

The Gospel of John

Lesson 4

John 5:1 - John 6:13

In Cana, Jesus heals a sick boy twenty miles away at the request of his father. John fails to record the rest of the events that take place in Galilee and picks up the story with Jesus back in Judea for the feast. Just inside the gate in Jerusalem, Jesus pauses at the pool of Bethesda.

To Jerusalem for the Day of Atonement, October AD 27

John ^{5:1} After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ² Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep *gate* a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.

The feast that Jesus is attending in Jerusalem is the Day of Atonement, also known as Yom Kippur. Specific instructions are set for the Day of Atonement by Moses in the books of Leviticus and Numbers.⁵⁶ It is to be celebrated every year on the tenth of the Jewish month of Tishri and it falls in late September or early October on the Gregorian calendar. It is the only day when the high priest is allowed to enter the Holy of Holies behind the veil of the covenant in the Temple. Once behind the veil, the priest makes a sin offering for himself, his family and the whole nation of Israel. The day is to be a time of total rest; no one is allowed to work on this day. Some teach that it is to be a day of fasting and, although it is not indicated in the instruction of Moses, it is practiced by the Jews. Each year on that day, two goats are selected for the offering. The lot is cast and one of them is slain as a sacrificial offering. The sins of the Nation of Israel are symbolically laid on the other goat, known as the scapegoat, and he is allowed to go free in the wilderness. It is this festival that Jesus is planning to attend in Jerusalem.

On the northeastern corner of the city is the Sheep Gate through which all the sheep are brought for sacrifice in the temple.

The ill man is healed by the pool of Bethsaida

John ^{5:3} In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [~~waiting for the moving of the waters; ⁴for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]~~

Just inside the gate is the pool of Bethesda, which means "house of mercy," and in Jesus' day it was believed that the waters contained healing powers when they were stirred by the angels. As a result, the lame and the sick came to these waters every day to wait under one of the five porches that surrounded them for the movement of the waters. The portions of this passage that tell the history of this pool are not found in the oldest and most reliable documents and the New American Standard Version indicates that by placing the text in brackets; nevertheless, people believed in the healing power of the water and some well-meaning editor added that information to the text sometime after the AD 400's.

⁵⁶ Leviticus 16:3-10; Leviticus 23:26-32; Numbers 29:7-11

Healed on the Sabbath

John 5:5 A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying *there*, and knew that he had already been a long time *in that condition*, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" ⁷ The sick man answered Him, "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." ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." ⁹ Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and *began* to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.

The compassion of the Lord is great for this man who has been ill for thirty-eight years. He knows only of the power of the water once it begins to stir. He is so sick that he cannot move quickly and others who are healthier rush in front of him when the waters stir. No proof exists that the waters ever possessed healing powers, but hope abounded in those days and people would hold out for years, waiting for something to happen. Jesus offers the man health, but he does not understand the depth of the Lord's ability on this Sabbath and he is healed by the words of Jesus, not the waters.

The man should not carry his pallet on the Sabbath

John 5:10 So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." ¹¹ But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'" ¹² They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up *your pallet* and walk'?" ¹³ But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in *that* place.

The Jewish leadership is ready to pounce on anyone who breaks one of their laws. The man is carrying his pallet, an act that is forbidden because it is considered to be work. The man tries to pass off the blame for his sin on Jesus, but he doesn't know His name. By the time all of this transpires, Jesus has already moved on to the temple area.

Jews persecute Jesus

John 5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." ¹⁵ The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. ¹⁶ For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." ¹⁸ For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Jesus finds the healed man in the temple and speaks to him. He then runs to the Jewish leadership and points Jesus out. They approach Jesus and question why He instructed the man to sin on the Sabbath. For the first time, the Jewish leadership accuses Jesus of breaking the law. They had done nothing to Him when He cleansed the temple seven months before but they could not overlook this incident; it is a major offense. Jesus' response, showing a personal relationship with the Father, is offensive to them. To claim that He is fulfilling the work of the Father's plan is blasphemy since, according to their laws, they are the designated workmen of God. Jews do not have a personal relationship with the Father even today. Their faith is based on works and an attempt to jump the hurdles of Jewish law to obtain a place in eternity. It is really no different from the theology of Islam or any other false religion. They fail to put their trust and faith in the Messiah, even today. John relates that they are offended because Jesus is making Himself equal with God in His

explanation of His personal relationship to the Father; it is a point of contention that will be used against Jesus from this point until His death.

