

The Blinding Power of False Religion

John 5:1-15

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6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to be made 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, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.”

9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

And that day was the Sabbath.

10 The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, “It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.”

11 He answered them, “He who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your bed and walk.’ ”

- 12** Then they asked him, “Who is the Man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?”
- 13** But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in *that* place.
- 14** Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, “See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.”
- 15** The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

The New King James Version. (1982). (Jn 5:1–15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Introduction

I was reading some articles the other day and found a reference to a book which records some very strange laws still on the books in our country.

Some of these “whacky laws” are listed below:

“In Pennsylvania, the penalty for cursing is a forty-cent fine. However, if God is mentioned in the curse, the fine is sixty-seven cents.”

“It is illegal to mispronounce the name of the city of Joliet, Illinois.”

“In Utah, the law requires that daylight be seen between two dancing partners.”**219**

“In San Francisco, you are not permitted to carry a basket suspended from a pole.”

“It is unlawful for goldfish to ride on a Seattle, Washington, bus unless they lie still.”

“Michigan law once required taking a census of bees every winter.”

“In Natchez, Mississippi, it is against the law for elephants to drink beer.”

“An old Hollywood, California, ordinance forbids driving more than two thousand sheep down Hollywood Boulevard at one time.”

“In Muncie, Indiana, you cannot bring fishing tackle into a cemetery.”

“The California penal code prohibits the shooting of any animal, except a whale, from an automobile.”

“In Kansas City, Missouri, children are prohibited by law from buying cap pistols. However, the law does not restrict them from buying shotguns.”

“A Minnesota law requires that men’s and women’s underwear not be hung on the same clothesline at the same time.”

“In Joliet, Illinois, women are not allowed to try on more than six dresses in one store.”²²⁰

I must also say that most of the regulations I am about to call to your attention were probably necessitated by people who were unwilling to abide by principles; thus, religious leaders were forced to become more and more specific, to the point of unbelievable gnat-straining. Here are some of the regulations of the Jews in our Lord’s time:

Some of the detailed regulations are passing wonderful. For example, ‘(On the Sabbath) a man may borrow of his fellow jars of wine or jars of oil, provided that he does not say to him, ‘Lend me them’ (*Shab. 23:1*). This would imply a transaction, and a transaction might involve writing, and writing was forbidden. Or again, ‘If a man put out the lamp (on the night of

the Sabbath) from fear of the gentiles or of thieves or of an evil spirit, or to suffer one that was sick to sleep, he is not culpable; (but if he did it with a mind) to spare the lamp or to spare the oil or to spare the wick, he is culpable' (*Shab. 2:5*). The attitude to healing on the sabbath is illustrated by a curious provision that a man may not put vinegar on his teeth to alleviate toothache. But he may take vinegar with his food in the ordinary course of affairs, and the Rabbis philosophically concluded, 'if he is healed he is healed' (*Shab. 14:4*)! [221](#)

The Mishna says: 'He that reapeth corn on the Sabbath to the quantity of a fig is guilty; and plucking corn is reaping.' Rubbing the grain out was threshing. Even to walk on the grass on the Sabbath was forbidden because it was a species of threshing. Another Talmudic passage says: 'In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered sifting; if she rubs the head of wheat, it is regarded as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherences, it is sifting out fruit; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing' [Jer. Shabt, page 10a]. The scrupulosity of these Jews about the Sabbath was ridiculously extreme. A Jewish sailor caught in a storm after sunset on Friday refused to touch the helm though threatened with death. Thousands had suffered themselves to be butchered in the streets of Jerusalem by Antiochus Epiphanes rather than lift a weapon in self-defense on the Sabbath! To these purists, the act of the disciples was a gross desecration of the Sabbath law. The worst of all was that Jesus permitted and approved it. [222](#)

In the above citations, J. W. Shepard is referring to the Sabbath laws of Jesus' day, but we would be incorrect to

suppose things have improved with time. A friend loaned me a book by Rav Yehoshua Y. Neuwirth entitled, *Shemirath Shabbath: A Guide to the Practical Observance of Shabbath*.

