

Messiah who Heals and Offends

John 5:1-18

BI: Jesus may not be what you want Him to be. He is Lord not only over our sickness, but also our idolatrous sins and Sabbaths as well.

What if God took up residence among sinners as an all-knowing, all-seeing, all-understanding teacher who never hesitated to speak the truth? What if He were absolutely fearless about confronting injustice, hypocrisy and sin anywhere he found it? Furthermore, what if, in addition to all of that, He was just as mortal as any other man? Would sinners love Him? Would they bow down and worship Him? No. They would kill Him. And they would do it at the earliest possible opportunity.

If you are one who knows the Lord Jesus Christ, you may find such a statement hard to believe because you love Him. The reality is, however, those who love Jesus have always been a small minority living in a veritable sea of people who would never conscience receiving Him the way He offers Himself in the N.T.

In chapter 1 of the Gospel of John the author offers us an introduction to Christ, followed by 3 1/2 chapters of specific revelations about Christ. Now, however, as we begin chapter five, we wade into a section that may be most accurately entitled the “Rejection of Christ” (chaps 5-12). This is the point in the narrative where we see the Jewish leaders begin to show their true attitude toward Jesus. These who claimed to be representatives of God who were humbly awaiting the arrival of Messiah were the very ones who, when He actually arrives, will despise Him, reject Him and eventually kill Him because in their hearts they hate Him.

Once again, however, this should not catch us off guard. The fact is, John forewarned us in 1:11, that even though Jesus came to His own people, they did not receive Him. That may seem surprising if you remember the stories about the thousands who *followed* Him, and the multitudes He *fed* and *healed*. But the reality is that most of those people really didn't *believe* in Him. They were simply following Him as curiosity seekers and beneficiaries of what appeared to be a kind of supernatural social welfare program.

Evidence for this is abundant in all four gospels, but no where more obvious than in the fact that after the crucifixion there were only about 120 persons who still continued to follow. My point is this: There are many who find themselves attracted to Jesus for a variety of reasons, but in the end most will conclude that He is not what they had hoped He would be.

They Pharisees and Scribes envisioned a Messiah who would come as a military leader to save them from the oppression of Rome. The sick were hoping the Messiah would heal all their diseases. The hungry were hoping that Messiah would continue to produce for them free food. The Zealots expected Messiah to set up His throne and reign as King. But by the end of His ministry most of the population of Israel found themselves disappointed with Jesus.

There was no doubt that He was a miracle worker. There was no doubt that He was a compelling preacher. But at the end of the day they just could not get Jesus to do what they wanted. He didn't come to overthrow Rome. He didn't come merely to eradicate disease. He

didn't come to provide free food for the masses, or control the weather or to make Himself King. He came to reconcile sinners to God. And accomplishing that mission required Him to meddle in people's personal lives, expose their sins, challenge their traditions, and command them to repent and submit to Him as Lord.

In verses 1-24 John reveals some important truths about Jesus and sickness, Jesus and sinners, Jesus and the Sabbath, and Jesus as the Son of God.

I. Jesus and Sickness: (1-9)

1. Read 5:1-9

2. The story of Jesus healing the paralytic is the third "sign" in John's gospel. The first was turning water into wine (chap. 2). The second was healing the nobleman's son (chap. 4). And now Jesus will heal a man who has been lame for 38 years.

3. Jesus apparently departed from Galilee for Jerusalem to celebrate one of the prescribed feasts. We don't know what feat it was nor do we know what else He did in Jerusalem during this visit. What we do know is that He visited what was called the pool of Bethesda. This was a place just outside the walls of the ancient city near an entrance on the north side called the Sheep Gate. The pool of Bethesda was actually two adjoining pools surrounded by five roofed-in colonnades where people could sit in the shade and find comfort in the water.

4. What was unique about these pools was that all kinds of sick people would come and lay around in the shade on their mats hoping against hope that they find healing there. Apparently there was a superstition that said that periodically an angel would come and stir up the pool and the first person to jump in would be healed.

