

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Healing at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath

Last time: the controversy of feasting vs fasting...the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees ganging up on Jesus Christ about a religious observance

This time: the controversy of the healing at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath

We will be in the Gospel of John, Chapter 5

We are now in the 2nd year of Jesus' Christ's ministry, which is marked with continual controversy and contention with the religious establishment

v1 a feast of the Jews:

By Law, the Jewish people went to Jerusalem at least three times every year

- Fall: Feast of Atonement/Tabernacles
- Spring: Feast of Passover
- Summer (Passover + 50 days): Feast of Pentecost

The compulsory Feasts are the Lord's appointment calendar for His PoR

- Fall/Atonement/Tabernacles:
 - birth of the promised Messiah (Is 7:14)
 - the start of the Messiah's earthly ministry (Luke 3:23)
- Spring/Passover:
 - death of the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Father's sin offering for Adam's race
- Summer/Pentecost:
 - pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon a new people, "Church"
 - the birth of the Bride the witness/ambassador of the Messiah

Additionally, if they could make it to Jerusalem for the other feasts, they would

- Fall: Feast of Purim (historical remembrance – Haman)
- Winter: Feast of Dedication (historical remembrance – Maccabees)

Which of the 5 feasts is this one?

We don't definitively know

In context...John, inspired to write this Gospel

- to the Church (in response to the infestation of Gnosticism in the early Church)
- revealing Jesus Christ as the Son of God ("I AM" Statements)

is very deliberate/careful to record the Passovers during the ministry of Jesus Christ, which

- lasted 3½ years
- started in the Fall on His 30th birthday (Luke 3:23)

Those Passovers are:

1. Cleansing of the Temple (Ch 2:23):
 - a. “coming out”
 - b. putting the corrupt religious leaders on notice
 - c. conversation with Nic
2. “Near” (Ch 6:1-4):
 - a. feeding of the 5000
3. Cross (Ch 11:55ff):
 - a. fulfillment of the shadow of Passover

With the Passover timestamps recorded by John, we can discern that

- we are in the 2nd full year of the ministry of Jesus Christ
- this feast is not a Passover...or else it would have been so declared

v2-3 by the sheep market a pool...impotent folk:

Here on the NE side of Jerusalem

- Sheep Gate and the sheep market [pics: scale model (2)]
Passageway for sheep/shepherds from Bethlehem coming up the
Kidron Valley with sheep for Temple sacrifices
Jesus (John 1:29) born in Bethlehem, house of David
- a pool [pics: Bethesda (3)]

we see something puzzling, something spiritual in its essence

Around the pool of Bethesda (“house of kindness/mercy”),
which is fed by an intermittent spring,
are lying a multitude of diseased people (impotent = without strength)

- blind
- crippled
- withered

that are anxiously waiting for the pool to be stirred

Why?

v4 an angel...certain season...whosoever then first after...made whole:
KJV, NKJV, NASB tell us why...v3b-4
RSV, ESV, NIV, NLT do NOT tell us why...the translators omitted v3b-4

The issue: Greek manuscripts of the NT [map]

1. found in Antioch – center of evangelism of early church
A documented line of disciples of Jesus Christ from the Apostles
("authors" of NT) thru Polycarp, a disciple of John
2. found in Alexandria – center of Gnosticism in the Roman world
No documented line of disciples of Jesus from the Apostles
Starts with Clement (T = Law of Moses + Greek philosophy)
Origen
Augustine
Led to RCC with its traditions and unbiblical dogmas
Worship of the virgin Mary as the Queen of heaven
Replacement Theology
Amillennialism
Secular humanism and Gnosticism infecting
Christianity...resulting in
secular Christianity/Christian humanism

From the Antioch manuscripts came the Textus Receptus that resulted in

- Reformation: the Final Authority is the Word of God, not man
- the strangle-hold of RCC on Christianity being broken
- revival
- English translation called KJV

From the Alexandrian manuscripts came RSV, ESV, NIV, NLT, and other modern English translations

Also consider:

1 Cor 1:18	Are we saved or are we being saved?
2 Cor 2:15	Only TR says "are saved"
Acts 19:2	Do you believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
	<i>epi/upon...</i> Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:3-4
	Only TR teaches

The NKJV and NASB agree with NIV, ESJ, RSV, NLT and disagree with KJV

Because they are the product of comparing TR to Alexandrian texts and combining the differences into one translation...i.e. are a mixture
Carefully read the Preface to NKJV and NASB

So, in my mind, it matters what Bible you read

Getting back to this very peculiar scene in v3b-4...what do we observe?