223 This volume (my friend reminds me that it is the first volume) goes into great detail concerning the interpretation and application of the Sabbath for contemporary Judaism. In the preface to this work the author writes, “The Mishna (Chagiga: Chapter 1, Mishna 8) likens the laws of Shabbath to ‘mountains hanging by a hair,’ in that a multitude of precepts and rules, entailing the most severe penalties for their breach, depend on the slightest of indications given by a biblical verse.”**224**

He also reminds us of the importance which Judaism has placed, and continues to place, on the keeping of the Sabbath:

May we be privileged, by virtue of the proper observance of the Shabbath, to see the final redemption of Israel. Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, “Were Israel properly to observe two Shabbathoth, they would immediately be redeemed” (Shabbath 118b). Until such time, God’s only dwelling-place on this earth is within the four walls of the Halacha (Berachoth 8a).**225**

The book contains many instructions about the keeping of the Sabbath, but I will mention only a few:

Cooking in most all forms (boiling, roasting, baking, frying, etc.) is forbidden on the Sabbath, in particular when the temperature is raised above 45 degrees centigrade (113 Fahrenheit).**226**

If the hot water tap is accidentally left on, it cannot be turned off on the Sabbath.**227**

Escaping gas can be turned off, but not in the normal way. One must turn off the tap of a gas burner with the back of the hand or the elbow.**228**

The preparation of food is greatly affected by the Sabbath. One cannot squeeze a lemon into a glass of ice tea, but one can squeeze lemon on a piece of fish.**229**

That one cannot light a fire on the Sabbath is taught in the Old Testament law (cf. [Exod. 35:3](#)). Strict Judaism views this to prohibit turning electric lights on or off on the Sabbath. The problem can be solved, however, by using a timer, which automatically handles this task.**230**

So, too, an air conditioner cannot be turned on by a Jew on the Sabbath, although a Gentile might be persuaded to do so.
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One cannot bathe with a bar of soap on the Sabbath, but liquid detergent is acceptable.**232**

There are billions of people around the world seeking salvation through religions that cannot save anyone. You can watch Buddhists in Asia offering sacrifices, spinning prayer wheels, and going through other religious rituals in the hopes of attaining Nirvana. There are quasi-Buddhists in Flagstaff who fly prayer flags in the hopes that it will bring them good karma.

You can find Hindu holy men at the temple in Kathmandu who think that by looking weird and meditating every day, they will gain salvation. There was a story I read of in western China last year, a driver stopped a bus at sundown, got out his

prayer rug, and said his prayers toward Mecca before the bus could resume the trip.

During Ramadan, the Muslims think that fasting during the daylight hours will help get them into heaven.

In Romania a woman in an Orthodox cathedral weeps as she prays to an icon of some “saint.”

Roman Catholics kneel before statues of Jesus and Mary, praying their rosary beads in their attempt to be right with God.

Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses canvass our neighborhoods every weekend, thinking that their efforts will earn them salvation.

And—let’s be honest—there are people in Protestant churches every Sunday who mistakenly think that their church membership and good deeds will get them into heaven when they die.

But the Bible is clear that religion is impotent to save anyone. By religion, I mean any humanly devised system of belief that teaches that by keeping their rules, rituals, and requirements, a person can gain eternal life. Jesus consistently confronted the Jewish religious leaders of His day, even though they claimed to be following the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They thought that by adhering to the Law of Moses, they could commend themselves to God. Over the centuries, they had added to that Law many of their own traditions. But Jesus deliberately confronted these religious leaders. Eventually, they were the ones who put Him to death.

In our text, we move from a section in John’s Gospel where we saw initial belief in Jesus as the Son of God to a section of

mounting unbelief and opposition to Him, originating with the Jewish leaders (whom John often calls, “the Jews”; 5:10), leading finally to the cross. At the root of their hostility toward Jesus was that He confronted their man-made religious traditions, especially their Sabbath laws. Jesus never broke the Sabbath as God intended for the Jews to keep it. But He deliberately violated the human traditions that had grown up around the Sabbath, because many of the Jews mistakenly thought that by keeping these traditions they could be right with God. But no one can gain eternal life by keeping God’s law, because no one can keep it perfectly from the heart, which is the requirement.

And so Jesus deliberately did things on the Sabbath to confront the Jewish leaders. After all, He could have waited 24 hours to heal this lame man by the Pool of Bethesda. He had been paralyzed for 38 years; what difference would one more day make? And, Jesus could have told him to leave his mat there by the pool and come back and get it the next day, so as not to provoke the religious leaders. Jesus could have told this healed man not to do anything that would violate these Jewish traditions, but He did not. He told him to pick up his mat and carry it.

