

General Church Education



Family Lesson: John 5 The Pool of Bethesda

[Family Talk](#) [Level 3](#)

[Level 1](#) [Level 4](#)

[Level 2](#) [Level 5](#)

Family Lesson 33 - D

The Pool of Bethesda
John 5

Family Talk:
THE POOL OF BETHESDA

You have just heard the story of the man at the pool of Bethesda. Let us look at two things in this story. The first is the fact that an angel came and stirred the waters of this pool and gave it a special power. The second is the Lord's saying, "Take up your bed and walk," for this is said three times, and it seems to have a very interesting story behind it.

If we think of this special pool as being like the Lord's Word, it is most interesting to think of an angel stirring the water sometimes, and this having a powerful effect on the people who come to the pool. The Writings tell us that there are people who don't think the Word is very special and have no idea how really wonderful it is. This is in the book *Heaven and Hell* (no. 310). It is in a chapter of that book about the Word. There are many chapters in that book, one about how angels are dressed, one about children in heaven, one about worship in heaven, one about heavenly happiness, and so forth. And one chapter is about how the Word joins people to heaven. It shows that one of the amazing uses of the Word is to bring those who are in heaven and those who are in the world close together, even when they do not know they are close together.

Are angels close to babies? The babies don't know it, but the angels are very close. Their angels always behold the face of their Heavenly Father. We have times when we feel we just know the angels are near when, for example, a little child is laughing happily, or when a little child has a look of trust and peace on his or her face.

Just as there are certain times when the angels seem especially close, it is said that the angel came down at certain times and stirred the waters of that pool. You may have noticed that there are times when the stories of the Word fill you with joy more than other times. Do you notice that when someone opens the Word before worship, this is done in a very reverent way? The Word is holy, and it is open to heaven. As we turn our minds to what it says, there are angels close to us. You will find that at certain times, and it is not always, something in the Word stirs you with great delight; and as you grow up, you will find that at times something of the Word that you have known for years is stirred in your mind in a way that moves you very deeply. Indeed, it not only moves and delights you, it has a way of uplifting and healing your spirit. We may think of this quality of the Word when we read the story of a pool, which at times was stirred by the presence of an angel.

Now let's look at the saying, "**Take up your bed and walk.**" Our story takes place in the city of Jerusalem, for the Lord had at last come to Jerusalem for a feast. Before this, He had been doing amazing things in another place called Galilee. The rulers in Jerusalem had been hearing stories about Him, and they finally

decided to send some special men all the way to where the Lord was (and that was almost a hundred miles).

They came into a crowded house where the Lord was in Galilee. And we bear in mind as we think of the story that Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem were sitting there and listening (see *Luke 5: 17*).

As they were sitting there, they saw that some men had opened a hole in the roof above them and were lowering down on a bed (like a mattress) a friend of theirs who was sick. Everyone watched and listened to see whether the Lord would make the man well. To their surprise, the Lord spoke to the man and said that the man's sins were forgiven.

Nobody in the room said anything, but you can be sure that those scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem were thinking something. They were thinking to themselves that Jesus had no right to say such words. For **"Who can forgive sins but God alone?"** (*Luke 5: 21*).

Although they did not speak, the Lord knew that was the thing they were thinking. They were complaining in their minds that He should not speak as if He had the power of forgiving sins. Then the Lord broke the silence and told them He knew what they were thinking, and then He said that to *prove* He did, indeed, have the power that only God has. He would tell the man to rise, take up his bed and walk. And then He said, **"Rise up and walk."** And that man who had been lying there got up, picked up the mattress he was lying on and walked. And it is said that all of the people **"were amazed, and glorified God."** They were filled with wonder and said, **"We have seen strange things today."**

No one would forget the day the Lord proved His power, not just over sickness, but also over evil, when He said, **"Rise up and walk."** Especially would those men from Jerusalem remember this, and they would tell it to other men when they reported back to Jerusalem.

