

JOHN

Chapter 5

The Healing at the Pool

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 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. 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.” 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?” 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.

5:1 *Some time later.* An indefinite expression (cf. 6:1; 7:1). (CSB)

a feast of the Jews. Probably one of the three pilgrimage feasts to which all Jewish males were expected to go—Passover, Pentecost or Tabernacles. The identity of this feast is significant for the attempt to ascertain the number of Passovers included in Jesus’ ministry, and thus the number of years his ministry lasted. John explicitly mentions at least three different Passovers: the first in 2:13, 23 (see note on 2:13), the second in 6:4 and the third several times (e.g., in 11:55; 12:1). If three Passovers are accepted, the length of Jesus’ ministry was between two and three years. However, if the feast of 5:1 was a fourth Passover or assumes that a fourth Passover had come and gone, Jesus’ ministry would have lasted between three and four years. (CSB)

Some manuscripts have “the feast.” Possibly the Feast of Booths, commemorating Israel’s 40-year wandering, or the Feast of the New Year. (TLSB)

5:2 *there is.* Not “was.” This may mean that the pool was still in existence at the time this was being written, i.e., that John wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem. However, this falls short of proving the time of writing (see Introduction: Date). (CSB)

SHEEP GATE - This was a small opening within the north wall of the temple, where the sheep were washed in the pool before entering the sanctuary. (TLSB)

Bethesda. The manuscripts have a variety of names (see NIV text note), but one of the Dead Sea Scrolls seems to show that Bethesda is the right name. The site is generally identified with the twin pools near the present-day Saint Anne's Church. There would have been a colonnade on each of the four sides and another between the two pools. (CSB)

It means "House of grace" or "house of mercy," signaling the miracle that Jesus was about to perform. (TLSB)

FIVE COVERED COLONNADES - This was four sets of columns that enclosed two separate pools, and a fifth set stood between the pools. These five sets of columns were capped to form porches for the people who gathered by the pools. (TLSB)

5:3–4 See NIV text note. Verse 4 was doubtless inserted by a later copyist to explain why people waited by the pool in large numbers. (CSB)

5:3 The disabled gathered here because of the popular Greek cultic belief that the pool had healing powers, with angels present at the water's first stirring. (TLSB)

5:5 *invalid*. John does not say what the trouble was, but it was a form of paralysis or at least lameness. (CSB)

5:6 *Do you want to get well?* The question was important. The man had not asked Jesus for help, and a beggar of that day could lose a sometimes profitable (and easy) income if he were cured. Or perhaps he had simply lost the will to be cured. (CSB)

5:7 *when the water is stirred*. The man did not see Jesus as a potential healer, and his mind was set on the supposed curative powers of the water. (CSB)

The man was still focused on the pool, hoping Jesus might help him reach it in time. (TLSB)

5:8 **MAT** - ESV has "bed." Mat or pad that could be rolled up and carried. (TLSB)

5:9 *the man was cured*.† Ordinarily, faith in Jesus was essential to the cure (e.g., Mk 5:34), but here the man did not even know who Jesus was (v. 13). Jesus usually healed in response to faith, but he was not limited by a person's lack of it. He wished to show the healed man that the restorative grace of God had touched his life and that this gift should not be received in vain (see v. 14: "Stop sinning"). (CSB)

5:10 *the law forbids you to carry your mat*. It was not the law of Moses but their traditional interpretation of it that prohibited carrying loads of any kind on the Sabbath. The Jews had very strict regulations on keeping the Sabbath, but also had many curious loopholes that their lawyers made full use of (cf. Mt 23:4). (CSB)

Jewish leaders interpreted the man carrying his mat as a violation of the Sabbath law against carrying burdens from one domain to another. Cf. Ex. 31:12-17. Necessary works, however, were not forbidden. (TLSB)

5:12 *this fellow*. The Jews were contrasting the authority of the law of God, which in their view prohibited the action, and that of a mere man (as they considered Jesus to be) who permitted it. (CSB)

5:14 *something worse*. The eternal consequences of sin are more serious than any physical ailment. (CSB)

Warning against persisting in unbelief, lest consequences worse than a physical handicap follow. (TLSB)

Life Through the Son

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. **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. **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. **28** “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice **29** and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. **30** By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

5:16 *was doing*. The continuous action points to more than one incident, and the Jews apparently discerned a pattern. (CSB)

persecuted. John does not tell us what form the persecution took. (CSB)