Restriction on the Son

John 5:19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless *it is* something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

Jesus is equal to God and states it in verse 17. Responding to the objection of the Jews that He is God, He restricts His work to the work of the Father in this and the following passage. When Jesus healed the man at the pool of Bethesda, He was doing only what the Father wanted Him to do. His statement claims that He knows the will of the Father perfectly and does only the Father's will. The Jews are incensed. How can He know the Father's will? Even the Jews do not know the perfect will of the Father, but Jesus is God and He does. Jesus makes the same point five times in His ministry that He is God just as the Father is God.⁵⁷

The Father's gift to the Son

John 5:20 "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. ²¹ "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. ²² "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

In the minds of the Jews, Jesus commits the greatest of blasphemies by claiming to be the Son of God and includes the point that the Father has instilled in Him all authority to judge mankind. In addition, Jesus claims that He is to be honored in the same way that the Father is honored. It is not mentioned here, but one of the honors given the Father is worship and Jesus is implying here that He is to be worshipped. If the Jews will not honor Jesus, they are not honoring the Father, a hard message for the Jews to accept. In all of history only two men, Elijah and Elisha, were accredited with raising a person from physical death.⁵⁸ In this passage, Jesus is claiming that He has the authority from the Father to give physical life to the dead. He has not done so yet, but He soon will with the son of the widow, Jarius' daughter and Lazarus.

The dead will hear and live

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. ²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; ²⁷ and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man.

Continuing with His message to the Jewish leadership, Jesus explains His authority over eternal life and eternal judgment. Changing His words, Jesus turns from speaking about physical life and death⁵⁹ to the subject of spiritual life and death.⁶⁰ It is a translation that is

⁵⁷ See this same point in John 5:17; John 5:30; John 7:28; John 8:28; and John 14:10.

⁵⁸ 1 Kings 17:22; 2 Kings 4:1-44

⁵⁹ In verse 21, Jesus uses the Greek word "Zoos" meaning the physical life in a creature.

missed in the English, but His words are understood by the Jews and they are deeply offended by them. He is claiming authority over eternal spiritual life because He is the Son of Man, the Lord God Almighty.

Life and judgment

John 5: 28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment. ³⁰ "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³¹ "If I *alone* testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. ³² "There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true. ³³ "You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. ³⁴ "But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

In verse 25, Jesus says, "an hour is coming and now is," meaning the appointed time for the event is at that moment. In verse 28, Jesus says, "an hour is coming," meaning it will happen in the future. Therefore, in the case of verse 25, Jesus is there with the authority to fulfill the plans of the Father to offer spiritual eternal life. According to verse 28, sometime in the future Jesus will call for the resurrection to spiritual life and at another time the resurrection to spiritual death; two distinctly different resurrections. At His own resurrection, Jesus will resurrect with Him all the Godly saints of the past to spiritual life.⁶¹ Who gives Jesus this authority? God does. John the Baptist has testified that Jesus was God, but that is the testimony of a mere man. Although the Baptist had testified that Jesus was the Light of the world, Jesus did not need his testimony; the Father had proclaimed Him as the Light of the world. Why is He saying all these things to the Jewish leadership? He is doing so because He wants them to have eternal life. Jesus came to earth so all might be saved. John says in John 3:17, "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." Jesus came to earth the first time to bring eternal salvation; at His second coming He will bring eternal judgment.

John is a lamp

John 5:35 "He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶ "But the testimony which I have is greater than *the testimony of John*; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.

In this passage, Jesus is referring to John the Baptist who is now in prison at the hand of Herod Antipas. John's active ministry is now over and Jesus is reminding the Jews of the parts of his ministry that they enjoyed. For a short time, a little over a year, John stood, not as the Light of the world, but as a lamp shining in the darkness. In some ways, we too are to be the "light of the world" since the world receives the Light of Christ through His followers.⁶² The light of John the Baptist pointed the lost to the Lord in his ministry. For a time he was extremely popular and the Jews were attracted to him.⁶³ They were attracted to his boldness, his brightness, his clarity, his roughness and his message, but this attraction was short-lived and they finally turned on him. John could light the spark of excitement, but he could not enlighten their minds because he was just a man. Jesus is a

⁶⁰ In verse 24, Jesus uses the Greek word "Zoe" meaning spiritual life beyond the physical life of this world.

