

John 5 (HCSB)

The Third Sign: Healing the Sick

⁵ After this, a Jewish festival took place, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ² By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda^[a] in Hebrew, which has five colonnades.^[b] ³ Within these lay a large number of the sick—blind, lame, and paralyzed [—waiting for the moving of the water, ⁴ because an angel would go down into the pool from time to time and stir up the water. Then the first one who got in after the water was stirred up recovered from whatever ailment he had].^[c]

⁵ One man was there who had been sick for 38 years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had already been there a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to get well?”

⁷ “Sir,” the sick man answered, “I don’t have a man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.”

⁸ “Get up,” Jesus told him, “pick up your mat and walk!” ⁹ Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.

Now that day was the Sabbath, ¹⁰ so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “This is the Sabbath! It’s illegal for you to pick up your mat.”

¹¹ He replied, “The man who made me well told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

¹² “Who is this man who told you, ‘Pick up your mat and walk?’” they asked. ¹³ But the man who was cured did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.^[d]

¹⁴ After this, Jesus found him in the temple complex and said to him, “See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.” ¹⁵ The man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Honoring the Father and the Son

¹⁶ Therefore, the Jews began persecuting Jesus^[e] because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus responded to them, “My Father is still working, and I am working also.” ¹⁸ This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill Him: Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

¹⁹ Then Jesus replied, “I assure you: The Son is not able to do anything on His own, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father^[i] does, the Son also does these things in the same way. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He is doing, and He will show Him greater works than these so that you will be amazed. ²¹ And just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to anyone He wants to. ²² The Father, in fact, judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ so that all people will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Life and Judgment

²⁴ “I assure you: Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.

²⁵ “I assure you: An hour is coming, and is now here, 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, so also He has granted to the Son to have life in Himself. ²⁷ And He has granted Him the right to pass judgment, because He is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done good things, to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked things, to the resurrection of judgment.

³⁰ “I can do nothing on My own. I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

Four Witnesses to Jesus

³¹ “If I testify about Myself, My testimony is not valid.^[g] ³² There is Another who testifies about Me, and I know that the testimony He gives about Me is valid.^[h] ³³ You have sent messengers to John, and he has testified to the truth. ³⁴ I don’t receive man’s testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵ John^[i] was a burning and shining lamp, and for a time you were willing to enjoy his light.

³⁶ “But I have a greater testimony than John’s because of the works that the Father has given Me to accomplish. These very works I am doing testify about Me that the Father has sent Me. ³⁷ The Father who sent Me has Himself testified about Me. You have not heard His voice at any time, and you haven’t seen His form. ³⁸ You don’t have His word living in you, because you don’t believe the One He sent. ³⁹ You pore over^[j] the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, yet they testify about Me. ⁴⁰ And you are not willing to come to Me so that you may have life.

⁴¹ “I do not accept glory from men, ⁴² but I know you—that you have no love for God within you. ⁴³ I have come in My Father’s name, yet you don’t accept Me. If someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe? While accepting glory from one another, you don’t seek the glory that comes from the only God. ⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. Your accuser is

Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, because he wrote about Me. ⁴⁷ But if you don't believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

Footnotes:

- a. [John 5:2](#) Other mss read *Bethzatha*; other mss read *Bethsaida*
- b. [John 5:2](#) Rows of columns supporting a roof
- c. [John 5:4](#) Other mss omit bracketed text
- d. [John 5:13](#) Lit *slipped away, there being a crowd in that place*
- e. [John 5:16](#) Other mss add *and trying to kill Him*
- f. [John 5:19](#) Lit *whatever that One*
- g. [John 5:31](#) Or *not true*
- h. [John 5:32](#) Or *true*
- i. [John 5:35](#) Lit *That man*
- j. [John 5:39](#) In Gk this could be a command: *Pore over . . .*

Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*¹

John 5

5:1-47 The "festival cycle" in John's Gospel spans from [5:1](#) to [10:42](#) and is characterized by escalating conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. This cycle begins with yet another sign—Jesus' healing of a lame man at a feast in Jerusalem (see note at [2:11](#)). The fact that the healing took place on a Sabbath provoked a major controversy. Jesus was accused of breaking the law by telling the man to pick up his mat ([5:8-10](#)). The controversy escalated to the point where the Jewish leaders charged Jesus with blasphemy for claiming to continue the work of God ([v. 18](#)). This provided an occasion for Jesus to defend His ministry and enumerate evidences for His identity.

