





Waiting for the Water

John 5:1-18

Life of Jesus: Miracles

The lesson opens with a feast of the Jews. Where do you think this feast would have been?

It was in Jerusalem, and Jesus went there for the feast.

The story takes place in Jerusalem, near the sheep market. This market was where sheep were sold, some historians believe this was where the sheep were purchased for the sacrifice, but this is not clear from the biblical text. Some markets could have been a place where you purchased a live sheep, and the animal is slaughtered for you to take home to cook for dinner.

By the market there was a pool with five porches, and the name of the pool was called Bethesda.

Discuss:

There is a large pool of water, and a large number of people around the pool.

What do you think is wrong with the people around the pool?

All around this pool there were many sick people who were blind, lame, and paralyzed.

All of them needed healing, and they were waiting for the “moving of the water.”

The next verse is very unusual, and this verse has been debated for years. Many modern Bible translations do not include John 5:4. But if you remove this verse, then John 5:7 does not make sense. This lesson will assume that the teacher has a translation that includes John 5:4.

John 5:4 says that at a certain time, an angel went down and stirred up the water. The angel would make the water bubble, or move, and the first person who got in the water after this would get healed.

It is difficult to find anything like this anywhere else in the Bible, so some scholars believe that this could have been a legend. Others say there may have been a spring connected to the pool, or it was connected to the water system in Jerusalem and air would bubble into the pool. Often people try to make the Word of God of less effect by explaining things away in a natural sense, but this can also detract from the power of God. The apostle John writes this very matter-of-factly and does not give any reason for the reader to believe that it was anything other than an angel; therefore, this lesson will assume the literal translation of John 5:4.

We can imagine the scene. When the water is stirred, there would be a mad rush for everyone to try to be the first one in the water.

Discuss:

What would this look like? There were a lot of sick people around this pool.

Some people might have been watching the water all the time waiting for it to move.

What do you think happened when the water started moving, or bubbling?

This could be a very crazy scene.

Do you think people would be rushing down to the water trying to get in first?

What would you do if you saw the water bubbling? Would you yell out that the water is moving?

Would you be quiet, not say anything and try to get in before anyone else noticed? Either way, people might be shoving other people out of the way, pushing to be the first one into the water.



Waiting for the Water

There was a certain man there who was waiting around the pool, and he had been sick for thirty-eight years.

We do not know how old he is, or how long he has been waiting by the pool.

There is one other time in the Bible where the number thirty-eight is mentioned. Deuteronomy 2:14 says that that Israelites wandered from Kadeshbarnea (where they sent the spies into the promised land) to the brook of Zered for thirty-eight years. This specific time period was part of the forty years that they were in the desert and this was the time that all the men of war died in the desert.

The possible parallel is that this time of thirty-eight years in this man's life was a time of wandering, a time where he was completely aimless, and waiting to die. But when given the opportunity to go into the promised land, he made a different choice.

For some reason, Jesus seems to have singled this man out. We don't know why he chose this man, or if he was the only person he healed at Bethesda.

Jesus saw this man lying there near the pool, and he knew that he had been that way for a long time.

Discuss:

How could Jesus have known that this man had been sick for a long time?

He seems to have known this just by looking at him.

Is it possible that the man's legs were skinny - small and shriveled? Sometimes when people are not able to walk for long periods of time their legs completely lose all muscle and strength; the legs become thin and frail.

Could that be what Jesus saw when he looked at this man?

Jesus came to him and asked him a question. What do you think he asked this man?

Jesus asked him, "Do you want to be made well?"

Discuss:

What kind of a question is this?

What would you say?

If you had been sick for thirty-eight years, what would you say?

Do you think the man wanted to be healed?

Was that why he was there at the pool waiting for what may have been a very long time?

Do you think this man said yes?

He did not actually answer the question. He basically offers an excuse, or an explanation of why he is not well. He blamed things on other people.



Waiting for the Water

He told Jesus that he did not have anyone to put him into the water when it is stirred up. And when he tries to get in the water, someone else always gets there first, and he can never get there in time.

We aren't sure why he offers this vague explanation; he seems to be trying to make excuses of why he is not healed.

Jesus does not respond to any of this.

He just says, "Get up! Pick up your bed, and walk." What do you think the man did?

What is interesting and unusual is that the reader finds out later that he does not even know who Jesus is. It is not like he heard about the healings that Jesus had performed, or knew the reputation that Jesus had. So as far as this man knows, this random man told him to get up and walk.

The man gets up. Immediately. He picked up his bed and walked. He was healed and made whole!

But what day of the week was it?

It was the sabbath.

Discuss:

What always happens when Jesus helps someone on the sabbath? Who is going to be angry?

The Jewish leaders always got upset. Why?

The Jews saw this man carrying his bed. Maybe he had it thrown over his shoulder. But the Jews saw him carrying his bed and said, Hey! What are you doing? It's against the law to carry your bed on the sabbath day! This is considered work.

The man told them, the man that made me well told me to pick up my bed and walk. Then the Jews said, Who? Who did this? What man told you to pick up your bed and walk?