⁶¹ **Matthew 27:52-53** The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

⁶² Matthew 5:14

⁶³ Mark 1:5; Matthew 3:5; Matthew 11:7; Matthew 21:26

man, yet He is fully God and He can enlighten their minds to the spiritual things of eternity; that is why He was sent by the Father.

Jews do not believe in the Father

John 5:37 "And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. ³⁸ "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰ and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. ⁴¹ "I do not receive glory from men; ⁴² but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. ⁴³ "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴ "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only* God?

Jesus is not speaking of the voice of the Father heard at the Jordan River.⁶⁴ Neither is He speaking of the voice of the Father heard at the transfiguration or His visits to the Greeks. These last two events have not occurred in His ministry yet.⁶⁵ Rather, Jesus is speaking of the witness of the Father in the hearts of the true believers. John will confirm this thought in 1st John 5:9-10.⁶⁶ Here, Jesus is implying that His voice is the voice of the Father because He is in union with the Father in everything He does. Failure to accept Jesus is failure to accept the Father.⁶⁷

The Jewish leadership is literally without excuse concerning the word of the Father. For more than 1,000 years the Lord spoke through the prophets and His Word was written down and passed from generation to generation.⁶⁸ The Jews do not know the Word of the Lord at this time in the story. They know what they want to know, they know what they have created about the Lord, but they do not know the Lord. They are supposed to be looking for the Messiah, but Jesus does not fit their concept of the Messiah. Because they are far away from the true Word of the Lord, they are far away from the Father. The Jewish leadership used the Scripture to create a mechanical code for salvation, one that did not require a change of heart. Eternal salvation is not found in the external works of the laws of the Rabbis; it is found in trusting the Lord. They could not find this Jesus as the Messiah in their Scripture. False teachers will arrive in Judaism and they will accept them. False Messiahs will come and they will accept them, but they are not willing to accept the true Teacher and Messiah at this time.

Moses accuses the Jews

John 5:45 "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.

Jesus does not need to condemn the Jews; they are already condemned by Moses, but they have twisted his words to meet their needs. They have set their hope in what they created

⁶⁴ Mark 1:11

⁶⁵ Mark 9:7; John 12:28

⁶⁶ **1 John 5:9-10** If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He has borne witness concerning His Son. The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son.

⁶⁷ John 14:9

⁶⁸ The Exodus occurred in 1,445 BC. During the 40 years in the wilderness Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible recording the history of the Lord's work. The Old Testament was completed in 404 BC with the last Word of the Lord recorded in Malachi. The next 400 years the Lord would not speak to the Jews; they had all the instruction they needed. Finally in 4 BC, Jesus is born, breaking the silence of the Lord to His people.

from the words of Moses. But if they really know the true words of Moses, they will believe in Jesus.

Moses wrote of Jesus

John ^{5:46} "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. ⁴⁷ "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

One place Moses wrote about Jesus in Deuteronomy 18:18-19 where the Lord says:

I will raise up a Prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which He shall speak in My name, I Myself will require *it* of him.

Both Peter and Stephen use this Scripture as a prophecy about Jesus.⁶⁹ In this passage, Jesus Himself is also saying that Moses is speaking of Him. The Jewish leaders do not know the words of Moses and they do not want to believe him even though they speak of him frequently. To the Jew, Moses is the greatest of all Jews, yet Jesus has proven that they do not really trust the writing of Moses; therefore, they do not trust the words of Jesus. The Jews have no rebuttal to Jesus' accusation.

From the feast of the Day of Atonement, Jesus returns to Galilee and John once again fails to mention 36 events in the ministry of the Lord while in the province. Listed below are those events.

