



SESSION 21 | JOHN 5:3-9

JOHN 5:1-9 | JESUS IN JERUSALEM: THE POOL AT BETHESDA, PART 1

- Verses 1-2 – included on session 20
- Verses 3-4 –
 - Through the years, the mystery of these verses has produced the following conclusions:
 - “I don’t understand this, but it is in God’s Word and it must therefore have an explanation that will be seen someday.”
 - Charles Simeon (1883): “Multitudes of diseased persons constantly attended there; and five porches were built for their accommodation. When that healing power was first given to it cannot be ascertained; probably God had but a few years before endued it with those qualities, in order to prepare the people for their Messiah”
 - “I don’t understand this, so I will spiritualize it.”
 - Augustine: “That pool and that water seem to me to have signified the Jewish people. For that peoples are signified under the name of waters the Apocalypse of John clearly indicates to us, where, after he had been shown many waters, and he had asked what they were, was answered that they were peoples. That water, then—namely, that people—was shut in by the five books of Moses, as by five porches. But those books brought forth the sick, not healed them. For the law convicted, not acquitted sinners.”
 - Harry Ironside: “Here [at this pool] was the best that the law could do. The law had help for the one who needed it the least. The strong could get into the water first. But the worse he was, the more helpless and the more sinful, the more wretched his condition, the less likely he was to avail himself of the privileges that the law could offer him. Some of these people had lain there for not only weeks and months, but for years, and one man was there who had had an affliction thirty-eight years. He was paralyzed. He had lost the power to use his legs. How long he had lain at the pool of Bethesda we do not know, but his friends may have brought him there years before Jesus met him. He was a picture of a poor, helpless sinner. That is true of every one of us in our natural state.” Notice that Ironside takes a mildly dispensational view (his incessant habit), then spiritualizes this into a picture of what the law could do.
 - “I don’t understand this, so I will remove it.”
 - Note, for example, the ESV.
 - The critical text removes this verse all-together. Some translations (NASB) put the text in brackets, others simply remove it, only for the scrupulous eye to notice.
 - After the discovery of the Pool of Bethesda, we have an almost perfect understanding of what this is about. And, it also shows that the KJV is the accurate rendering.

- After the Greek period of Hellenization, there were Greek symbols, statues, and temples throughout the city of Jerusalem.
- One of the Temples was the Temple of Asclepius and Sarapis.
 - Asclepius was the Greek god of healing, and from his mythology comes the sign of medicine today.
 - Serapis was the Egyptian god of healing, and from him comes the English word *Therapy*.
- Notice that **an angel went down...and troubled the water**.
 - You recall that **angel** is a transliteration, not a translation, and always needs interpretation. See, for example, [Luke 9:52](#).
 - Some translations of the critical text say, “an angel of the Lord” (NASB). However, the KJV and its underlying text simply says **an angel**.
 - It is perfectly legitimate by the rules of grammar and hermeneutics to translate this as “a messenger of the Greek god.”
 - Notice that the water is **troubled** (not “stirred” as in NASB).
 - This is the only time in Scripture that word is used of water.
 - The healing of Asclepius was done with snakes on the floor or in the water!
 - Asclepius had a daughter named Hygieia. Her symbol was a snake stirring waters. This is the symbol of the Pharmacy in modern times.
- Verse 5 –
 - It is possibly only incidental, but the Jewish people wandered in the wilderness for thirty-eight years.
 - Here is a Jewish man looking for healing for that same number of years.
- Verse 6 –
 - Jesus asks if the man wishes to **be made whole**. Jesus used the less-common word ὑγίης [hugias] rather than the more common word *healed*.
 - The word *hugias* is the source of our English word hygiene, but it is also *the name of the daughter of Asclepius*.
 - Could Jesus have been making reference to the pagan healing?
- Verse 7 –
 - Notice that this verse would be somewhat a mystery without the omitted portion of verses 3-4.
 - Note also that the man seems to be trusting in pagan rituals rather than the Jewish Messiah.
- Verses 8-9 –
 - Without waiting for the *troubled water*, Jesus simply gives the command, **and immediately the man was made whole**. Jesus displayed that He was “God of gods,” or “Lord of lords.”
 - This is the third of eight signs in John. And, a word that portends bad news on the horizon, **the same day was the sabbath**.

