

SESSION 3

THE SIGN OF HIS AUTHORITY

Leader pages on pp. 110-113

THE POINT:
JESUS WORKS IN A WAY THAT GOES BEYOND OUR EXPECTATIONS.

JOHN 5:1-11,17-20

¹ After this, a Jewish festival took place, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
² By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five colonnades.
³ Within these lay a large number of the disabled—blind, lame, and paralyzed.
⁵ One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years.
⁶ When 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.”

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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.’”

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¹⁷ Jesus responded to them, “My Father is still working, and I am working also.” ¹⁸ This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill him: Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God.

MEMORY VERSE

¹⁹ Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, the Son is not able to do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son likewise does these things.

²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing, and he will show him greater works than these so that you will be amazed.

KEYWORDS

Bethesda (v. 2)—The name of a pool, comes from two Hebrew words: beth, which means “house” and hesed, which means “mercy.” “House” suggests the presence of a structure. People came to this “House of Mercy” for healing.

My Father . . . still working (v. 17)—Despite the traditions of

the elders, God did not cease His work on the Sabbath.

And I am working (v. 17)—Just as the Father continued His work on the Sabbath, if even in a limited capacity, so the Son’s compassion would not be rendered inoperable by the day of the week.

HOW DO JESUS'S MIRACLES TESTIFY TO HIS AUTHORITY?

When we watch TV, especially religious channels, we often come across infomercials. Some infomercials now boast about using an object to receive a "miracle" from God. The infomercials are filled with testimonials of people receiving healing or money using miracle objects. Then the focus at the end of the infomercial is that if you send in a monetary gift, you will receive a miracle object, as well as begin to receive the blessings that will surely follow.

It's sad to see how many people (even some Christians) fall for these gimmicks to gain some temporary "blessing" while missing the greater truth: God calls us to have faith in Him alone. In today's passage, we'll read about a man who believed in the gimmick of a pool of water, and how people thought it to be a source of healing. Yet, when he met Jesus, his life was truly changed forever. This man's healing became one of the signs used to demonstrate the nature of Jesus's relationship with God the Father.

He Interjects His Authority //

John 5:1-7

While in Jerusalem attending a festival, we find Jesus walking by the pool of Bethesda on the

Sabbath. This area would have contained two pools of water with large, decorative colonnades (v. 2). Interestingly, in this beautiful place, the people around the pool were considered the outcasts of society. They were blind, lame, and paralyzed (v. 3a).

Why were people drawn to this particular pool for healing?

1. **The pool's name carried significance, as Bethesda means "house of mercy."** If there was a place for the people to experience the mercy of God, they believed it would happen at these waters.
2. **They believed that the waters contained healing powers.** In some commentaries and even translations, we see a reference to a traditional belief among the people, which was that the waters had been touched by an angel and healing power was available only when the waters moved (v. 7).
3. **When the waters would move, people sought to enter.** The example of others crawling or being carried to the pool would have certainly been a strong pull for those who needed hope.



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Not only is the setting for this passage significant, but we are also introduced to a man who had been disabled for thirty-eight years sitting by the pool (v. 5). At some point in his life, he heard about the pool and its “healing powers,” and he was brought to the pool to get an opportunity to be healed.

The man was desperate to enter the pool for at least thirty-eight years, and then Jesus walked by him. The Scripture says that Jesus “saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time” (v. 6). There must have been something different about this man in Jesus’s eyes. I’m sure that Jesus saw the desperation in his countenance and had compassion for him. While others walked by the pool and left without helping the outcasts, Jesus saw the hearts of people.

The question Jesus asked is one that we are all presented with when it comes to our own lives: “Do you want to get well?” (v. 6). Like the man at Bethesda, we can easily miss the point of the question. The man initially thought that Jesus’s question was a matter of helping him get into the waters (v. 7), but Jesus was there to show so much more. He was willing to do what no one else would be able to do. He was ready to step into the man’s life and provide him with true healing!

In our lives, we sometimes do the same thing as this man. When presented with opportunities that we think will make us better—the next job, the next relationship, or the next possession—we put our faith in those things instead. However, we soon find ourselves in a place of paralysis because we are unwilling to look to the One who can save us—Jesus.

WHEN HAVE YOU PRAYED FOR A NEED FOR SO LONG THAT YOU STARTED TO LOSE HEART?