5:1 **After this** marks the passing of an indefinite period of time. Up to a year and a half may have passed after the last recorded festival, the Passover, when Jesus cleared the temple and met with Nicodemus. The unnamed **Jewish festival** may have been the Feast of Tabernacles. On Jesus **went up to Jerusalem**, see note at [2:13](#).

5:2 **Bethesda** may mean "house of mercy," a fitting term given the desperate state of the people who lay there hoping for a miraculous cure; see note at [1:38](#).

5:3 Most likely official Judaism did not approve of the superstition associated with the alleged healing powers of the pool of Bethesda (see note at [v. 7](#)).

5:5 **Sick** probably means "paralyzed" or "lame" here (the Gk word expresses "disabled"). We do not know the invalid's age or how long he had been lying there, but he had been crippled for **38 years**, which is longer than many people in antiquity lived and roughly as long as Israel's wilderness wanderings ([Dt 2:14](#)). On John's penchant for selecting "difficult" and striking miracles, see note at [2:11](#). For a similar healing, see [Mt 9:1-8](#).

5:6 **Knew** probably indicates supernatural knowledge (see notes at [1:48](#) and [4:19](#)). Jesus' conversation with the man may have been occasioned by his request for alms ([Ac 3:1-5](#)).

5:7 Superstition attributed the stirring of the **water** to the actions of an angel (see the addition of [v. 4](#) in some later mss).

5:8-9 A **mat** (Gk *krabattos*; as distinguished from "bed," Gk *klinarion*, e.g., [Ac 5:15](#)) was the poor man's bedding. Made of straw, it could be rolled up and carried. We are not told this day was **the Sabbath** until the miracle was performed. This sets the context for the tensions with the unbelieving Jews (cp. [9:14](#)).

5:10 In a petty display of religious legalism, the Jewish leaders objected to the man's picking up his **mat** on the **Sabbath**. While not actually breaking any biblical Sabbath regulations, the man was violating a rabbinical code that prohibited the carrying of an object "from one domain into another" (*m. Sabb. 7:2*). Hence Jesus was accused of enticing the man to sin.

¹ Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "John 5".

5:14 Jesus met the man again in **the temple complex** (see note at [2:14](#)), a short distance from the site of his healing. Jesus' words may imply that the man's suffering was due to sin but do not suggest that all suffering is caused by personal sin (see note at [9:2](#)). **Something worse** may refer to eternal judgment for sin ([vv. 22-30](#)).

5:17 While [Gen 2:2-3](#) teaches that God rested (Hb *shabath*) on the seventh day of creation, Jewish rabbis agreed that God continually upheld the universe, yet without breaking the Sabbath. If God was above Sabbath regulations, so was Jesus ([Mt 12:1-14](#)). What is more, even the Jews made exceptions to the rule prohibiting work on the Sabbath, most notably in cases where circumcision occurred on a Sabbath ([Jn 7:23](#)).

5:18 Making Himself equal with God seemed to violate the OT teaching that there is only one God ([Dt 6:4](#)). Thus the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy, which became the primary charge leveled against Jesus before Pilate ([Jn 19:7](#)).

5:19-26 On Jesus' relationship to the **Father** in these verses, see note at [3:16-18](#).

5:19 Jesus' claim that **the Son is not able to do anything on His own** echoes Moses' affirmation that "the Lord sent me to do all these things and that it was not of my own will" ([Num 16:28](#)).

5:21 Jesus' statement that **the Son also gives life to anyone He wants** is significant since raising the dead and giving life are the prerogatives of God alone ([Dt 32:39](#); [1Sam 2:6](#); [2Ki 5:7](#)).

5:22 Like life ([v. 21](#)), **judgment** is the exclusive prerogative of God ([Gen 18:25](#); [Jdg 11:27](#)).

5:23 Jesus characterized Himself as God's authorized messenger. This is similar to Moses and the prophets, who served as God's agents and spokesmen. Of designated messengers (Hb *shaliach*), Jews held that "a man's agent is like the man himself" (*m. Ber. 5:5*). The statement **so that all people will honor the Son just as they honor the Father** in effect established Jesus' right to be worshiped and amounted to a claim of deity.

5:25 Jesus' words are reminiscent of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones ([Ezek 37](#)).

