

Lesson 8 – The Paralytic Man (John 5:1-47)

This story occurs at a feast day in Jerusalem. The setting locates Jesus at a place where a large number of sick and disabled people go for healing. The remedy occurs when the waters of the pool are stirred and the disabled are able to enter the pool (John 5:7). Jesus observes a man and learns that he has been an invalid for some thirty-eight years. The writer doesn't tell us if healing actually occurs at the pool of Bethesda but the expectation of those gathered there indicate they are anxious to get in the pool when the water is stirred (John 5:7).

From the invalid's perspective, a stranger approaches and asks him, "*Do you want to be healed?*" (John 5:6, 13). I'm sure it mattered not to the sick man that it was a Sabbath day, which John tells us is a day that the Jewish law forbids any manual labor (John 5:10). The only healing this man can envision is to be lowered into the pool when the water is stirred. Yet, this stranger said, "*Get up! Take up your bed and walk*" (John 5:7, 8). The story indicates there was no time for contemplation or consideration of what this man told him to do. He was cured, immediately. His infirmity was gone. There was nothing left to do but pick up his bed and go.

This incident does not go unnoticed by the Jewish leaders. The man is quickly cited for violating the law of the Sabbath. In his own defense, the man blames his violation on the one who healed him (John 5:10, 11). It is interesting to note that the Jews do not deny the fact that this man was healed; but, the emphasis from their perspective is that this extraordinary good deed resulted in a perceived breaking of the Sabbath law. This remarkable kindness shown to an invalid concludes with the healed man reporting to the Jews who it was that had healed him. The man's name is Jesus (John 5:15).

The author now focuses on the reaction that two groups of people can have to the signs that Jesus performs. On the one hand, a man is healed and he does not doubt how this action occurred. He attributes his good health to Jesus' words (John 5:11). However, another group, the Jews, are antagonized by Jesus' action so much that from this point onward he will be persecuted by them (John 5:16). Jesus does not take credit for his ability to heal: he attributes this ability to his Father, God himself (John 5:17, 19). The Jews understand exactly what Jesus meant by this statement. Now, their antagonism is heightened. This Jesus is a blasphemer: he thinks he is on the same plane as God (John 5:18).

This account, on a feast day in Jerusalem, concludes with a discourse by Jesus in defense of his healing the paralyzed man (John 5:19-47). This discourse contains several of the emphatic statements by Jesus, "*I tell you the truth,*"; which occur more than twenty times throughout John's gospel. It is noteworthy that it is here, that John first appeals to the testimony of men on behalf of the truth (John 5:33). The beneficiary of this testimony is for the saving of men (John 5:34). The correlation is now made between the works of Jesus, which are his Father's works, and the pathway to eternal life (John 5:36-40).

What an incredible story, a random act, a man chosen from a large number of very sick individuals responds to the words of Jesus. His life had been miserable for thirty-eight years and in a moment his life was joyously changed forever.

Questions:

1. What is the author leading the reader to conclude about the works that Jesus is doing (John 5:17, 36)?

2. Why is the random healing of a paralytic man important to the discussion that Jesus has with the Jews (John 5:18, 19)?

3. Is it a true statement that Jesus makes concerning diligent searching of the Old Testament Scriptures that the Jews could justify their having eternal life (John 5:39)?

4. Explain the different positions that were taken by the paralytic man and the Jews regarding Jesus (John 5:15-17, 41).

5. Although Jesus' actions had affected the quality of the paralytic man's life, what is implied by Jesus advice to the man at the temple (John 5:14).

6. Jesus uses great detail in his reasoning with the Jews concerning his actions on the Sabbath (John 5:19-47). What is meant by Jesus statement, "*How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?*" (John 5:44)
