

Paralysed Man Healed

Key Verse:

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

Romans 1:16

Extra: How does the Gospel meet our need so fully and completely?

Level 5 lesson 1

Read John 5:1-14

Further reading: John 7:45-52

Happy New Year to you all! Welcome to another year of studies in God's Word, the Bible. We trust that as you work your way through them they will be used by God to instruct, comfort and encourage you in your daily life.

THE PARALYZED MAN

As Jesus again entered the city of Jerusalem, He noticed a paralyzed man. This poor man was just one of many sick people lying in five porches around a pool, situated by the main gate to the city. What a sad, helpless group; some blind, some sick with disease, others lame and paralyzed. Why were they there? Well this was no ordinary pool: from time to time an angel used to visit this pool and stir its waters, and when this was done, the pool had the power to heal the first person who stepped into its waters. Verse 3 tells us these people "were waiting for the moving of the water" - their only hope of a cure. In reality, most were there to beg 'alms' - money or gifts - from the many visitors to the Temple.

Unfortunately though, any healing power in the pool could not meet the needs of **all** the sick people. What a contrast this is to the Gospel, which has sufficient healing or saving power to meet the need of the whole world!

You can contrast the two in the parallel columns set out here:

THE POOL

1. Could only heal physical diseases.
2. Healing power the work of an angel.
3. Angel's work had to be often repeated.
4. Could heal only one at a time - many disappointed.
5. Required some strength in the one desiring blessing.

What a difference between the two! Thank God for the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ: sufficient to meet the need of all, fully and completely!

Naturally, this crippled man was always one of the disappointed ones. He had been there for years, waiting and waiting, but always, someone stepped into the pool before him. However, this day was to be different! Jesus came to the pool and seeing him lying helplessly there, asked him, "Do you want to get well?" How kind and compassionate of Jesus, to care about this poor man and give him the opportunity of being healed.

Respectfully the man replied, "Sir, I have no-one to help me into the pool." (v7). Perhaps he thought Jesus would help him into the water. Jesus did something far greater than that! He knew this man's faith; that if only he could get in that pool he would be healed. Jesus said to him, "Get up. Pick up your mat and walk!" (v8). Imagine if the man had foolishly refused! However, he chose wisely - he said, "Yes!"

You too, have the power of choice. The Lord wants to save YOU and offers you salvation; you can refuse it or accept it. You can say "Yes" or "No!" Our prayer is that, like the crippled man, you will accept God's offer. Look at v9, "At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked." The Lord gave him instantly what he had NOT been able to get from the pool during years of waiting.

You too, may receive salvation from God at this very moment, as you read this lesson if YOU say "YES" to Jesus Christ and take Him as YOUR Saviour.

THE GOSPEL

1. Heals the spiritual disease of sin.
2. Healing power the work of Christ, the Son of God.
3. Christ's work never repeated - it's perfect and complete.
4. Can save all who believe - none need be disappointed.
5. Requires no strength, but simple faith in the Saviour.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why were the sick people waiting at the pool?	.....
2. Which of the five differences between the pool and the Gospel do you like best? Why?	.....
3. Write out a verse that shows how long it took the Lord to heal the man.	.....
4. What power do we all have?	.....
5. What is the wisest way to use this power?	.....

My Name is Age

The Great Physician

Key Verse:
“He forgives
all my sins,
and heals all
my diseases.”

Psalms 103:3

Extra: Consider the different responses to the preaching and teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

Level 5 lesson 2

Read Mark 2:1-12

Further reading: Luke 5:17-26

Today's lesson is one of the most fascinating stories in Jesus' life, and hugely important for us to understand.

JESUS TEACHES THE PEOPLE

The people of Capernaum were given another opportunity to see and hear Jesus - and they flocked to see Him. Some were sick, some curious, while others wanted to hear Him speak. Some said He was a prophet, while others thought He was just a good teacher. A few claimed He was the Messiah, God's promised Saviour. Even today, people have different ideas about Jesus and who He is. So Jesus, "The Word" of John 1:1, "preached the Word of God" to the large crowd. How wonderful to have Him reveal the God of the Bible to these ones gathered; how He must have brought the Scriptures to life! Jesus knew that to hear and understand God's Word was vital for these people - far more important than just getting well again. Our prayer today, is that as you study The Bible, you too will come to know the One whose 'Word' it is.

JESUS FORGIVES SIN

Suddenly, Jesus was interrupted by a noise above His head. It sounded as though somebody was breaking the roof apart - and they were! Soon, a large patch of sky could be seen and through this hole, four men lowered a bed down by ropes, until it reached the floor at Jesus' feet. On it lay a man paralysed from birth. Jesus saw the faith of this man and his friends, who had gone to such trouble to see Him. "Son" He said to the paralytic, "your sins are forgiven." (v5) Forgiveness of sin is always dependent on faith in God. These men displayed their faith in God by coming to Christ. Friends, if we in faith truly believe in Him, those words can be for us, too!

