

#### 4) Healing For Today?

- A) Oftentimes, healing and faith are inter-related. They seem to be connected by Jesus (cf. Matthew 15:28 -- the Canaanite woman's demon possessed daughter; Mark 5:34 -- the hemorrhaging woman who touches Jesus' cloak).
- B) Faith and healing were also connected by the Apostle Peter (Acts 3:16), although it is notable that it was not the faith of the healed (as was true in John 5:1-15 at Bethesda) which was always at issue.
- C) James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote instructions to the church for healing in James 5:13-16. While the passage is actually on prayer, the issue of faith is once again mentioned (James 5:15).
- D) It should be noted (James 5:14), that those who are sick in the church should initiate contact with the elders of the church in order to be prayed for and anointed with oil (James 5:14-15). Healing is for today!
- E) Sometimes sickness is attached to sin (James 5:16, John 5:14), and at other times it is not (John 9). Thus, healing is not always an issue of sinfulness or righteousness.
- F) Healing is always centered on Jesus (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:24, Matthew 8:16-17), and if Jesus chooses to heal, we know from the strength of the guarantee in James 5:15-16, He will.
- G) We know that God does not always heal (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:20, Paul leaves Trophimus sick; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:9 -- my grace is sufficient; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:23 -- Timothy's stomach ailments).

# Jesus The Healer

Long Beach Alliance Church • September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**NOW THERE IS IN JERUSALEM BY THE SHEEP GATE A POOL, WHICH IS CALLED IN HEBREW BETHESDA, HAVING FIVE PORTICOES. IN THESE LAY A MULTITUDE OF THOSE WHO WERE SICK, BLIND, LAME, AND WITHERED...  
~JOHN 5:2-3 (NASB)**

#### 2) Healing At A Distance

- A) Jesus departs Samaria (John 4:43) for Cana near the Sea of Galilee (4:46, note locations on enclosed map of region). In departing Samaritan "soil," Jesus is going back to Jewish "soil," and thus, his own country (4:44).
- B) Jesus testifies that "a prophet has no honor in his own country." While there are many interpretations as to what this could mean, it seems a simple contrast between Samaria & Galilee is in mind. The Samaritans wanted nothing, but received Jesus. The Jews don't really want Jesus, they want "signs and wonders" (4:48).
- C) Jesus is clearly seeking people of faith, and knows that wonders and signs do not always lead to genuine faith (e.g. 11:45-46). But, Jesus also realizes how weak our faith is, and

provides signs in order to reveal Himself to us (4:48, see also 10:38 & 14:11).

- D) Despite all of this, Jesus responds in compassion to the royal official's "crisis" (note "son" in vs. 46-47 transitions to "child" in vs. 49) and heals his son, without even being present (4:50).
  
- E) The healing, with the confirmation that it happened as Jesus said it would (4:51-53), leads the royal official and his household to faith in Christ (4:53).

### 3) Healing In Person

- A) Jesus heads back to Jerusalem\*. He is near the Sheep Gate (which Nehemiah referred to as being a small opening in the North Wall of the city. This is where sheep were brought through for washing, probably in the nearby pools which were eventually turned into public washing areas). Jesus

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\* Some scholars have argued strenuously that John 5 is a troubling chapter in that it does not refer to its festival directly and is out of place sequentially. Note how Jesus is in Galilee at the end of chapter 4, then he moves to Jerusalem in chapter 5, and unexpectedly in 6:1 he goes "to the other side of the Sea of Galilee." If chapters 5 & 6 are reversed, so the argument runs, John's stories about Galilee are gathered together (4:46-54; 6:1-71) and his Jerusalem stories come together as well (5:1-47, followed by 7:11ff). The new chapter order would be John 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 5, 7, 8, etc. (*NIV Application Commentary, John*, Gary Burge, page 171). Carson believes this view deserves some healthy scepticism (*Gospel According To John*, D.A. Carson, page 240), and Morris notes that "we ought not to expect everything to fit into a neat geographical or chronological picture. John draws his incidents from where he chooses" (*The Gospel According To John, NICNT*, Leon Morris, page 263). There are other abrupt shifts in John's gospel account, and we should not be startled by these, or bothered by liberal scholarship which points to these passages as "proof" of multiple sources used by John (or by later authors) to 'compile' the gospel. Rather, we should view the Bible, and the gospels especially, as making theological points about Jesus. The Bible is the truth from God through man revealing God, Christ and Holy Spirit to the world. Chronologies, science and even literary movement should be viewed as secondary to theological truth. This distinction is critical for all of Scripture, but especially the Gospels, including John.