And so now in our story, people in Jerusalem saw a man walking along carrying his bed (or mattress). They stopped him and said that it wasn't allowed to carry something on the Sabbath day. But he answered that the One Who made him well had said to him, **"Take up your bed and walk."** That saying must have rung a bell in their minds, for they immediately said to the man, **"Who is the man who said to you, 'take up your bed and walk?'"** Was this not the man they had heard of who claimed to have power over sickness and evil?

Yes, it was. And then we read that the Lord found the man in the temple. There are only two places in the Word where we read of the Lord "finding" a man, and in this case he was found in the church or temple. We can well imagine that the man had come there to give thanks to God for healing his sickness. But there was more than just sickness. In the temple he stood with the possibility of living a new life. Jesus found him there and said to him, **"See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."**

The Pool of Bethesda

John 5

LEVEL 1 – THE POOL OF BETHESDA



Materials Needed

Shoebbox or “base
Clay and tissue paper
Crayons or markers

Directions

Talk about the story with your child.

Discuss:

- ◆ What was the pool like?
- ◆ What were the surroundings like?
- ◆ Who was at the pool?
- ◆ How would the people be dressed?
- ◆ What happened at the pool?

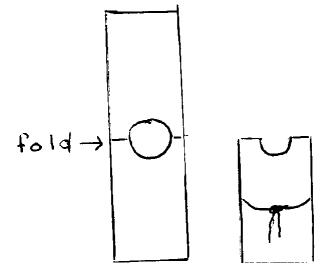
Making the scene

1. Use a shoebox turned on its side.

OR

Find something to use as a base (a piece of cardboard or cookie sheet lined with a brown grocery bag would work).

2. Tear blue and green tissue paper into small pieces.
Glue the pieces, overlapping them, on to the base to form the pool.
(or fill a shallow dish with water. You could add a little blue food coloring.)
3. Draw a pattern on the “walls” of the shoebox, and the area surrounding the pool to look like cobbles or stone.
4. Make figures out of clay to represent the Lord, the angel, the paralyzed man, and others.
Make columns and benches out of clay if you wish.
5. Your child may enjoy dressing each figure.
Cut a small rectangle of fabric. Fold it in half and cut a small hole for the head. Place it on the figure and tie it at the waist with a piece of yarn.



1. Arrange the figures around the pool.

The finished scene can be displayed, or your child can use it to act out the story by moving the figures while telling what is happening.

The Pool of Bethesda

John 5

LEVEL 2 – STIRRING THE WATERS

Retelling of *John 5*: 1-16

The Lord and His disciples were in Jerusalem to join in one of the Jewish feasts. The Jews had many holy days during the year. The people went to Jerusalem to celebrate them.

In Jerusalem there was a pool called the Pool of Bethesda. Once a year, an angel made the water of this pool wavy. When the water was wavy, the first sick person who got into the pool was made all better.

Many, many sick people from miles around came and waited by the pool for the angel to move the water. One of these people was a man who had been sick a very long time, thirty-eight years. The man was lying on a bed which was like a thin mattress with handles on the side for carrying him. He thought he needed someone to carry him on this bed to the pool. The Lord asked him if he wanted to be all better. He told the Lord he had no one to help him. The Lord told him to stand up, pick up his small bed, and walk. As soon as the man tried to help himself, he found he could do what the Lord told him to do. He was not sick any more. He picked up his bed and walked. The Lord had made him better on the Sabbath day, the Jews' day of worship.

In those days the Jews didn't do any work at all on the Sabbath day. They didn't even cook their food. They made all they would need to eat the day before. It was against their laws to do anything but pray and eat on the Sabbath.

When the Jews saw the man carrying his bed, they told him he was breaking the law. He said that the person who cured him had told him to carry his bed. The Jews asked the man who the person was who told him to do this. The man said he did not know who this person was.

