

BSP#3 Group Time Questions

1. The lame man in John 5:1-47 had been ill for 38 years. What is the significance of the number 38? (Read Numbers 13:17-20, 25-33, 14:1-9, 29-34; Deuteronomy 2:14. Do you see any relationship between Israel's 38 years of suffering in the wilderness and the lame man's 38 years of disability?)
2. In verses 5:45-47 Jesus accuses the Pharisees of being hypocrites who don't really accept the writings of Moses. Why does Jesus say this? (Read Genesis 3:15; Numbers 21:9. Do these passages from the Pentateuch – the 5 Books of Moses – teach anything about Jesus? Do the Pharisees accept these teachings?)
3. Do you see any parallels between Jesus and Moses in John 6:1-21? Consider the 12 baskets, the 5 loaves, Jesus walking on the sea. Do they remind you of anything about Moses?
4. The Jews murmured among themselves, not wanting to accept what Jesus was saying to them. Their ancestors murmured against Moses who was God's chosen spokesperson and even grumbled about the manna that God provided them to eat. Read Numbers 12:4-9. How did God feel about their murmuring and grumbling? Do you grumble and complain about some of the teachings or doctrines of His Church? Do you pick and choose which teachings and doctrines you will accept? How do you think God feels about this?

ANSWERS TO BSP#3 GROUP TIME QUESTIONS

Q1. The Israelites did not trust God and were afraid to enter the land of Canaan. They were punished by God and spent 38 years (generally rounded to 40 years) wandering in the wilderness. As a result, the first generation of the Israelites, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, was unable to enter the Promised Land. Like Israel, the lame man was disabled for 38 years. The number 38 symbolizes not only the lame man's disability, but also Israel's disability, and the disability of each one of us. Until we repent and believe, every one of us is lame. Until we want to be healed, we will not be healed.

Q2. The scriptural passages from the Pentateuch – the 5 Books of Moses – clearly point to Jesus and their predictions and prefigurations are fully fulfilled by and manifested in Jesus. And yet the Pharisees, who teach Moses' writings and claim to accept his teachings, still reject Jesus. Therefore, they are hypocrites in this sense.

Q3. The 12 baskets = the 12 tribes of Israel as established by Moses; the 5 loaves = the 5 Books of Moses; walking on the sea harkens to Moses' crossing of the Red Sea. By pinpointing the similarities between Jesus and Moses, John depicts Jesus as the new Moses. This sets the stage for a very important event that the "new Moses" is about to do: establishing the Eucharistic meal, just as Moses had provided the meal of mana for the Israelites.