- An angel is involved...what kind of angel?
- This was a random occurrence...as if by a whim
- It resulted in a mad scramble of diseased folks to be first...
 - only the first into the pool was made healthy while all others remained frustrated in their weaknesses
 - competition...fueled by self-centeredness (I win, you lose)
 - confusion/disorderly...God is the God of order
 - “survival of the fittest” self-help
 - contrary to Jesus’ “style” of ministry
 - ”all” are healed...whosoever comes to Him
 - Self-less and self-last vs me first

So who

- is the angel – holy messenger/helper of God or
unholy messenger/helper of the keeper of a prison?
- are the diseased folks – free or
in bondage (POWs)?

v5-6 certain man...Jesus saw him lie and knew:

Onto this bizarre, even pathetic, scene at the pool of Bethesda comes Jesus Christ

- power over the spiritual realm – demons
- power over the physical realm – diseases
- power of God to make healthy His people, spiritually and physically

The impotent man does not know Who Jesus is...

in fact no one at the pool is clamoring for Jesus to heal them

But Jesus knows who this impotent (without strength) man is...knows

- his heart and his thoughts (as He has demonstrated)
- the man’s problem not just the symptom
- exactly how many days he has been at the pool of Bethesda,
wanting to be healed

Jesus took the initiative to help the man who has been afflicted for 38 years

Did Jesus pick the weakest vs the strongest?

Did Jesus pick the most helpless case?

“Do you want to be healed?”

- (really healed – of your problem, not just of the symptom)
- (your choice)

v7 Sir, I have no man...while I am coming:

The impotent man, without saying so directly, answers, “Yes, of course!”

But, whereas other diseased people have help in the competition to be first into the pool at some unannounced time, he is alone...

- fending for himself in the periodic mad scrambles
- no friends or family to help him so he is never first to the pool

What do we make of this bizarre scene?

- The spiritual essence is cold and cruel, not compassionate
- The scene is perverse entertainment for the spiritual realm at the expense of the weak in the physical realm
- Contrary to the spiritual essence, Jesus is there to heal
 - completely...body and soul
 - compassionately...to set the captive(s) free
 - the weakest/least
 - the most hopeless
 - to make known the God Who will be known...
His nature

btw...v7 (in all English translations) makes no sense whatsoever without v3b-4
So who took out v3b-4...and why?

v8-9 Rise, take up your bed, and walk:

Jesus knows this man's heart and thoughts,

He knows he wants to be made healthy

So Jesus gives him

1. a simple command...that is impossible for the diseased man to keep
2. the power/strength to help him keep His command

With merely His spoken word from a heart of love, Jesus heals the man who has been hopelessly diseased for 38 years

The diseased man feels strength not his own enter his body...and his faith

(Rom 12:3) shifts from a “water show” to Jesus

After languishing helplessly for 38 years, the man is healed by no effort of his own but by the spoken words of this Stranger

Imagine his joy as he

- is healed...without moving a muscle, strength comes from outside
- is able to do what he could not one moment earlier or for the previous 38 years

Questions:

- Jesus would have had compassion on the entire multitude of sick folks lying around the pool so why did He heal only this man?
 - The Sovereignty of God: the “who, what, how, when, why”’s are His
 - God has a precise purpose for this healing: on the Sabbath
- If certain believers “have” the gift of healing all the time (vs the Holy Spirit giving it according to His sovereignty),
 - Why don’t they empty Children’s Hospitals? All hospitals?
 - Why don’t they heal even just one person?
 - If they cannot do the above, why don’t they just be still?

The healed man walked joyfully and courageously, carrying his bed, thru a feast-sized crowd in Jerusalem...
before many witnesses including the religious leaders.

This is going to draw the ire of the Pharisees...and Jesus knows it

By healing this man on the Sabbath, Jesus is challenging the legalism, hypocrisy, and cold hard-heartedness of the religious leaders that blaspheme the nature of His Father

Jesus is NOT backing down from the Pharisees and their contention with Him about His words, works, Identity

Jesus is boldly working to do His Father’s will...to set His people free...
and to make His Father known

v10-13 It is the Sabbath day...it is not lawful:

To a man who was diseased for 38 years and had been desperately competing to be the first one in the pool of Bethesda once an angel stirred the water, the religious Debbie Downers joylessly accuse him of breaking the Law by “working” i.e. carrying his bed

More accurately: with their interpretation of the Law, what previous rabbis had said about the Law, they condemned the man vs praised God

The man who had been healed just said he was doing what the Man who healed him...set him free...told him to do

Of course, the Pharisees want to know who this “rebel” is, who this lawbreaker is (they know by now)

