

John Chapter 5

Although opposition to Jesus smoldered beneath the surface, the story of Jesus' healing at the Pool of Bethesda highlights the beginning of open hostility toward Him in Jerusalem in the southern parts of Palestine. The passage may be divided into 3 parts.

- (1) The miracle performed (verses 1-9);
- (2) The Master persecuted (verses 10-16); and
- (3) The murder planned (verses 16-18).

John 5:1. "After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

John repeatedly tied his narrative to various Jewish feasts:

- (2:13), Passover;
- (6:4), Passover;
- (7:2), Booths, or Tabernacles;
- (10:22), Hanukkah or Feast of Dedication; and
- (11:55), Passover.

But this reference is the only instance when he did not identify the particular feast occurring at the time.

This is probably the second Feast of the Passover here. Of course, it could have been any of the Feasts, but Jesus seemed to put more emphasis on Passover.

Jesus went to Jerusalem for the major feasts the same as all dedicated Israelites.

John 5:2 "Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches."

"Sheep market or sheep gate" is a reference to the gate identified in (Neh. 3:1, 32; 12:39). It was a small opening in the North wall of the city, just West of the North East corner.

"A pool": Since some have suggested that John wrote his gospel before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, because his usage of "is" here implies that the pool still existed. However, John frequently used what is known as a "historical present" to refer to past events, so this argument carries little weight.

This place with the five porches means place of grace. Bethesda means house of grace or mercy. This would go right along with the number five which means grace. These porches were probably shade for the people waiting to get into the water.

Many believe this to be Siloam. It really doesn't matter, just Jesus' act matters.

John 5:3 “In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.”

Here we see a scene of numerous people lying on these porches waiting for the water to move. On a small scale, this was a place people came to receive a miracle.

It was a custom at that time for people with infirmities to gather at this pool. Intermittent springs may have fed the pool and caused the disturbance of the water (verse 7). Some ancient witnesses indicate that the waters of the pool were red with minerals, and thus thought to have medicinal value.

John 5:4 “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.”

The statement in the latter half of (verse 3), “waiting for the moving of the waters,” along with (verse 4), are not original to the gospel. The earliest and best Greek manuscripts, as well as the early versions, exclude the reading. The presence of words or expressions unfamiliar to John’s writings also militate against its inclusion.

This healing was on such a limited scale. Just one out of all these numbers who waited would be healed. What a disappointment to wait and then not be healed.

This water being troubled here in the Bible has caused many to believe in miracles such as this. Possibly the most famous being the one in Europe called Fatima. These seem to have very little spiritual significance, so they say an angel did it.

John 5:5 “And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.”

This man had literally drug himself to this pool over and over waiting to receive his healing. This disease had been of such a long standing time that the man had become despondent, probably, and thought that he would never be whole.

We are not told his condition, but it kept him from walking. Perhaps it was the result of sin (verse 14).

John included this figure to emphasize the gravity of the debilitating disease that afflicted the individual. Since his sickness had been witnessed by many people for almost 4 decades, when Jesus cured him everyone knew the genuineness of the healing.

John 5:6 “When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?”

Jesus “knew” meaning the word implies supernatural knowledge of the man’s situation. Jesus picked the man out from among many sick people. The sovereign initiative was His, and no reason is given as to His choice.

This may seem to be a strange question to you, but Jesus would not make him whole against his will. It is just like sin, you may have walked away from God for this long or even longer, but Jesus will not force Himself upon you. The Lord is saying "Will you be made whole?"

It is the same question. He asks the man if he will accept healing in his flesh. He asks the sinner will he be made whole in the spirit. God will not overrule your will. To be healed in the body or the spirit, you must desire to be made whole.

John 5:7 "The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."

Just as it is with the spirit, many times a person floundering, needing to be made whole, needs the help of a friend to help him plunge in. This man needed a friend. Most people who come to the Lord are helped by family or friends to come. The sad thing is, there are millions of people waiting to be made whole with no one to help them.

John 5:8 "Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

In the same way that He spoke the world into being at creation, Jesus' spoken words had the power to cure. The "pallet" or "mat" was normally made of straw and was light enough so that it could be carried on the shoulder of a well person who assisted the infirm.

Jesus tells him to do something to show that he has received his healing. Had the man just lain there, he would have died in that condition. He answered the call. He did just as Jesus said and was healed.

John 5:9 "And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath."

This phrase emphasizes the completeness of the cure.

This crippled man obeys the voice and takes up his bed and walks. Sabbath or not, if this Jesus can heal him, He certainly has the right to tell him to carry his bed. We see nowhere that this crippled man questioned, he just obeyed.

This is the very same thing we must do, all that have been crippled by the sins of life. When Jesus saves you, then you must obey. He will not be your Savior unless He can be your Lord as well.

The Old Testament had forbidden work on the Sabbath but did not stipulate what "work" was specifically indicated. The assumption in Scripture seems to be that "work" was one's customary employment, but rabbinical opinion had developed oral tradition beyond the Old Testament

which stipulated 39 activities forbidden, including carrying anything from one domain to another.

Thus, the man had broken oral tradition, not Old Testament law.

