

## **Jesus and the Man by the Pool, John 5:1-15**

### **May 31, 2009 - Skip MacMillan**

#### **All Kinds of Questions Arise:**

- How did this guy get here? What happened 38 years ago?
- What is the mystical pool the disabled are trying to get into? Is this Biblical?
- Is there a correlation between sin and sickness and/or physical ailments?
- Is faith required for healing?
- What is the Sabbath and is it a big deal?
- Why the water scenes: six jars of water, well and now a pool?

Parallel story in John 9:1-14.

#### **John sets up the Scene, John 5:1-5**

"Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda<sup>[a]</sup> and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years" (v. 4 is missing or added later).

#### **Judea to Samaria to Galilee to (some time later – months) Jerusalem**

##### **"Feast of the Jews,"**

- Explains **WHY** Jesus returned to Jerusalem (Keener, p. 635)
- Only "feast" in John not identified; it has no connection with Christ's actions (Carson, p. 241)
- Jesus fulfills the obligation of His culture (Barclay, p. 206-207)

##### **"Sheep Gate, a pool"**

- Historical detail giving evidence that the Gospel of John was written prior to AD 70
  - The gate was destroyed between AD 66-70; John writes as if it were still standing
- Layout, one area with two pools, one each for men and women, large as a football field, twenty feet deep (Keener, p. 636).
- Verse 4, explanation: "and they waited for the moving of the waters. From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease he had."
  - Added later to explain what was going on in this scene
  - Superstition and popular opinion about the moving of the waters (Carson, p. 242)
  - A stream underneath the pool would bubble up periodically and disturb the surface
- Nasty waters: "small opening in the wall of the temple. The sheep were washed in the pool before being taken to the sanctuary. This was also the place where invalids lay in hopes of being healed. The upper class and those wishing to be ritually pure would have avoided this area, but not Jesus" -Kostenberger, p. 178.
- Is this Biblical?
  - Not orthodox by the religious establishment, but they turned a blind eye.
  - Jesus does not speak against the healing pool, remains silent.
  - "healing shrines (pools) were characteristic of pagan cults" -Kostenberger, p. 179.

##### **Bethesda**

- "house of (divine) mercy" (Kostenberger/Barclay); "house of (twin) outpouring" (Carson)

## Water Motif

- The six jars in ch. 2 to clean, the well of ch. 4 to bring life, the pool in ch. 5 to heal; are all non-effective. Only the One who brings living water and the living water Himself can clean, give life and heal: Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit!

## Modern Day Pools:

- Healing water stores, water treatment spas, self-help books, "the Secret,"
- "Waiting for their chance for a miracle, a line of people often stretches for over a mile on a dusty road in the little town of Tlacote, Mexico. More than 10,000 a day sometimes come to visit Jesus Chahin's well and to take away a can or two of the now-famous miracle water which is said to have cured everything from AIDS and cancer to obesity and high cholesterol" -Healing Waters Crystalinks.com
- Someone must have been healed to some degree for others to continue coming, right?

## The Healing, John 5:5-9a

### Disabled and desperate people

- "Here a **great number** of disabled people used to lie – the blind, the lame, the paralyzed" (John 5:4)
- What a sight, a mass of disabled people. A place to be avoided by most.

### The Man

- Comparison with the woman at the well
  - Unnamed
  - Woman had broken relationships, the man a broken body
  - Both by bodies of water
  - Jesus heals both, the heart of the woman and the body of the man
- More, unable to walk and unable to work, therefore unable to have a wife, children, etc.
  - Men's honor is tied up rightly or wrongly in their work and ability to provide; he has none
- He is one of the worst cases, 38 years and he can't even get to the waters edge
- How did this guy get in this condition, what happened 38 years ago?
  - He was able to walk: "See you are well **again**" (5:14).