List of events in the life of Jesus in Galilee from the other Gospels, not included in John's Gospel

EVENT	SCRIPTURE PASSAGE
The disciples pick grain on the Sabbath.	Matt 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5
The man's hand is healed on Sabbath.	Matt 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11
Jesus withdraws to the sea.	Matt 12:14-21; Mark 3:7
Many follow Jesus to be healed.	Matt 4:23-25; Mark 3:7-12
Jesus prays on a mountain.	Luke 6:12
Jesus selects the twelve Apostles.	Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:13-16
Jesus descends and heals the multitude.	Luke 6:17-19
Jesus ascends the mountain to preach.	Matt 5:1
Jesus gives the Sermon on the Mount.	Matt 5:1-8:1; Luke 6:20-49
Jesus heals a Centurion's servant.	Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
The widow of Nain's son is raised from the dead.	Luke 7:11-17
John's disciples question Jesus.	Matt 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23
Jesus commends John the Baptist.	Matt 11:7-19; Luke 7:24-35
Jesus rebukes three cities.	Matt 11:20-30
Jesus eats with Simon the Pharisee.	Luke 7:36-50
Mary Magdalene is introduced.	Luke 8:1-3
Jesus heals a demon-possessed man.	Matt 12:22-23; Mark 3:20-22
Jesus rebukes the Pharisees.	Matt 12:24-37; Mark 3:22-30
Jesus speaks of the sign of Jonah.	Matt 12:38-45
The family seeks Jesus.	Matt 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21
Jesus tells the parables by the Sea.	Matt 13:1-35; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:4-18
The parables are explained in private.	Matt 13:36-53
The disciples are ordered to cross the sea.	Matt 8:18; Mark 4:35; Luke 8:22
Jesus calms a stormy sea.	Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:36-41; Luke 8:23-25
Legion is cast out of violent man	Matt 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39
Jesus sails to Capernaum.	Matt 9:1; Mark 5:21; Luke 8:40
Jairus asks Jesus to heal his daughter.	Matt 9:18-19; Mark 5:22-23; Luke 8:41-42

⁶⁹ Acts 3:22; Acts 7:37

An ill woman is healed by touching Jesus.	Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:24-34; Luke 8:42-48
The death of the daughter of Jairus is reported.	Mark 5:35-36; Luke 8:49-50
Jesus raises Jairus' daughter from the dead.	Matt 9:23-26; Mark 5:37-43; Luke 8:51-56
Jesus heals two blind men.	Matt 9:27-31
Jesus heals a mute demoniac.	Matt 9:32-34
Jesus is rejected a second time in Nazareth	Matt 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6
The twelve apostles are sent out to preach.	Matt 9:35-11:1; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6
Death of John the Baptist is reported to Jesus.	Matt 14:1-12
Herod fears John has risen from the dead.	Mark 6:14-29; Luke 9:7-9

John's Gospel jumps from Jesus in Jerusalem at the feast of the Day of Atonement in AD 27 to just before the Passover of AD 28 at the Sea of Galilee. The followers of the Lord are in the thousands at this time and He needs to feed them all.

To the other side of the sea⁷⁰

John ^{6:1} After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). ² A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. ³ Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.

Luke calls it the sea of Gennesaret,⁷¹ and John will later call it the Sea of Tiberias, but they are the same body of water located on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee.⁷² The portion of the sea next to the city is called the Sea of Tiberias even though the entire body of water is called the Sea of Galilee. In AD 22, Herod Antipas built his capital on the northwest side of the sea and called it Tiberias.

As recorded in the other Gospels and seen in the list above, Jesus performed many miraculous acts in Galilee over the previous six months which are not included in John's Gospel. The crowd is very large and when they will not leave Jesus alone, even on the hillside, Jesus has no other choice but to minister to them. They have gone without food for several days and He is now concerned with their physical nourishment.

The feeding of the five thousand⁷³

John ^{6:5} Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" ⁶ This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. ⁷ Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." ⁸ One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, ⁹ "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?" ¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. ¹² When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." ¹³ So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

All four Gospels mention this story.⁷⁴ The twelve apostles have just returned from their tour in Galilee and they are excited to give Jesus their report, but Jesus is surrounded by the

⁷⁰ Agrees with Mark 6:30-6:36

⁷¹ Luke 5:1

⁷² John 21:1

⁷³ Agrees with Mark 6:35

great multitude. Where will the money come from to feed all the people? Philip knows they have 200 denarii in the bag. A day's wage in that period was one denarius, and that amount would feed a family for a day. Therefore, the money in the bag would feed about 200 families. In the crowd are about 5,000 men and their families, so Jesus and His apostles would need at least 5,000 denarii to feed them. Jesus does not need any money to feed them; He uses the resources at hand to satiate their hunger and they were left with a basket of food for each of His apostles to eat on their trip up the coast to Capernaum.

⁷⁴ Mark 6:30-44; Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13