



MBS183

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



THE HEALING OF THE MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA JOHN 5:1-47



By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum



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Email: Homeoffice@ariel.org • www.ariel.org



*Jesus saith unto him,
Arise, take up thy bed,
and walk. And
straightway the man was
made whole, and took up
his bed and walked.*

John 5:8-9

INTRODUCTION

This study will examine the fifth chapter of John, specifically, the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda in four segments: the physical healing, the spiritual healing, the defense, and the fourfold witness.

I. THE PHYSICAL HEALING - JOHN 5:1-9

Verses 1-3 describe the scene: *After these things 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 multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered.*

Generally, when a feast is not more specifically named in the Scriptures, it is a reference to the Passover. If this is the case, this is the second Passover of Messiah's public ministry, His ministry is approximately a year-and-a-half old at this point. The Pool of Bethesda is a pool in the Moslem Quarter of the Old city that has been uncovered in recent times.

The procedure Yeshua (Jesus) used to approach to a man at the Pool of Bethesda is described in verses 5-9: *And a certain man was there, who had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity. When Jesus saw him lying, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he said unto him, Would you be made whole? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus said unto him, Arise, take up your bed, and walk. And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.*

The procedure He used to approach the man was threefold. First, He sought the man out in verse 5. The man did not come to Him, because he could not do so on his own, nor was he taken to Yeshua,

as was the case in a previous instance.

Secondly, He did not demand any faith on the part of the man. At that point in His public ministry, faith was not necessary for a miracle to be received, because the purpose of His miracles was to authenticate His messianic claims and to get them to believe.

Thirdly, there was no revelation of His Messiahship. Initially, He never told the man He claimed to be the Messiah. Later, when asked who healed him, the man did not know (v. 13). He did not know who Jesus was or who He claimed to be. There was no faith involved at that point.

Yeshua went to the Pool of Bethesda and saw there a man who had been ailing with an infirmity for thirty-eight years. When He asked him whether he would like to be made whole in verse 6, the man, of course, responded positively. Yeshua told him to do something that went contrary to the Jewish practices of that day—He said, *Arise, take up your bed, and walk* in verse 8.

Verse 9a says: *And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.* What Yeshua asked the man to do was a breach of the pharisaic interpretation of keeping the Law. By rabbinic law, one was not allowed to carry something out of a public place to a private place, or from a private place to a public place on the Sabbath. Asking the sick man to carry his bed and walk, then, was a breach of the Pharisaic tradition in keeping the Sabbath. It is important to understand, however, that it did not violate the Mosaic commandment about the Sabbath, as Jesus kept those laws perfectly, down to every jot and tittle. But the rabbis added about 1,500 additional rules and regulations concerning the proper way to keep the Sabbath, including decrees that would forbid the ailing man from complying with Yeshua's directive. Yeshua gave this directive, however, to convey the message that He simply did not accept the authority of Pharisaic tradition or interpretations.

Furthermore, John mentioned in verse 9b: *Now it was the sabbath on that day.*

The Sabbath had become a major observance in Pharisaic Judaism, to the point that it was personalized as the Bride of Israel, and as Jehovah's Queen. What Jesus had asked the man to do was a breach of the pharisaic interpretation of keeping the Sabbath. Among the fifteen hundred Sabbath rules was one forbidding a person to carry a burden from a public place to a private place, or from a private place to a public place. While the Messiah and the Pharisees debated over the authority of the Mishnah in general, one specialized area of debate was on the proper way to observe the Sabbath. Yeshua had three such conflicts with them in a row: the healing of a paralytic (Jn. 5); the controversy over the grain (Mat. 12:1-8; Mk. 2:23-28; Lk. 6:1-

5); and the healing of a man with a withered hand (Mat. 12:9-14; Mk. 3:1-6; Lk. 6:6-11).

Notice the procedure in this case: First, Jesus sought out the man. Secondly, there was no demand for faith, as this event in the Book of John occurred before the events of Matthew 12. In other words, Messiah was still performing miracles and signs for the benefit of the masses, to lead them to belief, when the John 5 incident unfolds. It is later, specifically in Matthew 12, that He began to perform miracles only for individuals who first professed faith. In the John 5 incident, in fact, there was certainly not even a revelation of who Yeshua was; there was no revelation of His Messiahship. In fact, as verse 13 points out, the man who was healed did not even know who Yeshua was. He had to go back to find out when someone asked him, “Who healed you?” He did not know, nor did he know who Jesus was or claimed to be. There was no faith involved. Yet, Messiah deliberately told the man to do what he did, because He knew it would raise the issue. He wanted to force the people—and leaders in particular—to make a decision concerning His messianic claims.

II. THE SPIRITUAL HEALING - JOHN 5:10-18

After the man’s physical healing at the Pool of Bethesda, he was quickly confronted by the Jews in verse 10: *So the Jews said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.*

The man was questioned further by the Pharisaic Jews in verses 11-13: *But he answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed, and walk. They asked him, Who is the man that said unto you, Take up your bed, and walk? But he that was healed knew not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in the place.*

The man’s response was that the Man who had healed him told him to do this. When he was asked, “Who healed you?” Again, he said he did not know, and had to go to learn the answer.

The spiritual healing of the man is recorded in verses 14-15: *Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, you are made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you. The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole.*

Yeshua found the man in the temple in verse 14, where he was perhaps thanking God of his healing and participating in the Temple festivities of the feast. Jesus said: *Behold, you are made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you.* Here is the spiritual healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda. At that point, he discovered who Yeshua was and informed the others in verse 15.

