

Troubled Waters

“For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had” (John 5:4).

While I sat at the picnic table beside the little pond, I could see schools of minnows near the edge of the waters. No doubt they found a measure of safety, a refuge from intruders, in the shallow water. Then, out of nowhere, the waters were troubled as a bigger fish invaded the minnow’s world. After a splash or two, he had done his damage and moved on to find more to feed on.

In studying the Scriptures, it is clear that God often troubles the waters of human circumstances. The difference in God’s troubling the waters of our lives, however, is that He works to help us, not to destroy us. Some of us remember when He interrupted and brought us to salvation. Others of us recall how a special trial was used to disturb our comfort zone and bring us to a new dependence upon the Lord.

Around the pool of Bethesda were “porches” (5:2), or “covered colonnades,” in which people found shade from the heat of the sun. Under these coverings, John tells us, “lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water” (5:3). Here they waited in hope that they would be miraculously made whole when the waters were troubled. Several lessons are set forth in this scene.

God clearly knows about our circumstances! The text reads, “For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water.” Although there were needs throughout the land, the angel was not sent to some other setting. Knowing the circumstances and the needs represented at the pool, the Lord dispatched an angel to this scene. We can believe that He is also totally aware of our circumstances and the needs in our lives.

God curiously intervenes in our circumstances! As the story goes on to reveal, it is true that Jesus used various means in helping those who were desperate. But “at a certain season,” although it was a very strange happening, He used an angel to stir the waters of Bethesda. Our interest should not be in how God intervenes but in the fact that He does intervene. In His own time and in His own way, He comes to help those who cannot help themselves.

God certainly heals through our circumstances! In the verse, we also see that “whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.” The Lord healed “whosoever”; the Lord healed “whatsoever”; but the Lord did not heal “whensoever.” He makes people whole when the waters are troubled. May our faith be renewed in our great Savior and in His great plan in our lives.