5:26 The claim that Jesus had **life in Himself** echoes the affirmation in the prologue of John's Gospel that "life was in Him [Jesus]" ([1:4](#); see note at [14:6](#)). It is further supported by Jesus' statement, "I am the resurrection and the life" ([11:25](#)). Because He is "the life" and has life in Himself, Jesus is able to give life (abundant life now; eternal life in the future) to all who place their trust in Him ([3:16](#); [10:10](#)).

5:27 Because He is the Son of Man echoes [Dan 7:13](#).

5:28-29 Compare these verses with [Dan 12:2](#).

5:30 On **I can do nothing on My own**, see notes at [verses 19](#) and [23](#).

5:31-47 Jesus spoke of several witnesses who bore testimony about Him: John the Baptist ([vv. 32-36](#); cp. [1:7-8,15,19,32-34](#); [3:26](#)); His own works ([5:36](#); cp. [10:25,32,37-38](#); [15:24](#)); God the Father ([5:37-38](#); [8:18](#)); and the Scriptures ([5:39](#)), particularly those written by Moses ([vv. 45-47](#)). Elsewhere in this Gospel, reference is made to the witness of Jesus Himself ([3:11,32](#); [8:14,18](#); [18:37](#)), the Spirit (chaps. 14-16, esp. [15:26](#)), the disciples ([15:27](#)), and the fourth evangelist ([19:35](#); [21:24](#)). The "witness" theme in John's Gospel is part of a larger "trial motif." This reverses the world's perspective of Jesus being put

on trial. It becomes clear that it is really the world, not Jesus, that is on trial, with a multitude of witnesses bearing testimony to His true identity as Messiah. This section also emphasizes the world's guilt for rejecting Jesus.

5:31 Jesus did not deny His reliability. He was alluding to the importance of having multiple witnesses ([Dt 17:6](#); [19:15](#); cp. [Num 35:30](#)).

5:32 Jesus was speaking of God the Father ([v. 37](#)) when He said, **There is Another who testifies about Me**. Avoiding God's name was a common way of showing reverence.

5:33 On Jesus as the **truth**, see note at [14:6](#) and the echo of this passage before Pilate ([18:37](#)). Compare [3Jn 3,12](#).

5:35 Jesus' characterization of John the Baptist as a **burning and shining lamp** seems to echo [Ps 132:17](#) where God will "set up a lamp" for His Anointed One. John was a "lamp" but not the Light ([Jn 1:7-9](#)); his witness was comparatively small and temporary. The past tense may imply that John was now dead or imprisoned. See notes at [3:29](#) and [3:30](#).

5:37 The Father... has Himself testified may refer to the voice at Jesus' baptism ([Mt 3:17](#)), a passage not explicitly mentioned in John, though the primary reference may be to God's witness in Scripture ([Jn 5:45-47](#); cp. [Lk 24:27,44](#); [Ac 13:27](#); [1Jn 5:9](#)). Jesus' affirmation that His hearers had not **heard** God's **voice** or **seen His form** (cp. [1:18](#)) seems to allude to wilderness Israel, which received the law at Mount Sinai without hearing God's voice or seeing His form.

5:38 Have His word living in you recalls the depiction of a God-fearing person who has the word of God living in his heart ([Jos 1:8-9](#); [Ps 119:11](#)).

5:39 Scripture itself does not impart life, but it witnesses to the One who does—Jesus (cp. [vv. 46-47](#)).

5:43 Jesus predicted the proliferation of false Christs as a sign of the end times ([Mt 24:5](#)). The first-century Jewish historian Josephus reported a string of messianic pretenders in the years before A.D. 70.

5:45-47 Jesus' appeal to **Moses** prepares the way for chapter 6, where Jesus is presented as the new Moses providing the new "bread from heaven." The reference to Moses as a witness or **accuser** against the Jews may allude to [Dt 31:26-27](#) where the law was invoked as a witness against the Israelites. The reference to Moses writing about Jesus in [Jn 5:46](#) may allude to the Pentateuch (attributed to Moses) or to the prediction of a "prophet like" Moses in [Dt 18:15](#).

The Apologetics Study Bible²

John 5

5:2 Until the 1890s, critics doubted this detail. Then the pool of Bethesda was excavated in Jerusalem and it turned out to have had five covered colonnades—four around the perimeter and one dividing the water into two compartments down the middle.