He Commands with Authority // John 5:8-11

With this man’s blinded view of the power of God in being able to heal him or to provide him with the opportunity and help to be healed, we would think that when Jesus calls for him to stand, there would have been skepticism in his response. However, when Jesus called the man to action (v. 8), it was a call to heal and to have purpose. The call to “get up” (v. 8) alone was a significant demonstration of healing power, and then for the man to “pick up your mat and walk” (v. 8) would have been far beyond what anyone expected, especially the man. His mat gave him purpose.

We read that the man didn’t sit there and mull over what people would think if he stood up. The Bible says that “instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk” (v. 9). The man no longer had to worry about getting into the water. He also



DIGGING DEEPER POOL OF MERCY

The Pool of Bethesda was an ancient, almost forgotten spot in Jerusalem. The place is surrounded by the sick and desperate: blind, lame, paralyzed—all just waiting for their miracle. The Pool of Bethesda’s fame as a healing site can be traced back to ancient religious beliefs, was cemented by the New Testament narrative of Jesus’s miracle and continued to be reinforced through centuries of religious tradition and archaeological discovery. By the time of Jesus, the Pool of Bethesda had become associated with Jewish beliefs in supernatural healing. It was thought that an angel would occasionally stir the waters in the pool, and the first person to step into the water after it had been stirred would be healed of whatever disease they had. But miracles aren’t just legends; they’re real with Jesus around.

Have you ever experienced a miracle? What was the impact to you and those around you?



didn't have to worry about what people would say because he had a testimony to declare of how he had laid there for thirty-eight years and no longer needed his mat. He truly was healed and transformed!

When we think about the power of God, we can have the tendency to become skeptical. We may hear about someone being miraculously healed, and we ask about what procedure they had, what doctor they saw, or what medicine they were taking. We have more questions than actually giving God the credit He deserves. It's our skepticism that can lead us to become paralyzed in our faith.

In verse 9, we're told that the day this miracle occurred was on the Sabbath. In verse 10, there's almost a pause and shift in the focus and tone of the writing. We are reminded again that it was the Sabbath and the implications that came with what the man was doing according to the law and Jewish traditions. When it came to the Sabbath, especially around a festival celebration, extra regulations were required for what Jewish people could or couldn't do during these days. As shown in verse 10, carrying your mat was strictly forbidden, as it was seen to be work, which was considered contrary to the principle of the Sabbath that commanded people to rest.

Have you ever been around a "Debbie Downer" or "Negative Nathan" type of personality? You could have the best moment happening to you, and they

are going to find something to criticize or share a moment of pessimism, which alters the tone of celebration. The man simply did what Jesus told him to do, and this brought about his immediate, public rebuke for breaking the law. The religious leaders had completely missed the fact that the man was healed and walking around! At that moment, the celebration of what had happened was immediately dampened by the legalism of the observers.

Jesus had indeed healed on the Sabbath, which was considered a radical action which ought to be punished (v. 16). Little did they understand that Jesus's radical actions were going to make their path to heaven possible.

WHY DO WE OFTEN RESPOND TO HUMAN AUTHORITY OVER CHRIST'S AUTHORITY?

He Acts in the Authority of the Father // John 5:17-20

When the Jews began persecuting Jesus, He shared a message with the crowd that communicated His purpose in healing: He was simply doing the work of the Father (v. 17). The nature of this statement would have been radical for the Jews to hear, as it would have been seeing Jesus healing on the Sabbath. It would also have been considered contradictory to God's statement regarding rest on the Sabbath, as prescribed in the commandments. However, what they missed was that the Sabbath was not meant to be a day of total absence of work. It was to be a day of worship, reflection, and total dependence on the Lord for His provision. What better way to celebrate that moment than to see people express worship of their Messiah as never before!

Once again, rather than celebrating the work of God happening among the people, the focus was placed on the words that Jesus used and how He equated Himself to God the Father (v. 18). This miracle became a sign for believers because it was used as a way to reveal the nature of Jesus Christ to people, and Jesus's response to the questions opened the door further to see who He truly is.

Jesus demonstrated His authenticity by explaining His relationship to God's authority. Just as a son

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in this time period wouldn't do anything without the father's blessing and direction. So also, Jesus, as the Son of God, wasn't doing anything outside of the purpose and plan of God. Furthermore, the healing done by Jesus could be equated to the Father's work because of their relationship.

