

Gospel of John Chapter 5 - John Karmelich

One of the great questions Christians struggle with is, "What exactly does Jesus do, as opposed to the role of God the Father?" If we are going to spend eternity close to them, that's a good thing to ponder. Chapter 5 is essentially Jesus performing a miracle, followed by a speech He gave explaining who He is, why He came to earth, and what His eternal role is. Obviously, if that's all there was to Jesus, that'd make the New Testament much shorter! If we'll be spending eternity with them, I'd argue it's important to understand exactly what Jesus does Himself and why the Father gave Him those responsibilities. It's more than just dying for our sins to make it simple. If it was just that, we'd be done by now!

It also leads to the question, why this specific miracle to give this speech? In essence, a crippled man is asked by Jesus if he wanted to get better. Why didn't Jesus just cure him, versus ask him that question? The text says there were a multitude of sick and injured laying by a pool. Why didn't Jesus cure all the people with a wave of His hand, so to speak? Why this one guy? What did his healing lead to a speech by Jesus about who He is? Those are the questions I'd like to address here. I realize Jesus can cure who He wants when He wants. In effect, it's His business to decide that. What's important is Jesus explains what He does and what He will do in the future, since we'll be the ones who'll be with Him forever. It's essential to grasp that God wants us to be with Him forever and He wants us to understand what is His relationship with the Son, or it wouldn't be part of the Bible. This is the part of the bible where this is a key topic, so let me cover this chapter in more detail and hopefully learn a bit more of what God wants us to know about our relationship with the "Godhead" and each other! OK, let's begin:

I like to start off with where we left off because there are no chapter breaks in the original text. The last chapter ended with Jesus doing a miracle by saving a child's life in the Sea of Galilee area. Here in the opening verse of Chapter 5 we are in Jerusalem which is a few days' walk away. It's also apparent that John (author of this book) wanted to tie the Chapter 5 miracle to the Chapter 5 speech Jesus gives right after that occurred. In fact John gives a lot of details about this miracle which validates the fact he was there. He recalls those details when he wrote this book a good 60 years after it occurred! That miracle occurred at a pool of water right by the temple. (Archeologists found that pool and it is visible today!) The text says a multitude of sick, injured and crippled people were by this pool waiting for the water to "bubble up." The water was probably fed by a spring, so every now and then the level would rise. That lead to a myth that the first one in the water gets cured of whatever's ailing them! While the crowd was waited for this event, Jesus walks up to a man who was crippled for 38 years. We don't know how long or how he even got to that spot to wait, and the text doesn't say how the disciples knew the time frame!

Bottom line is Jesus asked if he wanted to be cured. The same way God won't violate our free will, it's an example of that as Jesus asked if he wanted to be better! It always amazed me Jesus did hundreds or thousands of miracles, yet when He was on the cross, He had only His disciples and a few others there and none of them believed in the resurrection. It's after the resurrection the church grew from a handful of people to millions in a matter of a few centuries! If you don't believe Jesus is God, explain that one! Meanwhile, the crippled man thought the only way to be cured was to be "first one in the pool." That's the moment when Jesus told the man to take up his bed and walk. I'm sure the guy felt some urge as he immediately obeyed Jesus without question. No idea where he was going. I'm sure he was thinking, "I can't explain this, but if the guy who cured me says 'get moving,' who am I to argue?"

This led to confrontation #1. Some of the religious leaders spotted this man. It was a violation of their interpretation of God's laws to carry a "roll-up bed" on the Sabbath. Never mind the fact that he could walk, or even where he was going. He was going through the temple courtyard and a religious guy that

enforced the rules was more interested in enforcement than compassion for this man's life! All that led to a speech Jesus gave explaining what happened. Realize the cured man didn't know who Jesus was at that point. Jesus just showed up "introduced Himself again" and told the man to sin no more! Does all that mean some sin caused his condition or simply that one has to trust Jesus for forgiveness? Scholars argue either answer is a possibility. After that, the man went away and the scene changes to a dialogue between Jesus and religious leaders in the temple area.

The first topic on the table was the fact Jesus did this on the Sabbath. It is not a sin to heal someone on that day, but to tell him to walk with his bed was considered a violation of their law interpretation! We then learn that the Jewish people were persecuting Jesus for violations of the Sabbath law. That led to a speech Jesus gave that covers the rest of the chapter. He starts by saying His Father is working till now (implying God the Father works on the Sabbath!) and Jesus is working till now! More importantly, this is Jesus stating pretty directly that He is God's Son. Jewish people to this day expect a Messiah who is only a human and not God Himself, in effect, the biggest stumbling block for Jews to accept Jesus.

Anyway, on to the speech that covers the rest of the chapter. Jesus explains His relationship with God the Father in a way that most people can relate. Just as most boys learn in the early years of their lives by watching their fathers, so Jesus says He only does what His Father taught Him to do. Most people believe we get eternal life by God raising us up after we die, the text says Jesus gives life to whom He wills. I'd argue real life begins once we accept Jesus as God and Lord of our lives because then we get our purpose for living: to Honor Jesus as God, and use our lives as a witness for Him! Jesus states in effect that if don't honor Him as God, then in effect we've wasted our lives! He also implies that if we accept Jesus as God's Son, then we get to skip the eternal judgment aspect of eternity. (Yes, I believe we're still judged in terms of eternal rewards, but we'll definitely be in heaven as part of His family!)

Jesus also states those who have done good go to eternal life, and those who don't to eternal judgment. He is not implying we're saved based on works. He's saying, in effect, we can tell who's saved by how they have lived their lives as a witness for Him!

He goes on to say that if you want proof of His claim that He's God and He's in charge of judgment, it's a matter of believing John the Baptist's testimony! Remember He was talking to those who lived when John was on the scene. He then says if that's not good enough, the scriptures (Old Testament) speak of Him. Since I became a believer, I've learned that if an Old Testament passage is confusing, put Jesus in the middle of it and often it makes more sense! Jesus then says someone (a fake) will come in His own name. (That's either an argument that it'll be Satan Himself or false Messiahs). Jesus then names Moses to say he wrote about Jesus (all over the first five books of the Bible). In summary, if you don't believe Moses, it won't make a difference if you believe Jesus or not!

OK, let me pause to personalize this. I know most of us believe Jesus is God. I write these lessons for people who already believe that. Now what? In effect, this chapter was Jesus healing a man to give us an example of how one gets new life. The healed man, who was probably in his 40's, gets a new life, so this is an example of us being healthy conscious enough to use our lives as a witness for Him. I'm sure most of us already believe Jesus is God and He's in charge of eternal judgment. The classic question is "What do we do now"? We weren't created to live a nice life and then die. We were created to use our lives as to glorify Him with our lives. We do that by studying the Bible, living by its principles, and we use the gifts God gave us for His glory. Praying how God can use us is a prayer He loves to answer!

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! To read the other one, click on one of the two links on this page. Thanks again for reading this. John.