5:14 Sometimes this verse is used as a proof text for blaming all illness on someone's personal sin. But John contradicted this in [9:1-3](#). All Jesus was saying here was that this man's affliction seemed to have stemmed from some sin of his. Times of calamity are always good for personal stocktaking ([Lk 13:1-9](#)), but many tragedies are simply the results of life in a fallen world ([Rm 8:22](#)).

5:16-30 Throughout this passage it seems as if Jesus went back and forth between claiming He was equal to God and saying He was subordinate to His Father. Actually, both were true. There was essential equality with functional subordination. All three persons of the Trinity are fully divine and united as one God in three persons, but they have distinct as well as overlapping roles. The Son never commands the Father; He only obeys Him.

5:31 Of course, Christ's testimony about Himself was valid because He spoke the truth. But Jesus was here alluding to the Jewish principle that self-witness was illegitimate on its own, so He went on to cite others who could testify on His behalf.

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

John 5

5:1 Three festivals (or "holy days") required all Jewish males to come to Jerusalem: (1) the Festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread, (2) the Festival of Pentecost (also called the Festival of Harvest or the Festival of Weeks), and (3) the Festival of Shelters.

5:6 After 38 years, this man's problem had become a way of life. No one had ever helped him. He had no hope of ever being healed. The man's situation looked hopeless. But no matter how trapped you feel in your infirmities, God can minister to your deepest needs. Don't let a problem or hardship cause you to lose hope. God may have special work for you to do in spite of your condition, or even because of it. Many have ministered effectively to hurting people because they have triumphed over their own hurts.

5:10 According to the Pharisees, carrying a mat on the Sabbath was work and was therefore unlawful. It did not break an Old Testament law, but it broke the Pharisees' *interpretation* of God's command to "remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" ([Exodus 20:8](#)). This was just one of hundreds of rules they had added to the Old Testament law.

² Ted Cabal, ed., *The Apologetics Study Bible: Understanding Why You Believe*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1579-1580.

³ *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1760-1762.

5:10 A man who hadn't walked for 38 years had been healed, but the Pharisees were more concerned about their petty rules than the life and health of a human being. The Jewish leaders saw both a mighty miracle of healing and a broken rule. They threw the miracle aside as they focused their attention on the broken rule, because the rule was more important to them than the miracle. It is easy to get so caught up in our man-made structures and rules that we forget the people involved. Are your guidelines for living God-made or man-made? Are they helping people, or have they become need less stumbling blocks?

The Claims of Christ

Those who read the life of Christ are faced with one unavoidable question—was Jesus God? Part of any reasonable conclusion has to include the fact that he did claim to be God. We have no other choice but to agree or disagree with his claim. Eternal life is at stake in the choice.

<i>Jesus claimed to be:</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies	5:17 ; 14:33 ; 16:16 , 17 ; 26:31 , 53-56 ; 27:43	14:21 , 61,62	4:16-21 ; 7:18-23 ; 18:31 ; 22:37 ; 24:44	2:22 ; 5:45-47 ; 6:45 ; 7:40 ; 10:34-36 ; 13:18 ; 15:25 ; 20:9
the Son of Man	8:20 ; 12:8 ; 16:27 ; 19:28 ; 20:18, 19 ; 24:27 , 44 ; 25:31 ; 26:2 , 45 , 64	8:31 , 38 ; 9:9 ; 10:45 ; 14:41	6:22 ; 7:33, 34 ; 12:8 ; 17:22 ; 18:8 , 31 ; 19:10 ; 21:36	1:51 ; 3:13, 14 ; 6:27 , 53 ; 12:23,34
the Son of God	11:27 ; 14:33 ; 16:16 , 17 ; 27:43	3:11, 12 ; 14:61,62	8:28 ; 10:22	1:18 ; 3:35, 36 ; 5:18-26 ; 6:40 ; 10:36 ; 11:4 ; 17:1 ; 19:7
the Messiah/ the Christ	23:9, 10 ; 26:63, 64	8:29, 30	4:41 ; 23:1, 2 ; 24:25-27	4:25, 26 ; 10:24,25 ; 11:27
Teacher/Master	26:18			13:13, 14
one with authority to forgive		2:1-12	7:48, 49	
Lord		5:19		13:13, 14 ; 20:28, 29
Savior			19:10	3:17 ; 10:9

5:14 This man had been lame, or paralyzed, and suddenly he could walk. This was a great miracle. But he needed an even greater miracle—to have his sins forgiven. The man was delighted to be physically healed, but he had to turn from his sins and seek God's forgiveness to be spiritually healed. God's forgiveness is the greatest gift you will ever receive. Don't neglect his gracious offer.

