.

AMIR: Yes, or the First Testament.

RICK: Yeah, everything in the New Testament is based upon the Old Testament.

AMIR: Exactly.

RICK: It's the foundation.

AMIR: Yeah, I mean, I'm all for it. You know that. But anyway, as we dive into the Gospel of John chapter 5 and on, we're going to see quite a few interesting stories behind stories. And I'm talking about John chapter 5, the pools of Bethesda, a man that is healed there after having been paralyzed for quite a long time. And so there's quite a few things to look in that particular narrative. Do you want me to read a portion of it? Or do you want to already go all the way in?

RICK: I think if you read the first seven verses, that will lay the foundation for us.

AMIR: All right, so let me do that. (John 5:1-15, 18:) “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. 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.’”

So these are the first seven verses of John 5.

RICK: Let me just pick up and I’ll read the result. “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. ¹⁰ The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, ‘It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.’ ¹¹ He answered them, ‘He who made me well said to me, “Take up your bed and walk.”’ ¹² Then they asked him, ‘Who is the Man who said to you, “Take up your bed and walk”?’ ¹³ But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. ¹⁴ Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, ‘See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.’ ¹⁵ The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.” Now, what should you be looking for when you turn to a story like that?

And the first thing that comes to my mind is the attitude of the man who was made well. You see no thankfulness. You see no gratitude. In fact, he was so fearful of the religious Jews

when they asked, “Who cured you on the Sabbath?” The man, “I don’t know. I don’t even know His name.” And then when Jesus saw him in the temple, then he ran right away to tell the Jewish leaders, “The Man’s name is Jesus.” “Oh, that Man.” So don’t just read the Bible like a newspaper. Ask questions. And the first question is the attitude. What is the attitude of that man? And then what’s the attitude of the Jews? You’d think the Jews would rejoice! The man was made well, even though it’s the Sabbath. “You’ve been sick for all these days, these years, and you could not walk, and now you can walk. Wonderful. Praise God!” You would think that’s how they would respond, but they didn’t. So the attitude of the man, the attitude of the Jews, and then you start looking, and you see in the Gospel of John all these claims that Jesus made, and that’s why I love the Gospel of John. You know, the Old Testament tells us what the Messiah was going to be like. And then the Epistles tell us who that Messiah was, and what all He did, but the Gospels, in the Gospels, *Jesus* tells us who He is. And that is so important. And when He tells us who He is, He is revealing Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God, the living God Himself. So look for the claims of Christ.

And if you have your Bibles, I hope you are turning to this Gospel and you are following with us because I want you to be able to know exactly what to look for and follow with us in the Gospel of John and start looking at these claims. For instance, look at verse 18. **“¹⁸ Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”** Jesus is making Himself equal with God, because He was God. **“¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)**

AMIR: And I often tell people that the Jews never rejected Jesus as Messiah. They rejected Him as someone who claimed to be God, because that’s the blasphemy they accused Him for. And in

fact, this is the biggest problem in their misunderstanding of what Messiah is all about. It's not who the Messiah is, as much as what the Messiah is all about, and what is it that He came for. And once they understand that it'll be easier to immediately come to the conclusion that Yeshua of Nazareth is the One.

And yes, I want to remind people that are watching it right now: This program is not merely a Bible study; this program is the attempt to teach you how to study, not to study, but how to study. When you pick up your Bible and read, and you can do it alone, you can do it with people, you can do it at church. But the point is, it's way more than just the print on the pages of your Bible. And as I said, and as you said, Dr. Rick, it's what the story is, what to look for in the story, and what is the story behind the story. So keep that in mind. So Dr. Rick, go on and tell us more about that.

RICK: Just to keep reading that chapter and write down, pencil and paper, just write down the various claims. I think I found five or six claims in that chapter. So I'm not going to give them all to you. I want you to investigate for yourself because Jesus is telling us who He is in this passage of Scripture. And then what He does, He backs up His claims with witnesses.

AMIR: With actions and witnesses.

RICK: Yes, that's right. The action was the healing. [AMIR: Exactly.] And then He claims who He is, being able to perform that miracle. And then He comes up with these witnesses. And there are a number of witnesses. Look at **verse 31**. ³¹ **'If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.'** Now what does He mean by that? Well, according to the law, you need two or three witnesses to verify a fact. So He is basically saying: "Based on the Law, I'm only one witness. So one witness doesn't count." ³² **'There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.'** ³³ **'You have sent to John,...'** meaning John the

Baptist, “... ‘and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴ Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. ³⁶ But I have a greater witness than John’s;...” here’s the third witness, “³⁶ ... ‘for the works...’” or the miracles, “... ‘which the Father has given Me to finish —the very works that I do—bear witness of Me.’” Now I’m going to let you find the other witnesses in here. So you keep on reading this and look for the other witnesses that He has in here.

AMIR: So that’s part...

RICK: ...Because the last witness is very important.

AMIR: Yeah. So, what you just alluded to is what to look for in the story. Am I right?