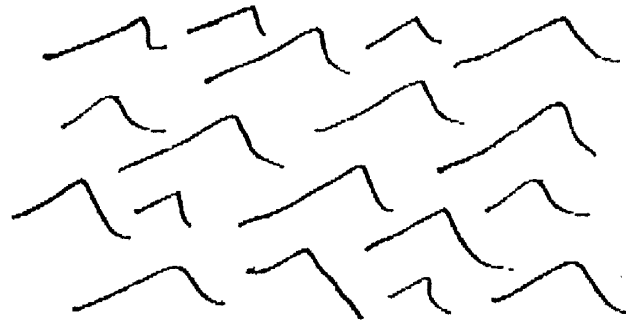
Later, the Lord found the man in the temple. The Lord told the man he was better now and he should not do any more bad things or something worse might happen to him. Then the man went and told the Jews that it was the Lord who had made him better. The Jews were angry because they thought the Lord had broken their laws and worked on the Sabbath. They tried from then on to have the Lord killed for working on the Sabbath.

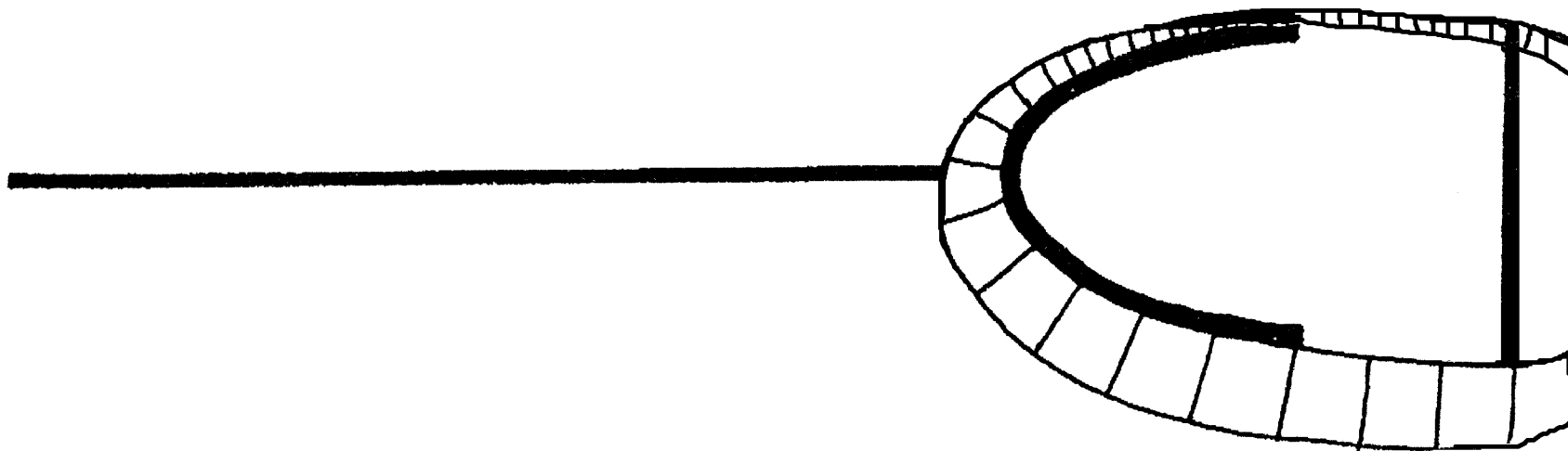
Project

1. Color the picture of the angel that is on the next page (page 3).
2. Color the strip of “water” on the next page.
3. Cut out the water strip, just inside the dark border.
4. Cut out the angel with the tab.
5. Glue or tape the tab under the angel on the water strip so that the bottom of the robe touches the top of the water. (The angel should be facing the wavy water.)
6. On page 4, draw some sick people around the pool. Add some background.
7. Cut slits along the two dark lines on the pool, and along the dark line leading up to the pool on page 4.
8. Pull the water strip up through the first slit (the one nearest the left side of the page), and down through the second slit. Place the angel up through the long slit.
9. Slowly pull the paper strip towards the right — the angel will come to the pool and the water will get wavy.