comes to the dual pools of Bethesda, with its five porticoes surrounding the pools (John 5:2).

- B) Each day families would bring their "sick, blind, lame and withered" family members and set them next to the waters at Bethesda. Charity workers could help the people, and the area had become popular because of local legend that the waters of Bethesda could provide healing (5:3-4\*\*, cf. 7).
  
- C) Jesus, who seems to already know about the man at the pool of Bethesda (5:6), asks "Do you wish to get well?" What an extraordinary question to a man who had been sick for 38 years (5:5-6)!
  
- D) Remarkably, the man doesn't even answer Jesus' question! Rather, he begins to explain why he thinks he hasn't been healed (5:7).
  
- E) Remarkably, Jesus completely ignores the man's answer and heals him anyway (John 5:8). The man immediately gets up and begins walking (5:9), and is so overwhelmed he doesn't even stop to get Jesus' name (5:13).

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\*\* The latter portion of John 5:3 and all of John 5:4 are omitted in the NIV (note the text jumps from verse 3 to verse 5) because these comments were clearly added at a later date by a copyist to explain why people were coming to the pools. In some way, the comments give explanation for the paraplegic's response in verse 7. The added clauses were introduced at different times, and eventually settled on this rendering. The NIV & ESV add these comments as a footnote text, which is appropriate. Since they are ancient in their source and accuracy though, they are included as an added gloss (a better/brighter explanation) in literal translations of the Bible (NASB, NKJV), although no note is made in the older KJV. While gloss additions are rare and always noted in modern translations, they can lead us to be affirmed in the rigorous and strict procedures which were used to determine the authenticity of the canon (rule or measuring rod) of Scripture.

## Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) The question Jesus poses in John 5:6 is one each of us needs to deal with on a personal and on a community level. Do you wish to get well? Do we wish to get well? It seems to me that the very first step in getting well, is realizing that I'm sick! I can't really appreciate how sick I am, unless I see what being healthy (Christlike) is really all about. What examples has Jesus given you in your life to show you healthy Christian living, and how do you know when you are getting sick?
  
- B) In reading James 5:13-16, the most notable thing I see is, as Christians, our very first response to sickness should not be to depend on medicine (taking a pill to make it better), but to depend on Jesus. This isn't a last resort, it's a first response. Talk with the others in your group about this idea and how it could "flesh" itself out in real life.
  
- C) Certainly, medicine was an important aspect of healing in the early church (remember Paul recommending a medicinal use of wine for Timothy's stomach ailments -- 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:23?) -- but clearly total dependence on Christ was the primary issue (James 5:13-16; Matthew 8:1-17). What is the balance?
  
- D) The Bible calls on sick people to get the elders together to pray and anoint with oil the person who is sick. This seems rather silly in our day and age. Is this really appropriate for today, what does it really accomplish in the life of a Christian?
  
- E) The bottom line is simple. Are you sick? Then you need Jesus! Emotional, physical, mental, etc., sicknesses can be healed by Jesus Christ -- even today! Are you depending on Jesus for ALL of who you are, or just a "safe" portion? Take some time in your group to talk about your own areas of personal sickness. Open up about what is holding you back in following Jesus. Is it physical, emotional, etc.? If it is needed or appropriate, call on the elders of the church to pray and anoint you with oil after a Sunday service. Do not delay, depend on Jesus today!

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