RICK: Yes, yes. Look for the claims of Christ. Look for the witnesses that He has. Keep asking yourself questions as you read. Now the question is, what’s the story behind this story? Jesus healing. Well, if you look at... Again, you could find this on your own. In the Bible margins, either on the sides or in the column, center column, look for a letter and then follow that letter or go to blueletterbible.org and you can find the cross references there that take you back to the Old Testament.

AMIR: To find a parallel story that is having the stories that has the same components of this one and to see what that one looked like.

RICK: Exactly. And if you go back, you’re going to find Isaiah chapter 53 verses four and five where it talks about the Messiah, and talks about healing. You’re also going to find that God reveals Himself in the Old Testament as Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. And then later on in the New Testament, we find, because this was the Sabbath, whenever Jesus did a miracle—it seems that He did it on the Sabbath—and that’s why these Jews were so angry with Him. “You were

working on the Sabbath.” But Jesus says, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”

AMIR: Yeah. He exposed religiosity and He came against religion, rather than faith and relationship. And I think He also wanted people to understand that obedience is better than sacrifice.

RICK: Amen. Again, when you open your Bibles, you look for that story in the narrative, in the Gospels. What is the story about? And then begin to ask yourself, what is it I should be looking for in this story? And you are looking in chapter 5 for these claims that Jesus has made. You’re looking for the witnesses. And then you can come up with your own things that you are looking for in the Scriptures. I want the words of the Bible to jump out at you, especially when you begin asking the Holy Spirit to reveal new truth to you that you haven’t seen. Go back to familiar passages, and you’ll be surprised. I do this every morning. I’ll go to passages that I’ve taught on, I’ve preached on, and I ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten me and show me something that I hadn’t seen before, or maybe I even taught it, but now I can see it in a new light, and He never disappoints me.

AMIR: You know, a few years ago, well, quite a few years ago, while I was still a tour guide, I brought a family to the pools of Bethesda, to this very place where this story took place. And they had a son who was semi-paralyzed. And they asked me since I’m a believer, a Jewish believer, a local, their tour guide, a teacher, they said, “Please pray for his healing right here. It’s very symbolic.” And then I said to them, “Look, I have no problem praying for his healing here, but obviously, it’s not like *here* God is going to heal him, and elsewhere He’s not.” And then I told them this, “If you carefully examine the story, you see that I’m not sure we’re going to see this man in heaven one day. I’m not sure if this man truly repented.” And I said to them, “I prefer to pray for your son to be born again, Spirit-filled, so we will have eternity with him. And not

necessarily that this physical healing is all that is there. Because this man has been healed physically, but he was sick as a dog spiritually. And look at his ungratefulness, look at his ratting on on Jesus and all of that.” So for me, that spoke volumes when... And when they listened and they thought, “You’re right, we do want to see physical healing, but physical healing will mean nothing if the heart is still sick and is a heart of...”

RICK: ...Yeah, the other thing I noticed in this passage is that the man was focused on the water, and Jesus was focused on healing.

AMIR: Correct.

RICK: Jesus just asked, “Do you want to get well?” I mean, what a wonderful question. “Do you want to get well?” “Yes, I want to get well.” No, that’s not what the man said. He says, “No one has taken me into the water.” [AMIR: He’s complaining!] Jesus is basically saying, “Forget the water, I’m asking you a question. Do you want to get well?” And I believe in times in our own personal lives, we are looking for one thing, and Jesus wants to offer us something else. And He keeps trying to get our attention because He wants to direct us in a certain direction, or He wants to provide for us something that we’re not even thinking about. And we’re looking over here, wondering, “Why aren’t You working over here in my life? I’ve been praying and praying, and I don’t see You at work over here.” And He is saying, “No, I’m over here, and this is what I want to give you.” If it had been up to the man, he would still be lying there.

AMIR: And the man was full of excuses also. I mean, he was looking for the religious way out. He was looking for why he’s not healed, always blaming others for his situation. And when he was offered to be healed, you would expect him to say, “Yes, absolutely,” and not to talk—But again, that’s the story of so many people. They really don’t want to get better. They just want to give you the excuse why they are in this situation. And all that the Lord wants is, “I want to get

you out of this situation, and I want you to stop blaming everybody all around you. Just take responsibility.” I mean, just get up, and that’s it, and then be thankful. Be thankful. And so, yeah, this is a great story.

And of course, whenever you come to Israel, and I hope you will, you can see that place. You can actually see the very place where this thing actually took place. Next to it, there is a St. Anne’s Church with the most amazing acoustics whenever we sing, if you remember. Yes, yeah, so it is a real place. It is a real story. This has happened and we know that it happened because even the Romans, the pagan Romans, knew there was healing going on here. And they had built a shrine for Asclepius, the god of healing for them, whose symbol was the serpent. And of course, we found their remains of body organs made of stone, because if they wanted their foot to be healed, they would carve a foot out of stone and bring it as an offering. And then later on, a Byzantine church, and then that one was destroyed. And then a Crusader church was built already next to it, where tradition is now that Anne, the mother of Mary, was actually buried. And again, isn’t that interesting? Again, the whole focus is shifted from the healing of the man to some religious story that took place there, may have taken—And now everybody is calling it St. Anne. So the thing is this, it is a real story. It’s a real place, and there’s a real message.