5:17 If God stopped every kind of work on the Sabbath, nature would fall into chaos, and sin would overrun the world. [Genesis 2:2](#) says that God rested on the seventh day, but this can't mean that he stopped doing good. Jesus wanted to teach that when the opportunity to do good presents itself, it should not be ignored, even on the Sabbath.

5:17ff Jesus was identifying himself with God, his Father. There could be no doubt as to his claim to be God. Jesus does not leave us the option to believe in God while ignoring God's Son ([5:23](#)). The Pharisees also called God their Father, but they realized Jesus was claiming a unique relationship with him. In response to Jesus' claim, the Pharisees had two choices: to believe him, or to accuse him of blasphemy. They chose the second.

5:19-23 Because of his unity with God, Jesus lived as God wanted him to live. Because of our identification with Jesus, we must honor him and live as he wants us to live. The question "What would Jesus do?" may help us make the right choices.

5:24 "Eternal life"—living forever with God—begins when you accept Jesus Christ as Savior. At that moment, new life begins in you ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). It is a completed transaction. You still will face physical death, but when Christ returns again, your body will be resurrected to live forever ([1 Corinthians 15](#)).

5:25 In saying that the dead will hear his voice, Jesus was talking about the spiritually dead who hear, understand, and accept him. Those who accept Jesus, the Word, will have eternal life. Jesus was also talking about the physically dead. He raised several dead people while he was on earth, and at his second coming, "the Christians who have died" will rise to meet him ([1 Thessalonians 4:16](#)).

5:26 God is the source and Creator of life, for there is no life apart from God, here or hereafter. The life in us is a gift from him (see [Deuteronomy 30:20](#); [Psalm 36:9](#)). Because Jesus is eternally existent with God, the Creator, he, too, is "the life" ([14:6](#)) through whom we may live eternally (see [1 John 5:11](#)).

5:27 The Old Testament mentioned three signs of the coming Messiah. In this chapter, John shows that Jesus has fulfilled all three signs. Authority to judge is given to him as the Son of Man (cf. [5:27](#) with [Daniel 7:13, 14](#)). The lame and sick are healed (cf. [5:20, 21](#) with [Isaiah 35:6](#); [Jeremiah 31:8, 9](#)). The dead are raised to life (cf. [5:21, 28](#) with [Deuteronomy 32:39](#); [1 Samuel 2:6](#); [2 Kings 5:7](#)).

5:29 Those who have rebelled against Christ will be resurrected, too, but they will hear God's judgment against them and will be sentenced to eternity apart from him. There are those who wish to live well on earth, ignore God, and then see death as final rest. Jesus does not allow unbelieving people to see death as the end of it all. There is a judgment to face.

5:31ff Jesus claimed to be equal with God ([5:18](#)), to give eternal life ([5:24](#)), to be the source of life ([5:26](#)), and to judge sin ([5:27](#)). These statements make it clear that Jesus was claiming to be divine—an almost unbelievable claim, but one that was supported by another witness, John the Baptist.

[5:39, 40](#) The religious leaders knew what the Bible said but failed to apply its words to their lives. They knew the teachings of the Scriptures but failed to see the Messiah to whom the Scriptures pointed. They knew the rules but missed the Savior. Entrenched in their own religious system, they refused to let the Son of God change their lives. Don't become so involved in "religion" that you miss Christ.

[5:41](#) Whose praise do you seek? The religious leaders enjoyed great prestige in Israel, but their stamp of approval meant nothing to Jesus. He was concerned about God's approval. This is a good principle for us. If even the highest officials in the world approve of our actions and God does not, we should be concerned. But if God approves, even though others don't, we should be content.

[5:45](#) The Pharisees prided themselves on being the true followers of their ancestor Moses. They were trying to follow every one of his laws to the letter, and they even added some of their own. Jesus' warning that Moses would accuse them stung them to fury. Moses wrote about Jesus ([Genesis 3:15](#); [Numbers 21:9; 24:17](#); [Deuteronomy 18:15](#)), yet the religious leaders refused to believe Jesus when he came.