

**The Gospel of John**  
**Week Seven**  
**John 5:1-27**

**Day One**

1 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; 4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]

v. 1 – Jesus went back to Jerusalem as the men of Israel were commanded to do three times every year (this is Jesus’ second trip reported in John ‘s gospel). Jesus was the perfect missionary because He totally identified with and immersed himself in the culture to which He was sent. Jesus was a Jew and lived under the Law so He could reach those who were under it as well.

v. 2 – The writer of this gospel had an excellent grasp on the details of Jerusalem, so he had to be an eyewitness of the events that he was recording. I have been to this venue every time I have gone to Jerusalem. It is a low-lying point just outside the Temple Mount. It was probably a place where sheep were brought into the Temple area for sacrifice and perhaps were washed before they came in. This is a strange place for a healing venue, which would have been busy with a lot of people and animals. It was a perfect place, however, for Jesus to perform an anonymous act of mercy, for which the Jews would designate Him a marked man – marked for death!

vs. 3&4 – I include these verses from the NAS version for they are eliminated entirely from the NIV. They are verses of dubious origin, which many believe were added in later manuscripts to try and put this event into context. Somehow, without explanation or reason, an angel would stir these waters, and the first one into those waters would be healed. This sounds like healing roulette or lottery, for only one person won while many were “playing.”

Jesus came to that place where a multitude were hoping and waiting and still only healed one man. Yet by doing so, Jesus took the mystery out of how God “moved” and “did business.” God would relate to mankind not through some random or fickle presence, but through His Son, Jesus:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand

of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs (Hebrews 1:1-4).

### Day Two

5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 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?" 7 "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." 8 Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."

v. 5 – This ill man had not been at the pool for 38 years, but he had been sick that long. He still had hope, however, that God could do something for him, or else he would not have been there when Jesus arrived. He still had hope even though there was no way for him to get into the water when it was stirred. He kept coming, one day Jesus came and the man's life would never be the same. His faith was rewarded, but it was not without a price and some controversy.

v. 6 – Someone told Jesus that the man had been ill for decades, and Jesus asked the man a strange question: "Do you want to be healed?" The man had been sick for 38 years and was lying by a pool of potential healing to which he had no access. It would seem like an obvious answer to a simple question. **So why did Jesus ask it?** He must have known something in the man's heart or situation that required the man to verbalize that he did indeed want to be healed. I would imagine that some people make peace with their disease or problem after a while, perhaps even getting accustomed to it. Jesus wanted to hear what was in the man's heart (He already knew) and the man seemed to answer honestly.

v. 7 – The simple truth was that there was no one to help the man into the water when it was stirred. So the answer was "yes," he did want to be healed. While the man had hope, he saw himself as helpless, since he had no assistant. Jesus had come and found him, however, so that He could be the man's assistant. He would not help the man into the water; Jesus would help him by speaking a word and seeing that word fulfilled. Jesus came to do for all of mankind what man could not do for himself. Thank You, Lord!

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

v. 8 – Jesus spoke a word. He did not touch the man and He did not explain what He was doing and why. He just ordered the man to get up, pick up the mat that he had been lying on, and walk. The man did not need help to get into some mysterious movement of the water; he just needed Jesus. The same is true for you. You don't need anything or anyone else.

### Day Three

9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." 11 But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.' " 12 So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?"

v. 9 – There was no time lapse between Jesus’ word and its accomplishment. Jesus talked and the man walked. It was that simple. **What has Jesus spoken to you that you need to walk out immediately? What have you put off until tomorrow that you need to do today?**

v. 10 – Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath, which was probably the most controversial thing He ever did in the Jews’ eyes. They had worked out a Sabbath plan that allowed for little activity and here was a man walking through the city, carrying his pallet. That was against the rules. They were not happy that he had been cured after a 38-year illness. They did not want to know how he had been healed so they could bring a friend or family member to that source of healing. They just wanted to protect their precious Sabbath day, or rather protect their system that they had devised to honor their concept of what the Sabbath should be.

This is an indication of how hard-hearted religious people can be. This man was set free and they were not happy because it did not take place within the rules. Religious people have rigid rules and those rules must be followed! It was irrelevant that this man was healed. They could not rejoice with him. Plus they would have had to acknowledge that God was the one who healed him and, if God healed on the Sabbath, then it must be the correct thing to do. Yet these leaders felt that they knew better than God!

The leaders claimed that the Law did not allow the man to carry his pallet. Actually, it was their *interpretation* of the Law that did not allow for this activity. Jesus had just ordered the man to do so, so it must have been all right for him to do so. Yet their interpretation differed from God’s and they insisted that their view was the correct one.

