

Bi132 The Gospels

Lesson Bi132-21 Healing the Lame Man

Jesus touched many people with various diseases and problems in their lives who sought him out for healing and deliverance. In most cases they had seen or heard what Jesus had done for someone else. This story is different because it was Jesus who sought out a man who was in great need. He could not walk. God's character is to seek out those who want him to work in their lives. The man was waiting at a place where, in the past, God had answered prayer for others. But this man did not recognize Jesus, nor had he heard about him.

Jesus had come from Galilee to Jerusalem for one of the required Jewish festivals. In Jerusalem, near the sheep gate, there was a pool, called Bethesda, which means 'house of mercy.' It was surrounded by five covered porches, to shade people from the sun. Here a great number of disabled people used to lay—the blind, the lame and the paralyzed. They waited for the moving of the water. From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir the water. The first one into the pool after it moved received healing from whatever disease they suffered.

One man who was there had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time. Then he asked the man an unusual question, "Do you want to get well?"

Remember, in this story it was Jesus seeking out the lame man, not the lame man seeking Jesus. The man came to the pool because of the traditional Jewish belief that an angel came there from time to time to stir the water, giving it special healing powers. The Apostle John, in recounting this story, does not tell us if that belief was correct. He does say that Jesus, when he found the lame man, asked him the question, "Do you want to get well?" He had not yet asked for Jesus' help. One might wonder if this man would have been happy to just continue to beg. He did not see Christ as a potential healer. His mind was focused on the curing powers of the water. His answer to Jesus' question, however, shows he did want healing, though he did not even know who Jesus was.

"Sir," the lame man 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 healed. He picked up his mat and walked away.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, so the Jewish leaders 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 (John 5:7-13).

Jesus usually healed in response to faith, but he was not limited by a person's lack of it. He gave the healing command and immediately the lame man stood to his feet! But there was a problem, because it was the Sabbath. It was not the Law of Moses itself, but the religious leaders' traditional interpretation of the Law, that did not allow this particular activity on the holy day. Their strict tradition prohibited the carrying of any load on the Sabbath.

Later Jesus found the man at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." The offended man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

When the Jewish leaders found out that it was Jesus who had allowed this behavior, they tried all the more to kill him. What the leaders overlooked was that the lame man was made whole, and freed from the bondage of Satan. When Jesus later revealed himself to the former lame man he warned him to turn away from sin. The man's healing was only temporary; someday he would die. He also needed forgiveness of sin, or he would be eternally lost. He needed the forgiveness only Jesus can give.

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him even more. In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." For this reason they tried all the more to kill him. Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

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 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.... He who does not honor the Son does not honor 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" (John 5:19-24).

As a result of the lame man's healing, Jesus has the opportunity to defend his actions to the religious leaders. He tells them because he is the Messiah; he acts and speaks only as a result of his close relationship to God, who is his Father. Jesus claims he can give life to the dead, an ability the Jews believed God reserved only for himself. Jesus ends his defense saying that whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. And further, only those who believe Jesus was sent from God can gain eternal life.

This story is **important** because it reminds us that the issue of wholeness in this life is important, but the most important issue of life is that sin is forgiven. This can happen only through faith in Christ.

The **main truth** of this story is that Jesus has the authority to do miracles and healings because he is the Son of God and has received his authority from the Father.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What question did Jesus ask the lame man at the pool in Jerusalem?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus asked, "Do you want to get well?" you are correct.

2. What warning did Jesus give the lame man after healing him?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you," you are correct.

3. Why did the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus after he healed the lame man at the pool?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said the leaders wanted to kill Jesus because, "He was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to this story until you can tell it in your own words to someone else. After telling the story, ask them this question, "What is the greater miracle, a supernatural healing or the restoration of relationship between God and a person through faith in Christ?" The greater miracle is a restored relationship with God, which will last forever. Healing of bodies is only temporary, because everyone will eventually die. So how then does God use miracles of healing today?