

John – An In-Depth Study

[Part 8]

John 5:1-9 [NIV] *“Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie, the blind, the lame, the paralysed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’ ‘Sir,’ the invalid replied, ‘I have no-one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.’ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,”*

To us this account sounds like a mere superstition, as indeed it is. But this kind of belief was widespread in ancient days.

Jesus did **not** trouble to lecture on useless superstition, His one desire was to help.

Jesus began by asking the man if he wanted to be healed.

This was **not** so foolish a question as it may sound.

After 38 years all hope may have died and left behind it a passive dull despair.

In his mind this man may have become content to remain an invalid not having to shoulder all the burden of making a living and accepting his own responsibilities again.

But this man’s response was immediate.

The first essential attitude towards receiving the power of Jesus Christ is the intense desire for it.

The desire to change for the better must be surging in our hearts and spirit.

Jesus went on to tell the man to get up.

Jesus was saying, make a supreme effort and you and I will do this thing you desire together.

No person can just sit back, relax and expect a miracle in their lives.

A miraculous change happens when our will and God’s power co-operate to make it happen.

In effect Jesus was commanding this man to attempt the impossible, the very thing he knew he could not do by himself.

When the man did all he could, God’s power made what was impossible happen.

This is what Paul meant in **Philippians 4:13** and Jesus Christ in **John 15:5**.

John 5:10-18 [NIV] *“and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, ‘It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.’ But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’” So they asked him, ‘Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?’ The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.’ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted*

him. Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.' For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God."

The strict Jews had added nearly forty different classifications of work that had to be strictly obeyed on the Sabbath day.

To carry a bed was certainly a major violation of the Sabbath in the eyes of the Jewish authorities.

In his defence, the man said that the One who had healed him told him to carry his bed home.

After Jesus met the healed man in the temple, the man realised who Jesus was and informed the Jewish authorities, trying to explain that it was not his fault that he had broken the Sabbath law. **[Jeremiah 17:19-27; Nehemiah 13:15-19]**

So the authorities levelled their accusations against Jesus.

The verbs in **verse 18** are imperfect tense which means repeated action in past time.

Certainly this story is only one example of what Jesus did habitually.

Jesus' defence was completely shattering to the Jewish authorities.

What Jesus was saying is that even on the Sabbath God's love, mercy and compassion act and so do I, His Son.

There is another Jewish belief that enters into this event.

When Jesus saw the man in the temple He told him to stop sinning.

To a Jew sin and suffering were connected, and a person who was sick could **not** be healed until his sins had been forgiven.

This healed man could argue that he had found someone who had released him from the consequences of sin, so he could now go on sinning and escape the consequences.

Jesus put an end to such thoughts, so did the apostle Paul. **[Galatians 5:13; Romans 16:1-18]**

John 5:19-20 [NIV] *"Jesus gave them this answer: 'I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.'"*

This is the start of Jesus' answer to the charge that He was making Himself equal to God the Father.

Jesus states His identity with God the Father –

To see Jesus in action was to see God the Father in action.

The important fact is that in Jesus we see what God is like.

If we want to know how God the Father feels and deals with human beings, we look to see how Jesus feels and deals with the human beings He lived among as the Son of Man.

This identity is based on complete obedience –

Jesus does nothing that proceeds from Himself only to fulfil the Will of God the Father.

A relationship of complete harmony with God the Father.

This obedience is **not** based on submission to power but on love.

The unity between Jesus and God the Father was a unity of love, two minds with a single thought because this loving relationship is so intimate, so close, that the Father and Son are one.

As a result of this union of love, Jesus the physical Son of Man, has complete confidence in what He says and does.

Jesus was quite sure that the future was in the hands of God the Father, no human could stop Him fulfilling what God the Father had given Him to do.

Jesus was totally fearless of what humans could do to Him –

There was no human situation in which Jesus would lower His claims or adulterate the truth.

John 5:21-24 [NIV] *“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no-one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him. ‘I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.’”*

Jesus is the giver of life just as God the Father is the giver of life to human beings, in the double sense.