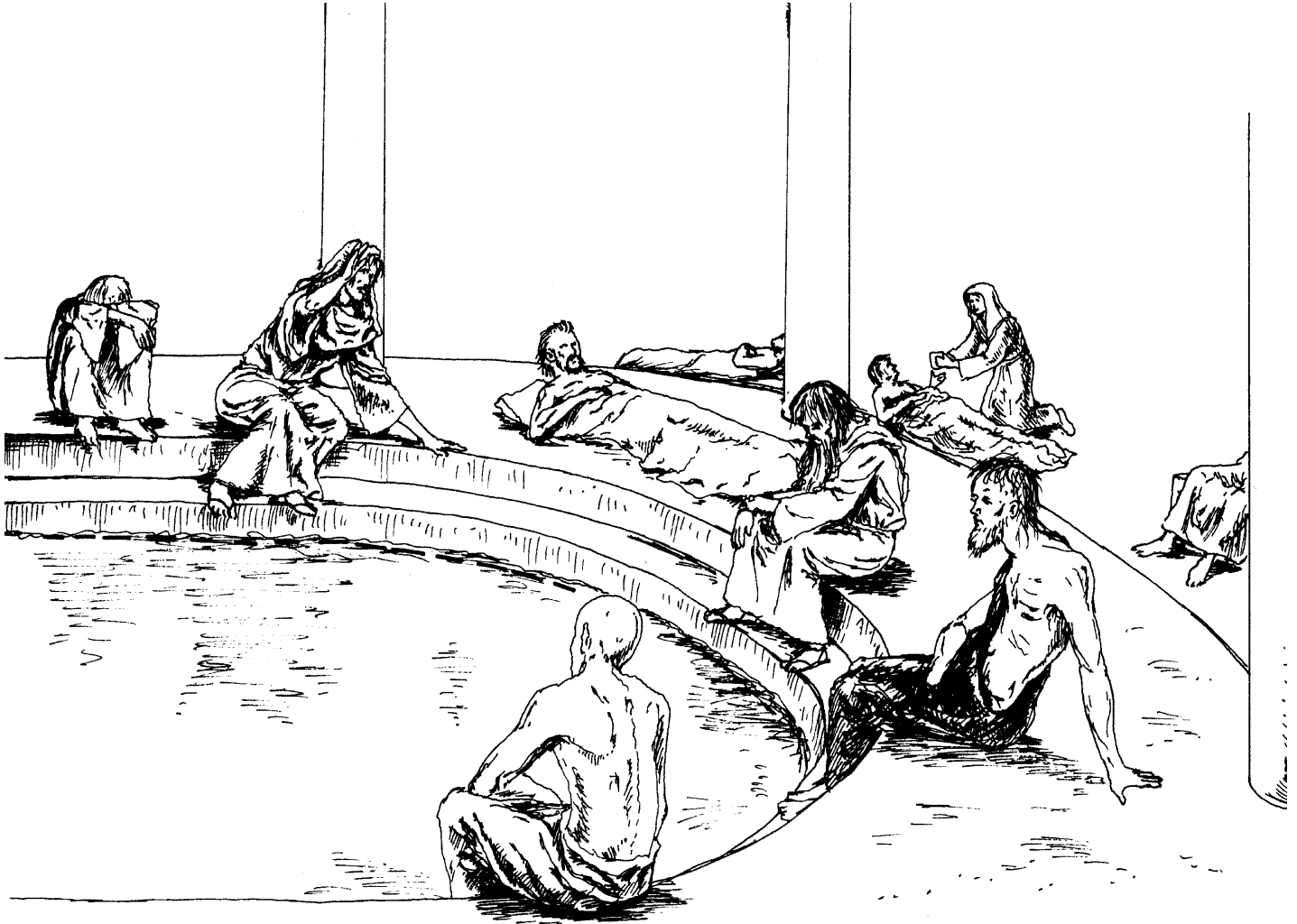


tape or glue
angel here





The Pool of Bethesda
John 5
LEVEL 3 – THE LORD’S TRUTH



Here is a picture of the pool of Bethesda.

Whenever water is mentioned in the Lord’s Word it is a picture of truth. Water washes our bodies and makes them clean, just as the true things we learn from the Word can “wash” our minds.