5. This is very reminiscent of places in America around the turn of the century that boasted of having healing waters. You know; places like Hot Springs, Arkansas; French Lick, Indiana; and Mineral Wells, TX. People would come to these places from all over the country homing to find relief for their aches, pains, and diseases. President Franklin Roosevelt used to frequent one of these hot springs in a place called Warm Springs, Georgia hoping it would help him with the near paralysis he experienced from polio. He was a visitor there for two decades, and even had a small house called the *Little Whitehouse*. In fact, Roosevelt died there on April 12, 1945 having never experienced the healing he had hoped for at the springs.

6. Do you know why people don't go to these places for healing any more? Because somewhere along the way it became obvious that the only thing these pools and hot springs were good for was making hotel and resort owners rich. So people quit going.

7. But imagine would it would have been like back in the hey-day of these hot springs when thousands upon thousands of people would come hoping for healing. Imagine if Jesus suddenly walked in, took one of these poor sufferers by the hand and healed him.

8. This is what Jesus did at the pools of Bethesda. John said (3) that at these pools there "lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame and withered." More specifically (5) there was a man there who had been ill for 38 years (that's 18 years longer than President Roosevelt

remained in Warm Springs). Can you imagine? Thirty eight years this man was sick! And then one day, Jesus quietly arrives at the pool. Notice what happens next.

9. Read v. 6.

10. Now, that sounds like a strange question, doesn't it? Of course he wanted to get well! If he didn't want to get well, he wouldn't have been at the pool! But what I think is worth noticing here is what Jesus didn't ask. He didn't ask the man if He believed in the Messiah. There was no requirement of faith on the part of the man being healed. Now in a day like ours where the "Word Faith" movement is so huge around the world, this is a text worth studying. But we don't have time to delve into that today.

11. All I want you to observe here is that Jesus doesn't ask the man to believe. In fact, He doesn't even tell the man who he is. He simply asks him, "Do you wish to get well?" And the man replies (7)

12. Now observe how Jesus responds. **(Read v. 8-9).**

13. What happened here? At the command of Jesus, this man experienced instantaneous healing. And the reason Jesus told the man to "Get up, pick up your mat and walk" was to demonstrate that he had been utterly and completely healed! Think about it. This man probably had leg muscles that had not been used in 38 years. They were all withered up from almost 4 decades of atrophy. But at the word of Jesus, all the cells, fibers, ligaments and blood vessels in his legs were instantaneously recreated!

14. That, beloved, is beyond amazing! But more important than this demonstration of power is how it should have been interpreted by everyone who learned about it. Because everyone should have known that God had announced that His Messiah would do this very thing when He appeared in the world.

15. Here is what God said through the prophet Isaiah. (Isaiah 35:5-6):

[When Messiah comes] "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy..."

16. This was how the **Messiah relates to sickness**. When He comes, diseases flee away. The blind see. The lame walk. The Mute shout for joy. And the dead are raised to life! When people see someone who can do that in fulfillment of O.T. Scripture shouldn't their first impulse be to fall on their faces before Him in worship? But that doesn't always happen.

17. There is more to Messiah than how He relates to sickness. Let's observe as Jesus now relates to sinners.

II. Jesus and Sinners: (10-16)

1. Read 9b-16)

2. Now, we don't have time to unpack everything here, but notice with me the unexpected response on the part of the man who was healed. When the Pharisees saw the man walking

around with his bedroll, they were scandalized. They didn't care about the fact that a great Messiah-identifying miracle had just taken place. All they cared about was that this man was breaking their law.

3. Next time we will come back to the Pharisees, but for our purposes this morning let's concentrate on the man who had been healed. How did he respond?

4. First, he engages in self-protective blame-shifting. When the Jewish leaders asked him about why he was breaking Sabbath law he replied (11) "He who made me well was the one who said, "Pick up your pallet and walk."

