

THIRTY THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT JESUS
JOHN 5:1-18 | THE POOL AT BETHESDA

THE CHRONOLOGY | JOHN 5:1

- The phrase for “After this” (in the plural, literally, “after these things”) does not indicate immediacy with the prior story. Several months and many other activities occurred between John 4 and 5. The activities are recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
- We are not told which “feast of the Jews” Jesus is attending, but it is likely either the “Feast of the Wood” on the 9th of Ab, or the “Feast of Trumpets” on the 1st of Tishri (September).
 - Feast of Wood – 15th of Ab (July/August) see Numbers 10:34
 - Feast of Trumpets – 1st of Tishri (Sept./Oct.) see Leviticus 23:24
- Jesus “went up” to Jerusalem, though traveling south. Jerusalem is both geographically and spiritually higher. Today, when a Jew emigrates to Israel, they “make Aliyah,” that is, they “move up.”

THE LOCATION | JOHN 5:2

- Translators add either “gate” or “market,” but literally the language simply says, “by the sheep.”
- The sheep for sacrifice were prepared at a spring just outside the city walls, north of the Temple, near a spring of water. It is these sheep which are spoken of here, and this same spring fed the Pool of Bethesda.
- Bethesda literally is “House of Mercy,” from “Beth Hessed,” though no English word fully encompasses the meaning of *hesed*.

THE CRITICS | JOHN 5:3-4

- A portion of v. 3 and all of v. 4 are omitted from many modern translations (NIV, GNB, NLT, ESV, The Message). Others (NASB, HCSB) put it in brackets. Only KJV includes it without casting doubt on its validity.
- Adjacent to the Pool of Bethesda is the Temple of Sarapis (Asclepius). This Temple was not discovered until 1964, so this passage of Scripture was often doubted. In light of the knowledge that the Pagan temple of healing was adjacent, it makes perfect sense that

this man was there looking for any kind of healing, and the Lord confronted him with the only true healer. Asclepius has several daughters, including Hygeia and Panacea.

THE CONFRONTATION | JOHN 5:5-13

- In the first confrontation, Jesus says, “Do you wish to be ὑγιής [hugies].” The typical word for “get well” is the same word for “be saved” as in Matt 9:21, Mark 5:23, 28, Mark 6:56. It appears that Jesus is confronting this man's trust in Hygeia and Serapis.
- In a second confrontation, Jesus is accused of breaking the Law for telling the man to “pick up your pallet.” This would have broken Rabbinical law, not Torah.



THE BOWL OF HYGEIA

THE CHRIST | JOHN 5:14-18

- Jesus again told the man he was “hugies,” but warned him about his salvation. Jesus avoids “soza,” the common word for healing that implies deliverance and even salvation (the study of salvation in Christian theology is called “soteriology.”)
- This man's response is far different from the blind man (“I once was blind but now can see.”) The man went out to let the Jews know, almost doubtlessly knowing they would begin persecuting Jesus. Perhaps he was given money by the Jewish leaders? Only speculation, but possible, for he had no career, but was a life-long beggar.
- Jesus makes a clearly Messianic declaration in verse 17, that He has picked up the work of God. The response of the Pharisees in v. 18 displays that they clearly knew the meaning of v. 17. (Note, some translations insert a heading between vv. 17-18, which breaks the connection between these verses.)