A picture of our minds

Look at the picture. Think about what happened at the pool.

What happened at the pool is a picture of something that happens in our minds. What do you think that might be?

Sometimes we are “sick”

The pool of Bethesda (water) is a picture of how the Lords’ truth works .

So what do you think the sick people around the pool might be? What in our minds could we see as being like the sick people? Well, we all have thoughts and wishes in our minds that are selfish or unkind or hurtful to other people. We could think of these thoughts and feelings as being like the “sick” people that need to be made better.

The people around the pool were sick, but when they got in the water they were cured. What about those thoughts and feelings we have in our minds that need to be made better. How are we going to “cure” them?

The Lord’s truth can make us well

When we learn and use the Lord’s truths in our lives, the Lord cures us. He makes us want to do good instead of selfish, hurtful things.

The man at the pool was sick for 38 years, a long time. The Lord asked the man, “Do you want to be made well?”

Do you remember what the man said? He said that there was no one to put him in the pool. Then the Lord told the man to “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” He told the man to get up and **do** something.

We have to change ourselves with the Lord’s help. We often put it off and make excuses and keep doing the wrong things. Maybe there is someone at school we are teasing. We know we shouldn’t do it, that it is mean and unkind. But we sort of enjoy it, and tell ourselves that its their fault because they are so stupid, or whatever other excuse we can think of.

That is why the Lord asked the man if he **really wanted** to be cured. If we really do want to get rid of “sick” thoughts, feelings and actions, we must **do** something. We must get into the “water.” How do we do that? We turn to the Lord by listening to the true teachings in His Word. And He will cure us.

Application

On page 3 is an activity to help you think about using the Lord’s truth to heal wrongs.

You may wish to color the picture on page 1.
You could add the angel stirring the water.

Things that need to be “cured”	Truths – the “water” to cure them
Hating the Lord.	
Cheating on a test at school. This is stealing someone else’s answers.	
Saying something bad about a person to someone else. This is murdering his reputation.	
Disobeying one of your parents.	
Using one of the Lord’s names to swear.	
Lying about something you have done.	
To want to have something of someone else’s because you think you should have it instead.	
To do something to someone else that you would not like them to do to you.	
To think that you should be trusted better than other people because you are more important.	

Cut out the “truths” below. They are like the water in the pool. Glue each truth next to each thing in the first column above that it will “cure”.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind & strength	Do unto others as you would have them do unto you
You shall love your neighbor as thyself	Honor your Father and thy Mother
You shall not covet	You shall not kill
You shall not bear false witness	You shall not steal
You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain	

The Pool of Bethesda

John 5

LEVEL 4 – AN ANGEL IN YOUR LIFE



At the pool of Bethesda, many people with all kinds of illness gathered. Occasionally, an angel would “stir” the water, and whoever got to it first was healed.

An angel in your life

These people are like the failings in your own mind. An angel in our life is a message from the Lord, which we feel as a pang of conscience. If a pang of conscience in our minds shows us something wrong we are doing or thinking about, we can rush to the “pool” of water—to the true teachings in the Lord’s Word—to “cure” us. Truth from the Lord’s Word can do wonders!

Making excuses

But there was one man at the pool who never got there in time. He blamed it on having no one to help him. There is sometimes a fault in our own lives which does not make it to the truth to be cured when our conscience speaks. We too like to think up excuses why we don’t change something in us that needs changing. Maybe we say things like “It’s too hard” or “No one will help me” or “Someone else prevents me from getting well.” Making up excuses is easy.

Listening to the Lord

But this story shows us that being healed is easy too. All the man had to do was **want** the Lord to heal him, then get up and go on with his life. How simple! If we accept the Lord’s help, we can be helped. And what did the Lord require of the man in response? Simply to “sin no more.”

All of this story takes place in Jerusalem, which is inside our hearts. This is often a very private place between ourselves and the Lord. The parts of our mind which need to be healed are often hidden from other people.

