SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

John

Chapter Five, Verses 1–47

The Son Who Gives Life — a healed man at Bethesda, a Sabbath charge, and the Son's defense before His accusers

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

At the pool of Bethesda Jesus heals a man who has waited thirty-eight years, and the Sabbath charge that follows draws out the fullest statement in the Gospels of what the Son shares with the Father — life, judgment, honor — and the five witnesses who stand behind Him. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind John's key words.

THE PASSAGE

John 5:1–47

the pool · the charge · the Son · the witnesses

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Four movements from the pool of Bethesda to the witness of Moses

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"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." — John 5:25

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

John 5:1–47

The Son Who Gives Life — One man made well on the Sabbath — and the claim that the Son does all the Father does

† How to Read This Study

This study walks John 5 in 4 movements, in John's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where John is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · JOHN 5:24

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

† Before the Passage

John 4 closed in Galilee with the second sign: a royal official's son healed at a distance (4:46–54). Chapter 5 takes Jesus back up to Jerusalem for "a feast of the Jews" that John does not name — Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles and Purim have all been proposed. The third sign of the Gospel follows, and with it something new: open hostility. Sproul marks this chapter as the point where the Jewish establishment's opposition to Jesus begins to rise; by verse 18 they are seeking to kill Him.

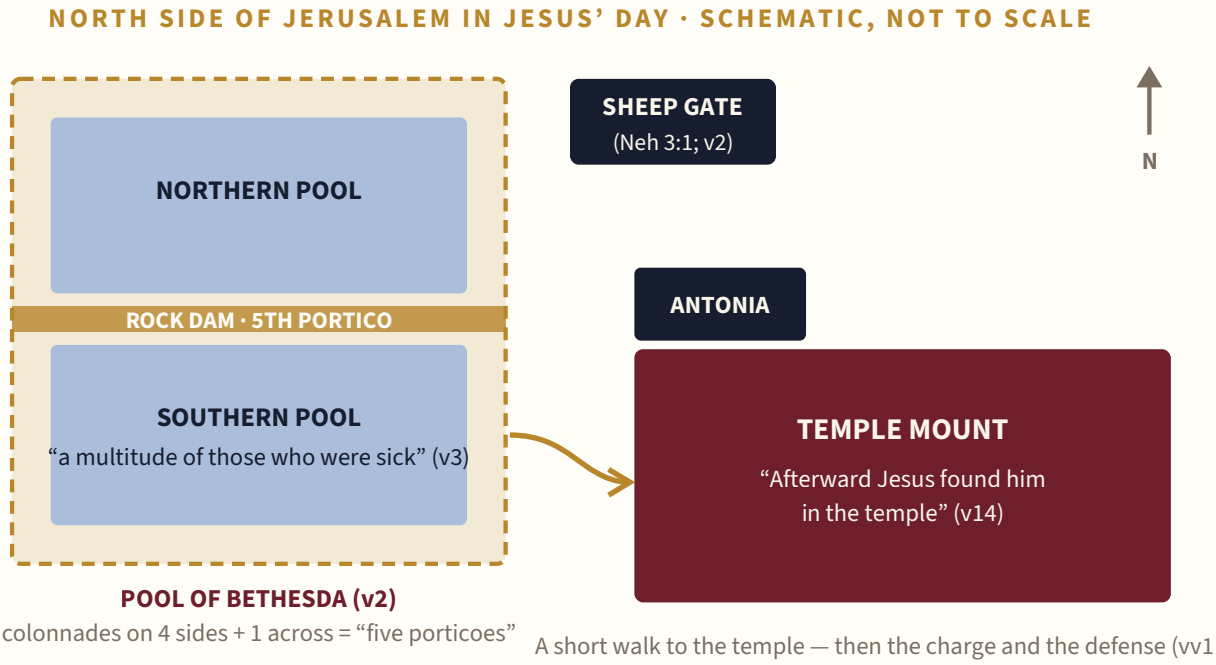
The setting is the north side of the city, "by the sheep gate" — the gate the priests rebuilt in Nehemiah's day (Nehemiah 3:1), near the temple's northern approach. Excavations beside the Church of St. Anne have uncovered two great pools divided by a rock dam: colonnades on four sides and one across the middle make the "five porticoes" of verse 2. The NASB keeps the name Bethesda ("house of mercy" is the usual gloss); the

SBLGNT prints *Bēthzatha*. Verses 3b–4, the angel stirring the water, stand in brackets because the oldest manuscripts lack them.