The great contrast that comes through in this miracle is the impotence of religion versus the mighty power of Christ. Neither the Jewish leaders nor the superstition about the angel healing the first person into the water after it was stirred up had helped this man in 38 years. But in one crisp command, Jesus brought instant and complete healing to him

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Review

Lesson

I. The Multitude

II. The Man

III. The Miracle

IV. The Madness

V. The Message

I. The Multitude

- 1 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, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches.
- 3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, 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.

5:1. **Jesus ... later returned to Jerusalem for a feast.** The feast is not named (some mss. read “the feast”), but it may have been the Passover. Jesus attended three other Passovers (2:23; 6:4; 11:55). John probably intended only to give a reason why Jesus was in Jerusalem.

A feast of the Jews (ἑορτῆ τῶν Ἰουδαίων [*heortē tōn Ioudaiōn*]). Some manuscripts have the article (ἡ [*hē*]) “the feast” which would naturally mean the passover. As a matter of fact there is no way of telling what feast it was which Jesus here attended. Even if it was not the passover, there may well be another passover not mentioned besides the three named by John (2:13, 23; 6:4; 12:1). **Went up** (ἀνεβη [*anebē*]). Second aorist active indicative of ἀναβαίνω [*anabainō*]. It was up towards Jerusalem from every direction save from Hebron.

Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 5:1). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

1. **A feast** (ἑορτῆ). Or *festival*. What festival is uncertain. It has been identified with the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of

Tabernacles; also with the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Dedication, and the Feast of Purim.

Vincent, M. R. (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 2, p. 131). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

5:2. To the north of the temple area was a **pool ... called Bethesda** (see the map showing the pool's location). The excavations of a pool **near the Sheep Gate** have uncovered **five** porticoes or **covered colonnades**, confirming the accuracy of the description given here in the Fourth Gospel. The pool was actually two pools next to each other.

Five porches - The word "porch" commonly means a covered place surrounding a building, in which people can walk or sit in hot or wet weather. Here it probably means that there were five covered places, or apartments, in which the sick could remain, from each one of which they could have access to the water.

A pool (κολυμβηθρα [*kolumbēthra*]). A diving or swimming pool (from κολυμβω [*kolumbaō*], to swim, Acts 27:43)

Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 5:2). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

Pool (κολυμβήθρα). In the New Testament only in this chapter and 9:7, 11. Properly, a pool *for swimming*, from κολυμβάω, *to dive*. In Eccl. 2:6 (Sept.) it is used of a reservoir in a garden. The Hebrew word is from the verb *to kneel down*, and means, therefore, a *kneeling*-place for cattle or men when drinking

Vincent, M. R. (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 2, p. 131). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Some ancient witnesses speak of the redness of the water, popularly thought to be medicinal

Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 242). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

Now this particular pool was actually not discovered until quite recently. Earlier archeological attempts to find it proved unfruitful and many therefore criticized John's gospel as being non-historical because they couldn't find this thing. It was discovered in 1888. It fits the description and we have this pool that's adjacent to the church of St Anne inside old city Jerusalem. It's right there for people to see and you can go in there and see the five porches. This is where this particular event took place. It's very specific.

Ken Boa

Blum, E. A. (1985). John. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 288–289). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Bethesda (Βεθεσδα [*Bethesda*], or House of Mercy. So A C Syr cu)

Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 5:2). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

When you visit St. Anne's Church in Jerusalem, they will show you the deep excavation that has revealed the ancient Pool of Bethesda. The Hebrew name *Bethesda* has been spelled various ways and given differing meanings. Some say it means "house of mercy" or "house of grace," but others say it means "place of the two outpourings." There is historical and archeological evidence that two adjacent pools of water served this area in ancient times.

The pool is situated near the northeast corner of the Old City, close to the Sheep Gate (Neh. 3:1; 12:39)

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 304). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.

5:3a. The **great number of disabled people** pictures the sad spiritual plight of the world.

Blum, E. A. (1985). John. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 289). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

In John 5:1–15, John paints a graphic scene for us. There's the pool, surrounded by five great colonnades. In the background there's the bleating of sheep as they are led through the Sheep Gate into the temple compound for sacrifice. And filling the view is a crowd of disabled people—not neatly dressed or sitting in wheelchairs, but, for the most part, outcasts and beggars, sprawling over the area wearing rags. Some can't see, some can't walk, some can't move. The smell is overpowering. The sight is pitiful in the extreme. And they're waiting for something to happen. They've been told that when the water stirs of its own accord—as it will, being a seasonal spring fed from the hills around Jerusalem—then the first one in will be healed.