They could have said, this is amazing! They probably knew this man. If he was a beggar, and he had been sick for so long, people probably knew who he was. He most likely had been sitting out there every day for days and people would have recognized him.

It is likely that many people in the city knew who he was.

The Jews could have been happy for the man. This man is excited; this is the best day he has had in thirty-eight years!

This is where we see that this man did not even know who Jesus was; he did not know who had healed him. There were so many people there that Jesus had left unnoticed.

Jesus found the man in the temple. If he found him, he must have been looking for him.

Jesus went up to the man and says something to this man that makes the reader wonder what was going on in this man's life, or what caused his condition in the first place?

Jesus said, You are well now; stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.

Why did Jesus say this? What does this mean?

Does this mean that God made him sick? No. God does not put sickness on us because of our sins.

First, does God forgive us when we sin? Yes.



Waiting for the Water

Look at Romans 6 to find out what happens when we sin.

We are not under the law anymore, we now live under grace (Romans 6:1, 14,15).

What is grace? It is God's favor, loving-kindness, pleasure. When we accept Jesus, God gives the gift of righteousness and in God's eyes he does not see our sin (Romans 5:17). Our old self died with Jesus, and we are made new just like Jesus was when he was raised from the dead (Romans 5:15-21; 6:6) God sees us as dead to sin, and alive to God through Christ Jesus. He looks at us the way he looks at Jesus.

What does it mean when we say "the law"? What is it talking about?

It means the Ten Commandments, and the other 613 laws in the books that Moses wrote in the Bible. The Jews lived by these laws for thousands of years.

If we are not under the law anymore and God forgives us, then can we just go and do whatever we want to because we know he will forgive us? No.

Sin is a trap. It is dangerous; it opens the door for the devil to come into our lives.

The apostle Paul wrote that **if you sin, you make yourself a slave (Romans 6:16)**. Do you want to be a slave?

Paul said if you obey God, it is like you are a servant to God, but if you sin, you will be a servant to the devil. If we sin, it is like opening the door for the devil to come into our lives.

Discuss:

Do you think that's why Jesus told this man to stop sinning?

Was he trying to protect him?

Jesus is warning him: if you keep sinning, it will let something worse in your life than you had before.

Just because God's grace covers our sin, it doesn't make it okay to sin.

If we continue to sin because we know that God's grace covers our sin, it is very dangerous. Yielding to sin makes us servants of sin, makes more sin, and ultimately sin will kill you. Satan will be your master, and he will pay you what you earned, which is death.

After this, the man left, and he told the Jews that Jesus was the one who made him well. That made the Jews want to kill Jesus even more, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

Then Jesus told the Jews, My Father is always working, and I am working.

This made the Jews even more angry, and they wanted even more to kill him. Not only had he broken the sabbath, but now he was saying that God was his Father, and he was making himself equal with God.

Jesus continued speaking about himself and his relationship to the Father.

Jesus explains who he is, and his relationship with the Father. He tells them many things, but his underlying theme is that you cannot separate Jesus from God. You cannot say you believe in one and not the other. You cannot say that you honor one and not the other.

Jesus in the Story



Jesus told them that he does not do anything of himself, but only what he sees the Father doing (John 5:19).

To honor God the Father, you must also honor the Son (John 5:23).

If you hear his word, and believe on him, you will have everlasting life (John 5:24).

If you search the scriptures, you will see that they speak of Jesus (John 5:39).

If you do not receive Jesus, you do not have the love of God in you (John 5:42).

Jesus said that He and the Father are one (John 10:30).

He said that if you've seen Jesus, you've seen the Father (John 14:9).

The Pharisees were saying they honored the Father, but they rejected Jesus. Jesus tells the Pharisees of the authority given to him by the Father (John 5:27). He tells them that He can do nothing of himself, and he only does the will of the Father who sent him (John 5:30). If you honor Jesus, you honor the Father. If you do not honor Jesus the Son, then you do not honor God the Father (John 5:23).

There are a lot of people who say they know God, and many religions say they have the way to God. But you cannot have a relationship with the Father without acknowledging that God sent Jesus into the world to save us (John 5:38,43).

Jesus IS the Word of God. The scriptures are all about Jesus (John 5:39) from the beginning to the very end. And if you do not receive Jesus, then the love of God is not in you (John 5:42).



Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

5. An Evening Visit

1. Who was Nicodemus?
2. What did Jesus say a person has to do to see the kingdom of God?
3. Why did God send his son into the world? (John 3:17)
4. Who are those that are condemned and why? (John 3:18)

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

6. Everything I've Ever Done

1. Why was the lady surprised that Jesus talked to her?
2. What water did Jesus tell the lady he had?
3. Who did the lady go tell about Jesus and what did she say?

John 4:23

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

7. The Nobleman's Son

Read Hebrews 11:6

1. According to this verse, what do we have to do to please God?
2. What do we have to do to come to God?
3. Who does God reward?

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

8. Waiting for the Water

Read Romans 6

1. We are _____ to sin (v.2)
2. What should we not let rule in our bodies? (v.12)
3. We are not under what? (v.14-15)
4. What are we under instead? (v.14-15)
5. If you obey something, what do you become to the thing you obey? (v.16)

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