### 38 Years

- "The man had been an invalid for thirty eight years – longer than many people in antiquity lived (the average life expectancy for men barely exceeded forty years)" -Kostenberger, p. 179
- Emphasizes the hopelessness, the seriousness of the circumstances
- That is a long time to be sick; we can grow comfortable in our misery and depression
  - Used to the routine, accept our place in life as a beggar
  - Succumb to our circumstances and stop resisting; submit, accepting something less
  - Especially after years and years of being oppressed, let down, failure after failure
  - We become worn out from trying, from hoping, even from dreaming
  - Despair settles in for a long winter's nap.
- "Years pass quickly for the happy and the healthy; but thirty eight years of disease must have seemed like forever in the life of the poor impotent man" -Spurgeon, May 8
- Displays the power of Christ over deeply embedded brokenness

### Picture of the depravity of man, broken, unable to help himself

There are things we can and must do but we cannot fix our hearts; this is God's territory.

### **This is what Jesus walks up to, John 5:6-9a**

<sup>6</sup>When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" <sup>7</sup>"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

<sup>8</sup>Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." <sup>9</sup>At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

#### **Jesus' Question: "Do you want to get well?"**

- Strange and straightforward question
- Jesus initiates the conversation and healing (just like the woman at the well)
- Jesus chose this guy out of many others:
  - "Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it" (John 5:21)
- **"Do you want to get well?" explained:**
  - Any hope left in you? Are you too far gone? Have you grown too accustomed to your life?
  - Are you willing to change? Do you even want to change?
  - Or do you like not having to work, not taking responsibility, griping and complaining?
  - What is preventing you from being healed? (Kostenberger, p. 180)

#### **The Man's Response:**

"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me" (5:7).

- "Crotchety grumblings of an old and not very perceptive man who thinks he is answering a stupid question?" -Carson, p. 243
- Or does he really want to get better? Is there a real desire in his heart to be well?
- Is Jesus searching for something to work with? Other places He is looking for faith.

#### **The Healing**

"Get up! Pick up your mat and walk. At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked" (5:7).

- Jesus SEEKS this guy out, no reason is given, sovereign initiative is with Jesus (Carson, p. 243)
- FAITH: is faith required for healing? Any faith on the man's part?
  - No overt faith expressed in Christ, he doesn't even know Jesus' identity
  - Healings occur differently, spitting, mud, faith expressed, struggling faith
- Jesus SPEAKS it and it is so; the power of Christ's words reshape what is--Gen. 1, John 1
  - Why did he listen to Jesus? Why did he think Jesus' words could be trusted?
  - The guy obeys what Jesus said, "Get up!" There was desire and some level of trust/faith (?)
  - Having not stood or walked in 38 years, imagine how awkward his getting up for the first time in 38 years may have looked. Atrophy.
- Jesus HEALS
  - What the waters couldn't do in 38 years Jesus does in an instant
  - "Pick up your mat and walk" shows the completeness of the healing, strength
  - Healings don't save; doesn't equate to a relationship with God, salvation
  - "Healing the body did not bring loyalty and trust" in Jesus (NIV Disciple Study Bible)
  - Healing and signs are not the ultimate answer; we will all die one day
  - Wakens a person to Christ, the power of Christ, and calls us to believe and follow Christ

- Healings and wonders are a preface to salvation, redemption
- Expression of God's compassion and love, that He is there!
- Jesus is always pointing us to a deeper healing, the salvation of our souls!
- Questions and Thoughts:
  - What about all the others at the pool? Why just this one guy?
  - John 21 says Jesus performed many other miracles but were not written down
  - If you're making this stuff up why would you say just one; either the author thinks we wouldn't ask that question or Jesus healed the one guy
- POWER of Jesus Christ is displayed in this scene, for all the readers of this Gospel

### **The Aftermath, The Religious and their Sabbath, John 5:9b-13**

"The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,<sup>10</sup> and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." <sup>11</sup>But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.' " <sup>12</sup>So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk? The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there."

#### **The Guy**

- Avoids the authorities by pointing to his healer
- But he doesn't know who because He slipped away into the crowd
- The man does return to the religious leaders and identifies Jesus as the one.