This relationship isn't just based on a legal standing but on a standing of love (v. 20). And the purpose of this love is to reveal even greater works that were to come through Jesus Christ. The love God has for His Son is the same love that Jesus has for all of us, which is shown in His death and resurrection. So, the focus of God's love goes beyond the Sabbath regulations that man tried to regulate and enforce, and instead points to His standard of love and mercy.

Rather than seeing healing as something to be skeptical about, this passage calls us to see it as an act of God's compassion and mercy shown to His people. And while we may not understand God's ways in healing one and not another physically, the greater truth is to see the power and purpose of God that was shown ultimately in our healing of the sickness of sin. We can rest in the finished work of Jesus on the cross and have victory today as we share in the life we have in Jesus's resurrection!

IN WHAT WAYS DO PEOPLE REJECT CHRIST'S AUTHORITY?

DID YOU KNOW?

Psychosomatic is a word that literally means soul and body, referring to the close relationship of body and spirit. The soul affects the body, and the health of the soul may be an indication of the health of the body. Most Christians believe in healing through faith, but trying to decide what techniques are scriptural, decorous, and psychologically helpful confuses the believer.⁴ Jesus used different methods in his healing ministry. They included calling upon the faith of the person or bystanders to be healed, touching the sick person, praying, assuring forgiveness of sin, uttering commands, and using physical media. On several occasions the faith of the individual was an important factor in the healing period speaking to the woman who was hemorrhaging, Jesus said your faith has made you well.

Biblical Truth: Whether the need is physical or spiritual, Christ has authority to heal all.

How will you approach the next health issues going forward, knowing that faith and healing work together?

LIVE IT

How do you respond when things don't go as planned?

Things don't often go as planned. In fact, more often than not, our expectations are not met. However, Jesus operates in ways that go beyond what we could ever imagine or expect. He not only has the ability to meet our needs, He has the authority. We don't need to rely on myths or legends; Christ's work is real and powerful. Choose one of the following applications:

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- **Submit to authority.** Reflect upon areas of your life where you have not submitted to God's authority and consider the difference it would make if you did so today. Write those things down and surrender them to Him.
- **Share gratitude.** Gratitude helps with moments of skepticism. Share with your group or a friend things you are grateful for in your life. Be sure to direct the thanks to God.
- **Celebrate with others.** Find a way to celebrate with someone in your group or family something that the Lord has done recently in his or her life. Spend time worshipping God for His faithfulness.

DAILY READINGS

1. HIS WORDS HAVE POWER // JOHN 5:8-9

Jesus goes to Jerusalem to a Jewish festival. Many disabled men and women are waiting by the pool for the water to move. One man has been disabled for 38 years. When Jesus sees him, He realizes the man has been there a long time and inquires whether he wants to be well. The man tells Jesus that he has no one to help him get into the pool. When the water stirs, someone always goes ahead of him. These verses highlight the power of God's words. Jesus tells him to pick up his mat and walk. Immediately the man gets well, picks up his mat, and walks. One word from the Lord can change your current situation. Tune in to what He has to say to you today.

Jesus is the answer—our question is do we want to be well.

2. ONE WITH THE FATHER // JOHN 5:30

Jesus heals the disabled man from yesterday's reading on the Sabbath. As a result, the Jewish leaders begin to persecute Him. He also calls God his Father, making Himself equal with God. And Jesus explains that the Son cannot do anything by Himself; Jesus does what he sees the Father doing. This passage of Scripture goes on to state that the Father does not judge but has entrusted judgment to the Son. If one does not honor the Son, he does not honor the Father. This verse highlights that the Son can do nothing alone. He judges as he hears; his judgment is just because it's from the Father. Why? The Son's will is wrapped up in the Father's will.

We, too, should align our will with the Father's will.

3. THE LORD IS IN CONTROL // JOB 38:34

Many of us are familiar with the story of Job. The Lord gives Satan permission to attack his things as well as his body but not to kill Job. He experiences great grief and agony and seeks to understand why this is happening to him. He seeks the Lord, but

he doesn't answer right away. By chapter 38, the Lord answers Job but not the way he expects. He provides a series of questions, which undoubtedly show His rulership. In this verse, God asks if Job is able to raise his voice to the clouds and a flood of water covers him. While this is a rhetorical question and God already knows the answer, He gives Job something to ponder.

