

The Gospel of John

The Pool of Bethesda

John 5:1-16

Jesus is still popular but is about to put the religious leaders to the test. Would they accept Him as Messiah, or would they reject Him for their own way? Through the working of a miracle which should have proved His deity, Christ will find that they will still refuse Him.

The Setting

- The feast – likely Passover, the second of Christ's public ministry – vs. 1
 - The first Passover is found in John 2:13.
- The Pool of Bethesda
 - Bethesda - "house of mercy"
 - Located outside the walls of Jerusalem near Antonia Fortress
 - Two pools with five porches
 - The deepest section is about 40 feet

The Story

- Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the feast – vs.1
- Many people waited by the pool to be healed by a strange miracle – vs. 2-4
 - Many unbelieving critics, and sadly Christians, fail to accept that such a thing could happen as an angel stirring the water and prompting a healing.
 - A.C. Gaebelien - "After all there is no more real difficulty in the account before us, than in the history of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, the various cases of Satanic possession, or the release of Peter from prison by an angel. Once admit the existence of angels, their ministry on earth, and the possibility of their interposition to carry out God's designs, and there is nothing that ought to stumble us in the passage. The true secret of some of the objections to it, is the modern tendency to regard all miracles as useless lumber, which must be thrown overboard, if possible, and cast out of the Sacred Narrative on every occasion. Against this tendency we must watch and be on our guard."
- One man who had been incapacitated for thirty-eight years is there hoping against hope for a healing – vs. 5
- Jesus sees him, has compassion, and offers healing – vs. 6
- The man's case is hopeless to human reasoning – vs. 7
- Jesus commands him to do something he it is impossible for him to do, and he does it – vs. 8-9
 - When God speaks in such a command neither man nor nature can resist – Genesis 1:3, Psalm 29, Matthew 9:6, Mark 4:39, John 11:43, and many more...

- Of course, the critics find a fault: this happened on the Sabbath! – vs. 9
 - Note that they could not rejoice in the healing, only criticize how it happened.
- The man is caught breaking Jewish tradition by carrying his bed roll – vs. 10
 - This infraction does not necessarily go against the Law itself (Exodus 20:8-11) but against the stipulations added by man over the centuries.
- The healed man appeals to the Person and Power that healed him as greater than man's regulations – vs. 11
- A surprising detail is that the man did not know it was Christ that had healed him – vs. 12-13
- Not much later, Jesus reveals Himself to the man – vs. 14
 - The man has gone to the Temple, perhaps:
 - to take part in the feast which he has been unable to participate in.
 - to praise God for His miracle – Leviticus 7:12
 - The words of Christ suggest that the man's former condition had been a result of his sinful life.
 - The man is warned to not waste the grace granted him lest worse befall him.
 - Similar warnings are found in Leviticus 26:23-24, Matthew 12:45, Revelation 2:21-23
- The Jews were enraged that Christ broke the Sabbath and now seek to kill Jesus – vs. 15-16

Christ performed a mighty miracle in healing a hopeless man. This should have brought rejoicing on the part of the people, but instead their cold hearts twisted the situation into the motive to have Jesus killed. How sad it is to see the depths of depravity of the human heart! Despite the goodness of God, they reject Him and seek to destroy Him.