THE SCRIBES CHALLENGE JESUS

However, Jesus' words of forgiveness offended the Scribes and religious leaders.

They were thinking "Why does this man speak blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Inwardly they challenged Jesus' authority to forgive sins. Now their belief that no-one can forgive sins except God, was totally correct: in Isaiah 43:25 God says, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake." No human has authority to forgive your sins. Only God can do that.

So were the Scribes right to question Jesus? Yes and no! If Jesus was just an ordinary man claiming to be God, and able to forgive sin, that would be blasphemy, as they said. But if He was God, they had no right to challenge Him! So their challenge left a big question hanging in the air, "WHO ARE YOU, JESUS?"

JESUS PROVES HIS AUTHORITY

This is one of the most important questions you will ever have to answer. Jesus responded to them by doing another thing only God can do - He read their hearts and minds! "Why are you thinking these things?" He asked. "Which is easier?" He continued, "To say to this paralysed man, 'Your sins are forgiven' - or to tell him, 'Get up, pick up your bed and walk?' What do you think? Of course, it would be easier to just say the words wouldn't it? Who could tell if the man's sins *WERE* forgiven? Although no-one has the right to say them - anybody can say mere words; but to tell a paralysed man to get up and walk? - THAT would really be something! No human can do that; people would see immediately if you were a fake. What a test!

I can imagine you 'could have heard a pin drop' in that crowded room, with every eye fixed on Jesus. Seeing the religious leaders did not respond, Jesus went on. "But so that you may know that the Son of Man [His title] has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He turned to the man and said, "Rise; take up your bed and walk!" To everyone's complete amazement, the man got to his feet, rolled up his bed and **walked** from the room through the crowd! What a stunning proof of Jesus' claim to be God! No wonder the crowd said in wonder, "We have never seen anything like this!"

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What did Jesus preach to the people when they gathered round the house?
2. What great blessing did Jesus give the man first?
3. When does He forgive us our sins?
4. Why did Jesus have the right to forgive sins?
5. How did the Lord prove He had power to do what He said?

A Centurion's Servant Healed

Key Verse:
"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call on Him while He is near."

Isaiah 55:6

Extra: We have a warning given us here. What other warnings can you find in the Bible?

Level 5 lesson 3

Read Luke 7:1-10; and Matthew 8:5-13

Our next lesson concerns a man who understood this question of Jesus' true identity and authority, and demonstrated it in a wonderful way.

THE CENTURION

Surprisingly, this man was a Roman Centurion; an Army officer in charge of 100 men, and a most important man in Capernaum. It seems that he had arranged for the building of a synagogue in the town and gifted it to the Jewish community on behalf of the Roman Emperor. No doubt this made him popular with the Jews, but it appears that this was not just a political move; we can see other signs too, that although born a pagan, he had come to believe in the God of Israel. He loved and cared for his slave, when most masters treated their slaves badly.

This was obvious from his actions when His servant became seriously ill one day, in great pain, and near death. Hearing that Jesus was in town, the Centurion immediately sent some Jewish elders to ask Jesus to come and heal the sick servant. The elders were glad of the opportunity of repaying the Centurion in some way, so they came to the Lord, "pleading with Him to come down and heal his servant." They explained how the Centurion was worthy, for he loved their nation, and had built them a synagogue. Intrigued, Jesus agreed to go to the Centurion's house.

THE CENTURION'S HUMILITY

While He was still some way from the house, the Centurion sent some friends to tell Jesus there was no need for Him to come any further. Then, while they were on the way, he followed them and spoke to Jesus himself. Although accustomed to instant respect and obedience, in Jesus' presence this Roman humbly recognised the Lord's superiority and supreme authority. "I am not worthy that you should enter my house," he said, adding, "I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you."

The Centurion's attitude is a great example to us all. He was humble, casting himself totally on the Lord's mercy, not thinking that Jesus should help him because he was an important man. He knew he had no claim on the Lord's goodness. That is an attitude we should all have before the Lord; just as the repentant, tax-collector did when he prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" [Luke 18:13]

THE CENTURION'S FAITH

The Centurion's next words showed an amazing appreciation of who Jesus was and His great authority. "You just say the word and my servant will be healed," he said to Jesus. "I too, am a man under authority," he explained. "I say to someone "Go" - and he goes. I say "come" - and he comes. I tell my servant to do something and he does it."

