



(Show [Sally Brestin's video](#) describing her Aslan painting.)

A copy of this painting is hanging on the wall of my office. Kellyn gave it to me as a Christmas present. Normally when you see paintings of a lion and a lamb together they are illustrating Isaiah 11:6.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.

But this painting, accidentally, as the artist testified, illustrates one of my all-time favorite Scripture passages.

1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, 4 and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. 5 And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

Verse five is the crescendo of this passage. All of heaven is crying out for someone who is worthy enough to open the scroll. Just then all attention is directed to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, he who has conquered death and sin. Every eye turned in eager anticipation to see the powerful lion sitting on his throne in all his majesty. But everyone turned to look...

6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain (Revelation 5:1-6).

This is a glorious picture of our Lord Jesus—the conquering Lion of Judah and the lamb who was slain. This is meekness and majesty. Meekness and majesty also relate to Christ’s humanity and deity. We see this beautiful balance of meekness and majesty all over Scripture and we also see it here in John chapter five.

After this 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, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. 5 One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” 7 The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” 8 Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” 11 But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’ ” 12 They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”

1. Jesus feels deeply.

Jesus’ compassion—would you say this is more his divine side or his human side? I think we want to say it is more of a function of his humanity but I’m not sure why that it is. Perhaps because we view emotions like this through the human lens but in my opinion, Jesus’ compassion is equally due to his deity and humanity. The facts are here that he saw an invalid, a man who had suffered for thirty-eight years and had compassion on him.

John does not strictly use the word compassion, but that’s what it was. We see this same compassion right before Jesus raised a dead boy back to life. We see his compassion on the hungry and lost crowds before he fed them with the fish and loaves.

This past Wednesday in our men’s study we finished working our way through 1 Peter. I’ll never forget the first time I ever read verse seven of chapter five: “casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” I was a young believer when I read this and the phrase “cares for” really stood out to me. We know that God is loving and merciful. We do see the word compassion applied directly to Jesus but this is the only time I am aware of that Scripture uses this phrase—“he cares for you.” It sounds so personal, so intimate. And this is exactly what Jesus felt toward the 38 years of suffering of the invalid. He cared for him unconditionally. The man did not earn this. He did not deserve this. It was unmerited favor, what we usually call grace.

2. Jesus knows intimately.

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?”

Jesus knew the suffering this man had endured. He knew how long he had been waiting at the pool for someone to help him. He even knew the inner motives of his heart. When Jesus asked the man, “Do you want to be healed,” he was not looking for information. Jesus was looking for confirmation. Jesus knew the man intimately so he was not seeking information like a detective or a counselor might. He was drawing the man out. He was testing him to see how he would respond to Jesus’ offer to help.

Jesus often used questions like these to draw people out. In Matthew 20 he asked two blind men, “What do you want me to do for you?” In Mark 10 he asked the blind Bartimaeus, “What do you want me to do for you?” In each case, Jesus already knew what they wanted and what they needed but he wanted to draw out their emotions and motives.

Jesus not only feels your pain deeply but he also knows you intimately. Jesus knowledge of this man is very similar to psalm 139. We are most familiar with the last two verses.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!

This seems to be an invitation to God to search our hearts. It’s like we are saying, “Go ahead and search my heart and tell me what you find.” But that is completely wrong because the entire Psalm is all about how intimately God already knows us. The Psalm begins with this assumption in mind. “O LORD, you have searched me and known me!” Almost every verse that follows is another description of how perfectly he already knows us. So the last two verses is not an invitation for God to search us but our invitation for God to tell us what he already knows. It is impossible for him to know you any more intimately than he already does.

I need to break off on a side note and talk about verse four. This verse is one of my life verses. Could I get a volunteer to read it for me? ☺ Unless you are holding a King James Bible, you don’t have a verse 4, which reads like this (including the end of verse 3).

3 waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

Where is Waldo? OR, where is verse 4? Why is there no verse four in my Bible? Who took it out and why? Here is how the English translations handle the end of verse three and verse four in their footnotes.

NIV—some less important manuscripts...
NASB—early manuscripts do not contain...
ESV—some manuscripts insert...

KJV—contains vv. 3b-4

Why does the KJV have these verses but every other English translation not have it?

First of all, verses 3b-4 are not found in any Greek manuscript prior to the 6th century. By the way, a manuscript is a portion of the New Testament. A manuscript is not usually the entire New Testament. So if you look at the development of this verse and a half, you can see that the oldest manuscripts do not contain verses 3b-4.

3rd century—no verse 3b-4

5th century—verse 4, not 3b

6th century—verse 3b-4 included

The King James has verses 3b-4 because it is based on the Greek New Testament called the Textus Receptus, which was published in 1516. The oldest manuscript that the Textus Receptus used was from the 12th century. If the Bible was written in the first century, do you see any problems with having a Bible based on manuscripts from the 12th century? Of course you do. A manuscript from the 12th century is over a thousand years removed from the original and is bound to have a lot more errors in it. Later versions of the Textus Receptus were much improved as they begin to use older manuscripts. but even today, the oldest manuscripts on which the TR is based come from the 5th century and other than the gospels, most come from the 9th century.

