

The Gospel of John

5:1-15

Welcome back to this week's study in the book of John.

From the end of chapter 4 to the beginning of chapter 5 John moves forward and it's about 16 months later with Jesus now in Jerusalem. Even though there is this time gap, the other three gospels record what happened during this time.

Remember when the gospel of John was written the other three gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) had already been written. So John knew that moving ahead was not a bad thing to do. Also remember that:

† **2 Tim 3:16-17** *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

So God inspired John to move ahead 16 months, which we start reading in chapter five.

✠ **John 5:1-6** *After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. 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. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "**Do you want to be made well?**"*

Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish feasts, we are not told which feast this is, but it is more than likely one of the three feasts that required the attendance of all Jewish males. Those feasts were Passover, Pentecost, and the feast of Tabernacles.

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, He enters by the north, by the sheep gate.

The only other place in the bible that the sheep gate is mentioned is in the book of Nehemiah speaking of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

† **Neh 3:1 (KJV)** *Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.*

As I looked at these verses I saw something interesting.

The name of the high priest was Eliashib, which means "God restores"

We will get back to this in a minute.

So Jesus enters by the sheep gate and as He does, He passes by Bethesda. These pools were thought to be both therapeutic and miraculous. As you went there, you would find literally hundreds of sick people waiting around to be healed. John mentions that in verse 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.***

This is the way my old pastor Ricky Ryan has explained this pool and stirring of the waters.

These pools, and really there were two pools that were tied together by one of the covered decks that had been built to keep the blazing sun off of the people that gathered there every day. But these pools were fed by two sources of water. Bethesda in Hebrew means, "the house of twin outpourings" so there was an above ground water source that flowed into these pools, but there was also an underground spring that fed these pools as well.

And it was these underground springs that gave the impression that the water was being stirred. Now to be fair to these people you have to understand that they knew that there were underground springs that feed the pools and they believed that it was the water from those springs that brought the therapeutic value. So when new water came in, they wanted to be the first in get the full value of the healing water that came from the underground springs.

But then they also believed that there was a supernatural element as well. That sometimes the stirring of the water was done by an Angel, and if you were first in the pool after that, you would be instantly and completely healed.

I can accept this and it may be true, but one thing I noticed is that the bible does not say that this is the case or that it was a fable or tale about the angel stirring the water.

Now back to Nehemiah:

† ***Neh 3:1 (KJV) Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.***

Remember I said the name of the high priest Eliashib means: "God restores"

Did God do this on purpose? Was it by accident or coincidence that the name of the high priest who rebuilt this gate was Eliashib, which means "God restores"?

Did God really send an angel to stir the waters so others could be healed, or restore them? I don't know, but I know God does not do anything by accident or by coincidence.

I will leave this up to you to decide whether an angel was sent by God and really did this, or if it was just the underground spring that caused the water to be stirred and refreshed.

I do know one thing, no matter which one is true; God is the one Who heals!

So Jesus steps in and sees possibly hundreds of people lying around who are severely sick. Notice that John speaks of these people's sickness as **blind, lame, paralyzed**. So they were not the ones with everyday colds or headaches, but they were the sickest of the sick ones. These people were considered to be useless and even unclean, so others would not be there to help them. Or at least not the priests or religious ones, because they feared being unclean by touching one of these people. It's interesting that when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath that He was attacked for this and the priests even said.

† **Luke 13:14** *But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day."*

I have to wonder how many people this ruler prayed for and was healed, or if he had ever gone to the sheep gate pool to help those in need?

As Jesus enters, He sees a man:

✎ *Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"*

Now remember that there are hundreds of sick people here, but Jesus focuses on just this one man who had been there for 38 years, or at least sick for 38 years. When Jesus sees him, He asks him a question **"Do you want to be made well?"** Kind of sounds like a dumb question, after all he's been sick for 38 years, of course he wants to be healed; but it's not a dumb question. Jesus asks this type of question a lot.

† **Matt 20:32-33** *So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened."*

† **Mark 10:36-37** *And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."*

† **Luke 18:40-41** *So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."*

But Jesus always knew what He was going to do and what these people wanted.

