

## The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Healing A Cripple By A Pool (Part Three)

by Martin G. Collins

*Forerunner*, "Bible Study," May-June 2008

After the healing of the crippled man (John 5:1-16), the Jews do not ask him, "Who healed you?" but "Who told you to carry your bed?" (verses 11-12). They are not in the least interested in the wonderful miracle that had been performed to make this man whole and vigorous. They are focused on what they perceive to be an offense against themselves—against their laws, power, desires, and pride. Essentially, if it meant breaking their rules, they would rather let people suffer than have them healed on the Sabbath.

The Jewish leaders' laws had become their god. They had long since forgotten that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). They were unable to recognize that the Sabbath is given to provide rest from an exhausting world and to rejuvenate people's relationship with God. Also, as this miracle typifies, healing brings rest from spiritual pain and suffering. However, these Jewish critics prefer the role of religious dictators and policemen oppressing the people. If enforcement of law only tyrannizes people and increases unnecessary suffering, it becomes harmful and worthless.

1. Is the Jews' reaction justified? John 5:16.

**Comment:** Once the Jewish critics learn that Jesus had ordered the man to carry his bed, their criticism and attack are aimed at Him. Their ruthless reaction is to seek to murder Him, the height of hypocrisy. While they attack Christ for healing on the Sabbath, they see nothing wrong with seeking to murder the One who healed a man who had been crippled for 38 years! They consistently show no judgment or mercy (Matthew 23:23).

Hundreds of years earlier, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah had seen hypocrisy in Israel, declaring it to be a problem of the heart (Jeremiah 42:20; Matthew 15:7-9). Human nature is full of hypocrisy, as can be seen in current laws that protect homosexuals and abortionists from criticism, even though they pervert and debase society and murder the unborn. At the same time, Christians are attacked and criticized for trying to raise their children to live moral and ethical lives for the benefit of all!

2. What is significant about the healed man speaking with Jesus in the Temple? John 5:13-14.

**Comment:** After his miraculous healing, the man heads to the Temple, probably to praise and thank God for his wonderful blessing. There, Christ instructs him in the spiritual principle of overcoming sin. The Jews viewed the Temple, not only as a place of thanksgiving, but also one of spiritual teaching and learning. Similarly, worship on the Sabbath with others of like mind creates a place of essential spiritual instruction for living God's way of life. People who avoid formal worship of God miss out on vital instruction and will be spiritually unprepared for God's Kingdom.

The man's healing was instantaneous, but the learning is not. It is a long process that requires both instruction (hearing) and application (doing). It takes time to grow in grace and knowledge (James 1:23-25; II Peter 3:17-18; Isaiah 28:9-10), as well as patience and discipline.

Christ warns the healed man not to go back to sinful conduct, indicating that his crippled condition resulted from sin. All sickness is not caused by our own personal sin, as John 9 shows in the example of the man blind from birth. Sometimes ill health is the effect of our forebears' sins or the accumulated sins of a whole society.

Jesus' warning, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you," is always apt because human nature, especially when encouraged by Satan, easily degenerates into sin. The experience of renewed health should instill in us a deeper repulsion of sin, a greater watchfulness for its pitfalls, and a more purposeful determination to overcome it. When we experience healing, we would all do well to remember Christ's warning.

3. Why are the healed man's words to the Jewish critics noteworthy? John 5:15.

**Comment:** The healed man tells the critics that Jesus had made him whole, or healed him, dismissing their question about who had told him to carry the bed. The Jewish critics had emphasized his carrying the bed, but the healed man (after Christ's revelation of Himself to him) put the emphasis on the Healer, suggesting which was more important. The spiritual priority was the healing, the work of Christ.

When people criticize God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the church, it is often because they have trouble recognizing what is truly important. Ignoring God's grace and mercy, they instead focus on a supposed violation of law, usually one they have perverted or made up, as the Pharisees did. They attack the Word of God, ignoring its important messages, and focus on picky, alleged discrepancies or fine points of the letter of the law. We must have the right priorities clearly in our minds if we are to serve and revere the sovereign God acceptably and diligently.