

Session created by [St Ebbe's](#) for [Home Groups](#).

View the session and the rest of the series [here](#).



Session 2 - The Son of God

Bible Passages:

- John 5:1-47

Brief Notes:

Once again, it may be over ambitious to try to cover the whole chapter, and it may well be wiser just to look at the first 30 verses, rather than feel you must get to the end. Whatever you attempt, be careful not to get bogged down in details: see the main points, then think how they apply to us.

1-15 : The sign

The familiarity of the story might mean we fail to see some of the surprising things about it. Why, when faced by so many needy people gathered in one place (“a great number”, v.3), does Jesus not say to them *all* “Get up! Be healed!”, why choose to heal just one? And why *this* one? He doesn’t show any kind of faith or gratitude. Jesus’ initial question seems designed to elicit or encourage faith, but the reply is a self-pitying complaint. After the miracle he has no idea who it was that healed him, no evident desire to find out (nb in v.14, “Jesus found him”), and then he proceeds to shop him to the Jewish authorities. For all that we might pity him for his disability, there is little to make us warm to him. Were there not more deserving people there? Another surprise is the absence of any wonder or amazement at this miracle. The only response seems to be hostility – “the Jewish leaders began to persecute him” (v.16).

What is clear is that it is not great faith that causes the man to be healed, but the power of Jesus' word. Verses 8,9 are very striking. 38 years of paralysis, but instant healing: no wobbly first steps, leaning on Jesus' arm. But Jesus' next words to him some time later are equally striking (v.14). What he says might suggest that the man's disability was a direct consequence of sin, though the Bible is clear that, even though all suffering is a result of sin, that does not mean particular suffering is normally the result of particular sin; a few chapters later Jesus will explicitly deny such a direct connection in the case of the blind man (9:1-3). The "something worse" Jesus warns the man of here is judgment on the last day. Jesus is saying – "your physical needs have been met, but recognise you have far more serious spiritual needs, which mean you need urgently to repent". The man though showed that he had little concern about God's wrath, and was more concerned to get the Jewish authorities off his back, hence trying to pin all blame on Jesus (v.15).

16-30 : The significance

The reason we only hear about the Jewish leaders' response to the miracle is explained by the fact that the controversy with them provoked by this incident is the key to understanding the significance of the sign. They see not a wonderful miracle and act of divine mercy, but a contravention of Sabbath law. Jesus says they have misunderstood the nature of the Sabbath and misunderstood who he is (v.17). They correctly understand him to be claiming equality with God, but assume that to mean he is claiming to be a second God, a rival deity. So from v.19 Jesus explains his relationship to the Father. Equality does not mean separateness and independence; there is profound dependence and complete unity between the Father and the Son.

The great proof of his equality with God will be the "greater works" that the Father will entrust to him – namely raising the dead to new life and final judgement. In the miracle Jesus had just done we are to see a pointer to the power of his life-giving word – a far more urgent and wonderful miracle of bringing the dead to life. The helpless, hopeless condition of that man was a picture of all of our spiritual state. The warning Jesus had given him in v.15, is a warning to all of us, for as the Son Jesus will one day sit in judgement "and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned" (v.29), so all should "Stop sinning". And the response the man so singularly failed to show but which we must show is faith (v.24). God is sovereign in his grace, v.21 (and so though perhaps we might wish Jesus had healed all those at the pool of Bethesda, it is his sovereign prerogative as to whom he should heal), but at the same time we are responsible for our own response (to honour the Son, v.23, and to hear and believe his word, v.24).

31-47 : The supporting testimony

These are huge claims Jesus is making, and he understands that if there was only his word to support such claims then that would be invalid. For himself Jesus knows his Father testifies to the truth of what he has said, but they too have plenty they can look to to validate all that Jesus has

said. In particular, the testimony of John the Baptist (vv.33-35), who for a time was flavour of the month and they had gone in their droves to listen to him and be baptised by him, but they hadn't accepted what he'd taught. Secondly, there were Jesus' miracles, which backed up his claims (v.36), but their response to this miracle was typical of their refusal to recognise what these signs pointed to. And in the Scriptures they had God's own testimony about Jesus, though for all their apparent high regard for the Scriptures their hearts were hard and their eyes were blind, and they had failed to grasp or believe what they said about him.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the surprising elements of this story?
- Why do you think Jesus asks the question he does in verse 6?
- What is striking about the miracle?
- What is surprising about the response to the miracle?
- Why do you think Jesus seeks the man out and has a further word with him (v.14)?
- What does Jesus mean? What worse thing might happen?
- How does Jesus justify doing what he had done on the Sabbath?
- Why are the Jewish leaders scandalised by what he says? Had they misunderstood him?
- What do we learn here about the Son's relationship to the Father?
- What are the two "greater works" he will do that show his equality with God?
- How are these greater works pointed to in the account of the sign / miracle?
- From v.21 and v.24, to whom does Jesus give life?
- How should we hold those truths together as we seek to share Christ with our friends?
- What do learn here about the judgment Jesus will bring?
- What are the implications of this teaching? (see v,23 - And what are the implications this verse?)
- In vv.31-47, what are the three witnesses Jesus points to to support these claims?
- What then should our response be to Jesus from this chapter? What encourages / challenges you?

St Ebbe's

steebe's | church
oxford



We are a friendly, evangelical church in the centre of Oxford. As those seeking to love and follow Jesus Christ we welcome people from all walks of life and all parts of the world. We believe that in the Bible God speaks a message of hope and forgiveness that is life-giving and life-changing.

[More by St Ebbe's](#)

Home Groups is a project of [SPCK](#).

Supported by [Allchurches Trust](#) and [The Jerusalem Trust](#).



The Jerusalem Trust

Copyright [SPCK](#) 2022.