The Sabbath is the hinge. The Fourth Commandment forbade work (Exodus 20:8–11), and Jeremiah warned Jerusalem not to carry a load through its gates on the Sabbath (Jeremiah 17:21). The rabbis built on such texts a detailed list of forbidden labors, carrying from one place to another among them. A healed man carrying his mat broke their rule, not Moses' law — and when Jesus answered by calling God "My Father," the argument moved from the mat to the throne.

From verse 19 the chapter becomes a courtroom. Sproul calls it a formal legal defense: Jesus answers the charge of "making Himself equal with God" by setting out what the Son receives from the Father (vv. 19–30), and then calls His witnesses — John, His works, the Father, the Scriptures, and Moses (vv. 31–47) — because the Law required more than one (Deuteronomy 19:15). Behind it stand Daniel's Son of Man who receives dominion (Daniel 7:13–14), Daniel's two resurrections (Daniel 12:2), and the Prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15).

FIGURE · BETHESDA, THE SHEEP GATE AND THE TEMPLE



The twin pools with their five porticoes lay just north of the temple courts — close enough that Jesus could find the healed man there the same day.

I
MOVEMENT

JOHN 5:1–9

Do You Wish to Get Well?

Thirty-eight years by the pool — and one word from Jesus

[1] *After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.* [2] *Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.* [3] *In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters;* [4] *for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]* [5] *A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.* [6] *When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?"* [7] *The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me."* [8] *Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk."* [9] *Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.*

JOHN 5:1–9

ὑγιής

HYGIĒS · "WELL, WHOLE" · G5199

Sound, healthy, whole. It is the word of this chapter's first half: "Do you wish to get well?" (v. 6), "the man became well" (v. 9), "He who made me well" (v. 11), "you have become well" (v. 14), "Jesus who had made him well" (v. 15) — and in the bracketed verse 4. Of its twelve New Testament uses, seven are in John 5 and a backward glance at this miracle in 7:23 ("I made an entire man well on the Sabbath"). The KJV renders it "whole." Jesus asks a question with this word in it and then gives the wholeness the question named.

κράβαττος

KRABATTOS · "PALLET" · G2895

A pallet or camp bed — the thin mat of the poor, light enough to roll up and carry. Mark uses it of the paralytic let down through the roof (Mark 2:4–12), and John uses it four times in verses 8–11 (some texts add a fifth in v. 12). The man had lain on it for years; Jesus tells him to pick it up. The very thing that carried him now has to be carried by him — and that is what offends the Sabbath watchers in verse 10.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sees a crowd of the sick who had settled into waiting, and notes that "Jesus was not about to conduct a healing crusade at the Pool of Bethesda" — He chose one man. The man's hope had been long disappointed, and his spirit may have been as discouraged as his body, so Jesus' question was not cruel: "This was a sincere question." Not every sick person wants the change that healing brings. Then "Jesus told the man to do what he could not do," and the healing came as he obeyed. On verses 3b–4 Guzik notes the words are not in several old manuscripts and may be a very early insertion, though the man's complaint in verse 7 shows the belief was current.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Preaching this text at St. Andrew's in August 2002, Sproul describes twin pools by the Sheep Gate with five porches full of the sick. He thinks verse 4 is probably a scribal addition reflecting a local superstition, and notes that the pools were fed by artesian wells that could explain the stirring. Jesus' question, he suggests, may expose a dependence the man had grown used to: healing would bring new responsibilities. He tells of a robber who surrendered because he preferred the security of confinement to the demands of freedom — a warning for anyone who has learned to live with his chains.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Jesus at Bethesda; or, Waiting Changed for Believing" (No. 744, April 1867) turns the pool into a picture of sinners told to wait for feelings, visions or a stirring: "'Wait at the pool,' is man's gospel, and has destroyed its thousands." Christ does not come to help the man into the water but to heal him directly, freely, without fee. The cure was immediate and complete — "Regeneration is an instantaneous work, and justification an instantaneous gift." He closes with his own conversion: "I never found mercy by waiting," but "There is life in a look at the Crucified One, but there is life nowhere else."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry dwells on the length of the misery: "He was lame longer than most live." He takes the pool's virtue as real — "Expositors generally agree that the virtue this pool had was supernatural" — yet observes that "The angel stirred the waters, but left the diseased to themselves to get in." The man's answer is a lament many can echo: "It is not for want of a good will, but of a good friend, that I am unhealed." Then the Friend arrives: "Christ did not bid him rise and go into the waters, but rise and walk." "Nothing is too hard for Christ to do."