Some Jews were now continually hostile toward Him and constantly considered how they might get rid of Him. (TLSB)

5:17 *My Father is always at his work.* Jesus' justification for his action was his close relation to his Father. The Jews did not refer to God as "My Father," regarding the term as too intimate—though they might have used "Our Father" or, in prayer, "My Father in heaven." Jesus also exemplified the way the Sabbath should be observed. God does not stop his deeds of compassion on that day and neither did Jesus. (CSB)

God does not stop sustaining His creation on Sabbaths; the Son was simply working as the Father does. (TLSB)

5:1–17 After Jesus heals an invalid, Jewish leaders accuse Him of breaking Sabbath law and begin to persecute Him. Legalistic rigidity can also keep us from showing mercy to those in need. The Lord calls us to repentance, sincere faith, and compassionate service. Jesus cares deeply for us, helping us in our physical and spiritual needs. • O Lover of my soul, help me to extend Your mercy to others. Amen. (TLSB)

5:18 KILL HIM - The Jews plotted to kill Jesus, not only for violation of the Sabbath law, but also for blasphemy. (TLSB)

his own Father. Referring to a special relationship. The Jews did not object to the idea that God is the Father of all, but they strongly objected to Jesus' claim that he stood in a special relationship to the Father—a relationship so close as to make himself equal with God. (CSB)

Calling God "Father" was rare in Jewish literature but did occur in the OT (cf. Ps. 89:26; Jer. 3:4). (TLSB)

EQUAL TO GOD - The Jews realized Jesus was claiming divine status and headship over all things. They regarded such a claim as usurping God's authority. Ironically, Jesus stood before them in obedience to His Father and in humble service to the world, especially to the Jews. They did not understand Christ's humble service or His exalted status. (TLSB)

5:18 The Jews plot to kill Jesus for what they understand to be a blasphemous claim: equality with God. Failure to acknowledge Christ's deity despite Scripture's clear testimony places one in opposition to the Lord. Jesus is indeed God and has given us the right to become God's children (1:12); nothing will ever take us from His hand (10:28). • O God, forgive me when I have questioned Your authority, and lead me always boldly to confess Your holy name. Amen. (TLSB)

5:19 *can.* Because of who and what he was, it was not possible for Jesus to act except in dependence on the Father. (CSB)

Jesus' Sonship is enacted in obedience. (TLSB)

them. Jews in Jerusalem (vv 1, 16–17). (TLSB)

5:20 *the Father loves the Son.* Therefore the Father revealed to the Son his plans and purposes, and the Son obediently carried them out. (CSB)

greater things. The Son's activities in raising the dead and judging (see following verses). (CSB)

Raising the spiritually dead, judging human beings, and raising the physically dead (vv 21–29). (TLSB)

5:21 *the Father raises the dead.* A firm belief among the Jews. They also held that he did not give this privilege to anyone else. Jesus claimed a prerogative that, according to his opponents, belonged only to God. (CSB)

Restores to life the spiritually dead (vv 21–25). (TLSB)

the Son gives life. Probably refers to Christ's gift of abundant life here and now, though possibly also to the future resurrection (see 11:25–26). (CSB)

5:22 *entrusted all judgment to the Son.* The Jews believed that the Father is Judge of the world, so this teaching seemed heretical to them. (CSB)

5:24-29 In this section of John's Gospel the evangelist relates the rising unbelief and opposition of the Jewish leaders. The words of our text follow Jesus' healing of the invalid/paralytic at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath (Jn 5:1–16) during "a feast" (5:1), most likely either Pentecost or Tabernacles. Though breaking the Sabbath-day law was reason enough for their persecution (5:16) of Jesus, it was the words of v 17 by which they perceived "he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (v 18) that increased their anger. The words of Jesus that follow, then, have to do with, first, his person and, second, his work. Immediately preceding our text, Jesus speaks of the unity of the Father and the Son in action and love, the shared authority to give life and to judge, and the requirement of giving the Son the same honor as the Father. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 4)

5:24 *believes him ... has eternal life.* Faith and life are connected (cf. 20:31). (CSB)

The words of verity and authority begin both vv 24 and 25. "Hearing" and "believing" go together with "my word" and "him who sent me." In hearing, the Holy Spirit creates saving faith. "Death" is judgment of sin. "Life" is forever through the forgiveness of sins. By faith a person has passed or departed (metabevbhken) out of death to life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 4)

has eternal life. A present possession (see note on 3:15). (CSB)

has crossed.† The decisive change has taken place, and the believer no longer belongs to death. (CSB)