Don’t judge them too harshly, for you and I have often done the same thing. I determine to know what God will and will not do and I am convinced I know with certainty. I pretend to know what kind of people God will bless and won’t bless. When He blesses them, I get upset at both the people and at God. **Have you ever done the same?** If so, then we have acted just like the Jews in this story.

v. 11 – The man did not rejoice and sing God’s praises for his healing. He defended himself from the wrongful attack and accusation of the Jews. My opinion here is that this man had some issues that did not allow him to enter into the fullness of his healing. He had just been set free from not being able to walk after 38 years, and he doesn’t tell the Jews his story. Contrast this with the man in John 9 who was blind from birth and healed. He “got in the face” of the Jews to defend both his healing and the man who healed him. This man in John 5 did not do the same thing. He was intimidated, perhaps, by the

leaders who interrogated him. **Who intimidates you and keeps you from singing God's praises or giving Him glory? Isn't it time you faced the effect they have on you?**

#### Day Four

12 So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?" 13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. 14 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." 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

v. 12 – The interrogation continued, for the Jews wanted to know who had the audacity to command this man to do something in violation of the Sabbath regulations. The line of questioning did not pursue who had the power to heal him from a 38-year-old malady. The Jewish leaders did not care about people as much as what people could and should do to fulfill the Law.

v. 13 – The man didn't know who Jesus was or who had healed him. The place was so crowded that Jesus had managed to slip away. Yet this man himself didn't seem that excited about his healing! I am probably reading more into this than is there, but somehow this man should have been "walking and leaping and praising God." Instead he submitted to an interrogation to which he responded with factual information but no joy. I think if I had just been set free from my inability to walk, I would be ecstatic. However, I want to be careful to point out that the verses do not support this view. It is just my opinion. **Are you rejoicing at what Jesus has done for you?**

v. 14 – Jesus found this man for the second time. The first was to heal him and the second was to warn him. Jesus' admonition was that the man had to stop sinning or something worse would befall him. **Was there a sin that caused this man to be afflicted? Is that what Jesus was saying?** It would seem to me that this is the message. **Is every disease the result of some specific sin?** Absolutely not, for we will see in John 9 that the man born blind was born like that so that God's glory could be revealed when Jesus healed him. But in the case of this man in John 5, it seems that there was a correlation between his sin and his ailment.

v. 15 – I find it strange that the man ran to tell the authorities that it was Jesus who had healed him. The man could have gone home. He should have been telling his family and friends what Jesus had done. Instead, he went off to justify himself to the Jewish leaders that he had not profaned the Sabbath. He had been ordered to do so by Jesus. **What was the man supposed to do? Was he to lie by the pool after he was healed until the Sabbath was over?** That's ridiculous!

Somehow this all relates back to the strange question that Jesus asked the man: "Do you want to be healed?" The man indirectly said he did, but his behavior after the fact reveals that Jesus knew and saw something in the man that was problematic. I find this man's

behavior strange for one who had just been set free, which leads me to believe that he still wasn't free even though he was healed.

**Do you agree or disagree? What is your "take" on this man's story?**

### Day Five

16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. 17 Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." 18 For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

v. 16 – The Jews persecuted Jesus from that point forward! **What had Jesus done?** He healed on the Sabbath. What a crime that is! This attitude remains today in some parts of Jerusalem, where Jews will throw stones at a driver who is driving on the Sabbath. Hotel elevators automatically stop at every floor so that Jews can get on and not have to push any buttons so as not to "work" on the Sabbath. A restaurant that stayed open (run by non-Jews) was defaced and vandalized by legalistic Jews. So I can see how angry these Jews must have been because I have seen that anger in Israel today.

v. 17 – The Jews must have found Jesus and confronted him in the Temple area. Jesus could have avoided the man and consequently avoided this confrontation, but he did not do so. He did the right thing, healed the man and then faced his persecutors and detractors. Jesus had great courage and did not look for or run from a confrontation. Here he had one in earnest – a confrontation that is.

Jesus declared that He and the Father were united in their commitment to work on the day in question, which was a Sabbath. Jesus did not deny the truth of what He did but He wanted to show the Jews that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored (Mark 3:3-5).

The Jews said it was unlawful to do good on the Sabbath. Jesus maintained that it was. **Guess who is correct? Do you see that there could be no peace between these two positions?** Jesus was on a collision course with the powers that were and it would be a struggle to His death, in the will and purpose of God, of course.

v. 18 – The Jews were not simply giving Jesus a hard time; they wanted to kill Him! They understood that Jesus was telling them that He was God, equal to the Father! Of course this was blasphemy to them, so they had no choice but to put Jesus to death. This verse would certainly be used to help explain the concept of the Trinity, although it is still

incomprehensible from our point of view. Jesus set Himself up as the Lord of the Sabbath and as God's equal. This was more than the Jews could take.

