

“Do You Want to be Made Well?”

John 5:1-18

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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, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. 5 One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" 7 The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed." 11 But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'" 12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. ESV

A person may harden their heart and deny that Jesus is very God, but no one can read John's Gospel and honestly declare that what John writes about and what Jesus says about Himself is not His claim to be truly God!

John's Gospel does not record many of Christ's miracles. However, when John does record a miracle he usually gives a very detailed account of it.

You will also see that in John's Gospel that when Christ performs a miracle the miracle is often followed by a sermon that Christ preaches about Himself based on that miracle.

This is the case with the miracle before us in Chapter Five. Jesus heals the impotent man and then preaches a sermon on His deity in Chapter Six. The impotent man represents the impotence of the Old Covenant to heal. Jesus reveals the New Covenant in His blood with all power!

The impotent man is an illustration of what sin has brought into the world. He is friendless, helpless, and hopeless as he lay near the healing waters year after year and received no benefit from them.

National Israel had the very word of God but she was impotent because she rejected the message of grace.

Tragedy and illness are not necessarily the direct result of specific sin but the root of all of our infirmities is sin!

We see the compassion of our Lord who "saw him lying there."
In the great multitude Jesus sees one individual and heals him.

"He delights in mercy." Micah 7:18

Jesus is more ready to save the man than the man is ready to be saved!

The impotent man represents the failure of the OT economy due to Israel's disobedience. The man's healing is followed by Christ's sermon on His equality with God the Father.

Jesus claims to have all authority and power! What He does, what He says: the testimony of John the Baptist; the witness of the Father; and the witness of the Scriptures all declare that Jesus is God the Son.

All of this is in chapter 5!

In Chapter Six Christ feeds the 5000 and walks on the water and then He preaches that He is the Bread of Life, the true Bread from heaven.

Jesus is the Light of the world, He is the Good Shepherd, He is the Resurrection and the Life, He is the Servant of God, He is the True Vine, and He is the Passover! He is all and in all!

Moses and the prophets and the psalms all spoke of Jesus but the Jewish leaders were blind to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. [5:1]

Which feast?

If the feast is Passover then John mentions four Passovers and Jesus' ministry is 3 ½ years. If this is some other feast then John only mentions three Passovers and Jesus' ministry is 2 ½ years.

The feast mentioned is probably Passover since a lesser feast probably would have been named. The consensus of conservative scholars is that Jesus ministered in His time of earthly humiliation for 3 ½ years.

It was a **Sabbath** and Jesus goes to a **certain** pool where a **certain man** [5] was laying. The pool is at Bethesda, which is the "House of Mercy [Grace]". This man had been in this pitiful condition for 38 years!

Because John explained that "Bethesda" is a Hebrew word this indicates that John wrote primarily for the Gentiles.

A study of the Hebrew word “Beth” is instructive. Beth means “house” or “place.” So a word that includes “Beth” is house or place of something.

Bethabara is “place of passage.”
Bethanath is “house of echo.”
Bethany is “house of figs or dates.”
Bethaven is “house of inquiry.”
Bethbirei is “place of the city.”
Bethcar is “place of pasture.”
Bethel is “house of God.”
Bethlehem is “place of food” or “house of bread.”

Bethesda is “house of mercy.”

That there was a “great multitude” indicates that the stirring of the water only occurred at the time of this feast.

The Sheep Gate is where the sheep were brought in for the sacrifices.

There is a covered colonnade of “five porches” which are a type of the five books of the law and represent the Old Covenant given through Moses. The 38 years is the time of the wandering in the wilderness after the provocation where the Hebrews turned back in unbelief at Kadesh Barnea.

This interpretation is the same as that of Augustine who says that all of this is prearranged to demonstrate the impotence of the law to heal.

The stirring of the water by an angel?

There is nothing like this anywhere else in the Bible.

There are some translators who question the validity of the text that reads:

“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.”

The translators who say this passage is not original and yet have no other explanation for the gathering of a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, and paralyzed.

J.C. Ryle says that all attempts to get over the difficulties of this passage are thoroughly unsatisfactory. "To condemn this passage as not genuine is a lazy way of cutting the knot."

It is not necessary that John himself believed there really was an angel who stirred the water of the pool. But that is **why** the multitude was at the pool. They believed the waters when stirred could heal.

Besides Verse 7 is not in dispute and it refers to the stirring of the pool.

Jesus used various means when He healed people. Sometimes only His word and that from a distance as we saw in the healing of the nobleman's son.

One time He put His spit on a man's eyes. [Mark 8:22]

Here Jesus does not use the pool at all and only speaks to the man. Do you see the wisdom in the fact that He did not use the pool?

Jesus knows the condition of this man [6], yet He asks the man,

"Do you want to be made well?"

I ask you, *"Do you want to be made well?"*

If you are yet resisting the call of the Gospel by holding on to your bosom sin I ask you on the authority of Jesus Christ: *"Do you want to be made well?"*

The Savior's question is made over the head of the man and is addressed to the nation he represents. *"Do you want to be made well?"*

The nation of Israel will continue in its corrupt form for about 40 more years when Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed in 70 A.D.