† **Matt 12:25^a** *But Jesus knew their thoughts,*

What about you? Have you been waiting for something but haven't told the Lord what it is? Maybe you think, *"The Lord knows, so I shouldn't have to ask Him"*

Yes, the Lord does know, and you don't have to ask, but maybe He wants you to. If you have kids, you know what they need and most things you give to them. But sometimes you just want them to ask, just so you can see the expression on their face when you say yes and give them what they ask for. If God were to just give to us all the time without us asking, we would forget that He is the provider. So when we ask and He says yes, or no, it reminds us that God is in control and that He is our provider!

This also reminds me of a story pastor Chuck Smith tells about when some people who brought up a man in a wheelchair for prayer. Pastor Chuck saw this man sitting in the wheelchair and felt the Lord wanted to heal him, so he prayed for him and the man stood up and walked. At this the people (I believe it was the man's family) were astonished and said to pastor Chuck, *"He just had a cold and wanted you to pray for him to get well from his cold"*. Sometimes we think we know what we need, but the Lord wants to do better things in our lives. Sometimes God will do these things to increase our faith. We may have faith that God can heal a cold, but doubt that God can make the lame walk.

Maybe you feel that God has forgiven you for a certain sin, but there are others you doubt His forgiveness on. Just as God can heal a cold and make the lame walk and the blind see, God will forgive you for all your sins, no matter how great or small they are!

† **1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

† **Mark 3:28** *Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter.*

So today Jesus may be asking you, *"What do you want Me to do for you?"* What will you answer be?

Jesus asked this man, *"Do you want to be made well?"* and he answered.

✠ **John 5:7** *The sick man answered Him, "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."*

Excuses are just our way of showing our lack of faith. This man was looking at the physical and thought the only way he could be made well is if he was the first to be placed in the pool when the water was stirred. Not knowing that

the healer was there, who is Jesus, and he didn't need to be placed in the water to be healed, all he needed to do was simply ask the Lord.

Maybe you know someone who is sick and you want to take him or her to church or a healing service to be healed.

Is God only in the church? Is He not with you even now!

Sometimes we think, or we are taught that we must take someone to church to be prayed for and healed of physical or spiritual things. But that's not true, if you read through the gospels, Jesus went outside of the synagogue and healed others. He didn't tell them to go to synagogue or to have a friend take you there and ask for them to be prayed for.

If Jesus is with you, why can't you pray for this person?

Maybe your faith is lacking? If so then bring other Christian(s) with you to pray for this person, or if it's you that needs the healing, ask some Christians to come to your house to pray for you.

But Jesus cut right to the chase and didn't preach to him, He just gave him what he needed.

✠ **John 5:8-9** *Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.*

The power of God's word! Notice Jesus didn't conform to this man's way of thinking and placed him in the pool, but instead blew his mind by telling him to do something out of the ordinary. Get up off that bed that has bound you all these years, take it and go throw it in the trash.

What has bound you all these years, pornography, drugs, alcohol, hatred, bitterness, lies, fornication, adultery, lust, covetousness, self-seeking, or greed?

Today Jesus may be speaking to you, telling you that you are healed of this and to remove it from your life, and start a new life in Him!

So Jesus tells this man to take up his bed and to walk, with the last sentence being "***And that day was the Sabbath.***" As soon as the Jews would see this, they would be upset, but this man didn't seem to care what they thought, or possibly he didn't know he wasn't supposed to do this.

✠ **John 5:10-13** *The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed." He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.' " Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place.*

As we know the religious leaders of the day to well, they were upset because this man was caring his bed on the Sabbath day.

Now you also have to realize that this was not a bed, as we would think of with a mattress and box spring, but was more like a sleeping bag, or a blanket and a mat.

But still this was considered to be work by the Jews.

Did you notice something else in this conversation between the man and the Jews? Read it again in verses 11 & 12.

✎ *He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.' " Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?"*

This man had been sick for 38 years and was healed, but the only thing the Jews could think about is that he was caring his bed on the Sabbath.

It's very possible that they knew that Jesus was the one who healed this man, and they wanted to trap Jesus by saying that He doesn't follow God's law by having this man break the Sabbath day. But they wanted to hear it from this man's lips, also there were a lot of people around listening to the conversation since they knew this man was healed. So the Jews knew that if this man said that Jesus told him to carry his bed on the Sabbath, that they would have Him, or so they thought.