II
MOVEMENT

JOHN 5:10–18

The Sabbath Charge

A mat on the Sabbath, a warning in the temple, and the claim to be equal with God

10 *So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the* ⟳ *Sabbath*, *and* ⚠ *it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet*." 11 *But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'"* 12 *They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk'?"* 13 *But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.* 14 *Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well;* ⚠ *do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you*." 15 *The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.* 16 *For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the* ⟳ *Sabbath*. 17 *But He answered them, "*△ *My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working*." 18 *For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the* ⟳ *Sabbath*, *but also was calling God His own Father,* △ *making Himself equal with God*.

JOHN 5:10–18

> *"Thus says the LORD, "Take heed for yourselves, and do not carry any load on the sabbath day or bring anything in through the gates of Jerusalem."*
>
> JEREMIAH 17:21

ἐργάζεται … κἀγὼ ἐργάζομαι

ERGAZETAI … KAGŌ ERGAZOMAI · "IS WORKING … AND I MYSELF AM WORKING" · G2038

Both verbs are present tense: the Father "is working" — has never stopped — "until now," and the Son "also is working" alongside Him. The charge was that Jesus had done work on the Sabbath; His answer is that the Father works on the Sabbath too, upholding the world and giving life, and the Son works with Him. *Kagō* is emphatic: "and I." The same verb comes back in 6:27–30 — "Do not work for the food which perishes … What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?"

ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ

ISON HEAUTON POIŌN TŌ THEŌ · "MAKING HIMSELF EQUAL WITH GOD" · G2470

Isos means equal in measure or rank — the word Paul uses of Christ in Philippians 2:6, "did not regard equality (*isa*) with God a thing to be grasped." Verse 18 gives the two counts of the indictment: He was "breaking" the Sabbath (*elyen*, literally "loosing" it, imperfect: He kept doing it) and calling God "His own Father" (*patera idion*) — not "our Father" as every Jew might, but His own in a unique sense. The accusers understood Him exactly, and Jesus does not correct them.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

For Guzik the leaders fixed on the mat and ignored the miracle: "It was not a breaking of God's law of the Sabbath, but the human interpretation of God's law." The healed man, asked who told him to carry it, passes the blame to Jesus, and later reports Him — "The fact that he reported Jesus to the authorities showed how intimidated the man was by those same religious leaders." Jesus sought him out because his soul mattered more than his legs: "Living a life of sin is worse, and will bring a worse result, than being crippled for thirty-eight years." And when Jesus answered, "Jesus did not try and explain that He had not truly worked on the Sabbath"; "The religious leaders did not miss the fact that Jesus claimed to be equal with God."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul asks the obvious question: "Where in the Word of God does it say that it is not lawful for a person who was healed of paralysis to carry his bed?" The ban came from rabbinic rules, and the leaders reacted to the infraction rather than the miracle. The man did not even know Jesus' name and blamed Him — "How wicked and deceitful is the human heart." He received a healed body without saving faith: "Let us learn from this man how not to receive the blessings of Christ." In the next sermon Sproul reads "My Father is working until now" against deism: "God is not some nebulous greater power or force that starts things rolling." He never stopped sustaining what He made.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In his exposition of the chapter Spurgeon defends the man's reply to the leaders: "That was his warrant. None but God could have made him whole." The Sabbath complaint itself he calls "a mere pretense, an idle excuse for their enmity." In the temple "Christ bids him henceforth keep clear of sin, lest a worse calamity should come upon him." And verse 17 is the answer to the whole charge: the Father does not cease to do good on the seventh day — "God's work continues" — and the Son works as the Father works.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notices that Jesus slipped away and "left the miracle to commend itself, and the man on whom it was wrought to justify it." Of the leaders he writes, "Thus hypocrites often cover their real enmity against the power of godliness with a pretended zeal for the form of it." The warning in the temple means that sickness and sin are linked, and a mercy received is a reason not to return to sin. Verse 18 shows what happens when light is refused: "Those that will not be enlightened by the word of Christ will be enraged and exasperated by it."