The question to the man is designed to arouse hope in a man that had long ago given up any hope?

See the man's answer. *"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."*

Sir [Lord], there is no one who will help me.

“The poor is hated even of his neighbor.” Proverbs 14:20

It is as though the man is asking Jesus, “Will you stay with me until the water moves and help me to get into the pool?”

Like the woman at the well, the man does not yet know,
Who it is who speaks to him!

“Rise, take up your bed and walk.”

When I broke my leg and after the bone knitted back together and the cast was removed it still took me weeks to be able to walk without crutches.

“Rise up...!”

Suddenly and completely the man is healed!

And the man does get up!

After 38 years he simply gets up and walks without a word to Jesus.

The man was one of a multitude of people who had some affliction.
Why did Jesus heal only one man when He could have healed them all?

He healed one more than deserved to be healed!

Does that sound a little cruel to you?

What is your concept of mercy? Is mercy deserved?
When you think mercy is an obligation it is no longer mercy.

Jesus healed one more than deserved to be healed!

But it was a Sabbath!

We have seen how the Jewish leaders had corrupted the law of the Sabbath.

What God intended as a day of rest to remember the Creator had become the most miserable day of all. The Jewish leaders had invented over 300 hundred “rules” about what you could and could not do on a Sabbath.

Here is an example of how the Jewish leaders had corrupted the Sabbath.

Mark 2:23-28

Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: 26 how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?" 27 And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

We have legalists today who twist the Scriptures in their vain attempts to be more holy than God!

It is clear that the Jews cared nothing about mercy. The man doesn't get very far until the Jews charged the man with breaking the law of the Sabbath!

Also notice that the Jews did not ask the man who **healed** you; but who told you to do “**work**”?

It is a fine point but the man was not carrying his bed for profit. It would be hard to apply the law, “Bear no burden on the Sabbath,” to a man carrying his pallet who had just been healed after 38 years.

It did not matter to the Jews that the man had been in this condition for so many years. All they could see was that the man had broken the letter of the law in their interpretation of the law. Of course Jesus did not break the law of God and He did not cause anyone else to break the law.

All we need to do to witness for Jesus is to tell others what Jesus has done for us. You do not need to be a theologian and you do not need to have all the answers to all the dumb questions that some people can come up with to try to avoid their own responsibility to believe the Gospel.

"He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'"

The man's logic is irrefutable!

My healing justifies my obedience!

Whoever has the power to heal me must be obeyed, Sabbath or not!

The Jews can't deal with the man's logic so they ask him who told him to, *"Take up your bed and walk."* But the man could not tell them because Jesus had withdrawn because of the crowd that was gathering. So the man continues on his way.

Later Jesus finds the man and confronts him like He did the woman at the well. **Jesus knew all that he ever did!**

"See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

From what Jesus says to the man, this may be a case where sin is connected with an affliction. Some sins carry their own afflictions.

That is not usually the case, as we see with the man born blind in Chapter 9.

Do not fall into what is called "Retribution Theology".

That was the error of Job's "friends."

They insisted that God was punishing Job for specific sin.

Study Job and you will learn that God can do what He pleases for His own glory!

The idea is not that the man is suffering for a single act of sin from 38 years ago. It is present tense and refers to his position at that very moment. He is dead in trespasses and sins. The man is not reconciled to God!

Jesus warns of something worse than being lame for 38 years!

What could be worse?

To not know who Jesus is in saving grace!

15 The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

The man goes to the Jews. The man probably intended no harm but thought they needed to know who it was that had made him well.

The Jews are outraged and plot to kill Jesus because they believed He had violated the Sabbath.

16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.

17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

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.

The equality that Jesus claims with God the Father is absolute!

The Father and the Son are engaged in a single purpose. Be it the sustaining of the physical creation or in the salvation of sinners the Father and the Son do “work” on the Sabbath.

"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

“This verse opens up the entire theology of the person of Christ ...”

“He who came to fulfill Isaiah’s greatest prophecy, “**Behold your God!**” [Isaiah 40:9], had reached the point in His short earthly ministry of three and a half years when He must present Himself as “**Emanuel, God with us,**” in language which would bear no other interpretation.”

Charles D. Alexander

The words Jesus spoke were precisely intended to have the effect they did.

The words Jesus spoke allow for **no equivocation.**

Jesus is either God or He is a blasphemer. It is completely ignorant and intellectually dishonest to claim that Jesus was a “good” man but that he is not God! A “good” man would not lie and claim to be God!

The Jehovah's Witness cult says that Jesus is not God. If Jesus is not who He claimed to be He is not worthy of the place that this cult gives to Him.

Another important point for those who say that Jesus never claimed to be God is that the Jews certainly understood that He claimed to be equal with God! Cf. 10:33

Christ's sermon on His deity begins in verse 19 with one of those double Amen's" which are unique to the Gospel of John.

Amen, amen! Verily, verily! Truly, truly, Most assuredly!

We do not know when or how the Holy Spirit will use the Word of God to reach into a dead sinner's heart of stone and change it to a heart of flesh.

If God has spoken to you through this message and you have not surrendered your stubborn will to Christ there will never be a better time to do so.

“Do You Want to be Made Well?”

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