

John 5:1–47: Jesus, the Healer, the Son, and the Judge

Setting the Stage (John 5:1–5)

“After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.” (John 5:1–3 NKJV)

This chapter shifts from Galilee back to Jerusalem. Jesus, ever obedient to His Father's will, travels for one of the Jewish feasts. Near the Sheep Gate—by the pool of Bethesda—there lay many sick and hopeless people, hoping for healing through a miraculous stirring of water.

Whether or not this healing was tied to an angelic visitation the tradition was strong enough to inspire desperate hope. Among them was a man who had been infirm for 38 years—a long stretch of frustration and disappointment.

“Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’” (John 5:5–6 NKJV)

Jesus asks a probing question—not because He didn't know the answer, but to awaken a desire in the man's heart. Sometimes, the first step toward healing—whether physical or spiritual—is a willingness to change. The man responds, not with faith, but with frustration:

“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.” (John 5:7 NKJV)

The man's response reveals how his hope had been tied to a system, not a Savior. He was waiting for someone else to help him, unable to see that the Healer himself was standing before him.

The Power of Christ's Word (John 5:8–9)

“Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’ And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.” (John 5:8–9 NKJV)

Jesus bypasses the “system” and offers direct healing with a simple command. Notice: the command required obedience before the healing was visible. When Jesus speaks, He supplies the power to do what seems impossible. The man could have refused, citing his past failures, but he obeyed—and he was healed.

Personal Application: Has Jesus ever called you to something that seemed impossible? A change in your behavior, a step of faith, forgiveness for someone who hurt you deeply? The ability to obey doesn't come from you—it flows from trusting Him.

Legalism vs. Life (John 5:10–16)

“The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, ‘It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.’” (John 5:10 NKJV)

Instead of rejoicing over a miracle, the religious leaders focus on a perceived violation of Sabbath law. Legalism blinds the heart to the work of God. They were more interested in preserving traditions than celebrating transformation.

“For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.” (John 5:16 NKJV)

Jesus challenged their rules—not to disrespect the Sabbath, but to reveal that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. True rest is found in Him, not in rule-keeping.

The Authority of the Son (John 5:17–30)

“But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.’” (John 5:17 NKJV)

Jesus claims equality with God—not just in mission, but in nature. His work was not an independent operation but a full expression of the Father's will. This incited the leaders even more:

“Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him... because He said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” (John 5:18 NKJV)

This was no misunderstanding. They knew what He meant. Jesus was not a mere teacher or prophet. He was claiming to be God.

“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.” (John 5:21 NKJV)

Jesus, as the Life-Giver, holds the authority to raise both the physically and spiritually dead. Eternal life is not something we earn—it is something we receive from the Son.

“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.” (John 5:22 NKJV)

Jesus will also be the Judge. This twofold role—Savior and Judge—reminds us that neutrality toward Christ is not an option.

“He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” (John 5:24 NKJV)

Everlasting life is given to those who both listen and believe. Not a mechanical belief, but a relational trust in the One whom God sent.

Personal Application: Don't merely hear Jesus—believe Him. Have you passed from death to life? Eternal life is not a future hope but a present reality for those who trust Him.

Future Resurrection (John 5:28–29)

“The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” (John 5:28–29 NKJV)

Jesus foretells two resurrections—one unto life, and one unto judgment. The "doing good" and "doing evil" are not works-based salvation but evidence of one's trust in or rejection of the Son (see John 6:29).

Four Witnesses of Christ's Identity (John 5:30–47)

Jesus outlines four witnesses that testify of His divine identity:

1. John the Baptist (v. 33–35) – a burning and shining lamp who pointed to Christ.
2. His works (v. 36) – miracles that only God could do.
3. The Father (v. 37–38) – speaking at His baptism, affirming His mission.
4. The Scriptures (v. 39–47) – the Law and the Prophets pointed to Him.

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” (John 5:39 NKJV)

The leaders knew the Scriptures but missed the Savior. Intellectual knowledge is no substitute for personal encounter.

“But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” (John 5:40 NKJV)

The issue wasn't evidence—it was willingness. They rejected Jesus not because they lacked information but because they loved their own glory more than God's (v. 44).

Personal Application: Do you know about Jesus but still resist coming to Him? Intellectual agreement is not enough. Jesus invites us into a relational trust. His arms are open—but we must come.

Conclusion

John 5 reveals Jesus as the divine Healer, the life-giving Son, and the righteous Judge. It confronts our traditions, our assumptions, and our spiritual passivity. God has given His witness in His Word, in His Son, and by His Spirit. The only question is: Will you come to Him?

Suggested Prayer:

Lord, stir up in me a living faith—not just knowledge, not just passive belief, but a willingness to obey and to trust You fully. Help me not miss You in the very pages that speak of You. Let me hear, believe, and walk in newness of life.