Can you think of one thing you’d like to do but know is wrong, yet still keep wanting? It might be a desire to lie, or jealousy of a friend, or teasing classmates. The Lord is near. Listen to Him. Every time that thought comes into your mind, hear Him say, **“Do you want to be made well?”** He may have to ask you if you want to be made well many times. Just like the man at Bethesda, it may take thirty-eight years. But someday you will hear Him, and take up your bed and walk.

Application

Think about water. It is essential to life but can also destroy life.

- 1. List some good things about water.

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

- 2. List some happy times, or places, where water plays an important part in the fun. (Include winter as well as summer!)

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

- 3. List some of the harms that come from water.

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

- 4. List some stories in the Word which have to do with water.
You could look up Gen. 1: 6,9; Gen. 7; Exodus 14: 21-29; Exodus 15: 22; Exodus 17: 5.

Water in the Word : useful water

Water corresponds to truth from the Word. It is a picture of how truth works in our lives.

That is why it does so many useful things, like wash, satisfy our thirst, make plants grow and help foods cook. That is also why being with it at the ocean or swimming pool or ski slope or ice-skating is delightful to us.

Water in the Word : destructive water

Why, then can water kill in a flood or drowning? Because everything has both a correspondence in heaven and in hell. The angels' water is truth. The devils' water is falsity. Too much of falsity kills everything. In the story of Noah, water corresponds to the overwhelming false ideas men fell into at that time.

