

John 5:1-23

Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath

The first two miracles that John recorded were done privately, but this next one is public—and on the Sabbath day—which draws the attention and opposition of the Pharisees. Reaction to Jesus among the Jews moves from reservation to hostility.

What are the sick people doing at the pool of Bethesda? What was the popular belief about the pool? The people apparently held to a belief that the first person into the pool after the waters had been disturbed (by an angel) would be miraculously healed. Their hope was in a superstition, not in a person. Jesus will challenge that.

John's reference to the length of this man's illness is perhaps to document its seriousness and his hopeless condition without Jesus.

Verse 6 Why did Jesus ask the obvious question "Do you want to get well?" A beggar can lose a good living by being cured.

And why does the man not give a simple "Yes" in response? He doesn't realize what Jesus is capable of. He has a victim mentality. The sick man does what we nearly all do. He limits God's help to his own ideas and what he can imagine. There is no indication of any repentance, no mention of faith, and no inquiry as to who Jesus is or what He is about.

This miracle was an example of what attribute of God? Grace—unmerited favor, undeserved goodness. This man has done nothing to deserve God's favor. He is the recipient of God's grace, not because of who he is or what he has done, but because of the kindness of our Lord alone. Men are always unworthy of the grace that God sovereignly bestows upon them.

Application: Where do you see evidence of God's grace in your life?

Instead of choosing one person, why didn't Jesus heal all the blind, lame, and paralyzed around the pool? The Scripture doesn't tell us. Jesus didn't come primarily to heal, but to provide salvation. Jesus cares about these sick people, but He also knows that it is a never-ending problem. The more He heals, the more people will come to Him for healing, and the more time He will spend healing. He heals selectively because man's primary problem is not sickness, but sin. God can use sickness to bring people to faith.

Verses 8 & 9: Jesus tells the man to "Get up!" and he does. There is some level of faith—or at least response—but no gratitude.

What was the Jews' response to the healing? The Jews ignore the miracle and take offense at the miracle maker. Opposition begins! They are distressed that Jesus is "breaking the rules"—their rules. This is the first open hostility toward Jesus that John records.

Application: Do we make up our own rules? There's a little bit of Pharisee in all of us. We define the rules based on our preferences.

Why were the Jewish religious leaders so upset? Carrying a bed (actually a sleeping-mat or a bedroll) was in fact a violation of the rabbis' interpretation of the commandment against doing work or business on the Sabbath. It was not breaking God's law of the Sabbath, but the human interpretation of God's law. The Jewish leaders didn't want to know who healed the man. They wanted to know who told him to carry a bedroll on the Sabbath day.

What does the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) actually say about honoring the Sabbath? God's intent in the fourth commandment was to free people from having to work to earn a living for one day out of seven, and honoring God in it.

Application: How does the fourth commandment apply to us today? Or does it?

Verses 13--15

- **Why do you think Jesus slipped away at this point?** To confront the man personally before dealing with the Pharisees
- **When did Jesus run into the man again?** Later, in the temple.
- **Was this a chance meeting?** No, Jesus found him.
- **What was the purpose?** To remind him of his healing and address his continuous sin. To awaken him spiritually.
- **As a result of this encounter, what was the response of the man?** He betrayed Jesus to the Jewish authorities.

The focus quickly changes from the paralytic to Jesus. What was the Jews' plan in regard to Jesus?

- To persecute Him, verse 16
- To kill him, verse 18

Knowing the plan, how did Jesus respond to the Jews' persecution? Jesus defends His actions by pointing out that He is merely imitating His Father by working on the Sabbath. Jesus does not say, "Our Father is always at work...and I, too, am working." He says, "My Father...." *Jesus is claiming that God is His Father. He is claiming to be God!*

Did the Jews understand what Jesus was claiming? Absolutely! That's why they tried to kill Him.

We cannot help but notice that those who are most in the wrong here are those who are sure they are right—the religious people. Wanting to be right, and thinking you are right are not the same as *being* right. Consider the sincerity of the cults.

Application: Just as Jesus did the right thing in healing the invalid, what can we expect from doing the right thing? Doing what is right is *always* the right thing to do. And doing what is right may very well produce a favorable response. But if our Lord's good deed resulted in betrayal by the recipient of a supernatural healing, and persecution by the Jewish religious leaders, let us expect that our good deeds may also produce some very unpleasant responses.

The controversy results in Jesus making the most thorough statement of His unity with the Father recorded in the Gospels.

Verses 19-23 describe the relationship of Father and Son. What are some of the distinctives of that relationship?

- **The Son *can* do nothing by Himself.** He doesn't say "*will* do nothing." Jesus, God the Son, does nothing independently. He is fully submitted to the Father's will. *Jesus is one with the Father. Jesus is God.* Because He *is* God, He must act like God. He cannot act independently of His Father!
- **Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.** They share common goals. There is no need for the Son to act independently.
- **The Father loves the Son:** The relationship between the first and second members of the Trinity is not one of master and slave, superior and subordinate, or employer and employee, but Father and Son, united by love.
- **Greater works than "these"** (the healing of a paralytic) includes giving life to the dead (verse 21) and pronouncing final judgment (verse 22). Part of the purpose of these greater works was to face His critics with His divine authority so they would consider His claims.
- **The Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it.** The Son and the Father both have power over life and death. The Jews acknowledged that only God could raise the dead (2 Kings 5:7; Ezekiel 37:13). Jesus claimed that authority. This "giving of life" appears to be the giving of spiritual life up to this point in our Lord's ministry. It wasn't long after this that Jesus literally raised the dead.
- **The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son.** The Son has the same authority as the Father, including the authority to judge everyone. This is a prerogative of God only, and as such is another demonstration of the deity of Jesus. He also executes God's wrath upon those who reject His sacrifice for sins.
- **That all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.** This is a further claim to deity. If the Son were not God, then it would be wrong to honor Him in this way. Failure to honor the Son reflects failure to honor the Father. In Isaiah 42:8 God says He will not share His glory with another. Consequently, for Him to share His honor with the Son must mean that the Son and the Father are one in essence.

Application: What does it mean in your life that Jesus is the only Son of God?

MEMORIZE: John 5:22-23