This was a remarkable statement of faith. He knew that just as he spoke with all the authority of the mighty Roman Emperor behind him, so Jesus spoke with all the authority of Almighty God behind Him! This was an acknowledgement of Jesus' deity - that He really *was* God. Jesus marveled at him, saying, "I have not found such great faith in all Israel!" In response to such faith, the servant was healed. Jesus went on to say that in future many 'outsiders' like the Roman Centurion would enter the Kingdom of God, while those who consider themselves 'insiders' and have been privileged to hear the Gospel often, would find themselves shut out in outer darkness. (Matthew 8:11-12)

The warning is clear; people from heathen countries who trust the Saviour will be saved, but many people from so-called 'Christian' lands will be shut out because they have rejected the Gospel. Don't be one of them!

In conclusion, it may interest you to know that the remains of the synagogue the Centurion built have been discovered. It was a magnificent building, made of white marble, but built in the Roman style of architecture rather than Jewish.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What did the Centurion do for the Jewish Nation?	.....
2. What did the elders say about him?	.....
3. What did he say about himself?	.....
4. How did the Centurion show his faith in Jesus to heal his servant?	.....
5. What lesson should we learn from the Centurion's words to Jesus?	.....

Jesus Stills the Storm

Key Verse:
“He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.”

Psalm 107:29

Extra: Can you find another example of Jesus’ power over nature?

Level 5 lesson 4

Read Mark 4:35-41

Further reading: Matthew 8:23-27

You may remember the story in British history about King Canute. His flattering aides suggested that he was so powerful he could forbid the tide to come in upon him. He agreed, and foolishly went and sat on the beach beneath the low-water mark. Of course their stupidity was soon obvious to all, as the waves were soon breaking over both him and his aides! He revealed himself conclusively, to be a man and nothing more. Today’s lesson though, is about the One who COULD command the wind and tide! Let’s read it.

THE DISCIPLES BATTLE THE STORM

Late one afternoon, after the Lord Jesus had been speaking to the crowds, He said to His disciples, “Let’s go over to the other side” [of Lake Galilee]. At these words, the disciples and Jesus set off in their fishing boat for the distant shore. Lake Galilee is not a huge lake, but it is renowned for its fierce storms, which blow up very quickly. They had not travelled very far, when one of those violent storms struck. Soon waves began crashing over the boat, tossing it from side to side. The disciples, many of them experienced sailors, struggled to keep it afloat. Despite their efforts, it seemed as though the boat would sink and in desperation, they called out to Jesus for help.

JESUS ASLEEP IN THE BOAT

What was Jesus doing while all this was going on? His long, hard day amongst the crowds had so exhausted Him, He was sleeping deeply, on a pillow in the stern of the ship! He was after all, truly human as well as divine. The terrified disciples woke Him up, saying, “Teacher, don’t You care if we drown?” Without being critical of them, for it was a desperate situation, these words revealed the disciples’ lack of faith in the Lord. Firstly, Jesus Himself had said, “Let’s go to the other side” – and so they were bound to get there.

His direct command was a guarantee that whatever might happen on the way, they were sure to arrive at their destination. Secondly, their words showed the disciples’ shallow knowledge and appreciation of the Lord Jesus. Of course He cared whether they drowned; they were His, and they would never perish with Him on board their little craft. And, in a deeper sense, if we have the Saviour in our hearts by faith, we can never, ever perish. [John 10:28] Whatever may happen to us during our journey across the ‘sea of life,’ we are secure for eternity, with Christ.

JESUS CALMS THE SEA

Despite the disciples’ lack of faith and accusing questions, Jesus knew this was a time for actions not words! Graciously He displayed for them, in no uncertain terms, both His power and His loving care for them. Rising to His feet, He cried out to the wind and waves, “Peace! Be still!” In an instant, the fearsome storm was changed into a “great calm!” What majesty, what power is exhibited here in the simple command of Christ! Think of it! Tempestuous winds, raging waves, terrified disciples, sinking ship, turmoil all around, and suddenly by the word of our Saviour - all is changed. Winds cease, waves subside, terror departs, turmoil is over - there is a GREAT CALM! Turning to the incredulous disciples, Jesus gently rebuked them, “Why are you so afraid? How is it you have no faith?”

THE DISCIPLES PONDER THE MIRACLE.

The disciples were totally in awe of Jesus after this amazing experience. They were terribly afraid, and said to one another, as we can well imagine, “What kind of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!” There was only one answer to their question. He was, and is, the God-Man, divine as well as human. The elements of creation had to obey the command of their Creator – the same One who spoke them into being! (Genesis 1, Hebrews 11:3) How much more should we? The disciples should have trusted Him, and so should we, in all the circumstances of life.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What shows that our Lord was truly human as well as Divine?	.....
2. What did the disciples words to Jesus reveal about them?	.....
3. How can we be sure that we will never perish?	.....
4. How did Jesus calm the sea?	.....
5. Why did the wind and sea obey Jesus?	.....