

# John 5

## Healing a Man at the Pool of Bethesda; Controversy about the Sabbath; Life through the Son; Jesus' Witnesses

### **For Your Information:**

### **"Period of Controversy" 5:2-6:71**

"The first period in the life of Jesus recorded in this Gospel contained His claims. He Himself presented some of them through an explicit avowal of messiahship, some were implicit in the titles ascribed to Him by His friends, and still others were latent in the miracles that He performed. He claimed nothing less for Himself than deity. He demanded nothing less from His followers than obedient faith. It was inevitable that such claims and demands as His should meet opposition especially when they interfered with the prejudice and sins of His hearers. Chapters 5 and 6 show the development of this opposition in debate and controversy before it broke into deadly conflict."  
- Merrill Tenney (103)

## Day 1

### Read John 5:1-13

#### Healing a man at the pool

1. From 5:1, where did Jesus go and why?

- Picture the scene in 5:3 and imagine the sight, sounds and smells at the pool. How would you describe the atmosphere?



*Pool at Bethesda*

2. What did people believe about the pool of Bethesda?

**For Your Information:** "The NASB marks a portion of 5:3-4 with brackets to indicate text that doesn't appear in the earliest Greek manuscripts. Most likely, an early scribe added the text as a clarification based on his knowledge of the tradition."  
- Charles Swindoll (108)

**"Verse 4...**indicates this popular belief held by the people and does not represent the view of John nor the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Yet, the notation in **verse 7** evidences that the water was indeed agitated on occasion. More than likely, however, the pool was fed by 'intermittent springs that caused the disturbance' [D. A. Carson]." - Mike Calvert

3. Why do you think Jesus asked the man if he wished to get well? 5:6 (Compare John 1:38)

**For Your Information:** "Observe how Jesus responded to this man's total lack of hope by challenging him with a question (v. 6). Perhaps He meant, 'Do you really want to live?' or 'Do you have enough faith to believe that God can make a difference in your life?' The question stirred faith in this man who was desperate for hope." - Mike Calvert

4. What does the man's answer say about his hope and perspective on the situation? 5:7 (i.e. Did he want to get well? What did he think he needed?)

5. How did Jesus heal him? 5:8 (Compare Psalm 33:9)

- How well was he healed? 5:9 (Consider: What types of miracles would need to take place in his body after 38 years.)

6. How did the Jews react to the healing? 5:10 (Compare Jeremiah 17:20-22)

- How did the man defend himself to the Jews? 5:11 (Why couldn't he identify Jesus? 5:13)

**For Your Information:** "The Law of Moses [Ex. 20:8-10] forbids work on the Sabbath. The rabbis minutely spelled out what constituted work (by 200 AD thirty-nine classes of work were defined). Nehemiah 13:15 and Jer. 17:21-27 condemn carrying loads for commercial business on the Sabbath, so the rabbis decided that 'taking out aught from one domain into another' (Leon Morris) was always work. This included carrying a mat. The rabbis had a theory that each commandment should be applied as widely as possible to avoid even accidentally breaking the law." - John (Life Change Series) (69)

"[The man] was scolded by 'the Jews' (John's term for 'religious authorities') for carrying something on the Sabbath, which was strictly forbidden by tradition, but perfectly acceptable by the law of Moses given the extraordinary circumstances...The Pharisee strictly applied the words of Jeremiah (17:21), but failed to recognize the context. Jeremiah complained because the seventh day in Jerusalem had become business as usual, like any other day." - Charles Swindoll (110)

7. From the following verses, what did Jesus say about healing on the Sabbath?

- Matthew 12:8-14
- Mark 2:27,28

**Optional Digging Deeper**  
Fill in information about the 3<sup>rd</sup> sign on the chart "Signs in the Gospel of John."

**Applying the Word:** "The sick man does what we nearly all do. He limits God's help to his own ideas and does not dare promise himself more than he conceives in his mind." - John Calvin

Can you identify an area of your life that needs healing? How would you answer the question: "Do you want to get well?"