III
MOVEMENT

JOHN 5:19–30

The Son Who Gives Life

Life, judgment and honor — what the Father has given to the Son

19 *Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.* 20 *"For △ the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.* 21 *"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so △ the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.* 22 *"For not even the Father judges anyone, but △ He has given all judgment to the Son,* 23 *so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. ⚠ He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.* 24 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, ☆ has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but ☆ has passed out of death into life.* 25 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, ◷ an hour is coming and now is, 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, even so He gave to the Son also to have △ life in Himself;* 27 *and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.* 28 *"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which ◷ all who are in the tombs will hear His voice,* 29 *and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to ☆ a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to ⚠ a resurrection of judgment.* 30 *"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because △ I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

JOHN 5:19–30

"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt."

DANIEL 12:2

FIGURE · WHAT THE FATHER DOES, THE SON DOES

JOHN 5:17–27	THE FATHER	THE SON
WORKS	"My Father is working until now" v17	"and I Myself am working" v17
LOVES · SHOWS	loves the Son, shows Him all v20	does whatever He sees the Father do v19
GIVES LIFE	raises the dead and gives them life v21	gives life to whom He wishes vv21, 25
LIFE IN HIMSELF	has life in Himself v26	given to have life in Himself v26
JUDGMENT	judges no one — has given it all v22	authority to judge, as Son of Man vv22, 27
HONOR	honored as God v23	honored "even as" the Father v23

"whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner" (v19)

Read across each row: every work Jesus claims for the Father in vv17–27 He also claims for Himself — the very equality His accusers heard in verse 18.

ζωοποιεῖ

ZŌOPOIEI · "GIVES LIFE" · G2227

From *zōē* (life) and *poieō* (to make): to make alive. It is God's own prerogative — Paul calls Him the God "who gives life to the dead" (Romans 4:17) — and in verse 21 Jesus claims it for Himself twice over: the Father "gives them life," "even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes." John uses it again at 6:63, "It is the Spirit who gives life." The KJV's "quickeneth" is the old English for the same thing. No created being gives life at will; the Son does.

μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν

METABEBĒKEN EK TOU THANATOU EIS TĒN ZŌĒN · "HAS PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE" · G3327

Metabainō is to change place, to move house. The tense is perfect: the move has been made and the result stands. The same phrase returns in 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life." Verse 24 piles up present realities — he who hears "has" (*echei*) eternal life, "does not come" into judgment (*krisis*, G2920) — so that eternal life is not only a future hope but a present possession. Verse 29 then speaks of the future "resurrection of judgment": the same word, *krisis*.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears verse 19 not as weakness but as unity: “Jesus explained that His work was a perfect reflection of the work and will of God the Father.” The Son’s dependence is not servitude — “The relationship between the First and Second members of the Trinity is not one of master and slave” — but love. Because all judgment is given to the Son, “Failing to honor God the Son means that it is impossible for one to also honor God the Father who sent the Son.” Verse 26 claims self-existence: “Jesus had life in Himself, not dependent upon other people or things.” And the coming hour is bodily: “Jesus will command them to rise on that day, in bodies suited for eternity.”

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew’s

Sproul (September 2002) treats verses 19–27 as Jesus’ legal answer to the charge of making Himself equal with God, and he answers it with a distinction: the ontological Trinity — one being, three persons equal in being, power and glory — and the economic Trinity, the roles each person takes in redemption. “From all eternity, the Father sends the Son. The Son does not send the Father; the Father sends the Son.” The Son submits in the work, without being less in His being. And because the Father has handed all judgment to the Son, “No, you cannot honor the Father without honoring the Son.”

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached verse 24 under the title “Verily, Verily” (January 1882). The doubled word puts the truth beyond doubt because Jesus Himself says it: “I had rather have one word from Jesus than volumes of human reasonings.” The blessing belongs to the one who hears and trusts, however weak; he does not wait for eternal life — he has it now, and will not come into condemnation, because Christ bore judgment in his place. Good works grow from that root: “Flowers stuck into the ground without roots are babes’ follies, and good works without faith are childish vanities.” In his exposition he adds, “Christ’s work runs parallel with that of the Father.”