RICK: And there’s another real story at the real place and with a real message in the next chapter.

AMIR: Exactly.

RICK: In chapter 6. Yeah. Now, this is the famous passage of the feeding of the 5,000. And what I find interesting is even though John’s Gospel is 95% different than all the other Gospels, all four Gospels have the feeding of the 5,000. And when you think that 5,000, actually there were far more than 5,000 people there.

AMIR: True.

RICK: Because the Bible tells us there were 5,000 men.

AMIR: Correct.

RICK: And of course, you could add women, their wives, and then you could also add children. So I mean, there were thousands of people who were there. And I find, why don't you read, Amir, the first couple verses.

AMIR: Another festival of the Jews was approaching. So it's very interesting. **(John 6:1-14)** 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. ⁵ Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' ⁶ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. ⁷ Philip answered Him, 'Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.' ⁸ One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, ⁹ 'There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?' ¹⁰ Then Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.'** Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand." The men, yeah. ¹¹ **And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, 'Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.' ¹³ Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ Then those**

men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’” Amazing.

RICK: It is a great story and when you look at the other Gospels, you find more what’s going on here. For instance, there’s only one Gospel that tells you where this is taking place. [AMIR: Correct.] It’s interesting. One of the questions I would ask is not only who is there, and we already talked about that, but where are they? And Luke tells us that they were at Bethesda, at Bethsaida.

AMIR: Bethsaida.

RICK: Bethsaida. And it’s also known as a solitary place. They were probably not right in Bethsaida, but somewhere near Bethsaida, at a solitary place. So the question comes to my mind and here’s what you should ask yourself. Why were they there? Who was there? Where were they? Why were they there? Most of us don’t even think about that. Why were they there? Well, the Bible tells us why they were there. If you look at Matthew 14 and Mark 16, you find that these disciples just returned from their missionary journey that the Lord sent them on. And they come back and they’re so excited, but of course they’re also pretty much worn out from all the traveling that they did. But not only that, John the Baptist had just been beheaded. And so Jesus says, “Let’s go to a solitary place.” They needed to get away. And Amir, I know you’ve experienced this on all of your travels.

AMIR: Oh, yeah.

RICK: There’s a time you just need to get away and to get some rest because you are traveling, you’re teaching. And it’s a wonderful experience for you and for those who hear your teaching, but there are times you want to be at a solitary place where you have some rest. That was the idea. That’s what caused them to go over there to Bethsaida.

AMIR: Yeah.

RICK: Now, when they get over there, surprise, all these other people show up. So Jesus starts teaching them, but it's getting late. And where are you going to get food? There is Bethsaida, that's a little distance away, but who has enough money to buy food to feed all these people? So when you begin to look at these other Gospels, you get that kind of a background and you start asking the right questions. Who is there? Where are they? Why are they there? This story takes on a new perspective.

AMIR: True.

RICK: They were there to get rest, but instead of rest, Jesus sees another opportunity to teach and He teaches, but it's getting late. Everybody's getting hungry. What do we do about it? And then my question is, why did He ask Philip this question?

AMIR: And we got—You know what we're going to do? I think that we're going to leave that question for the next time.

RICK: Really? Okay!

AMIR: Yeah. First of all, we need that suspense. And second, we're just running out of time here for this one. But I actually, I think this is the—Well, we're 32 minutes into the program. I think that what I want to do is next time we're going to dive into why Philip, and even move on to chapter 7 and chapter 8 to see more stories of how we can look into the narrative, what's to look in it and what's the story behind the story.

And again, folks, the idea of this program is to teach you how to study the Bible. And then you can go, ask those questions yourself and you will get the answers because the Holy Spirit will never fail you. Dr. Rick, thank you so much for being with us today. I'm looking forward to our next time where we're going to answer that question. Why Philip? And move on to more chapters

and more ways to demonstrate how important it is to study the Word and to go deeper and ask those questions so we can get an understanding of who God is all about, what His plan is and how faithful He is to fulfill it.

I want to thank Dr. Rick for being with us.
I want to thank all of you for watching. Please share this with as many as you can. Go to our website, BeholdIsrael.org. You can find also a PowerPoint there in the section that talks about



Explore the Bible where you can also ask a question —ask Dr. Rick a question—about the content of this program today. And also over there you can find out what is the next event that we’re going to have in Israel or around the world. And whenever you want to support this ministry, that’s the place where you can go and do that. I want to thank all of you for watching. Thank you and God bless you from Galilee, Israel and from Parker, Colorado.

* Scripture is taken from the New King James Version unless noted otherwise.

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