## Day 2

### Read John 5:12-23

#### Confrontation with the Jews

8. Why do you think Jesus had "slipped away?" 5:13b

9. How did the man respond to Jesus' warning? 5:14,15

10. How did the Jewish authorities respond to Jesus' power and authority? 5:16

**IT'S GREEK TO ME** "persecute" *dioko* NT:1377 has the meanings (a) "to put to flight, drive away," (b) "to pursue," whence the meaning "to persecute," - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

11. What did Jesus say about God's work? 5:17a (*What are some ways that you can see God at work on the Sabbath?*)

12. By equating His work with God the Father (5:17b), what was Jesus doing? 5:18 (Compare John 10:31-33)

- Why do you think the Jewish authorities reacted so negatively (5:18) to Jesus' statement? (Compare John 11:48)

**Optional Digging Deeper**  
 What other ways did Jesus state his equality with the Father?  
 John 10:30  
  
 John 14:9-10  
  
 John 16:15a

**For Your Information:** **"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working"**  
 "Although the Father ended His work of creation on the seventh day, He never takes a break from His work of caring for the world that He has created. Even on the Sabbath, God still supports the world, and Jesus modeled His behavior on God's behavior. The Jewish leaders recognized that Jesus' words were equivalent to claiming to be equal with God."  
 - Africa Bible Commentary (1262)  
 "The Son of God was merely continuing to do what He, as the Creator, had been doing since the seventh day of creation."  
 - Charles Swindoll (114)

13. Summarize Jesus' claims about His work and relationship with the Father.

5:19-20	
5:21,26	(See Deuteronomy 32:39)
5:22,27	(Compare Acts 10:42; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
5:23	(See Isaiah 42:8)

**Applying the Word:** Do you see any way that you are putting “religious rules” above a personal relationship with God?

### Day 3

#### Read John 5:24-30

#### Life in Christ

14. What do you think it means to *hear* (or not hear) Jesus’ word? 5:24a (Compare John 8:43,47; Jeremiah 6:10)

- Whom do we need to believe? 5:24 (How does that compare to John 3:16?)

15. List the three phrases in 5:24b that describe what a believer receives.

**Optional Digging Deeper**  
Memorize John 5:24

16. Underline the phrases that describe what someone must do to be assured of life/salvation?

- John 6:28-29 They said therefore to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."
- John 6:40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." NIV
- Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. NIV
- 1 John 5:11-12 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. NIV

17. Compare John 5:21,26 and 1:4. What does this say about Jesus’ claim to life?

**For Your Information:** “Christ can give life because He Himself possesses life. He not only has a part in giving it, He is the source of it. This is another testimony to Jesus’ deity, because only God has life in Himself.”

– The Nelson Study Bible (1769)

“None of us has life inherent in ourselves. Our life is derived from our parents, and the fragile environment around us. Jesus claimed that His life was derived from no one; it is inherent and uncreated. Theologians call this quality of self-existence ‘*aseity*’ and recognize that God alone possesses it.”

- David Guzik

18. What kind of “life” does Jesus Christ offer us?

- John 6:35; 10:10
- Philippians 2:13
- 2 Peter 1:3-4

19. What titles did Jesus use to refer to Himself in 5:25 and 5:27? What work is associated with each title?

**Optional Digging Deeper**  
How does the Lord judge our works? 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

### **Christ’s righteous judgment**

20. What two groups did Jesus say will be judged? 5:29

**For Your Information:** “Taken by itself, [verse 29] seems to indicate that eternal destiny is based on our deeds – good or evil – rather than on belief or unbelief. But as we study John’s writings, it’s clear that he saw ‘doing good’ as a natural outgrowth of the saving gospel’s seed planted in the heart of the believer at the time of the new birth. (3 John 11) From the viewpoint of the gospel writers, the ‘good’ life emerges through a relationship with Christ, and the ‘evil’ life encroaches through separation from Him (compare Matthew 25:31-46).”  
- Charles Swindoll (EC 80)

“Those who have done good”: “The only ‘good’ anyone can do is to believe on Christ, the One God sent (6:28,29). All other good actions flow from that. Anything good that is done without that belief means nothing to God and will result in the resurrection of condemnation.”  
- The Nelson Bible Dictionary

21. Why will Jesus’ judgment be just? 5:30 (Cf. 5:19)

**Optional Digging Deeper**  
What does Isaiah 11:3-5 prophesy about the judgment of the coming Messiah?

22. What does Jesus’ example in 5:19,30 say to you? (Compare Ephesians 5:1,2)

**For Your Information:** “Stop for a few moments and seriously consider these six claims. Think of the best person in all of history (other than Jesus Christ), living or dead. Imagine him or her standing before you to make a speech having these six points: I am equal with God the Father.  
I am the giver of life.  
I am the final judge over all of humanity.  
I hold the destiny of every human in my hand.  
I will raise the dead.  
Everything I do is the will of God.

