

JOHN 5

REVIEW

Last week's study of John 4 brought us to the end of the second part of the outline, The Presentation of the Son of God (1:19-4:54), as we saw the Lord Jesus presenting Himself masterfully to the woman at the well in Sychar of Samaria, proclaiming to her that He is the Messiah. He also revealed Himself to many of the Samaritan men, and they proclaimed Him to be "the Savior of the world." Subsequently, He demonstrated His divine power by healing the dying son of a royal official, from a distance of approximately 15 miles. John tells us that this was the second sign which He did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

Now in John 5 we enter the third major section of the outline of the book. The Rejection of the Son of God (Chapters 5 to 12). The Savior is back in Jerusalem, appearing at the time of an undesignated feast. The Jewish feasts are important to John, as we note that he mentions feasts 17 times in his gospel, compared to Matthew's 2 times, Mark's 2 times, and Luke's 3 times. This feast in chapter 5 is unnamed, and any attempt at specifying which of the Jewish feasts it refers to is personal speculation. If the Spirit of God had desired for us to know which feast it was, He would have led the human writer (John) to name it.

Why does John refer so often to the Jewish feasts? Perhaps for these three reasons:

1. As a time element, to show duration from event to event
2. To demonstrate that Jesus fulfilled all of the Law, including required feast attendance, and
3. To show that the purposes of the feasts themselves were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Five can be broken down into the following sections:

- 5:1-9 The healing of the man with the 38-year old infirmity, at the Pool of Bethesda (meaning "house of mercy")
- 5:10-18 Opposition by the Jews (the religious leaders)
- 5:17-47 Christ's response to His persecutors

1. Healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda

Why does John include this sign *at this point* in his book?

- To demonstrate the power of Jesus as the Son of God; cf. purpose of book (20:30-31)
- To introduce the reasons for the Jews' opposition and rejection of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God
- To provide the setting for Jesus clearly to proclaim His Deity/Equality with the Father

Note in v. 3 that there was a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, hoping and waiting to be healed, but that in this case Jesus singled out a certain man to receive His divine healing, and apparently did not do the same for the rest of the multitude (5:5). Let us never presume upon the Lord's grace!

Note also that the man had suffered his infirmity for 38 years, yet Jesus healed him instantly! "And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked." (v. 9) Truly our Lord is the Master of Time; there is no short-term or long-lasting problem in our lives that He cannot overcome; He is the Sovereign Lord of the Universe!

The end of verse 9 is that pregnant statement: "And that day was the Sabbath." This introduces the first reason for the Jews' rejection of Jesus.

2. Opposition by the Jews (the religious leaders)

The Jewish religious leaders held people to an unbiblical standard of law-keeping, including keeping the Sabbath, which was based upon their *tradition* rather than upon the Word of God. Thus, they were infuriated when Jesus healed the man at the pool on the Sabbath. This was the first issue in their opposition to the Savior (see v. 16). The second issue was the claim of Jesus to equality with the Father. Verses 17 and 18 make this clear: "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.' Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."

3. Christ's response to His persecutors

This section is one of the greatest Christological sections in the entire Scripture, and it is not surprising that these words come from the lips of the Divine Christ Himself!

In verses 17 to 23, Jesus makes **5 Claims to Equality with God** (taken from John MacArthur's study notes found in the MacArthur Daily Bible, p. 484);

1. Jesus is equal with God in His PERSON (5:17-18)
2. Jesus is equal with God in His WORKS (5:19-20)
3. Jesus is equal with God in His POWER and SOVEREIGNTY (5:21)
4. Jesus is equal with God in His JUDGMENT (5:22)
5. Jesus is equal with God in His HONOR (5:23)

Let us beware of "generic religiosity" by which people would claim to know God, but bring no honor to His Son. They are false professors of truth. "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." (5:23b)

In verses 24-30, the Lord delineates **2 Divine Prerogatives** which are exclusively His:

1. The Prerogative to Grant Life, and
2. The Prerogative to Judge Sinners.

In verses 31-47, He tells us of the **4 Witnesses to Christ's Claims** of Deity/Equality with the Father. When Jesus says in verse 31, "If I bear witness of Myself, my witness is not true," He is NOT saying that it might be possible for Him to speak falsely, but that His witness would not be accepted as true. The Jewish Law required that upon the basis of 2 or 3 witnesses every word shall be established (cf. Deut. 17:6 and 19:15). The context of the Deuteronomic passages relates to bearing testimony in a court of law. Thus, our Lord, in John 5:31, is saying that His witness concerning Himself would not be valid in a court of law, since it was the testimony of a single party, and the law required multiple testimonies (2 or 3).

By speaking in this manner, Christ sets Himself and His listeners into the Divine Court to hear testimony concerning His claims to Deity and Equality with the Father. He calls forth 4 witnesses:

1. John the Baptist (5:33-35)
2. Christ's own works (5-36)
3. The Father Himself (5:37) See also v. 32, where "another" is from a Greek word which refers to 'another of the same kind,' thus referring to another Divine witness, either the Father or the Holy Spirit.
4. Scripture, especially (as appropriate for His Jewish audience) Moses (5:38-47).

In John 5, the author skillfully brings evidence to lead the reader to the proper conclusion, in order to fulfill the purpose for his writing of this book. He presents the great power of Christ, in healing the man with the 38-year old infirmity, then the claims of Christ to Deity and Equality with God His Father (as evidenced in that healing), and then the other witnesses to those claims. What, then, is his purpose in writing these things? He answers our question in 20:30 and 31:

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

DO YOU BELIEVE IN HIM IN THIS WAY?