✎ *But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place.*

Everything happened so fast that this man didn't know who Jesus was. Does this sound strange? Well, actually it's not. We seem to picture Jesus as walking around with a halo over His head, glowing like He was painted with glow in the dark paint or something. But the truth is Jesus looked like any ordinary Jewish man. He wasn't the most handsome man in the world, nor was there anything about His appearance that would make Him stand out in a crowd.

We know all of this because of the book of Isaiah.

✠ *Isaiah 53:2 (NLT) My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.*

So this would explain why this man didn't know that it was Jesus Who healed him.

✎ *John 5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."*

So why was this man in the temple? A few reason, possibly to give an offering to God for his healing, or maybe to show others that the Lord had healed him. It could also be because for the past 38 years he was unable to go to the temple because of his sickness. Whatever the reason was, Jesus went there also and found the man there and says

something interesting to this man, ***"See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."***

So does this mean that your sickness is because of sin? Well it is possible that this man was in sin and that caused his sickness. But right now you may be wanting to know if your sickness is due to sin in your life.

To be honest, I couldn't tell you.

We do know that sexual sin can cause many different types of sickness, including Aids STD's. Excessive use of alcohol can cause liver damage as well as brain damage.

Drugs can fry your brain like an egg in a frying pan (we have all seen the commercial).

Different sins can cause sickness in our lives. But I am not saying that your sickness is due to sin. That's a question you need to ask God Himself!

✠ ***John 9:1-3 Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."***

But it seems Jesus is warning this man (back in chapter 5) that his sickness was due to sin in his life, and if he continued in this sin that he would be worse off then he had been for the past 38 years. A scary thing to think about, but it seems this man didn't heed Jesus' warning.

✠ ***John 5:15 The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.***

Or as the NLT puts it.

✠ ***John 5:15 (NLT) Then the man went to find the Jewish leaders and told them it was Jesus who had healed him.***

Jesus healed this man, but he was more concerned with the religious leaders than Jesus or God. It's sad to say but the religious leaders had this man under their power (so to speak) as they had so many others. They had them bound up in their man made laws so much that they ignored God's law to follow what these men said.

Dip your fingers in water and make the sign of the cross.

Say 20 Hail Mary's as penance for your sins.

Come to me and I will make you well.

Give to this ministry or me and God will bless you.

Those are the wrong clothes.

Your hair's too long or too short.

Women don't wear pants and cover your head.

All sorts of rules we put upon people, but none of them are found in the bible, they are manmade, but people think they are from God because they don't check it out for themselves.

I know a girl at work who doesn't eat meat on Friday's because she is taught that it's like eating the body of Jesus. I asked her one day where this was in the bible, and she didn't know, she just knew that she was told not to do this.

Are there things you practice or that you have been taught, maybe even by your parents that are not in the bible? Do you know which ones are and which ones aren't?

We seem to follow what man says more than what God says in His word.

We won't rob a bank because we don't want to get caught and go to jail, not because God says: ***Thou shalt not steal. Ex 20:15 (KJV)***

We don't have that affair because we don't want to get caught by our spouses, not because God says: ***"Thou shalt not commit adultery. Ex 20:14 (KJV)***

We will eat the right foods because man says it will help you live longer, but we won't read God's word to stay spiritually healthy, instead we read books or magazines that we shouldn't be.

We turn up the radio if a popular worldly song comes on even though it speaks of sex and partying and who knows what, but if a Christian song comes on and the word "Jesus" or "God" is mentioned, we are quick to turn it down fearing that others may hear what we are listening to.

We seem to forget that Jesus said: ***But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Matt 10:33***

Or we seem to forget that God says through king David: ***In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? Psalms 56:11***

Who or what have you been putting your trust in lately?

Will you deny or betray Jesus to please man just as this man did?

The bible doesn't tell us what happen to this man, but we can get an idea because of what Jesus said to Judas Iscariot.

‡ ***Matt 26:24 "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."***

We tend to forget how awesome and Holy God is. I think it's time we start to remember, then we won't be so shocked when we get to heaven.

Well, that's it for this week. Next week we will see the response of the Jews after they find out that this was Jesus who healed this man and told him to carry his bed on the Sabbath. But we will see that Jesus reveals the truth to them, again.