Paterson, A. (2010). *Opening Up John's Gospel* (pp. 42–43). Leominster: Day One Publications.

In these (ἐν ταυταις [*en tautais*]). In these five porches. **Lay** (κατεκειτο [*katekeito*]). Imperfect middle of κατακειμαι [*katakeimai*], to lie down, singular number because πληθος [*plēthos*] (multitude) is a collective substantive. **Withered** (ξηρων [*xērōn*]). Old adjective ξηρος [*xēros*] for dry, wasted as the hand (Matt. 12:10). The oldest and best manuscripts omit what the Textus Receptus adds here “waiting for the moving of the water”

Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 5:3). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

Impotent folk - Sick people; or people who were weak and feeble by long disease. The word means those who were “feeble” rather than those who were afflicted with “acute” disease.

Halt - Lame.

Withered - Those who were afflicted with one form of the palsy that withered or dried up the part affected. See the notes at [Matthew 4:24](#).

3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, 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.

5:3b–4. The earliest manuscripts omit these words which appear to be a late insertion to explain why the pool water was “stirred” (v. 7). People believed that an angel came and stirred it. According to local tradition, the first one in the water would be healed. But the Bible nowhere teaches this kind of superstition, a situation which would be a most cruel contest for many ill people. No extant Greek manuscript before a.d. 400 contains these words.

Blum, E. A. (1985). John. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 289). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

John 5:4

All of this verse is wanting in the oldest and best manuscripts like Aleph B C D W 33 Old Syriac, Coptic versions, Latin Vulgate. It is undoubtedly added, like the clause in verse 3, to make clearer the statement in verse 7. Tertullian is the earliest writer to mention it. The Jews explained the healing virtues of the intermittent spring by the ministry of angels. But the periodicity of such angelic visits makes it difficult to believe. It is a relief to many to know that the verse is spurious.

Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 5:4). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

While it is true that some manuscripts omit the end of John 5:3 and all of verse 4, it is also true that the event (and the man’s words in John 5:7) would make little sense if these words are eliminated. Why would anybody, especially a man sick for so many years, remain in one place if nothing special were

occurring? You would think that after thirty-eight years of nothing happening to *anybody*, the man would go elsewhere and stop hoping! It seems wisest for us to accept the fact that something extraordinary kept all these handicapped people at this pool, hoping for a cure.

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 304). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Tertullian (about 145-220 A.D.) already shows that he knows this passage; for he states:

“An angel, by his intervention, was wont to stir the pool at Bethsaida. They who were complaining of ill health used to watch for him; for whoever was the first to descend into these waters, after his washing ceased to complain’ (*On Baptism V*).”²³⁸

Listen to what Carson has to say about this:

The invalid apparently held to a popular belief that the first person into the pool after the waters had been disturbed, and only the first person, would be miraculously healed. There is no other attestation of this belief in sources roughly contemporaneous with Jesus, but analogous superstitions both ancient and modern are easy to come by.²³⁹

II. The Man

5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to be made 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.”

5:5. Jesus picked a certain invalid on a Sabbath Day (v. 9) at a feast time, a man who had been afflicted **for 38 years**. John did not say what kind of physical problem he had or if he was **an invalid** from birth. In any case his condition was hopeless.

John described these people as “impotent, blind, lame, paralyzed.” What havoc sin has wrought in this world! But the healing of these infirmities was one of the prophesied ministries of the Messiah (Isa. 35:3–6). Had the religious leaders known their own Scriptures, they would have recognized their Redeemer; but they were spiritually blind.

No matter how you look at this miracle, it is an illustration of the grace of God. It was grace that brought Jesus to the Pool of Bethesda, for who would want to mingle with a crowd of helpless people! Jesus did not heal all of them; He singled out one man and healed him. The fact that Jesus came to the man, spoke to him, healed him, and then met him later in the temple is proof of His wonderful grace and mercy

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 304). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

infirmity

Original Word: ἀσθένεια, ας, ἡ

Predefart of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: astheneia

Phonetic Spelling: (as-then'-i-ah)

Short Definition: want of strength, weakness, illness

Definition: want of strength, weakness, illness, suffering, calamity, frailty.

HELPS Word-studies

Cognate: 769 *asthénéia* – properly, without strength (negating the root *sthenos*, "strength"). See 772 (*asthenēs*).