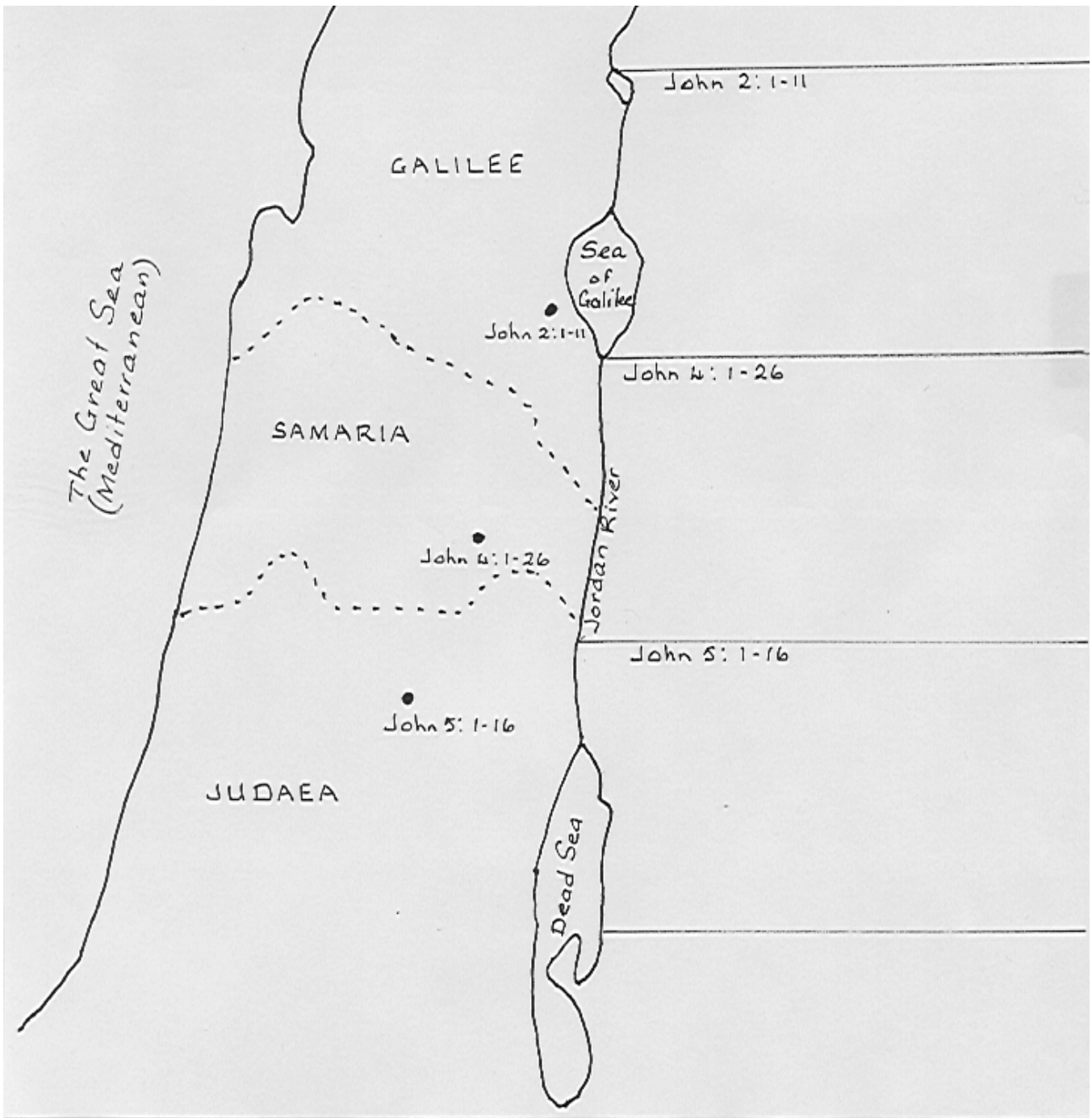


In most stories in the Word, including the story of the Pool of Bethesda, we see the good correspondence of water — water picturing the Lord's truth and how it operates in our minds.

5. On the map of the land of Canaan below there are three dots, each showing the location of a city. Fill in the names of the cities (*the verses in the Word next to each dot will give you the names*).

Read about the story which took place there.

Write the details briefly in the spaces on the right hand side of the page. While you are writing about the water, think about what it may mean about the Lord's truth in your life.



The Pool of Bethesda
John 5
LEVEL 5 – THE LIVING WORD



For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.”
(John 5:16)

When the Lord healed the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath Day, it led to very strong opposition to the Lord. In fact, there were people who from that time sought to kill the Lord, because He had broken the Sabbath and because He was making Himself equal with God (verse 18).

“I have come in My Father’s name”

Yes, the Lord’s Divinity *was* being made known, and this was bringing opposition. Let us concentrate here on an amazing thing the Lord said as He dealt directly with that opposition. He said in effect that Moses (whose words those people treasured) was writing about *Him*. This was not only amazing to the people of that time! It was amazing to all readers of the Bible, and it leads to a fundamental point of New Church teaching that is really striking.

First the Lord said to the people who were opposing Him that they were not coming to Him as the Source of life. They thought they could find life in their scriptures, and they were right. But their scriptures were really all about Him:

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”
(John 5:39, 40)

The Old Testament Teaches about the Lord

What Scriptures are meant? They had the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which seem to teach about Jehovah—God as He is seen in the Old Testament.

But where do they testify about the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, look at these verses from the Old Testament:

“For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given:
And the government will be upon His shoulder;
And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Might God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
(Isaiah 9:6)

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be ruler in Israel...”
(Micah 5:2)

Looking at these verses, it is clear that those Scriptures are about the Lord. (And can you think of any others?) Those people had no idea that the Scriptures were about the Lord. Every Christian reader of the Bible knows now that they are.

The Books of Moses

Now look at what the Lord said later in *John* 5:

“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.”
(John 5:46)

Do you know what books Moses wrote? They are the first five books in the Word—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Now, where in these books do we find something written about the Lord? Students of the Bible have pondered this a lot. If you have a cross-reference Bible, you may find some notes. At the most, you usually find four places that have been found in what Moses wrote that are generally believed to be about the Lord:

1. There is the verse about the serpent in Genesis:
*And I will put enmity between you and the woman,
 And between your seed and her Seed;
 He shall bruise your head,
 And you shall bruise His heel. (Genesis 3:15)*

