

Pool of Bethesda John 5 v1-18 Jesus Christ – Equal with God

Introduction The Lord's first two miracles in John were relatively private. This miracle was not only public, but took place on the Sabbath – it aroused the wrath of the Jewish religious leaders. Lesson to us on how easy 'religion' seeks to take the place of 'Christianity'.

Ch 5v1. Feast of the Jews

John does not identify which feast and in so doing preserves us from remembering the day in a special way, - what is important is to have an understanding of Christ's person. The feast was likely to have been 'The Passover'.

Ch 5v2-9. 'Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches'

The Place;- There is direct archeological evidence for the place – excavations have revealed two adjacent pools with five porticoes, in the NE corner of old Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate.

Best manuscripts omit the end of v3 found in the AV version - 'waiting for the moving of the water' and also v4. But that something happen periodically is evidenced by the presence of so many sick people

Among the group of suffering humanity, the Lord Jesus singles out one man. This man had been ill, paralyzed, for 38 years – it does not imply he had been at the pool for that time, but he been there a long time. The Jewish priests had been of no help to him. Nor could he expect any help from them, they were too bust with their religious duties. (Note;- Israel had wandered in the wilderness 38 years. Deut 2v14 – Spiritually speaking Israel was paralyzed, waiting for the Messiah). The site would not have conformed to today's health and safety / disability regulations

The Goodness of God;- The Lord Jesus comes up to this man and asks 'Do you want to be healed'. It may seem an unnecessary question, but the Lord Jesus was arousing within him the desire to be made well, which would later develop into the step of 'Faith', which the Lord would require from him. The paralyzed man gives an account of his desire to be made well and how he was unable to make any progress.

The Lord Jesus then says to the man 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'. The command 'Rise' was an invitation to the man to exercise his faith, the command 'take up your bed and walk' (word for walk means 'to walk about') would be undisputable proof to all, that the man had indeed been healed. In Matt 9 the Lord first forgives a paralyzed man his sin, and when questioned by the scribes on his authority for this, promptly healed the man and told him to take up his bed and walk! The Paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda accepted the invitation and promptly took up his bed and walked.

The Confrontation Ch 5v9b-18 ‘Now that day was the Sabbath ...’

‘Now that day was the Sabbath ...’ is very significant because it explains what now follows. The OT commandments had forbidden Sabbath day work but not what was required to bring healing. The Jewish religious leaders in their day had expanded the OT laws with their own traditions and constraints, to the extent that they became a real burden to people. In this miracle, and in the healing of the blind man on the Sabbath Ch9v1-14, the Lord Jesus was challenging them head on!

These religious Jews were scandalized, someone had dared challenge their traditions - ‘It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful to carry your bed’ they said. When challenged, the paralyzed man who had been healed said ‘The man who healed me said to me “Take up your bed and walk”’. ‘Who?’ the religious Jews demanded, ‘asked you to take up your bed and walk’! So too the world finds fault, - it is scandalized when a Christian seeks to live according to the Lord Jesus teaching, rather than it’s own traditions.

The Lord Jesus found the man who had been healed in the temple and told him to ‘Sin no more that nothing worse befall him’. The Lord had talked to the man about his sin as no-one else ever had, the light dawned; the man who had made him whole was Jesus. The man went out and confessed that it was Jesus who had healed him.

The Jewish religious leaders did not persecute the man who was healed – he after all was the one who had broken their traditions, but their opposition was against the Lord Jesus. When they confronted the Lord Jesus he simply said ‘My Father is working still, and I am working’. The Jewish leaders immediately understood his claim to be equal with God and changed their charge to one of blasphemy! It was here that the official persecution of the Lord Jesus began, which would ultimately end in his death on the Cross at Calvary. The religious Jewish leaders ignored his good deeds, his irrefutable teaching, his mighty miracles – they were intent on preserving their religious traditions.

Jesus made himself equal with God, because he is God! This is the theme of John’s Gospel!

Today there are many in desperate need of a cure for their Sin! Religion has neither the cure, nor a desire to see you made right with God God’s way – it seeks to follow and protect its own interests. The Lord says to you, as it did to that man ‘Wilt thou be made whole?’ Will you come to the Lord Jesus, recognizing that he is the Son of God, and that he died on the cross at Calvary to be your Saviour?

Miracles Today

Miracles throughout scripture are in the main confined to specific periods and were used by God to bring us new truth. Both to giving of the Commandments and the coming of Christ were attended by mighty miracles. They will again be evident when the Lord Jesus returns. While God can and does heal, ‘faith healers’ are not endorsed by the Word of God!