

Lesson 10 – A Feast at Jerusalem

Text: John 5

Main Characters: God, Jesus, the Jews

Key Passages:

- John 5:14 – Jesus’ healing of the disabled man was a foundation for him to teach about repentance.
- John 5:19 – Jesus was only able to act as God gave him authority to do so. He followed God’s example.

Main Storyline:

At some point, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went to Jerusalem (note that there is not enough evidence to know exactly when this event took place). At the time, there was a pool in Jerusalem called Bethesda. Around the pool were five porches (shelters) where many sick people laid. They were waiting for an angel to come and stir the water in the pool. Whoever stepped into the pool first after the angel stirred the water was made well of whatever disease he had.

On one particular day (the Sabbath), one of the people in the crowd was a man who had had a disability for 38 years. He was apparently unable to walk, as he could not move around on his own, relying on others to help him. When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing that he had been disabled for a long time, he asked the man if he wanted to be made well. The man replied that he did not have anyone to put him into the pool as soon as it had been stirred; as soon as it was stirred, someone else would get in before him.

Jesus said to the man, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” Immediately, the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. When the Jews saw that the man was carrying his bed, they rebuked him because they believed it was not lawful for him to carry his bed on the Sabbath. The man defended himself, explaining that the man who had healed him had instructed him to do so. They pressed the man to try to find out who had instructed him, but he could not tell them who Jesus was.

Afterward, Jesus found the man again in the temple and told him that he needed to stop sinning, or else a worse thing [than his sickness] would come upon him. The man left the temple and told the Jews that it had been Jesus who healed him. Because of this, the Jews began to persecute Jesus, wishing to kill him because of what he had done on the Sabbath.

Note that, all around the pool of Bethesda, there was a multitude of sick people. Jesus could have healed any or all of them, but only healed the one disabled man mentioned. It appears that Jesus knew that his healing the man on the Sabbath (and the man’s carrying the bed) would give him an opportunity to correct the misunderstandings of the Jews in regards to the Sabbath. This is a good demonstration of how Jesus used miracles and healings: to help people to believe and understand God’s commandments.

Jesus responded to the Jews’ accusations and persecutions by explaining to them that the Father (God) was working, and Jesus was working as well. The Jews were motivated to kill him even more because of Jesus’ explanation. Not only did Jesus, in their opinions, break the Sabbath, but he also said that God was his father, making himself equal with God.

Jesus continued to try to teach the Jews about his position and character with respect to God. He explained that, as the Son, he did not do anything of himself, but rather whatever the Father (God) also did. Jesus also explained that the Father had given him all authority to judge people. Jesus’ judgment was righteous because he was seeking after the will of God rather than his own will. Jesus also pointed out the inconsistency of the Jews’ beliefs. They were willing to trust and believe in John the Baptist, but were not willing to trust in and believe Jesus, about whom God himself had directly testified. Jesus’ teachings in the latter half of John 5 served to help the Jews understand God, Jesus, and the fact that Jesus was not breaking the Sabbath by doing God’s will.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Jesus’ primary mission was not to heal people, but rather to teach them about the kingdom of heaven.
- 2.) As Jesus was an imitator of the Father and executor of God’s will, so also should we be (Ephesians 5:1).