

John 5:1-18

II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (1:19-12:50)

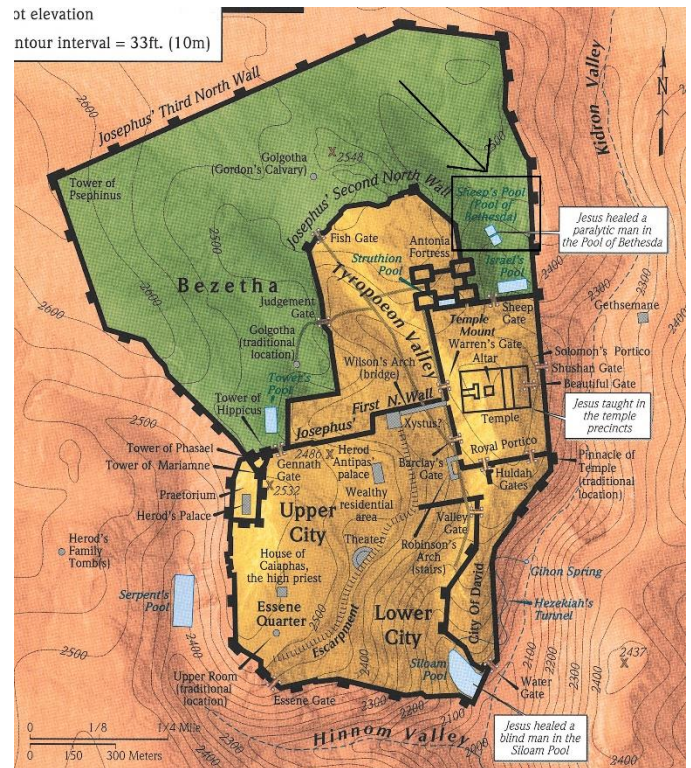
G. The Second Discourse – The Water of Life (4:1-42)

H. The Second Sign – Healing the Nobleman's Son (4:43-54)

I. The Third Sign – Healing of the Lame Man (5:1-18)

John 5 begins with some questions that don't have very good answers. Which feast is this (v. 1)?¹ Why would an angel stir up the water (v. 4a)?² How would this stirring up lead someone to be healed (v. 4b)? Unfortunately for us, no good answers exist, so we must be content with taking it all in as background understanding that, occasionally, people would be healed by wading into the Sheep Pool just north of the Temple (see picture to the right).

Nevertheless, among the *sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed* was a man who dealt with *an infirmity for thirty-eight years* (v. 5). All indications point to the fact that the man was paralyzed.³ Jesus, already knowing this man's story, asks him, *Do you want to be made well* (v. 6)? There was no request for healing, nor did the man even know Jesus' name! After replying that he's been trying to be healed in the pool for thirty-eight years, Jesus simply speaks the words, *Rise, take up your bed*⁴ and walk (v. 8). *Immediately the man was made well* (v. 9a).⁵



Yet, before we leave v. 9, we see one more note that John adds, which is *that day was the Sabbath* (v. 9b). The fourth commandment, found in Exodus 20:8-11, commands Israel to *remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . In it you shall do no work*. In this first century setting, carrying one's bed violated the Sabbath commandment, and this was going to cause some issues with the Jews who watched this man carry his bed. For this part, the healed man responded to them, saying that he was just doing what the Man *who made him well* told him to do (v. 11). No wonder! If someone healed me after thirty-eight years, I'd be inclined to follow his instructions and not worry about what day it was!

This then shifts the Jews' attention to the identity of this Healer. *Who is the Man who said to you, "Take up your bed and walk"* (v. 12)? They want answers! Who is encouraging people to break the

¹Scholarly consensus leans towards the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Trumpets, both being fall feasts.

²Bruce notes that many believe it had to do with natural, intermittent springs. *The Gospel of John*, 123. A further possible complicated factor is a number of Greek manuscripts don't have vv. 3b-4 at all, although we have no reason to doubt its authenticity.

³He was *lying there* (v. 6); he couldn't move himself into the water (v. 7), and the emphasis is on Jesus' command to *rise. . . and walk* (v. 8, cf. vv. 9, 11-12).

⁴The *bed* was likely a straw-filled mat that could be rolled up and easily carried on one's shoulder.

⁵Healed not only of paralysis, but think of the atrophied muscles that would have been strengthened!

Sabbath? As it turns out, the healed man had no answers, *for Jesus had withdrawn* after the miracle (v. 13).

Not too long after, Jesus finds the man *in the temple*, telling him to *sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you* (v. 14). Evidently, this man's paralysis resulted from sin. It doesn't necessarily mean, though, that all infirmity is a result of sin (cf. John 9:2ff). Immediately, the man departs to inform the Jews of the identify of this man (v. 15). Talk about an ungrateful heart! The paralyzed man didn't bother to ask the name of the Man who had healed him, and the moment he found it out, he immediately went to go report Him!

As a result, we read in v. 16 that *the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath*. Yet *Jesus answered them, saying My Father has been working until now, and I have been working* (v. 17). This angered the Jews *all the more* (v. 18). Breaking the Sabbath was one thing, but now *making Himself equal with God* was beyond the pale. Bruce comments on the true purpose of the Sabbath:

In Jesus' eyes, the sabbath was given to be a blessing and not a burden to human beings, and it was most worthily kept when the purpose for which God gave it was most actively promoted. He therefore regarded acts of healing and relief not as permitted exceptions to the prohibition of work on the sabbath, but as deeds which should be done by preference on that day, because they so signally fulfilled the divine purpose in its institution.⁶

It's odd to me that people downplay, minimize, or discount Jesus' testimony that He was fully God. John 5:1-18 is but one account in which Jesus makes the claim to be God. Not only that, but the response by those within ear shot know what He's claiming, because they seek to silence Him as a result! They accuse Him of blasphemy! It's not even like there was some misunderstanding. Jesus knew what He said, and the Jews knew full well what He meant.

All along the way, we are fully convinced that John was making the case that this Man, Jesus, was indeed the Son of God in the flesh. It's quite odd that people today will claim that Jesus was a good and honorable man, or a good teacher, yet stop short of calling Him the Son of God. To deny that Jesus is the Son of God is to call Him a liar, which wouldn't make Him a very good teacher or some upright, moral man!

⁶The Gospel of John, 125.