

In the prologue in the first chapter of the Gospel of John we come across this startling verse “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.” How could the Creator be rejected by His creation? How could the Messiah be rejected by those to whom the Messiah was promised to come? How could those most eagerly awaiting the Messiah reject Him?

“The Jews” in John’s gospel are the leaders. We find they oppose Jesus in all the gospels. They see Jesus as a threat to their authority. The passage we will look at today marks the beginning of this hostility.

The religious leaders had turned Judaism into a false religion. Rather than pointing people to worship God they made religion into a bunch of rules and regulations. It was about keeping these man-made rules instead of having a heart that was right with God.

As the gospel progresses we find that although thousands flock to see Jesus’ miracles and be healed, most turn away from Him. In chapter nine Jesus heals a man born blind, and we are told how the leaders were keeping the people “in line” by threatening them with expulsion from the synagogue (9:22), which was the center of Jewish religious and social life. In fact, that is exactly what they did to the blind man that Jesus healed (9:34).

In chapter eleven we come to the famous story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. The leaders were so afraid of losing their positions (11:48,) and hated Jesus so much, that they determined to kill Him (11:53).

With all that in mind let us turn to our passage:

**<sup>1</sup>After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.**

**<sup>2</sup>Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. <sup>3</sup>In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; <sup>4</sup>for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]**

**<sup>5</sup>A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup>When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that**

***condition, He said to him, “Do you wish to get well?” <sup>7</sup>The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.” <sup>8</sup>Jesus said to him, “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.” <sup>9</sup>Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.***

***Now it was the Sabbath on that day. <sup>10</sup>So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.” <sup>11</sup>But he answered them, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’” <sup>12</sup>They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk?’” <sup>13</sup>But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.***

***<sup>14</sup>Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.” <sup>15</sup>The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. <sup>16</sup>For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.***

The passage is divided naturally into two parts: **The Healing** and **The Fallout**.

### The Healing

In verse one we learn that this story takes place when Jesus left Galilee to go to Jerusalem for one of the three feasts they were required to go to each year.

In Jerusalem there were many pools used for water, bathing, and relaxing. This particular pool was by the gate going into the city called the “sheep gate.” It had five covered areas around the pool. The name of the pool is Bethesda and is significant to the story because it means “house of mercy.”

This pool gathered a large number of people who were sick, blind, lame, and withered. Apparently, there was a superstition

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associated with the pool that it had healing properties. The section in brackets (second half of verse 3 and verse 4) are not in the earliest manuscripts and were not part of John's gospel originally. A scribe apparently added them at a later date to give a reason why all these people would gather at this particular pool.

John tells us that there was a particular man by the pool who had been ill for nearly four decades. Jesus signaled this man out knowing he had been there a long time. He was about to receive mercy from Jesus where he had received none for 38 years.

Jesus grabbed his attention right away by asking if he wanted to get well. There was probably nothing more important to this man. He had not given up hope of being made well, he was still waiting by the pool after all this time, but had no one to help him be the first to get into the pool.

Jesus gave the man three commands; get up, pick up your bed, and walk. The result was instantaneous. The man was made completely well in that instant and obeyed. He picked up his pallet and walked away – something he hadn't done in thirty-eight years.

Note that the healing was not dependent on the man's faith. He didn't even know who Jesus was at this point. The healing was complete. It was not partial and did not require any further effort on the part of the man.

### **The Fallout**

The significance of the miracle is revealed in the last sentence of verse nine – it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had healed the man. Was there something wrong with that? Nothing, according to Jesus; He wouldn't have done it if there was.

To the religious leaders, though, it was a big problem. It was in direct violation of their man-made rules. Jesus had deliberately healed the man not on Friday or Monday, but on the Sabbath. Jesus was taking issue with the fact that they were making the Sabbath a burden to the people instead of the day of rest God had intended.

The leaders took issue with the man who was carrying his pallet on the Sabbath. They showed no sign of compassion for the man. They could not have cared less that he had been healed. They were more concerned about their legalistic rules than about the welfare of this man.

From their point-of-view if someone was lame like this man it was because of sin. They ostracized him because

they saw him as under the judgement of God. When the healed man told them he had been healed they demanded to know who had dared to do such a thing on the Sabbath. The man did not even know who had healed him because Jesus had slipped away right after the miracles.

Jesus found the man in the temple. The man had gone right away to the temple, someplace he had likely not been in the last 38 years. He had been shunned by the religious leaders, but desiring to return to Jewish social and religious life (really no distinction between them), he had gone to the temple.

Jesus said to him **“Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.”** This implies that the original state of the man was because of sin in his life, and he needed to leave his life of sin.

Upon finding out that it was Jesus, the man ran to tell the leaders who it was who had healed him. He chose the leaders and their false religious system over Jesus. The leaders were persecuting Jesus because of He had healed on the Sabbath. They, too, chose their man-made rules, their man-made religion, over the Messiah. They opposed Him and eventually had Him murdered.

Although, this is a miraculous story, it is a sad story. It shows how people rejected the Son of God, the Savior of the world, for religious reasons.

We, too, must make a decision. Will we choose Jesus, or will we reject Him? Will we choose a man-made religion, or philosophy, over the Savior of the world?



### **Bible Studies:**

**7:00 am Tuesdays – Bible study –  
Governor's Large Conference Room – Open  
to All: Legislators, Constitutional Officers,  
Lobbyists, Staff**

**8:00 pm Tuesdays – Legislator Only Bible  
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