Scripture teaches two “resurrections.” Augustine: “Hence a resurrection does place now, and men pass from death to life; from the death of infidelity to the life of faith; from the death of falsehood to the life of truth; from the death of iniquity to the life of righteousness... The Lord Jesus, then, was willing to make known to us a resurrection of the dead before the resurrection of the dead” (NPNF1 7:125). (TLSB)

5:25 *is coming and has now come.* A reference not only to the future resurrection but also to the fact that Christ gives life now. The spiritually dead who hear him receive life from him. (CSB)

The second statement of verity and authority concerns the “time” or “hour,” of such hearing of the voice of the Son of God. This is the time of the New Testament beginning already then as Jesus reached out to his enemies in these words and continuing to this day. Jesus is forthright as he refers to himself as the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 4)

Eternal life begins when a person comes to saving faith in Christ. (TLSB)

dead will hear. Hearing with faith brings spiritual life (Gal 3:2, 5). (TLSB)

5:26-27 No one doubted that the Father, the Creator, has life in himself. It is because of the unity of persons that “he has granted the Son [also] to have life in himself.” It follows that the Son has also been given authority to execute judgment. The issue is upon Jesus’ human nature possessing this authority because of the communication of attributes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 4)

5:26 *has life in himself.* Must be understood against the background of the OT, where life is spoken of as belonging to God and as being his gift (Dt 30:20; Job 10:12; 33:4; Ps 16:11; 27:1; 36:9; etc.). The Son has been given the same kind of life that the Father possesses (cf. also 1Jn 5:11 for the benefit to man). (CSB)

As true God, Jesus is the giver of life through creation and redemption (1:3–4; 14:6). (TLSB)

5:27 *authority to judge.* Granted to the Son by the Father. (CSB)

Son of Man. See note on 1:51. (CSB)

5:28–29 A reference to the future raising of the dead. (CSB)

qaumavzein is to “marvel” or “wonder with astonishment” that this authority to judge has been given to a human being. They are not to marvel, however, because Jesus is not just any human being, but the Son of God in the flesh. Again, the hour is coming (but is not here yet) “when all who are in their graves will [also and finally] hear his voice and come out [of their graves].” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 4)

5:28 *all who are in the tombs.* Describes the resurrection of the body. (TLSB)

5:29 *done good ... live ... done evil ... condemned.* As always in Scripture, judgment is on the basis of works, though salvation, of course, is a gift from God in response to faith (cf. v. 24). (CSB)

All flesh will be raised at the Last Day: those who have “done” good to the resurrection of life—the simple aorist participle of ποιέω, indicating the good works of faith done by believers in obedience to God. The word πράξαντες, however, is chosen to describe the self-chosen works of the evil or wicked unbelievers. They are raised to the resurrection of judgment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 4)

“All passages about works can be judged according to this rule. When eternal life is granted to works, it is granted to those who have been justified. Only justified people are led by the Spirit of Christ, can do good works. Without faith and Christ as Mediator, good works do not please, according to Hebrews 11:6: ‘Without faith it is impossible to please (God)’” (Ap. V 251-52). (TLSB)

5:19–29 Equal to the Father in deity and honor, God’s Son makes people spiritually alive through His Word and raises believers from the grave at the hour of His coming to judge. Those who refuse to believe in God’s Son will come under judgment, and their evil deeds will become known. Christ has the authority to give you life now and on the day of your resurrection to everlasting life. • O Son of God, with joy I praise You, that by Your grace I have passed from death to life. Amen. (TLSB)

5:30 *By myself I can do nothing.* Jesus stresses his dependence on the Father (see note on v. 19). He judges only as he hears from the Father, which makes his judgment fair. (CSB)

Christ did not act independently but was in perfect communion with His Father. (TLSB)

seek not My own will. Because Jesus did as He saw (vv 19–20) and judged as He heard, He was consulting and following the Father’s will at every moment. (TLSB)

Testimonies About Jesus

³¹ **“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. ³² There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. ³³ “You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. ³⁴ Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. ³⁵ John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. ³⁶ “I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, ³⁸ nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. ³⁹ You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life. ⁴¹ “I do not accept praise from men, ⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your**

hearts. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God? ⁴⁵ "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

5:31–47 This section stresses the testimonies (see note on 1:7) of John the Baptist (v. 33), of the works of Jesus (v. 36), of God the Father (v. 37), of the Scriptures (v. 39) and of Moses (v. 46). (CSB)

