

The Forgotten Jesus Podcast
S6E17
Battling A 38 Year Trial - John 5:1-7

Description – Today we'll look at John 5, and the healing of the man who has been disabled for 38 years.

John 5:1-7

After this, a Jewish festival took place, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ²By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five colonnades. ³Within these lay a large number of the disabled—blind, lame, and paralyzed.

⁵One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to get well?”

⁷“Sir,” the disabled man answered, “I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.”

Did you notice or catch what happened here in the first few verses? There’s no verse 4.

This is a controversy we hear all the time, “The new or modern bibles take out (or intentionally leave out) verses but it’s in the King James!”

Notice the footnote: “Some mss include vv. 3b-4:—*waiting for the moving of the water,* ⁴*because an angel would go down into the pool from time to time and stir up the water. Then the first one who got in after the water was stirred up recovered from whatever ailment he had.*”

We talked about this before, King James, the Codexes, the manuscripts, etc. Erasmus put together the greek NT that he had available with the manuscripts he had at the time.

Back in the 1500’s - 1600’s the farthest they could go back was 800 - 900AD, that was the manuscripts they had.

Then in the 18th century, they discovered the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaius, those manuscripts took the timeline all the way back to the 200’s and 300’s.

We believe this addition came from the scribes who added this to help explain what was going on at the pool.

The practice of stirring the water and providing healing was a greek thought, the idea of Aesculapius, who was a god of healing, his symbol is the staff with the twisted snakes, where we get our current medical symbol. Think: Blue Cross Blue Shield.



Pergamum Aesculapium snake column in propylon



You have the man who is a picture of Israel, you have a colonnade with 5 pillars, the 5 pillars representing the 5 books of Torah, the law. And a man who is there has been disabled for 38 years, 38 being the number of years the people wandered in the wilderness, plus 2 years of travel out of egypt, up to the promised land to scout it out, and to leave to go wander, and then to go back to prepare to cross the Jordan.

Jesus is repeatedly connecting his identity with Jewish festivals in the miracles that He performs.

John is highlighting miracles of healing to highlight certain things.

Notice where this is taking place: The pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate.

There were actually two pools of water here. There is a north pool and a south pool.

Jesus comes in with his disciples, likely coming into the city to prepare to celebrate the passover. They enter the city and here are all these disabled, sick, wounded people laying around. The superstition at the time was that an angel would come and stir the water, and if you could make it into the pool you'd be healed.

But these two pools were fed by two intermittent springs, that would bubble up from time to time as the limestone rock would release the water stored in it, along with bubbles. This rising of water from the springs would "stir" the waters.

This is a hopeless, pitiful scene.

Also, remember, this is a Rabbi, who shouldn't be anywhere near these "unclean" / sick people. He would have been considered unclean and not able to celebrate the Passover.

John 5:7-13

⁷ "Sir," the disabled man answered, "I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I'm coming, someone goes down ahead of me."

⁸ "Get up," Jesus told him, "pick up your mat and walk." ⁹ Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.

Now that day was the Sabbath, ¹⁰ and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "This is the Sabbath. The law prohibits you from picking up your mat."

¹¹ He replied, "The man who made me well told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

¹² "Who is this man who told you, 'Pick up your mat and walk'?" they asked. ¹³ But the man who was healed did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

John has a tendency to give parallel accounts side by side. Think John 3-4, Nicodemus and the woman at the well. Two completely different people in society but both touched by Jesus.

Notice this man is so excited to be healed, he doesn't even really pay attention to what Jesus looks like. He doesn't even know his name.

Look again at 5:6,

⁶When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to get well?”

What a strange question. Why would Jesus ask if this man wanted to be well, to be healed?

When Jesus says this, you’d assume the guy would say, “Well of course! I’ve been here for 38 years..”

But what Jesus is asking is: Do you want me to change everything about your life? Do you want me to turn your world upside down? Remember, the Torah commanded people to take care of the poor and downtrodden. If this man was healed, he’d have to leave everything behind that he’d known for the past 38 years. He’d have to leave behind all he knew about begging for money, food, provisions, etc. to be healed and then get a job, take care of family, even pay taxes.

But it’s also deeper, because this guy has wrestled with losing hope. Physical paralysis can lead to mental paralysis. He’s tried everything to be healed, been to every doctor, tried all the home remedies, but nothing has worked in 38 years.