769 /*asthénéia* ("weakness, sickness") refers to an ailment that *deprives someone* of enjoying or accomplishing what they would like to do. 769 (*asthénéia*) focuses on the *handicaps* that go with the weakness.

[769 (*asthénéia*) expresses the *weakening influences* of the illness or a particular problem, especially as someone becomes *wrongly (overly) dependent*.]

6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to be made well?”

5:6. The word **learned** does not mean that **Jesus** received facts from others. It means that He perceived the situation by His knowledge (the Gr. is *gnous*, “knowing”; cf. 1:48; 2:24–25; 4:18). Jesus’ seemingly strange question, **Do you want to get well?** was designed to focus the man’s attention on Him, to stimulate his will, and to raise his hopes. In the spiritual realm man’s great problem is that either he does not recognize he is sick (cf. Isa. 1:5–6; Luke 5:31) or he does not want to be cured. People are often happy, for a while at least, in their sins.

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.”

:7. The man replied that he lacked not the desire but the means to be healed. Without strength and without friends, he could not be helped **when the pool water was stirred**. He had tried but without success.

- a. **Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool:** The man's answer is basically, "Yes, I want to be made well, but I don't see how this can happen."
- i. Calvin speaks well of his response: "The sick man does what we nearly all do. He limits God's help to his own ideas and does not dare promise himself more that he conceives in his mind."
- ii. J.B. Phillips wrote a famous book about this problem, titled *Your God is too Small*. For many of us, we create a small God in our heads, a God who is limited by whatever "box" we try to put God into.

III. The Miracle

8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

:8. **Jesus then said ... Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.** His command carried with it the required enablement. As with dead Lazarus (11:43), Jesus' word accomplished His will. This illustrates conversion. When people obey His command to believe, God works in and through His Word.

Blum, E. A. (1985). John. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 289). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

John 5:8

Arise, take up thy bed, and walk (Ἐγείρε, ἄρον τον κραβαττον σου και περιπατει [*Egeire, āron ton krobatton sou kai peripatei*]). Present active imperative of ἐγείρω [*egeirō*], a sort of exclamation, like our "Get up." The first active imperative (ἄρον

[*āron*] of αἶρω [*airō*]) means to pick up the pallet, and then “go on walking” (present active imperative of περιπατέω [*peripateō*]). For κραβάττον [*krabatton*] (pallet) see Mark 2:2–12; 6:55; Acts 5:15; 9:33.

Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 5:8). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

5:9– God’s supernatural power was evident in the man’s instantaneous cure. **He picked up his mat and walked.** Muscles long atrophied were completely restored. Isaiah prophesied that in the days of the Messiah the lame would “leap like a deer” (Isa. 35:1–7). Here in Jerusalem was a public sign that the Messiah had come.

Blum, E. A. (1985). John. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 289). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

IV. The Madness

And that day was the Sabbath.

10 The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, “It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.”

11 He answered them, “He who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your bed and walk.’ ”

12 Then they asked him, “Who is the Man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?”

13 But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in *that* place.

And that day was the Sabbath.

The Sabbath was a central issue in the conflicts between Jesus and His opponents (cf. Mark 2:23; 3:4). The Mosaic Law required that work cease on the seventh day. Additional laws were added by later Jewish religious authorities, which became very complicated and burdensome. These human traditions often obscured the divine intention in God's Law. "The Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27) so that he could have rest and a time for worship and joy. The Jews' rigid tradition (not the Old Testament) taught that if anyone carried anything from a public place to a private place on the Sabbath intentionally, he deserved death by stoning. In this case the man who was healed was in danger of losing his life.

Blum, E. A. (1985). John. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 289). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Our Lord's first two miracles recorded by John were somewhat private in nature. The servants and the disciples knew that He transformed the water into wine, and the servants and the nobleman's family knew that He had healed the sick son. The miracle recorded in John 5 was not only public, but it was performed on the Sabbath Day and incited the opposition of the religious leaders. We see here the beginning of "official persecution" against the Saviour.

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 304). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The miracle would have caused no problem except that it occurred on the Sabbath Day. Our Lord certainly could have come a day earlier, or even waited a day; but He wanted to get the attention of the religious leaders. Later, He would deliberately heal a blind man on the Sabbath (John 9:1–14). The scribes had

listed thirty-nine tasks that were prohibited on the Sabbath, and carrying a burden was one of them. Instead of rejoicing at the wonderful deliverance of the man, the religious leaders condemned him for carrying his bed and thereby breaking the law.