John 5:10 “The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.”

The phrase reveals that the Judaism during Jesus’ time had degenerated into pious hypocrisy. Such hypocrisy especially enraged the Lord Jesus, who used this incident to set up a confrontation with Jewish hyper legalism and identified the need for a national repentance.

This is just the way a lot of people think. They were completely ignoring the fact that a man who had been crippled thirty-eight years could walk. They were so caught up in the law that all that meant anything to them was the formality of religion.

We too must not get so caught up in the routine of going to church, that we overlook the Lord and His Spirit. Formality means nothing to God. He wants your obedience and love.

These religious people were not interested in helping people. They were just interested in them keeping the law. Religion without Jesus is no good at all.

John 5:11 “He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.”

These religious leaders were not really interested in the man. They wanted Jesus, to punish Him. They were jealous because His powers were far beyond anything they had.

John 5:12 “Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?”

They already knew that this was Jesus. They just wanted this man to give His name, so that they might accuse Him.

John 5:13 “And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.”

The man had not stopped to ask Jesus who He was. Probably this man had spent so much time waiting at the pool that he had never heard of Jesus. We read there was a multitude there, so we know it would have been easy for Jesus to just walk through the crowd and be lost.

John 5:14 “Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.”

The basic thrust of Jesus’ comments here indicates that sin has its inevitable consequences. Although Scripture makes clear that not all disease is a consequence of sin, illness at times may

be directly tied into one's moral turpitude. Jesus may specifically have chosen this man in order to highlight this point.

The first thing this man did was go into the temple which had been denied him for thirty-eight years. Perhaps he went to give an offering for his healing.

Jesus tells him, as He told the woman who had been caught in adultery: "Go and sin no more". In this case, Jesus gave a warning "lest a worse thing come unto thee".

John 5:15 "The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole."

We did not see Jesus telling the man not to tell, so there is really nothing wrong in him telling.

John 5:16 "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day."

The verb tense of persecute means that the Jews repeatedly persecuted Jesus, i.e., continued hostile activity. That was, not an isolated incident of their hatred toward Him because of His healings on the Sabbath.

Jesus did not break God's law since in it there was no prohibition of doing good on the day (Mark 2:27). However, Jesus disregarded the oral law of the Jews that had developed, i.e. "the tradition of the elders". Most likely, Jesus deliberately practiced such healing on the Sabbath to provoke a confrontation with their religious hypocrisy that blinded them to the true worship of God. (See verses 17-47), for the main reason for Jesus' confrontation.

Personally, I believe they were jealous. He was doing things far beyond their capability. They were caught up in the law to the extent that they cared not that this man had been healed.

John 5:17 "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Here Jesus' response is considered blasphemy. He spoke of His Father. The Jews realize that He is equating Himself with God.

Jesus is saying here that truly God's help for mankind has never ceased. Even the fact that Jesus came to this earth to save all of mankind shows that God's labors never ceased. God's creation of the world ceased, but His caring for mankind never ceased.

We must enter into the Sabbath of rest with God. That is actually what we do when we turn our lives over to Him and let Him be Lord. We can rest from the worry and trials of this world while still occupying until He comes. This will certainly stir up these Jews.

Jesus' point is that whether He broke the Sabbath or not, God was working continuously, and since Jesus Himself worked continuously, He also must be God. Furthermore, God does not need

a day of rest for He never wearies (Isaiah 40:28). For Jesus' self defense to be valid, the same factors that apply to God must also apply to Him.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8). Interestingly, even the rabbis admitted that God's work had not ceased after the Sabbath because He sustains the universe.

John 5:18 "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

This verse confirms that the Jews instantly grasped the implications of His remarks that He was God.

The amazing thing to me is how these learned men of the law could overlook the predictions in the Scriptures of Messiah. Why they did not realize that no mere man could do all of these miracles is amazing to me.

Jesus was equal with the Father. It should not have come as any surprise to them that Jesus (Messiah, Christ), was among them. They should have believed the Bible which they proclaimed to uphold.

John Chapter 5 Questions

1. Why did Jesus go back to Jerusalem?
2. What was the name of the pool near the sheep market?
3. How many porches did it have?
4. What does that number mean?
5. What does Bethesda mean?
6. What were these blind, halt, impotent folk waiting for?
7. Who troubled the water?
8. How many were healed when the water was troubled?
9. How long had the man had the infirmity?
10. What question did Jesus ask the man?
11. What does that have to do with Christianity?

12. How did the impotent man answer Jesus?
13. What did Jesus tell the man to do as an act of faith?
14. What day had Jesus healed the man?
15. Jesus will not be your _____ unless He can be your _____.
16. What reaction did the Jews have to the man being healed?
17. Why did they ask the man, who healed him?
18. How did Jesus get away without being seen?
19. When Jesus saw the man in the temple, what warning did He give him?
20. Is all disease because of sin?
21. When the man told the Jews that Jesus healed him, what did they do to Jesus?
22. In verse 17, what did Jesus say that further angered the Jews?
23. What did the Jews want to do to Jesus?
24. What angered the Jews more than His breaking sabbath?