

Meeting Jesus

The Lame Man

Foundation

Bible passage : John 5.1-16

The account of the healing of the lame man ends at verse 14 but the aftermath continues beyond then. The first thing we see is that Jesus healed the lame man, but that led to a confrontation because He had done it on the Sabbath. The way Jesus then described Himself caused further scandal.

John tells us that the lame man have been invalided for 38 years. The man was not alone at the pool which was believed to have healing properties because John says there were “a multitude of invalids” there. On other occasions Jesus healed many people but this time it seems he only healed one and yet it sparked controversy.

The way in which Jesus healed often seems to be deliberate in order to teach something about Himself. Here we see what we most often see, that Jesus simply spoken, telling the man to get up, take his mat and walk. He didn't pray, or do anything else, he just commanded the man to get up, and he got up. This was part of the evidence for what John wrote at the start of the gospel, that Jesus is the eternal Word through whom all things were made (Jn 1.1-3).

“Get up, take up your bed,
and walk.”

But notice that Jesus didn't just tell the man to get up, or to walk, but to take up his mat and walk. It was that third bit that sparked controversy. Jesus could have left out the third bit, or come back and healed another day, as was



suggested on another occasion (Lk 13.14). Therefore, Jesus seems to have deliberately done it this way to teach something important.

The religious leaders confronted the man for carrying his mat on the Sabbath (v10) and though he simply told the truth about what happened it feels a bit like he was shifting the blame to Jesus, and it was Jesus who told him to do it.

Later, when the man told the leaders who had healed him, John wrote they “persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath”. It would be a couple of years before they finally managed to kill Jesus. But, it is hard to understand why they were incensed by what Jesus did. He did not tell people to ignore the Sabbath command but on another occasion said they should not use it as an excuse not to help those in need (eg Luke 6.9). More significantly here He explains that the Father is working, meaning active in upholding creation, and so is Jesus (Heb 1.3).

It was the statement in verse 17 that led to further confrontation because Jesus was making himself equal to God (v18), which, as the Son of God, He is, without being the same as the Father.



Jesus taught that we should keep God's commands but not in a way that ignores the need to love and care for others.