

What happened at the Pool of Siloam?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Pool-of-Siloam.html>

The Pool of Siloam, also called the Pool of Shiloah (Isaiah 8:6), has a rich and storied history, which involves an ancient king of Judah, a famous sermon, and one of Christ's great miracles. The word Siloam means "Sent" (John 9:7). Several rabbinic traditions identified the Pool of Siloam as the Messiah's Pool. It was the only source of fresh water within the walls of ancient Jerusalem.

The Pool of Siloam was built by King Hezekiah in the 8th century BC (2 Kings 20:20) in order to provide water to Jerusalem, even in the event that the city were besieged. The pool was fed by a tunnel Hezekiah cut through almost 2,000 feet of solid rock from the Gihon Spring, also called the Virgin's Spring. The spring, which produced a flow of water about twice a day, was located on the east side of Jerusalem, outside of the wall and on a slope leading down to the Kidron Valley. Hezekiah's Tunnel channeled the water from Gihon to the pool, located in the southeast part of the city in the Tyropoeon Valley. The original Pool of Siloam was about 53 feet long, 18 feet wide, and 19 feet deep and was made of part hewn rock and part masonry.

Jerusalem and the Pool of Siloam were destroyed by the Babylonians about 600 BC. Seventy years later, Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, and part of the job was to repair the Pool of Siloam: "[Shallun son of Kol-Hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah] also repaired the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the King's Garden, as far as the steps going down from the City of David" (Nehemiah 3:15).

During the reign of Herod the Great, improvements were made to the Pool of Siloam. The pool itself was enlarged, and a large arcade (a set of arches) was built around the

pool. Another arcade divided the pool, probably to create separate areas for men and women. During this time, the poor and sick people would often come to the Pool of Siloam to bathe.

But it is during the time of Christ that the Pool of Siloam finds its true significance. Because the pool was near the temple, its water was used for a special ceremony during the Feast of Tabernacles. Every morning during that joyful feast, a priest would take a golden vessel to the Pool of Siloam, fill it with water from the pool, and bring it back to the altar amid the shouts of the people. Then, as the crowd chanted the Hallel (Psalms 113–118), that priest poured out the water on the west side of the altar, and another priest poured a drink offering of wine on the east side of the altar. This ritual was probably to illustrate Isaiah 12:3, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”

However, on the eighth and final day of the feast, the ritual was not repeated. And that is exactly when Jesus chose to make a startling announcement: “On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them’” (John 7:37-38). On the one day of the feast when no water was poured, Jesus stood up and filled the gap. The “water” He offers (the Holy Spirit, verse 39) is better than the waters of Siloam. In offering the water of life, Jesus identified Himself with the rock in the wilderness that gave water to the Hebrews (see 1 Corinthians 10:4).

In John 9, Jesus meets a man born blind. To show that He is indeed the “light of the world” (John 9:5), Jesus heals the man. But it is interesting how Jesus chose to heal

him: “He spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ‘Go,’ he told him, ‘wash in the Pool of Siloam’ (this word means ‘Sent’). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing” (John 9:6-7). So, the blind man was sent to a pool called “Sent” by the One who was Himself sent by God into the world (John 3:17; 10:36).

The site of the original Pool of Siloam has been excavated, and there is still a pool there, but it is hardly the splendid place that it once was. Still, we have the biblical record of the Pool of Siloam, a place that was used by kings and priests and by the Messiah Himself. The One sent by God to be our Savior used the Pool of “Sent” to prove that He is the Light of the World and to offer the living water available only through Him. The invitation to drink of Him is still open: “Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17).