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the Son’s “nothing of Himself” as the Mediator’s perfect oneness with the Father’s will, joined to an equal power. Giving life is the proof: “A resurrection from the dead never lay in the common road of nature.” “All judgment is committed to our Lord Jesus,” so that all might honor Him. He sees two raisings in the passage — the spiritual resurrection of souls that hear the gospel now (v. 25, “and now is”), and the bodily resurrection to come, when the grave — “The grave is the prison of dead bodies, where they are detained” — must give up its prisoners at His voice (vv. 28–29).

IV
MOVEMENT

JOHN 5:31–47

Five Witnesses

John, the works, the Father, the Scriptures and Moses — and why they were not believed

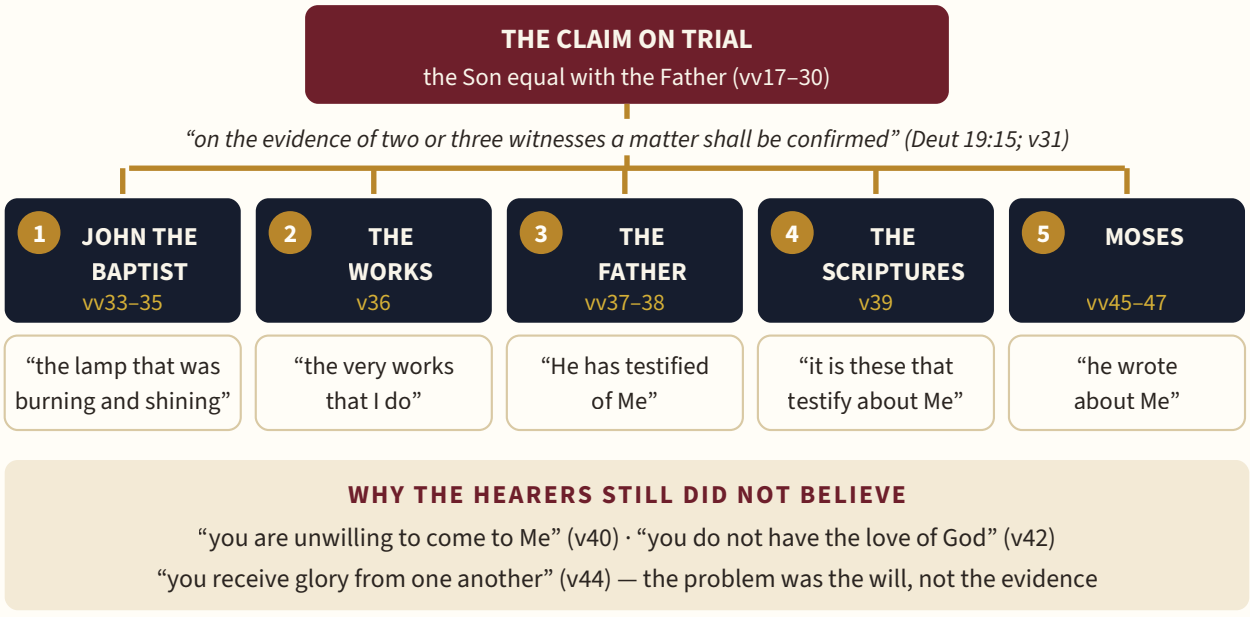
31 *“If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true.* 32 *“There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.* 33 *“You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth.* 34 *“But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.* 35 *“He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.*

> 36 *"But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.* 37 *"And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.* 38 *"You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.* 39 *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;* 40 *and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.* 41 *"I do not receive glory from men;* 42 *but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.* 43 *"I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.* 44 *"How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?* 45 *"Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.* 46 *"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.* 47 *"But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"*
>
> JOHN 5:31–47

> *"A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 19:15

> *"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him."*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 18:15

FIGURE · FIVE WITNESSES FOR THE DEFENSE



The Law asked for two or three witnesses; Jesus calls five, and then names the real reason His hearers will not believe.

μαρτυρία · μαρτυρέω

MARTYRIA · MARTYREŌ · "TESTIMONY · TESTIFY" · G3141, G3140

Courtroom words: evidence given by a witness. The noun appears four times in verses 31–36 and the verb seven times in verses 31–39 — eleven uses in seventeen verses, the densest cluster in the Gospel. John's whole book is built on testimony (1:7; 19:35; 21:24). The KJV renders both "witness." Our word "martyr" comes from the same root: in time, to bear witness to Christ came to mean dying for Him.

ἐραυνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς

ERAUNATE TAS GRAPHAS · "YOU SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES" · G2045

Eraunaō means to search, examine, track down — used of the Spirit who "searches all things" (1 Corinthians 2:10). The form *eraunate* can be read as a statement ("you search," NASB) or a command ("Search," KJV). The flow of the sentence favors the statement: they did search, "because you think that in them you have eternal life," and still would not come (v. 40). Verse 41's and 44's "glory" is *doxa* (G1391): the approval they wanted from one another instead of from "the one and only God."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik counts five witnesses — John the Baptist, Jesus' works, the Father, the Scriptures and Moses — and insists that evidence was never the problem: "The religious leaders were not willing, even though they had all the testimony one could have wanted." Their Bible study missed its subject: "Their recognition of and belief upon Jesus was a measure of their true understanding of the Scriptures." Beneath their unwillingness lay this: "The fatal error of the religious leaders of Jesus' day – and ever since – is pride." Moses wrote of Christ — the Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15, the bronze serpent of Numbers 21 — so "These religious leaders rejected Jesus because they rejected God's word through Moses."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (September 2002) hears courtroom language: Israel required at least two agreeing witnesses, so Jesus summons His. John had stirred the nation, and they enjoyed his light for a season. The works are a second witness, though miracles authenticate a messenger rather than prove God exists: "The existence of God is made manifest and proven long before a single miracle takes place." The Father spoke at the baptism. The leaders studied Scripture but did not let it abide in them — "They brought that darkness with them, even when they searched the Scriptures" — and Sproul defends Moses' authorship of his writings against the critics, since rejecting Moses undercuts belief in Jesus.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's early sermon on verse 40, "Free-Will—A Slave" (December 1855), takes the text Arminians often quote against Calvinists and argues it teaches the opposite: no one, left to himself, will come to Christ. Men do not feel their need — "No man knows his need until God shows it to him"; "A doctor may have a good shop, but nobody will buy his medicines until he feels he wants them." Yet the refusal is guilt, not excuse: "It is sin that has brought you into this condition that you will not come." In his exposition he adds that for the Bible students of verse 39, "the Scriptures themselves became a sepulcher in which they were entombed."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry calls John a lamp lit to announce the dawn — "His office was to enlighten a dark world with notices of the Messiah's approach, to whom he was as the morning star." Reading verse 39 as the KJV's command, he urges, "All those who would find Christ must search the scriptures" — "not only read them, and hear them, but search them." The root of unbelief is not the evidence: "Ignorance of God is the true reason of men's rejecting the record he has given concerning his Son." And Moses is no defender of those who reject Christ: "Moses was so far from writing against Christ that he wrote for him, and of him."

V
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From the lame who leap to the Son who has life — where John 5 reaches back and forward

"Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah."

ISAIAH 35:6

"And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived."

NUMBERS 21:9

"who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,"

PHILIPPIANS 2:6

"Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."

LUKE 24:27

"He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life."

1 JOHN 5:12

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik gives examples of what Moses "wrote about Me": the Prophet like Moses whom Israel must hear (Deuteronomy 18:15) and the bronze serpent lifted up in the wilderness (Numbers 21), which Jesus Himself applies to His cross in John 3:14.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry presses verse 46 home: Moses "wrote for him, and of him," so that the Moses the Jews trusted becomes their accuser — "Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the scene and its motives; Sproul turns the defense into doctrine — the Trinity, providence, the law of witnesses; Spurgeon presses the gospel invitation (and, in 1855, the bondage of the will); Henry gathers it into Puritan counsel. They agree on Christ's deity in verse 18; they differ on the pool's angel (Henry takes verse 4 as genuine; Guzik and Sproul doubt it) and on whether verse 39 is a statement or a command.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The pool	A sincere question; Jesus told him to do what he could not do.	Healing brings responsibility — some prefer the security of their chains.	"Wait at the pool" is man's gospel; life is in a look, not in waiting.	Lame longer than most live; not a good will he lacked, but a good friend.
II · The charge	Human rules, not God's law; the man reported Jesus; equality understood.	Where does Scripture forbid it? How not to receive Christ's blessing; no deism.	A mere pretense for enmity; God's work continues on the Sabbath.	Zeal for the form hides enmity to the power; refused light enrages.
III · The Son	Not master and slave but love; life in Himself; honor the Son or not the Father.	Ontological equality, economic order: the Father sends the Son.	"Verily, verily" — the believer has life now; works grow from that root.	Life-giving proves deity; two resurrections — souls now, bodies then.
IV · The witnesses	Five witnesses, ample testimony; the fatal error is pride.	Courtroom law of two witnesses; darkness brought to the Scriptures; Moses wrote.	No one comes of himself — yet the refusal is sin; the Bible as a tomb.	Search, don't just read; ignorance of God, not lack of proof; Moses wrote for Him.

