



The Lame is Healed

John 5:1-18

Notes: The primary reference used in developing this Bible Study was the *Life Application Commentary*. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

5:1 – Why did Jesus go to Jerusalem?

There was a feast of the Jews. All Jewish males were required to come to Jerusalem to attend three feasts; (1) the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, (2) The Feast of Weeks (also called Pentecost), and (3) the Feast of Tabernacles.

Why does this verse say Jesus went up to Jerusalem?

Capernaum, at the northern end of Israel, was lower in altitude than Jerusalem. Because of Jerusalem's location in the mountains, and because of its priority as the city of David, people spoke of going *up to Jerusalem*.

5:2-4 – What was at the sheep gate in Jerusalem?

A pool with 5 covered porches where people went to be healed. However, there was not a lot of healing taking place at this pool; it was only a faint hope... People wanting to be healed had to wait until the water was stirred by an angel then only the first in the pool would be healed.

Why did Jesus choose to go to such a place?

He was there to heal people with the kind of healing that went beyond the physical needs of the disabled.

5:5-8 – Who did Jesus chose to help?

Jesus chose to heal a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. After 38 years, this man's problem had become a way of life. No one had ever helped him. He had no hope of ever being healed and no desire to help himself. The man was paralyzed in sight of healing. His situation looked hopeless until the day that Jesus showed up. Among all those trying to be healed, Jesus found the one who couldn't help himself.

Why would Jesus choose the one who couldn't help himself?

1. He was more open to help from Jesus.
2. Mercy
3. He was ready for help. Jesus did not have to spend any effort to convince him he needed help.
4. It was clearly a miracle.

How did Jesus know that the man had been in his condition a long time?

This gives us a glimpse of the omniscient power of Jesus. He knew this man's condition and how long he had suffered.

Why did Jesus ask "Do you want to be made well?"?

Jesus will not force himself upon anyone. He seeks permission before intervening in that person's life. In this case, Jesus waited until later to explain to the man the spiritual aspects of his sickness. He was sick because of his sin. Also, we must acknowledge our dependency and decide if we want Christ to heal us.

How did the man answer the question?

The man indirectly answered Jesus by telling how he had not been able to be healed because others would get into the water before he did. In making that statement, the man admitted that he needed help. His hope for healing was stuck behind his hopelessness of ever getting help to get to the water in time.

What did the paralyzed man have that many healthy people lack?

He knew he needed help. Physical health can be dangerous to your spiritual health if this causes us to live without ever facing our inability to save ourselves. Jesus went to a desperate person who didn't have to be convinced he needed help.

Can we be saved without having a desperate physical need?

God saves us out of His grace, no matter what our physical condition may be.

What kind of help did Jesus give the man?

1. Not the kind he expected.
2. Jesus simply said, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

5:9 – What was the significance of the man carrying his mat?

The action of carrying his mat represented this man's freedom but the Jewish religious leaders took this as an occasion to impose restrictions on him because it was the Sabbath.

What should this miracle have revealed to the Jews?

The miracle revealed that the Messiah was finally present.

Isaiah 35:5-6 - Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

5:10 – What was the problem the Jews had with this healing?

It took place on the Sabbath. The issue that the Jewish religious leaders had was due to their interpretation of God's law. God's law says:

Exodus 20:8-9 - Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work. (NKJV)

The regulation against carrying something on the Sabbath was the last of 39 rules in the "tradition of the elders". This was just one of hundreds of rules the Jewish leaders had added to the Old Testament law. They missed the point of God's grace in the law.

What is the grace in the law?

1. The Law is intended for man's benefit, not to enslave.
2. The Law allows us to take time off to honor God.
3. The Law allows us to experience how God will help us with our work.

What is the danger in having preconceived notions of how God works?

Our preconceived notions of how God's work should be done get in the way of it getting done!

Why did Jesus heal on the Sabbath?

The religious leaders had determined that healing was work. Jesus was challenging the religious leaders to look beyond God's command regarding the Sabbath to its true purpose—to honor God by helping people in need.