It has never bothered me that I cannot understand some things about God. I have to accept those things by faith. I would expect that an infinite God could not "fit" into my finite brain or worldview.

### Day Six

19 Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. 21 For 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. 22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 23 that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

v. 19 – Jesus did not withdraw or shrink back from his foes. He could have left the confrontation but he was determined to finish this teaching opportunity that He had. Jesus was laying the credit (or blame) for the healing on the Sabbath at the feet of God Himself. He was only doing what the Father was doing. The Father did good on the Sabbath, and He was determined to do good as well. If anything did not like that, it was their problem.

v. 20 – Jesus spoke to the relationship between the Father and the Son. I will not try to analyze what this means, for I truthfully can't grasp it all. **Does this relate to the fact that Jesus, who was and is God, lessened or emptied Himself to the extent that He needed to rely on the Father for what acts He performed? Was this to provide an example to show us how we are to rely on the Father for everything ourselves? How much did Jesus limit Himself when He came to earth?** We know He could no longer be omnipresent, but rather had to become like us in all ways except sin.

I have always held the picture that Jesus was led by the Spirit, perfectly of course, so that we would have a model to follow. He did what He did and now stands encouraging us to do the same – rely on the Father for all that we do and say.

v. 21 – Jesus alluded to the fact that He had the ability to give life. In this context, He had just healed a man and He was indicating that the Jewish interpretation of the Sabbath and the allowable activities was not a source of life, but death. Jesus came to give life and that would give freedom from legalism as well as physical bondage. He and Father were both Life Givers. Jesus had also told Nicodemus, however, that this life would require that men start over, so to speak, and be born again.

v. 22 – Jesus also repeated what He had told Nicodemus in John 3, that the Son did not come to judge the world but to save it. The Father was not judging the world but had

entrusted all judgment to the Son who had no intention of using His authority to tear own but to build up. Anyone who refused to receive who He was and what He did was already condemned by his or her unbelief. I had never seen these verses as a repeat of those in John 3. Jesus was now telling a much larger audience what He had told Nicodemus. The message was that He had come to give the Jews and all believers life. His miracles were not to be a source of contention but of proof that He was on a divine mission.

v. 23 – Jesus made a profound statement in this verse with serious implications. It is not possible to honor the Father unless one honors the Son whom He sent. This certainly flies in the face of modern wisdom that says there are many ways to God. **Was Jesus only addressing Jews here or was He addressing all mankind?** If the latter is the case, and I believe it was, then faith in Christ is essential to knowing God. There is no other way.

### Day Seven

24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. 25 I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

v. 24 – “I tell you the truth” – Jesus just said that a few verses earlier and He said it again and again and again, even in the very next verse What else could He say, but those listening were not convinced that He was doing so. Jesus promised that those who put their faith in what He said would cross over from death to life. Those who did not would remain in death. This is the first resurrection promised in Revelation 20:

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6).

Jesus was promising that He had the keys to life and death and was urging His listeners to choose life.

v. 25 – Jesus was not referring to the final judgment but to the here-and-now reality that those who would hear what He was saying would pass from death to life, right here and right now. They would pass from death to life. The Jews represented the way of death,

and they even wanted to kill Jesus for having too much life. Jesus presented the other option for life and He was urging them to choose it, to choose Him!

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

If they chose death, Jesus was not responsible. It would be a man drowning, a bystander offering a life preserver and the drowning man refusing the preserver. The bystander would not be responsible for that person's death. He had offered a way out.

v. 26 – The Father had life and gave the Son the ability to impart that same life to whomever He chose. This was Jesus' mission. Keep in mind that Jesus was describing the functions of the Father and Son in terms that His audience could understand. I would not expect that our limited vocabulary and perspective would be able to comprehend it, so He was giving us truths that were accessible to our limited ways of thinking.

There is no death in God, only life. He can only give life, but the life can only be accessed through faith. Faith is the currency with which we make transactions with God. And those who trust Him will find their life in Him and Him alone. There was no life in the Jews, for they were dead and wanted Jesus dead. God is life and wants no one to die. Yet He will allow them death if they choose to pursue life apart from Him. Some say that is cruel, but it is simple and straightforward. **Have you chosen life in the Son?** If so, you have chosen wisely.

v. 27 – Jesus has not taken the role He has but the Father has given it to Him. There is total unity in the Godhead, and what Jesus does, He does with the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. While Jesus did not come to judge, His very coming serves to judge those who will not receive Him. His intent is not to judge, but His presence is a source of judgment. **Does that make sense?**

So the job of the Church is not to preach judgment but repentance. Those who repent, God receives no matter who they are or what they have done. Those who do repent are under judgment and will remain there.