2. Then in Genesis 12 it is said to Abraham that in his descendants all the nations of the earth would be blessed. This is regarded as a reference to the eventual birth of the Lord, who would bless all nations.
*“I will make you a great nation;
 I will bless you
 And make your name great...;
 And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
 (Genesis 12:2,3)*

3. Then there is the well-known prophecy in the book of Numbers:
*“I see Him, but not now;
 I behold Him, but not near;
 A Star shall come out of Jacob;
 A scepter shall rise out of Israel...” (Numbers 24:17)*

4. And finally, in Deuteronomy 18, it says that some day a prophet will like Moses will arise:
*The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like
 me from your midst, from your midst, from your
 brethren. Him you shall hear. (Deuteronomy 18:15)*

These are the places which people have thus far found that seem to be about the Lord.

A New Revelation

What does the New Church have to say about how much of what Moses wrote is about the Lord? A few verses? Maybe several verses? The New Church answer is that **all** of what Moses wrote, every least part of it, is about the Lord!

Yes, *everything* that Moses wrote, and *all* things of the Word, are inmosty about the Lord. Two of the books which Moses wrote are *Genesis* and *Exodus*. You are probably aware that the largest work of the Writings, called *Arcana Coelestia*, is a verse-by-verse unfolding of the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus*.

The Living Word

The world was totally unaware when the Writings were first written that everything in the Old Testament was about heavenly things. We read:

“The Christian world is as yet profoundly unaware of the fact that all things in the Word both in general and in particular, nay, the very smallest...enfold within them spiritual and heavenly things...” (AC 2)

The passage goes on to say that anything that is not inwardly about the Lord “is not alive.” Think of that. Not alive.

Now, do you see what the Lord meant when He said to those people that they were seeking life in the Scriptures, but the Scriptures were about Him, and they were not coming to Him “to have life”?



A glimpse of the Arcana Coelestia

You are now going to look at parts of the very first two pages of the Arcana Coelestia.

Bear in mind that this is a dramatic new revelation about what Moses wrote.

Read the passages from the Arcana Coelestia on page 4:

The Word is **alive**, because it unfolds things about Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

As you read, keep a look out for the words “**life**” and “**lives.**”

Underline the words life and lives each time you find them in the passages.

If you have the first volume of the *Arcana Coelestia* you may like to read the complete verses 1-5. (Note: your translation may be a little different)

Arcana Coelestia

1. The Word of the Old Testament contains heavenly arcana, with every single detail focusing on the Lord...but no human being grasps this from the letter.
2. . . . because the Word is the Lord's and derives from Him, it cannot possibly exist if it does not contain within itself such things that belong to heaven, the Church, and faith. If this were not so it could not be called the Word of the Lord, nor be said to have any life within it. For where does its life originate except in those things which belong to life, that is, in having every single detail go back to the Lord, who is life itself? Therefore anything that does not interiorly focus on Him has no life..
3. Without such a life the Word as regards the letter is dead, for it is the same with the Word as it is with man, who, as the Christian world knows, is internal as well as external. The external man, if parted from the internal man is just a body and therefore dead. It is the internal man which lives and imparts life to the external. The internal man is the soul of the external man. The same applies to the Word which as to the letter alone is like the body without a soul.
4. As long as the mind confines itself to the sense of the letter alone one cannot possibly see that its contents are such. Take for instance these first sections of Genesis: From the sense of the letter the only subject matter people recognize is the creation of the world, and the Garden of Eden which is called Paradise, and Adam as the first man to be created. Who thinks anything different? The fact that these things contain arcana however which have never been revealed up to now will be sufficiently clear from what follows — especially clear from the fact that the subject of Genesis 1 is, in the internal sense, the NEW CREATION of man, that is, in general his REGENERATION, and in particular the Most Ancient Church. And the subject is represented in such a way that not the smallest part of any expression fails to have a representation, carry a spiritual meaning, or embody something within itself.
5. But unless he has it from the Lord no human being can possibly know that this is the situation...In the Lord's Divine mercy...I have been allowed therefore to hear and see astounding things in the next life which have never come to any man's knowledge nor even entered his imagination.

(John Elliot translation)