When Jesus comes into our lives we become fully alive. Before, we were spiritually dead, but we become spiritually alive.

When Jesus comes into our lives through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we already have eternal life. [**1 John 5:11**] This also is from Jesus Christ. [**2 Corinthians 5:17**]

We will still face physical death, but when Jesus Christ returns we will be resurrected back to eternal life. [**1 Corinthians 15:12-22, 35-50**]

Jesus is the bringer of judgement –

Jesus is the touchstone by which all humans are tested.

Simply by being Himself and confronting humans with Himself, He brings judgement to all human beings. [**2 Corinthians 5:10**]

John 5:25-29 [NIV] *“I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. ‘Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.’”*

John is speaking about the spiritual dead, those who have never heard of Jesus Christ, or understand Who He is and what He has promised all human beings.

These people will hear Jesus Christ’s teaching for the first time. [**Revelation 20:11-13**]

John is also speaking about those who have died physically after having repented and accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. [Dead in Christ]

Such Christians will be resurrected at Christ's return. [**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**]

John 5:30 [NIV] *“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”*

In the previous statements Jesus claimed His right to judge human beings.

It is **not** unnatural that those who heard Jesus make this claim should ask by what authority He had to make this claim.

It is in reality impossible for any human being to judge another human being, because there is within each of us so many motives that will affect our judgement. Injured pride, prejudice, jealousy, contempt, envy, intolerance, self-righteousness, self-conceit, etc. Plus major lack of insight into the mind, spirit and experience of the other human being.

In complete contrast the judgement of God is based on the perfect character of God and the full knowledge of any human being. [**Psalms 139:1-16**]

John 5:31-36 [NIV] *“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favour, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.”*

Jesus begins by admitting the universal principle that unsupported evidence of one person cannot be taken as proof.

There must be at least two, better three witnesses who all agree. [**Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Matthew 18:16; 1 Timothy 5:19**]

But Jesus claims that there are other witnesses to Him, as to Who He is.

John the Baptist – **John 1:19-20, 26, 29, 35-36**.

The miracles that He performed – that pointed to the power of God the Father working in Him.

God the Father – the supreme witness to Who He is.

Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:11; Mark 9:7; Luke 3:22; Luke 9:35; 2 Peter 1:16-18.

John 5:37-43 [NIV] *“And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.”*

God's witness to Jesus Christ is found in the scriptures with all those that foretold the coming of the Messiah which Jesus had fulfilled in His personal life and would continue to fulfil in His death, resurrection and ascension to God the Father's side on His throne.

One thing is very clear, the Jewish authorities, as many others since Christ was on earth, had read the scriptures with a closed mind.

Reading the scriptures, **not** to seek God, or listen to God, but only to find arguments to support their own positions, and find defence for their own beliefs.

Jesus said that the Jews had accepted for a time others who had claimed to be the Messiah [**Mark 13:6, 22; Matthew 24:5, 24**] and many more will continue to come as imposters.

Why do people follow imposters?

Imposters make claims that correspond with the desires that people have in their hearts, preaching an easy way to satisfy people's desires.

Jesus offered humans the hard way, to find lasting joy and fulfilment in life, the cross.

Matthew 16:24-25 [NIV] *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.’”*

Paul explains what it means to take up our cross in **Romans 6:3-6**.

John 5:44-47 [NIV] *“How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God? ‘But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?’”*

The scribes and Pharisees, as many religious leaders, desired the praise of other human beings. They pray in such a way that others would consider them as righteous. They love being recognised and greeted by other people.

Because of this they do **not** hear the voice of God.

What is important is **not** what other people think of us, but how God sees us.

What Jesus said next would strike home they loved the Old Testament books that were written by Moses.

Jesus said if you had read those books aright you would have seen that they pointed to Me.

If you do **not** understand what Moses wrote, how can you ever believe what I say?

Let us always remember that the greater the knowledge of God we receive the greater will be the condemnation if we fail to live by it. [**James 1:22-25; James 3:1**]