

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL - THE LIFE OF CHRIST

PART FIVE - JESUS AT A FEAST IN JERUSALEM - PROBABLY THE PASSOVER

43. Heals on the Sabbath and Defends His Act (Jn. 5:1-47)

- (1) This passage is the first recorded conflict between Jesus and the authorities at Jerusalem. Jesus has returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, thus ending the first year of His ministry. The feast is not what is important here, the fact that it is a Sabbath however is important. That is why John did not choose to specifically name the feast. Reliable scholars believe the feast to be the Passover.
- (2) The exact location of this pool within the city is not known. "Bethesda" means "house of mercy."
- (3,4) We know that the pool was thought to have had medicinal effects on those that bathed there. However, half of this verse and all of verse four are not in the ancient manuscripts. The additions are thought to have been made during the second century. So, we really do not know how the pool helped these people.
- (5) Among the multitude gathered around the pool that day was a man who had been afflicted for 38 years. He was probably a paralytic.
- (6) Jesus knew the man wanted to be healed, so this question was simply asked to acquire the man's attention. In most of His miracles Jesus requires the attention and an act of will on the part of the subject.
- (7) This verse is probably what led to the insertion of verse four. The waters moved. This could have been caused by a spring that flowed intermittently. The man's illness kept him from getting into the pool quickly enough, before another would get in before him.
- (8) Jesus speaks with authority and imperatively. However, an act of obedience is required. The man must choose to get up or continue to lie there. The "bed" mentioned here is what we would call a pallet.
- (9) Notice the four steps of Christ's healing: 1)- Christ addresses the man, 2)- He commands, 3)- the man is healed and 4)- obeys. Jesus picked the Sabbath day to do this healing because the time was right for the impending confrontation.
- (10) The Law of Moses forbade the carrying of burdens on the Sabbath, Ex. 31:13; Jer. 17:21; Neh. 13:15-19. The authorities questioned this man concerning his actions. The Pharisees had increased the intent of the Law to the extremes, putting more restrictions on the people than required by the Law. The man was probably within the limits of the Law but beyond the limits of tradition.
- (11) The man's defense was simple. If the man (Jesus) is powerful enough to heal me, then His requests are to be obeyed. If He tells me to take my bed, then I take my bed.
- (12) Notice that they care nothing about the healing, but only to try and find someone who had done physical labor on the Sabbath. To the Pharisees the Law outweighed mercy.
- (13) Jesus however was relatively unknown in Jerusalem at this time. The man did not know Him and Jesus easily disappeared into the crowd.
- (14) The man went to the Temple, as did Jesus. It seems as if Jesus is indicating that the man's sins had brought on this disease? Is this possible?
- (15) It was from this meeting that the man knew Jesus' identity. In obedience to the demand of the authorities he returned to them and told them of Jesus and His whereabouts. There was no malicious intent on the part of the man; however, trouble would soon come upon Jesus because of the man's actions.

- (16) The Jews were pursuing Jesus to attack Him. The oldest manuscripts omit "sought to slay Him." Compare this confrontation to the one that occurs in Jn. 2:14. Jesus will justify His actions by making Himself equal with His Father.
- (17) If Jesus is God, then the Laws of the Sabbath do not restrict His divine work.
- (18) The Pharisees were livid. Since they could not accept Jesus as the Son of God, His defense was pure blasphemy in their eyes. "They sought the more to kill Him" indicates that they were planning to get rid of Jesus not by outright murder, but through some deceitful plan.
- (19) Jesus now sets out to show His Divinity through His character, mission, authority, and credentials. These all hinge on Him being the true Son of God. Verses 19-23 declare His relationship to the Father by their 1) unity of action, 2) unity of love, 3) unity in ability to impart life, and 4) unity in judgment. All of these common characteristics leading to their 5) unity in honor. Since He has no will or action apart from the Father it would be impossible for Him to do anything contrary to the Father's will.
- (20) The miracle of healing would be a preview of greater works to come. Here we see the unity of love.
- (21) The Father possesses the power to raise the dead and the Son also possesses this same power, e.g. Lazarus.
- (22) The judgment of the world is delegated to the Son. Does judgment begin in this world? (Jn. 9:39)
- (23) The Son deserves honor because He speaks the words, does the work, and is a physical manifestation of His Father. If the Son possesses the right of concurrent action in the realms of unity, love, power over death, and judgment, then His concurrent use of the Sabbath for His father's business was not to be questioned.
- (24) This verse points to two conditions of eternal life. 1) Knowledge of the revelation of Christ and 2) a belief of it such as to cause acceptance. This verse then indicates that eternal life and eternal condemnation are a present condition.
- (25) This verse is primarily aimed at those that are spiritually dead.
- (26) Jesus had been given a spiritually regenerating power that no other man possessed.
- (27) These powers qualified Jesus to be the perfect judge. Other characteristics of Jesus that make Him the perfect judge are: 1) He has experienced the infirmities and temptations of man and 2) His dual nature (God and man) makes Him the only true mediator between God the Father and man.
- (28) Jesus describes the future literal and final resurrection of the dead.
- (29) All will come forth from the grave - good to eternal life and evil to eternal damnation.
- (30) Here Jesus reasserts His dependence upon the Father to show how His relationship to man is an extension of His relationship to the Father. Because His judgment will be inspired by the will of His Father, it will be a perfect judgment.
- (31) The Jews have other witnesses to listen to, besides Jesus.
- (32) This verse probably refers to John the Baptist (see v. 33) as Christ's witness.
- (33) Comparing this verse to Jn. 1:19 shows that Jesus was addressing the rulers of the Jews. John testified that Jesus is the Christ.
- (34) Jesus is saying that he receives testimony "not from man alone." However, if the Jews were willing to accept Jesus solely on the testimony of John, then so be it.
- (35) The Jews believed John for a time, but rejected him when he testified for Jesus as the Messiah (Lk. 7:33).
- (36) Christ's life and deeds were the second witness on His behalf. This was a more convincing testimony because it manifested itself in tangible evidence, namely, miracles and His sinless life. "Work" would indicate not only His miracles but it would also encompass the entire realm of His life, including His message and His death for our sins.
- (37) The Father bore witness through the prophets (v. 39) and the power He gave to Jesus.
- (38) The Jews however chose to reject all of the witnesses and all of their testimony.

- (39) The very place that they searched to find eternal life contained testimony pointing to Jesus as the Christ.
- (40) But still they refused Jesus. See McGarvey p. 207.
- (41) Jesus did not take His rejection personally, because He was not looking for honor, only for faith.
- (42) Jesus had searched their hearts and knew that they did not truly know or love God. All the evidence in the world would not convict their souls.
- (43) Just as quickly as the Jews reject Jesus they will begin to accept and follow various antichrists. These false christs can be recognized because they come in their own name instead of the Father's.
- (44) Jesus was not offering what the Jews expected of the Messiah. They wanted a Messiah to restore glory to them and their nation, not one who would expect them to humble themselves before all of mankind.
- (45) The Law of Moses, which they have clung to so vigorously, will condemn them in the end.
- (46) How will the testimony of Moses condemn them? Because Moses testified of Christ and the Jews rejected His testimony. Jesus was the essential subject of the Law and the Prophets (Lk. 24:27, 44-46; Rom. 16:25,26).
- (47) Those that would reject Moses would surely reject Jesus as well. Moses specifically wrote concerning Christ in Deut. 18:15-18, but the essence of Christ permeates the whole Law. To reject either Testament is to reject them both. Jesus does not condemn the Jews for holding Moses in reverence, but he does condemn them for ignoring the sayings of Moses.