Today, think on the Lord's supremacy and trust in His power.

4. ONE WE CAN COUNT ON // PSALM 108:12

How many times have we sought help of man only to be let down? It is natural for us to go to others in our time of need. But a truth that most of us hate to admit is that we have limitations. There is only one person who we can count on when the odds are stacked against us. David reminds us that our victory comes from the Lord, so this is who we should praise and seek in the time of trouble. We see his total reliance on the Lord, charging him to aid against the enemy. For, he realizes that the help of man is worthless. Like David, we should admit that human help is limited and seek help from the Lord.

God's help is trustworthy, timely, and limitless!

5. HIS STRONG HAND // EXODUS 13:9

God is able. Ephesians 3:20 reminds us that "he is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think." We serve a God who does not need the help of our puny hand. The Lord tells Moses to consecrate unto him the firstborn male, both human and animal. Moses tells the people to remember this day when the Lord delivered them from bondage. They are to eat unleavened bread for seven days. On the seventh day, there is to be a feast to show thy son what the Lord has done, a sign and memorial so that the Lord's law will remain in their mouth because they were brought out by the Lord's mighty hand.

Our God can do anything. The Lord has a strong hand!



Signs of Jesus in John

BY DR. MARK CROSTON

People are always looking for signs to affirm, advance and advise them in their lives. There are 9 Signs from the Universe; 6 Types of Spirit Guides; the 3rd Eye; 12 Zodiac Signs; Palm, card and tea readers; psychics, and more. People are looking for insight, foresight, truth, guidance, direction, affirmation and a path to success. What we learn from the Bible is that true faith does not need a sign. We hear this in John 4:48; 10:37-38; 14:11; 20:24-25; Acts 5:12; 1 Corinthians 14:22 and more. Speaking to an unbelieving world and a faithless generation John 4:48 says, Jesus told him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.”

Back then like now, Jesus brings the life giving, life guiding, message of the gospel to a faithless generation. Faithless people always need some kind of proof before they will believe. They need a sign. John’s mission in the Gospel he records is to prove and affirm that Jesus is the divine Son of God and that he is all we need to guide and govern our lives. He drives this home in

John 14:6, Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John sets out to prove his thesis, that Jesus is the Son of God, and to quench the passion of people to have a sign, by delivering sign after sign and highlighting some of the miracles Jesus performed. I said some of the miracles because John 20:30-31 says, “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

- The sign of His glory– Turning Water into Wine (John 2:1-12).
- The sign of His grace– Healing the Nobleman’s Son (John 4:46-54).
- The sign of His authority– Healing the Man at the Pool (John 5:1-11).

- The sign of His provision– Feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1-15).
- The sign of His presence– Walking on Water (John 6:16-21).
- The sign of His light– Healing the Man Born Blind (John 9:1-12).
- The sign of His power over death– Resurrecting Lazarus (John 11).

Each of these are signs of Jesus's divine sonship. There are seven of these if you count those before his crucifixion. There are nine if you count the resurrection in John 20 and the catch of fish in John 21. Either way you count them works. Seven is the number of perfection. Nine is the number of completeness.

This is not only the message of John, but also indeed the message of the Bible. God walks us through the Old Testament with sign after sign so we would believe Jesus when He declared Himself to be God's son.

- God Produced the universe out of nothing.
- God Preserved Noah in the flood.
- God Procreated through Abraham at age 100.
- God Provided for Moses in the wilderness.
- God Punished Goliath at the hands of David.

- God caused the lions to be at peace with Daniel.
- God was present with the three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace.
- God pronounced the future birth of His Son through the prophets.

The religious people in Jesus's day already knew and believed that God was a miracle working God, so if Jesus was the Son of God, He too must be a miracle worker. The unbelieving pagans in Jesus's day may not have been persuaded by the stories of the Old Testament, but they could not deny what they saw with their own eyes. We see this clearly in Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47. As Jesus died on the cross, on a hill called Calvary, the testimony of the Centurion that stood watch was – When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39).

As true as all these signs are, God does not desire us to live by signs. His passion is for us to live by faith. Hebrews 11:6 declares, “Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

You know you are truly living a life of faith when signs are no longer needed for you to believe. Faith people are willing to simply take God at His Word – God said it, and that's enough!

What about you? Do you need another sign, or are you willing to trust God by faith?

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