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 304–305). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The importance of the Sabbath in Israel's History cannot be overstated

Ex 20:9–11

Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

10 but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the Lord your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates.

11 For *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Ex 23:12

12 Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.

Ex 31:15–17

15 Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does *any*

work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.

17 It *is* a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.’ ”

Ex 35:2

2 Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh day shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death.

Nu 15:32–36

Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day.

33 And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation.

34 They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him.

35 Then the Lord said to Moses, “The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.”

36 So, as the Lord commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

Jeremiah 17:21 - `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.

Mt 12:1-2

12:1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.

2 And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"

Mk 3:2-5

2 So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

3 And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward."

4 Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent.

5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched *it* out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

Lk 6:6-12

Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered.

- 7 So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him.
- 8 But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, "Arise and stand here." And he arose and stood.
- 9 Then Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?"
- 10 And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.
- 11 But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Lk 13:11–14

- 11 And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise *herself* up.
- 12 But when Jesus saw her, He called *her* to *Him* and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity."
- 13 And He laid *His* hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.
- 14 But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath;

Jn 5:16

16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.

Jn 7:23–24

- 23** If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?
- 24** Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

Jn 9:14–16

14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

- 15** Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”
- 16** Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.”
- 10** The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, “It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.”
- 11** He answered them, “He who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your bed and walk.’”
- 12** Then they asked him, “Who is the Man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?”

13 But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in *that* place.

What man is he ... - In this verse there is a remarkable instance of the “perverseness” of men, of their want of candor, and of the manner in which they often look at a subject. Instead of looking at the miracle, and at the man’s statement of the manner in which he was healed, they look only at what they thought to be a violation of the law.

5:11. The healed man realized this difficulty and tried to evade any responsibility for violating tradition by saying he was just following orders.

5:12–13. The authorities were naturally interested in the identity of **this fellow who told** the invalid to violate their rules. But **the man ... had no** knowledge of Jesus. This seems to be a case in which healing was done in the absence of faith. The invalid was chosen by **Jesus** as an act of grace because of his need and also to display God’s glory in him. Jesus then **had slipped away into the crowd** (cf. 8:59; 10:39; 12:35), so momentarily He was unknown.

Blum, E. A. (1985). John. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 289–290). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

V. The Message

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, “See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.”

15 The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, “See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.”

5:14–15. **Jesus** later **found** the healed man in **the temple** area. This implied that Jesus sought him out in order to speak to him. The ex-paralytic seemed to have no gratitude to Jesus: his conduct put him in a bad light. Jesus’ warning (**Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you**) does not mean that his paralysis was caused by any specific sin (cf. 9:3), though all disease and death come ultimately from sin. The warning was that his tragic life of 38 years as an invalid was no comparison to the doom of hell. Jesus is interested not merely in healing a person’s body. Far more important is the healing of his soul from sin.

Blum, E. A. (1985). John. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 290). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Findeth him (εὕρισκει αὐτον [*heuriskei auton*]). Dramatic present as in 1:45, possibly after search as in 9:35. **Sin no more** (μηκετι ἁμαρτανε [*mēketi hamartane*]). “No longer go on sinning.” Present active imperative with μηκετι [*mēketi*], a clear implication that disease was due to personal sin as is so often the case.

Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 5:14). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

sin no more, &c. —a glimpse this of the reckless life he had probably led *before* his thirty-eight years' infirmity had come upon him, and which not improbably had brought on, in the just judgment of God, his chronic complaint. Fearful illustration this of "the severity of God," but glorious manifestation of our Lord's insight into "what was in man."

15 The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Went away and told (ἀπηλθεν και ειπεν [*apēlthen kai eipen*]). Both aorist active indicatives. Instead of giving heed to the warning of Jesus about his own sins he went off and told the Jews that now he knew who the man was who had commanded him to take up his bed on the Sabbath Day, to clear himself with the ecclesiastics and escape a possible stoning. **That it was Jesus** (ὅτι Ἰησους ἐστιν [*hoti Iēsous estin*]). Present indicative preserved in indirect discourse. The man was either ungrateful and wilfully betrayed Jesus or he was incompetent and did not know that he was bringing trouble on his benefactor. In either case one has small respect for him.

Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 5:15). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

15. The man departed, and told, &c. —little thinking how unwelcome his grateful and eager testimony would be. "The darkness received not the light which was pouring its rays upon it" (Jn 1:5, 11) [Olshausen].

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 136). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.