Note the 7 miracles of Jesus on the Sabbath:

1. Sends a demon out of a man.
2. Heals Peter's mother-in-law.
3. Heals a lame man.
4. Heals a man with a shriveled hand.
5. Restores a crippled woman.*
6. Heals a man with dropsy.
7. Heals a man born blind.

*When Jesus healed the crippled woman he said, "*You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?*" (Luke 13:15-26)

What kind of things do religions today impose on people that are not scriptural?

1. What we can't do on Sunday.
2. The denomination we worship in.
3. The kind of Christian music we use to worship.

So what is the lesson that we should learn from Jesus healing on the Sabbath?

Where the Bible does not specify rules, we should not either.

Note: We should be on our guard about this. Are our guidelines for worship and living God-made or man-made? Are they helping people, or have they become needless stumbling blocks? Extra-biblical rules based on personal convictions only have value if they help a person live more spiritually.

5:11-13 – Why did the man who was healed not know who had healed him?

Jesus had withdrawn into the multitude. This reveals a lot about Jesus. He had mercy on the man and healed him for the glory of God. Jesus could have hung around and received glory for the healing like those with healing ministries today but that was not His way.

5:14-15 – Where did Jesus find the man later?

Jesus encountered the man in the temple.

What did Jesus tell the man?

Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you. This implies that the man's sickness was in some way caused by sin.

Are all afflictions caused by sin?

No, Jesus said in John 9:3 that a man's blindness had nothing to do with his sin or his parents' sin. One of the results of sin is suffering, but not all suffering is the result of personal sin.

What is the 'worse' thing that could happen to the man?

He could spend eternity in hell. The man was delighted to be physically healed, but he had to turn from his sins and seek God's forgiveness to be spiritually healed.

What did the man who was healed do when he learned who had healed him?

He told the Jewish leaders which triggered persecution of Jesus by the leaders.

5:16 – Why did the leaders persecute Jesus?

Jesus broke one of their rules and they felt their power threatened by Jesus' actions, thus they resented him.

5:17 – What does God do on the Sabbath?

1. God is always at work.
2. God is not subject to the Sabbath rules of man.
3. If God stopped every kind of work on the Sabbath, nature would fall into chaos and sin would overrun the world.

What did God rest from after 6 days of creation?

He rested from the work of creation but began the work of sustaining creation. (Genesis 2:2) God upholds “*all things by the word of his power*” (Hebrews 1:3, NKJV).

Did Jesus teach that we are now released from observing the Sabbath?

No... “*Do not think that I came to destroy the law of the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill*” (Matthew 5:17, NKJV). Instead, Jesus challenged us to keep it in the right way by setting down our work, consciously taking time for rest, and understanding that God has a place in our work and our rest, which makes them both holy.

Mark 2:27 - The Sabbath was made for human kind, and not human kind for the Sabbath (NRSV).

What are some questions to ask ourselves to see if you have the right attitude about setting aside a day of rest:

1. When I work, am I working for God or money?
2. When I rest, am I resting for God or myself?
3. Does my resting refresh me for work?
4. How does my time of rest include devotion to God?
5. How well do I understand the fact that one person’s work is another person’s rest?

5:18 – What else besides breaking the Sabbath rules made the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus?

In saying, “My Father”, Jesus was clearly claiming to be God’s Son, thus equal with God. For a human to claim equality with God was blasphemy; and blasphemy was a sin carrying the death penalty (Lev. 24:15-17). People regularly misunderstood Jesus and He was constantly correcting them. Jesus never attempted to correct the understanding that He was claiming to be God, for that was exactly what He meant.

How did the political situation of the time contribute to the hate directed at Jesus from His own people?

1. Roman rule over the Jews placed severe limits on most power and control exercised by the native people.
2. The Romans with their pluralistic views of religion, interpreted the religious sphere as little more than a local, meaningless activity to help keep the masses under control.
3. Among the Jews of Jesus’ time, the highest power someone could wield was in the religious structure.

4. Jesus challenged the legitimacy of the religious leadership, exposing their false pretenses, and claiming a higher authority.
5. Thus threatened by the loss of power if Jesus’ claims were true, the religious leaders chose to reject Him.
6. However, God used the attempted solution to the “Jesus problem” to solve once and for all the entire world’s “sin problem”.