The man who was healed did not know who Jesus was...nor can he point Him out since Jesus disappeared (intentionally) into the crowd

The Pharisees were

- all rules and no compassion
- self-deceived and self-blinded by their religion/legal relationship
- so far from the Truth while thinking they held and interpreted the truth having a radically different heart than God’s
- rejecting God’s Messiah

Therefore, the Pharisees did not know (did not teach)

- the spirit of the Law – love, the nature of the Lawgiver, 1 John 4:8
- God’s purpose for the Sabbath – time for relationship/fellowship with Him, time for rest and refreshment in His presence

Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath to send a message to the religious leaders

- Higher Law of Love...love being the fulfillment of the Law
- His Identity...Messiah, Lord of the Sabbath
- His mission...to set His people free from the bondage of sin and the oppression of religion

Know any “Christians” like the Pharisees?

Condemning, judgmental, and legalistic...unteachable

vs

Compassionate, gracious, and merciful

“If go to church on Sunday, are breaking the Sabbath.”

(SDA: this is the mark of the beast)

v14 thou art made whole, sin no more:

After the Pharisees had interrogated the ex-diseased man about his “crime”,
Jesus found him and revealed the full extent of His healing –
physical and spiritual

The man’s disease had a spiritual basis – sin was the problem and the disease was
the symptom

Jesus tells the man that he was made healthy physically and spiritually –
so “sin no more so that something worse does not come upon you.”

Implied: Jesus forgave the man’s sin and gave him the gift of repentance
2 Tim 2:24-26

God chose to make the impotent man whole,
the man must choose to repent and sin no more

Only God could heal/cure/make him whole,
the man could repent and sin no more only by the strength of God

A man who was in bondage

- as a consequence of sin, diseased for 38 years
- alone to compete in a confused mad scramble of “Survivor”...
in a perverse game of the survival of the fittest
- not looking for Jesus, not even knowing Who He was
- shown no compassion by the legalistic self-righteous religious leaders

was set free by Jesus Christ Who had the power and authority

- to break the chains of his bondage
- heal the symptom – the disease
- heal the problem – sin

Jesus Christ is the Answer to our disabilities, the strength for our weaknesses

Sin is the source of this weakness (v14)

I am a sinner, we are sinners, by:

- nature/birth
- choice/practice

Only Jesus Christ can heal me/us

Jesus gave this man a simple command...and the power/strength to obey by faith

“Get up, walk away from this bondage.

Boldly and joyfully walk before those who think wrongly.

Be free...to sin no more.”

John 15:1-5...to keep the strength flowing

Luke 24:49...the power of God upon us, the power to be His witness

Jesus Christ came to set us free

Biblical Christianity (God-centered world view) produces individual freedom...

- freedom to not sin (only by His indwelling power/Helper upon us)
- under the shelter of absolute Truth and Authority, freedom from the moral and legal whims of man

Humanism (man-centered world view)...

freedom without absolute Truth (right and wrong, good and evil are relative)

leads to NOT to individual freedom but to

license

bondage

chaos and confusion

every-man-for-himself “survival of the fittest”

authoritarianism in order to bring social order

the State (the will of the people) being god

Biblical Christianity...the teachings of Jesus Christ...

- the heart of Jesus poured into His disciples as recorded in the Antioch manuscripts...the heart of Antioch
- Not secular Christianity or Christian humanism...the heart of Alexandria, Gnosticism (which is vomited, Rev 3:14)

offers liberty/freedom in the world

Jesus' healing the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath was His 3rd healing on the Sabbath

Jesus did the right and compassionate/loving thing...in keeping with His nature

The Pharisees who are opposing everything Jesus says and does...

all of which bear witness that He is the Messiah...

believe He did the wrong and “illegal” thing

Jesus gives us the strength and the courage to walk free away from the bondage –

the strength and the courage to make a stand for right vs wrong and good vs evil

2 Cor 12:9-10 And he said unto me, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

The religious establishment to this day

- is threatened by Jesus Christ (issue: control of the people)
- is paying Jesus Christ lip service but not heart service
- is persecuting the genuine followers/disciples of Jesus Christ

So...expect controversy, contention, and confrontation with the religious establishment

Jesus gives us the strength and the courage to walk free, away from that bondage –
the strength and the courage to make a stand for right vs wrong and good vs evil

John 8:36

Freedom comes only in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
Bondage comes by the religions, traditions, and philosophies of man

Do you believe?

“Every parable of Jesus was a miracle of instruction,
Every miracle a parable of instruction”

Will you with simple faith obey the simple command of the Messiah...and be set free?