By the way, I am taking time to explain this since we will see it again later and also to help you have more and more confidence in the reliability of Scripture.

Textus Receptus
(Earliest = 5th century) { KJV

Nestle-Aland
(Earliest = 2nd century) { NIV
NASB
ESV
RSV
NLT
HOLMAN
ISV
ALL OTHERS...

All other English translation of the New Testament are based on the Greek N.T. named after the editors—Nestle and Aland, which was published in the late 1800's. This version is based on manuscripts as early as the 2nd century with one fragment which was written only thirty years after the original. So it makes sense that the Nestle-Aland would be more reliable since the manuscripts are much older.

If these verses were not in John's original gospel as he wrote it, how in the world did they get inserted into the KJV? You may have heard that people who have hand copied manuscripts over

the years have always been extremely careful and diligent in their work. And that is true. They were extremely careful but on occasion they would put a note in the margin that would help explain something that was unclear. Eventually this explanatory note would make its way into the text itself. Here are two early church fathers who talked about this passage.

Tertullian (3rd century)

"An angel used to do things when he moved the Pool of Bethesda. Those who complained of ill-health used to watch out for him, for anyone who got down there before the others, after washing had no further reason to complain." (On Baptism, Chapter 5)

Ambrose (4th century)

Therefore it is said: "An angel of the Lord went down according to the season into the pool, and the water was troubled; and he who first after the troubling of the water went down into the pool was healed of whatsoever disease he was holden." (On the Mysteries, Chapter 4, 22)

As far as we know, verses 3b-4 were not in the copies read by Tertullian and Ambrose but they did give their commentary, their explanation of these verses. They wrote in the third and fourth centuries and then the first appearance of these verses happens in the fifth century and then v. 3b appears starting in the sixth century.

We do not have the original copies but we do have thousands of manuscripts that when assembled together and compared, give us a Greek New testament that is 99.5% internally consistent. These 1 ½ verses are one of the very small areas where there is disagreement. This chart shows how much superior quality of the New Testament as compared to other ancient documents.¹

Author	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies
Lucretius	1,100 yrs	2
Pliny	750 yrs	7
Plato	1,200 yrs	7
Caesar	1,000	10
Aristotle	1,400	49
Homer (Iliad)	500 yrs	643
New Testament	less than 100 years	5600

I am not saying that the King James is in any way inferior to the other translations. However, I think you can also see that the "King James only" people who believe that all other translations are of the devil are dead wrong.

So the question is, is this how it actually happened? Did an angel come down and stir the water which caused someone to be healed? What we know for sure is that the man believed that he had to get in the water first when it was stirred in order to be healed. We don't need verses 3b-4 to understand what was happening here. It helps in a commentary sort of way but it is not necessary.

3. Jesus heals instantaneously.

8 Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Sometimes it can be hard to see these miraculous healings in the Bible because they seem so rare nowadays. Jesus healed as a function of both his human compassion and his divine power. It is

another one of those wonderful mixes of deity and humanity, of meekness and majesty. We also want healing. We pray for it. We ask hordes of other believers to also pray for us, but it doesn't always come. In fact, a great deal of what many people claim to be a miraculous healing is nothing of the sort. Now don't put words in my mouth and go telling everyone that Maurer doesn't believe that the Lord miraculously heals people. He does, but not as often as we'd like to think. I've seen my share of false miracles. And the fact is, this man who was healed from 38 years of disability, died. The little boy whom Jesus raised from the dead, died. Lazarus had to die twice. Everyone who has ever been healed has eventually died so even miracles such as this are temporary.

Moreover, I have seen some very wacky instances of alleged healing. There is [a video on Youtube](#) of a conference where a large group of people are praying for a man in a wheelchair. Eventually they decide to pull him up out of his wheelchair and walk—drag really—him around for a minute. You could see by the look on his face that he was in terrible agonizing pain. When they finally dropped him back into his wheelchair, someone yelled out an announced that there was a healing. I can't imagine how they get away with this stuff.

Here's a good way to pray for healing. Ask, but do not demand. Beg even but do demand. Jesus taught us to ask and ask again. We are taught to presume upon God's love and power to heal. Jesus feels deeply, knows us intimately and can heal instantaneously, but it may not be his will for you to be healed. Ask, beg and plead, but do not demand. If we could demand that God do something then that would make us more powerful than him.

Also, we need to keep James 5 in mind.

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

We have been doing this very frequently lately. In the last few months people have asked the elders for prayer more than they did in the past several years. It's great. We love to be a part of praying for you so please let us know if you want prayer for any reason.

4. Jesus rules completely.

Jesus' miracle of healing, as it almost always did, created a controversy. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." The Jewish leaders said this because there were 39 prohibited categories of work. The one that Got the healed man in trouble was #39—"Transporting an object between a private domain and the public domain, or for a distance of 4 cubits within the public domain." You weren't allowed to carry anything within your house more than 4 cubits, which is about two yards, so you certainly would not be allowed to carry your mat across town.