How would you respond? Of all the great philosophers, teachers, artists, and statesmen who ever lived, none would dare make such claims unless he or she were either completely insane or shamelessly evil. Not unless He was indeed God in human flesh.”  
- Charles Swindoll (120-121)

*Applying the Word: What would you say to someone who believes that Jesus is just a good man?*

**Day 4**

**Read John 5:31-47**

**Jesus' witnesses**

23. What did Jesus say about His own witness? 5:31

- What Old Testament rule was there about witnesses? Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15

24. List who/what Jesus gave as witnesses.

5:32,37	
5:33,35	
5:36	<i>(Compare Acts 2:22)</i>
5:39	
5:45-47	

**For Your Information:**

***"There is another who bears witness of me" 5:32***

"Another in the Greek means 'another of the same kind.' It is a subtle reference to deity (compare 14:16, where He uses the same word to describe the Holy Spirit.)...The Greek construction for the verb 'bears witness' indicates continual action. The Father continually testifies to the claims of Christ. At Jesus' birth, the Father announced the arrival with prophets, angels and a miraculous star. At Jesus' baptism, the Father testified: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased' (Matt. 3:17b). And, later in Jesus' life, the Father reaffirms His own testimony – at the Transfiguration (17:5), the Resurrection (28:1-7), and the Ascension (Acts 1:9-11).'" - Charles Swindoll (EC 84)

25. Why wasn't John's witness as great as Jesus' works? 5:36 (Note: How many works had Jesus been doing? See Matthew 4:23-24; John 21:25;)

**The Jews' unbelief**

26. What problems did the Jews have with the Word?

- 5:38
- 5:39

27. What was the result? 5:40

28. What wrong motivations were keeping many Jews from seeking God? 5:41-44

29. How was their concern for man's approval reflected in their behavior?

- Matthew 23:5-7
- John 12:42,43

30. In what ways had the Jewish leaders "set their hope" (5:45) on Moses (author of the first five books of the Old Testament - containing the law)? Romans 2:17; 10:3-4

- Where do we need to put our hope? Philippians 3:9

31. Why didn't the Jews really believe Moses? 5:46,47

***Optional Digging Deeper***

What did Jesus say about Himself and scripture? Luke 24:27,44

How did Paul connect the Old Testament with Christ? Acts 26:22-23

***For Your Information:*** "Moses wrote about Christ in the promises to the patriarch, in the history of the deliverance from Egypt, in the symbolic institutions of the Law, and in the prediction of a Prophet like himself (see Luke 24:25,26). If the people had believed Moses, they would have received Jesus gladly. Over three hundred Old Testament prophecies were specifically fulfilled in the First Coming of Christ."  
- Nelson Bible Dictionary

Where did Moses write about Jesus? In many pages, but here are a few:

- The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst...* (Deuteronomy 18:15)
- Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."* (Numbers 21:8-9)
- Jesus was typified in the rock that gave Israel water in the wilderness (Numbers 20:8-12 and 1 Corinthians 10:4).
- The ministry of Jesus was shown in almost every aspect of the seven different kinds of offering that God commanded Israel to bring (Leviticus 1-7).
- Jesus and His ministry were shown in the Tabernacle and its service...
- The law of the bondservant speaks of Jesus (Exodus 21:5-6 and Psalm 40:6-8).

- David Guzik

32. From 5:38-47, list the “do not” phrases that describe why the Jews were not willing to come to Jesus.

5:38a	
5:38b	
5:40	
5:42	
5:43	
5:44	
5:47	

33. How would you summarize the claim that Jesus was making? Read the following excerpt by C. S. Lewis and record any thoughts you might have.

*"I am trying to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg--or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. We are faced, then, with a frightening alternative. This man we are talking about either was (and is) just what He said or else a lunatic, or something worse...I have to accept the view that He was and is God."*

- (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York: MacMillan, 1943), pages 55-56)

**Applying the Word:** How can you make sure that when you study the Bible you are coming to know the God of the Bible?