5. In other words, its not my fault. Don't get mad at me! I'm just doing what I was told by the healer! So they asked him (12-13)...

6. What interests me here is that once again Jesus' miracle was done discretely. When Jesus arrived at the pool there was a multitude of sick people. In other words, there were crowds of people there. So in order to get to this particular man Jesus had to walk past and perhaps even step over many others who were sick. He didn't heal them all. He chose this one man out of the multitude to heal.

7. The response of this man should have been absolute, unreserved gratefulness and loyalty to Jesus for what He had just done for this man. But it wasn't. In order to keep himself out of trouble he simply blamed Jesus for what he was doing.

8. What happens next, however, is even more amazing. (Read v. 14).

9. What do we learn from this? I think we learn that Jesus had a purpose for the healing that was greater than the man's physical well-being. The healing was for holiness. Jesus didn't come simply to make people well. He came to reconcile us to God. He came to make us holy. But sinners aren't attracted to holiness... they run from it!

10. As Jesus said in 3:19, "*And this is the judgment, that the Light came into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the Light for their deeds were evil.*" I'm sure this man loved being healed by Jesus just as the people in the wilderness loved being fed by Jesus. But this bit about holiness? He wanted a healing Messiah, not a Messiah who demands holiness!

11. In effect his attitude was this: The Messiah exists to serve *me*. As long as He is blessing me, I'm in. But I don't want anyone complicating my life, getting me in trouble with the authorities and my family, or making requirements of me. But this is exactly what Jesus did.

12. So what did the man do after hearing Jesus' warning? (Read 15).

13. What did he do? He ratted him out to the Religion Police. He didn't have any interest at all in worshiping this kind of Messiah. What he worshipped was his own comfort, his own health, and his own wellbeing. The fact is, this man had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the promised Messiah, only to discover Jesus was nothing like what He had hoped He would be.

14. This is a dangerous way to live, beloved. (Read v. 22-23).

15. In other words, whoever does not honor the Son of God as He deserves to be honored - as the

Messiah, the Lord of heaven and earth, the King - is in real trouble with God the Father.

16. My fear is that most everyone here this morning (and those who are listening in other places) would probably say that you believe in Jesus. But do you really know Him? Do you know and love Him for who He has revealed Himself to be (as Lord of your life)? Or are you simply attracted to Him because you think you can get from Him things that you want.

- A. Perhaps you see Him as nothing more than a source of comfort
- B. Perhaps you see Him as the means to get wealth
- C. Some see Him as the center-piece of all their social connections
- D. Maybe you see Him as your heavenly butler on call to provide all the things you desire and feel you need.

17. But how do you respond when He doesn't give you what you want? How do you respond when He takes things (precious people, or house, or Job, or health, or money) away?

18. Let's conclude now by taking a look at how this man should have responded. Turn with me to John 9:35-38. Keep in mind that while the man in John 5 was fearful that he might be kicked out of the synagogue, this man in chapter 9 actually was. (Read 9:35-38).

Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"³⁶ He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you."³⁸ And he said, "Lord, I believe." And *he worshiped Him*.

19. In our culture it is still easy to say that we love Jesus. But does our loyalty to Him prove strong when He asks us to do things that we would rather not? Jesus Himself said, "Why do you call me 'Lord,' 'Lord,' but do not do what I command" (Luke 6:46).

20. What if God took up residence in our church as an all-knowing, all-seeing, all-understanding teacher who never hesitated to speak the truth? What if He were absolutely fearless about confronting injustice, hypocrisy and sin anywhere he found it? Furthermore, what if, in addition to all of that, He was just as mortal as any other man? Would you love Him? Would you bow down and worship Him? Or would you turn your back on Him while others plot to kill Him.

21. The response of the man in this story is sobering. And it should cause us to examine our hearts to see if the Jesus we say we love is really the Jesus of the Bible.

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