Sowing	Beating wool	Flaying
Plowing	Dyeing wool	Tanning
Reaping	Spinning	Scraping hide
Binding sheaves	Weaving	Marking hides

Threshing	Making two loops	Cutting hide to shape
Winnowing	Weaving two threads	Writing two or more letters
Selecting	Separating two threads	Erasing two or more letters
Grinding	Tying	Building
Sifting	Untying	Demolishing
Kneading	Sewing stitches	Extinguishing a fire
Baking	Tearing	Kindling a fire
Shearing wool	Trapping	Putting the finishing touch on an object
Washing wool	Slaughtering	Transporting an object between a private domain and the public domain, or for a distance of 4 cubits within the public domain.

But of course these are all man-made rules. This is man's attempt to rule over other men. I called this principle, "Jesus rules completely" because this miracle was done on the Sabbath and as we know, Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. He doesn't refer to himself by that title here but he says even more than this in the next section of John when they questioned Jesus. Think about what it means to be Lord of the Sabbath. How did the Sabbath arise? A Sabbath is the seventh day of creation when God rested from his work. Therefore, Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath because he created the Sabbath. He built the Sabbath into the seven day cycle of the week, which he also created.

This reminds me of a passage I read in my devotions this week. Jeremiah 29 is a chapter of discipline and judgment upon the Jews.² Now some of you say, "Hang on, how can Jeremiah chapter 29 be about judgment when the famous Jeremiah 29:11 is in that chapter? I suggest you read what comes before and after verse eleven and you will understand. Jeremiah 29 is the chapter of judgment but chapters 30 and 31 are about the restoration of God's people. Listen to how God confirmed his promise.

*Thus says the Lord,
who gives the sun for light by day
and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night,
who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—
the Lord of hosts is his name:
36 "If this fixed order departs
from before me, declares the Lord,
then shall the offspring of Israel cease
from being a nation before me forever." (Jeremiah 31:35-36)*

In modern language, the Lord said, "If the earth suddenly stops revolving around the sun and the moon ceases to orbit the earth, then my promises will fail." So tomorrow, if the sun does not come up—and by that I don't just mean that it's a cloudy day—then God has forsaken us. But if the sun does rise, then that is evidence of God's unfailing promises. Here's just one. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." As long as the fixed order of the sun, moon and earth continue, these promises will not fail. God rules completely. If he doesn't rule completely he possesses no power to make any promise.

Jesus feels deeply and knows you intimately but these things are tied up with his ruling completely. His compassion and power are inseparable. His meekness and his majesty exist, as the song says, in perfect harmony.

5. Jesus warns lovingly.

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."

The invalid was healed by Jesus but did not know who had healed him when the Jewish leaders asked him. But then Jesus found him again and gave him this stern warning: stop sinning or something worse may happen to you!

Now you might wonder, what is worse than 38 years as an invalid. He couldn't walk. He was completely dependent on the kindness of others. Every single day was a long exercise in suffering. What could be worse than 38 years of suffering like this? 39 years? The something worse was not a sickness or disability but hell itself. This man did not show evidence of any faith at all. Jesus just healed him unconditionally. We don't know what he did to deserve this warning. The miracle should have caused the man to examine his life and make some changes. If you would have been miraculously healed, would you have found the healer? The man just went about his life almost as if nothing had happened. He did not repent. He kept on sinning. He didn't look for Jesus. Jesus gave him the grace of healing but the grace of eternal life would be withheld from him unless he repented and trusted Christ. There is nothing more loving than to warn a sinner about the perils of the final judgment.

For application, I would like you to think about a trial or difficulty that you are facing. It could even be something like loneliness or a difficult decision. I want you to think about that and close your eyes. I want you to see how deeply Jesus cares for this situation. He knows exactly how you feel.

He also knows your situation intimately. He's always know it. Nothing about it worries him or concerns him. He has perfect knowledge of what you are experiencing.

Jesus heals instantaneously. He could decide in an instant to eliminate the trial, but nevertheless, not our will but his will be done.

He also rules completely over your situation. No one can change anything about your situation unless her permits it. Whatever happens, he is completely sovereign over it.

Finally, he warns lovingly. It may be that your trial is a matter of Godly discipline. Some sickness is directly related to sin. Much of it is not, but we should at least consider the possibility. Through this trial or circumstance he may be asking you to repent of an attitude or behavior.

Rich Maurer
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¹ <https://carm.org/manuscript-evidence>

² **15** “Because you have said, ‘The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon,’ **16** thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your kinsmen who did not go out with you into exile: **17** ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, behold, I am sending on them sword, famine, and pestilence, and I will make them like vile figs that are so rotten they cannot be eaten. **18** I will pursue them with sword, famine, and pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, a terror, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, **19** because they did not pay attention to my words, declares the LORD, that I persistently sent to you by my servants the prophets, but you would not listen, declares the LORD.’
(Jeremiah 29:15-19)