5:31 Jesus' testimony about himself required the support of all God's revelation. Otherwise, it would have been unacceptable. (CSB)

The OT required more than one witness (Dt. 19:15). (TLSB)

5:32 *another*. The Father testifies concerning the Son. The Jews might not accept this testimony, but it was the testimony that mattered. (CSB)

Jesus cites John the Baptist (v 33), but He will rest on the witness of the Father Himself (v 37). (TLSB)

5:33 *You have sent to John*. A reference to the delegation from the Jewish leaders to John the Baptist (see 1:19). (CSB)

he has testified. The testimony of John was important, though not, of course, equal to the testimony of the Father. But had the Jews believed John, they would have believed Christ and would have been saved. (CSB)

5:35 *John was*. The past tense may indicate that John was dead or at least imprisoned. In any case, his work was done. (CSB)

burned and gave light. John's giving light was costly to him. (CSB)

for a time. The Jewish leaders never came to grips with John's message, and their responses to him were always at best tentative and superficial. (CSB)

5:36 *work*. The miracles of Jesus, which testified to what he is and to his divine mission (see 10:25). (CSB)

Jesus has a legal witness even greater than John: the Father.(TLSB)

works ... bear witness about Me. All Jesus' works, including His miracles, attest to His identity, that people may know Him, trust in Him, and thereby be saved. (TLSB)

5:37 *the Father ... has himself testified ... his voice.* Probably a reference to God's voice in the Scriptures (see vv. 38–39). God had also given his voice of approval at Jesus' baptism (see Mt 3:17). (CSB)

Through prophecies and the signs of Jesus' ministry. (TLSB)

nor seen his form. Probably refers to their lack of spiritual perception of who Jesus really is. (CSB)

5:38 *you do not believe.* The Jews did not recognize what God was saying, as their failure to believe Jesus shows. (CSB)

abiding in you. The Word abides in the heart of a person united to Christ by faith. (TLSB)

5:39 *You diligently study.* The Jewish leaders studied Scripture (OT) in minute detail. Despite their reverence for the very letter of Scripture (see notes on Mt 5:18–21), they did not recognize the one to whom Scripture bears supreme testimony. (CSB)

The Scriptures give eternal life only by and through Christ, not through the mere act of studying them. The entire scriptural testimony centers on Jesus (cf. Rm., 15:4; 16:25–27). (TLSB)

5:41 *praise from men.* Jesus did not accept human praise any more than human testimony (v. 34). (CSB)

5:42 *love of God.* May mean God's love for them or theirs for God. Probably it is the latter, but people's love for God is in response to his prior love for them (1Jn 4:19). (CSB)

5:43–44 The Jews had their attention firmly fixed on people. Their emphasis on self-seeking and on human praise showed that they did not accept the one who came from God, and therefore they missed the praise that comes from God. (CSB)

They sought their own honor through one another's praise. (TLSB)

5:45 *Your accuser is Moses.* The Jews prided themselves on their attachment to Moses, their great lawgiver. So it was an unexpected thrust for Jesus to say that Moses himself would accuse them before God. (CSB)

The Jews desired to follow the Law of Moses, which actually accused them and revealed their sins (Dt. 31:19, 21, 26; cf. Rom. 3:19) (TLSB)

5:46 *he wrote about me.* All the NT writers stressed, or assumed, that the OT, rightly read, points to Christ (cf. Lk 24:25–27, 44). Jesus applied this truth specifically to the writings of Moses (see, e.g., notes on Ge 49:10; Ex 12:21; Lev 16:5; Nu 24:17; Dt 18:15). (CSB)

John Chrysostom: "If they believed Moses they ought to have done homage to One of whom Moses prophesied" (NPNF1 14:149). (TLSB)

5:47 Because the Jews did not believe that Moses pointed to Christ, they did not believe Christ's explanation of Moses (cf. 2 Cor. 3:15-16). (TLSB)

5:30–47 The Father gives binding witness to His Son's true identity, which is revealed in the works He performs and in the Scriptures that everywhere speak of Him. Those who fail to see Christ in the pages of the Bible, including the OT, are blind to its central purpose. Through Scripture's testimony of Christ, God reveals His great love toward all people. • O heavenly Father, I praise You for the testimony You have given me of Your Son, my Savior, through Your life-giving Word. Amen. (TLSB)