JOHN 5:1–47 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Grace chose one man out of a multitude.** A crowd of the sick lay in the porticoes (v. 3); Jesus spoke to one, who did not ask Him for anything and did not know His name (v. 13). Guzik: "Jesus was not about to conduct a healing crusade at the Pool of Bethesda." THE TEXT
- **"Well" is the word of the first half.** *Hygiēs* appears in vv. 6, 9, 11, 14 and 15 (and bracketed v. 4) — seven of its twelve New Testament uses are in this chapter. Jesus asks about wholeness and then gives it. THE GREEK
- **The command came with the power to obey it.** "Jesus told the man to do what he could not do" (Guzik). Henry: "Christ did not bid him rise and go into the waters, but rise and walk." GUZIK
- **They saw the mat and missed the man.** Not one word of the Law forbade a healed man carrying his pallet. Sproul: "Where in the Word of God does it say that it is not lawful for a person who was healed of paralysis to carry his bed?" SPROUL
- **A healed body is not a saved soul.** The man blamed Jesus, then reported Him. Sproul: "Let us learn from this man how not to receive the blessings of Christ." Jesus' warning in v. 14 aims at the greater need. SPROUL
- **His accusers understood Him exactly.** "Calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (v. 18) — and Jesus does not correct them. He answers by claiming the Father's works: life, judgment and honor (vv. 19–27). THE TEXT
- **Eternal life is a present possession.** "Has eternal life … has passed out of death into life" (v. 24): present tense and perfect tense. Spurgeon's "Verily, Verily" — the believer does not wait for life; he has it. THE GREEK

- **Two hours, one voice.** "An hour is coming and now is" (v. 25) — the spiritually dead hearing the gospel; "an hour is coming" (v. 28) — the bodily dead hearing His voice from the tombs. Henry sees both resurrections here. HENRY
- **You can study the Bible and miss its subject.** "You search the Scriptures … it is these that testify about Me" (v. 39). Spurgeon: "the Scriptures themselves became a sepulcher in which they were entombed." SPURGEON
- **Unbelief is a matter of the will.** "You are unwilling to come to Me" (v. 40); "you receive glory from one another" (v. 44). Guzik: "The fatal error of the religious leaders of Jesus' day – and ever since – is pride." GUZIK

† Questions for the Table

1 **Jesus asked a man who had been sick thirty-eight years, "Do you wish to get well?" What in my life have I grown used to, and do I really want Him to change it?**

Sproul: healing brings new responsibilities; some prefer the security of their chains.

5:5-7

2 **The man said, "I have no man to put me into the pool." Who in my life is lying by the pool with no one to help — and what would it look like to be that man for him?**

Henry: not a good will he lacked, but a good friend.

5:7; Gal 6:2

3 **The leaders cared more about the mat than the man. Where do I care more about rules and appearances than about people being made whole?**

Guzik: human interpretation of God's law, not God's law.

5:10-16

4 **Jesus found the man in the temple and warned him, "do not sin anymore." What sin is He warning me about after He has already shown me mercy?**

A worse thing than thirty-eight years of paralysis is a life of sin.

5:14; Rom 6:1-2

5 **Verse 24 says the one who believes "has passed out of death into life." Do I live like a man who has already moved out of the house of death?**

Perfect tense: the move is made and the result stands.

5:24; 1 John 3:14

6 **I can know the Bible and still not come to Jesus. Whose approval am I living for — men's or God's?**

"How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another…?"

5:39-44

John 5 starts with one man on a mat and ends with the whole nation on trial. The Son who told a lame man to walk is the Son who gives life to whom He wishes and will call the dead from their tombs. The question He asked at Bethesda is the one He asks every man who has waited too long: Do you wish to get well? Then come to Him.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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