Jesus’ healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda led to two accusations by Israel’s leaders in verses 16-18: *And for this cause the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did these things on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them,*

My Father works even until now, and I work. For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

First, He healed on the Sabbath, which was a breach of Sabbath law—again, not according to the Mosaic interpretation, but according to Pharisaic interpretation, which forbade healing on the Sabbath except in one situation, if there was a danger to life. John states that this was a key reason why they persecuted Yeshua in verse 16.

When Jesus answered, “My Father works even until now, and I work” in verse 17, He was claiming equality with God.

The second accusation came in verse 18 when called God His own Father, thereby making Himself an equal with God. In other words, by claiming to be the Son of God, by claiming to have God as His unique Father, He was claiming equality with God. That is the way the Jewish audience understood Him. Often, cultic groups use these things to deny the deity of the Son, claiming that the Son is less than the Father. However, that is not true in Jewish reckoning, because the first-born son is considered equal to the father. We must note carefully that by merely claiming to be the unique Son of God, Yeshua was understood by His Jewish audience to be claiming equality with God. There was no ambiguity in the Jewish mind as to what He was claiming.

III. THE MESSIAH’S DEFENSE - JOHN 5:19-29

Yeshua then defends Himself against these accusations by making four specific points: First, He is doing the works of the Father in verses 19-21: *Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father doing: for what things soever he does, these the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that himself does: and greater works than these will he show him, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom he will.*

By doing the works of the Father, or works that God does, He proves His equality with God. He has an equal relationship to the Father. What one does, so does the other in verse 19. Furthermore, there is a love between the Father and the Son, and this love gives the Son the right to do these mighty works in verse 20. There is equal love between God the Father and God the Son. Then, in verse 21, there is also equal power, and the Son shares the Father’s power to give life. As giving life is something that is a divine ability, this means He must also be divine.

The second point in His defense is that the Son will judge all men in verses 22-23: *For neither does the Father judge any man, but he has given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.*

He that honors not the Son honors not the Father that sent him.

In the Old Testament, the final judgment was a prerogative of God. But if the Son is, indeed, the One who will judge, He must, therefore, be God Himself. This also means the Son has equal honor with the Father. His third point of His defense is that He has the power to provide eternal life in verse 24: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes him that sent me, has eternal life, and comes not into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*

The ability to provide eternal life was something that the Old Testament said only God possessed. Therefore, if the Son can provide eternal life, He certainly is God Himself.

The fourth point in His defense is that He will bring about the resurrection of the dead in verses 25-29: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour comes, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father has life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself; and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.*

According to the Old Testament, the resurrection from the dead is something that God will do. If the Son now claims the ability to raise people from the dead into the immortal state, that would mean He must be God Himself. Two more observations must be made regarding these same verses. First, both His humanity and His deity are emphasized. In verse 25, He refers to Himself as the Son of God, emphasizing His deity. And in verse 27, He refers to Himself as the Son of Man emphasizing His humanity. The second observation concerns Yeshua's discussion of two kinds of resurrections in verse 29: the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment. The resurrection of life is the first resurrection, the resurrection of believers only. The second resurrection is the resurrection of unbelievers only to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.

One last comment about these verses involves the phrase, shall hear his voice, in verse 28. In the Gospels, whenever the hearing of a voice is emphasized, it is always the voice of the Messiah.

IV. THE FOURFOLD WITNESS TO HIS MESSIANIC CLAIMS - JOHN 5:30-47

I can of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. It is another that bears witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesses of me is true.

After this four-point defense, Yeshua concludes by pointing out there is a fourfold witness to His messianic claims in verses 30-45. Keep in mind that under the Mosaic Law, a minimum of two witnesses was

needed to establish a case; for extra measure, there would be three. But Jesus provided a fourfold witness to His Messianic claims, going beyond the demands of the Law.

The first witness was John the Baptist in verse 33-35: *Ye have sent unto John, and he has borne witness unto the truth. But the witness which I receive is not from man: howbeit I say these things, that ye may be saved. He was the lamp that burns and shines; and ye were willing to rejoice for a season in his light.*

It was John who identified Yeshua as “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:7).

The second witness to His messianic claim was His works in verse 36: *But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me.*

The works of Jesus—His miracles, signs and wonders—authenticated His Messianic claims.

The third witness to His messianic claims was God the Father in verses 37-38: *And the Father that sent me, he has borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not.*

God the Father bore witness of the Messiah audibly at His baptism when He declared from Heaven: *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased* (Mat. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21).

The fourth witness was the Scriptures in verse 39: *Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; ...*

As He is fulfilling messianic prophecies, the Scriptures bear witness of His claims.

Because they did not understand Scripture, they failed to understand Him is pointed out in verses 40-44: *...and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life. I receive not glory from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in yourselves. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that comes from the only God ye seek not?*

For that reason, they did not love God, and sought the glory of men rather than the glory of God.

Therefore, the very Law of Moses on which they had set their hope condemned them in verse 45: *Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuses you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope.*

With four witnesses such as these, the problem was not that there was a lack of testimony to His messianic claims. The real problem, Yeshua said, was that they did not believe Moses in verses 46-47: *For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his*

writings, how shall ye believe my words?

That might seem a strange accusation to make against Pharisees, but the fact is that the Pharisees believed Moses only the way they re-interpreted him in Pharisaic tradition. They did not believe Moses as “it is written,” whereas Yeshua fulfills the Law of Moses as it is written. Had they accepted Moses as it is written, they would not have failed to recognize that He was the Messiah.

In all these ways, the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda provided an opportunity for Jesus the Messiah to proclaim His Messiahship, His divinity, and His unique Sonship relationship with God the Father.☆

NOTES

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