#### **Sabbath, Conflict Rising**

- Jesus healed this guy on the Sabbath; "The day on which this took place was a Sabbath"
- Jesus is setting up a head-to-head conflict with the religious authorities
- "A violation of the Sabbath can indicate a cavalier attitude toward Torah and Moses in general" -Keener, p. 641
- More next week

### **Final Encounter with Jesus, John 5:14-15**

<sup>14</sup>Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." <sup>15</sup>The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

#### **Jesus finds the man a second time, "See, you are well again."**

- suggesting there was a time when the man could walk earlier in his life

#### **Jesus: "Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." 5:14**

#### **Sin**

- Can result in illness or disability (1 Kings 13:4; 2 Kings 1:4; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 1:30)
- Not always, John 9:2-3; "Neither this man nor his parents sinned . . . this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."
- For this guy, his sin led to his disability; his sin found him out and disabled him
- Sin is a destructive force in your life and those around you

#### **"Stop sinning"**

- This would be new to this guy, being able to actually do something about his situation

- Believers and Sin
  - This is your territory to manage; you can change, you can stop, the Holy Spirit is in you! In your new nature found in Christ, you are able to manage sin.
  - Jesus calls us to “stop sinning,” get rid of the sin
  - Expected of a follower of Jesus Christ to wrestle and struggle to overcome sin
  - “Sin is no longer the identifying mark of believers” (NIV Disciple Study Bible)
  - You need to STOP, stop making excuses, blaming others and do it!
  - **Context, stop taking advantage of grace**
  - “There were those in the Church who used their liberty as an excuse for self-indulgences (Gal. 5:13). There were those who sinned in the confidence that grace would abound (Rom. 6:1-18). There have always been those who have used the love and forgiveness and the grace of God as an excuse to sin. But we have only to look at the cross of Calvary, to know that we must always hate sin because every sin breaks against the heart of God” -Barclay, p. 214
  - You are saved but if you wallow in chosen sin, you will suffer the consequences in this life. Why when you don’t have to? Stop sinning.

#### **“Something worse may happen to you”**

- Eternal judgment, eternal separation from God for the unbeliever
  - “... refers not to a worse physical condition at all but rather to eternal judgment for sin” (John 5:22-30)
  - This is a call to unbelievers to turn to Christ, believe in him or hell awaits
- Urgency is here, stop it now or something worse may happen (Carson, p. 246)

#### **The guy went away and “told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well”, 5:15**

What? Did he become a disciple or a betrayer?

- Betrayer?
  - he knows the leadership’s opposition to Jesus yet informs them that it was Jesus who healed him (Keener, p. 644)
  - His gratitude was to report Jesus to the Jewish authorities
  - “He is a representative of unbelief and ‘is going nowhere in faith’ ” -Kostenberger, p. 183
  - Represents the one who hears Jesus, touched by Jesus, but never gets it; seed that fell on the rock, never yields or follows Jesus
  - He is so blind that he doesn’t recognize Jesus standing right in front of him and furthermore, doesn’t recognize him even after miraculous healing
  - ***But, if not regenerated, then why did Jesus tell him to stop sinning? How would this be possible without the power of the Holy Spirit?***
- Not sure what to make of this guy

#### **Think About it: Christology, Who is Jesus?**

#### **Jesus speaks it and it is so, the power of Christ’s words reshape what is; Gen. 1, John 1**

- God can change your circumstances, attitude, perspective, no matter how long you’ve lived in sin
- Do you really want to change?

#### **Stop Sinning**

- Some of us are continuing in sin that we know we should STOP!
- “urgent need for moral reformation” -Carson, p. 245
- You need to hear Christ this morning, Stop it! This is the day! No more! Move into the LIGHT!
- God calls on you is to live differently – quit sleeping around, speak the truth, work with integrity, treat her/him right, shut down the anger, deal with your issues, start being generous and quit making excuses

**Healing:** Jesus is the healer of the sick and sinner. Not a pool, a self help book, or water in Mexico. Healing does not mean salvation. Healing wakes us up, helps us to see Christ, but does not save.

**Our response ought to be:** gratitude, commitment to follow the healer of our soul, to serve God.

### **Communion**

Recognize the power of Christ to heal, to change your life, to redeem, to empower you.

Respond with an attitude of gratitude, commitment to the pursuit of what is right, good, pure and holy; determined to bring glory to God.