

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ◇ Deo ◇ Gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

The Healing at the Pool on the Sabbath

John 5:1-18

February 20, 2005

- This is the FOURTH Sign that Jesus performs in the Gospel of John
 - A Miracle underscores the **power of God** and is received with a sense of awe.
 - A Sign is something that **reveals and discloses what was hidden before**.
- The Seven Signs in the Gospel of John:
 1. The Changing of Water into Wine (2:1-11)
 2. The Temple Cleansing (2:13-22)
 3. The Healing of a Nobleman's Son (4:46-54)
 4. The Healing of a Lame Man (5:1-15)
 5. The Feeding of the Multitude (6:1-15)
 6. The Healing of the Blind Man (9:1-41)
 7. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-44)

Chapter 5

Verse 1

- “a feast of the Jews”
 - There were seven Feasts of Israel:
 1. Passover
 2. Feast of Unleavened Bread
 3. Day of Firstfruits *
 4. Feast of Pentecost *
 5. Day of Trumpets
 6. Day of Atonement
 7. Feast of Tabernacles
 - * *Occurred every year on Sunday, the day **after** the Sabbath*
- Here, in John 5:1, the reference is probably to *Tabernacles* or *Passover*
- In John, Jesus is the **fulfillment of the Feasts of Israel**

Verse 2 – 5

- “Bethesda” is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning, “house of outpouring”
- “It was a double pool, generally identified with the pools excavated near St. Anne’s Church just inside St. Stephens Gate of present-day Jerusalem. Each pool was trapezoidal in shape, and the overall length of the two pools (north to south) was about 318 feet. The smaller pool to the north was about 197 feet wide on its northern side and the larger southern pool was about 250 feet wide on its southern side. The five colonnades were located one on each of the four sides of the double pool and one across the center dividing the two pools.”
- The two pools were fed by large reservoirs called Solomon’s pools
- They also may have been fed by subterranean springs, which caused a disturbance (“when the water was stirred up” in Verse 7)
 - Some less important manuscripts have Verses 3b – 4: “and they waited for the moving of the waters. From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease he had.”
 - It is **very** unlikely that this passage occurred in the original manuscripts
- According to some ancient accounts, the water had a reddish color to it that was thought to be medicinal – the spring, therefore, may have been chalybeate
- What good did the superstitious waters have to heal those who bathed in them?
- “Just as the water from the purification pots of the orthodox could neither produce nor be mistaken for the new wine of the kingdom [when Jesus turned water into wine]; and just as the water from Jacob’s well could not satiate the ultimate thirst of religious people who may have looked to genuine revelation but whose views were widely viewed as aberrant [in the woman at the well]; so the promises of merely superstitious religion have no power to transform the truly needy.” D.A. Carson

Verse 6

- The Greek participle *gnous* possibly suggests **supernatural** knowledge:
 - “...[Jesus] *knew* that he had been there a long time...”
 - This is similar to Christ’s encounter with Nathanael (1:47-48) and the Samaritan woman (4:16-19)

- Unlike the account of the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12 – **Jesus chose this man out of the crowd of invalids**
- **WHY MUST JESUS TAKE THE INITIATIVE?** (Recall also, the Samaritan Woman)

Verse 7

- According to tradition / superstition, when the waters were disturbed (stirred up) [by an angel], the first person into the pool would be healed of his illness or infirmity.
- According to the paralytic, he had no friend to put him into the water, and therefore, someone always beat him into the water first

Verse 8

- *Get up!* is a command by Jesus that emphasizes the power of the voice of the Son of God
- Not only did this healing give the man enough strength to walk, but also to carry his mat

Verse 9

- It was the Sabbath – Saturday
- The Synoptics record several instances where Christ’s activities on the Sabbath cause great controversy (Mark 2:23 – 3:6; Luke 13:10 – 17; 14:1 – 6; Matthew 12:1 – 14)

Verse 10 – 12

- **So** in the NASB indicates that it was **because** it was the Sabbath that the *Jews* wanted to know why the man was **working on the Sabbath** – a crime punishable by death
 - *The Jews* refers to the authorities in Jerusalem, likely it was predominantly Pharisees
- The Jewish authorities created a “hedge” around the law to, in theory, prevent them from breaking the Law.
 - Logically, they believed, if they could keep the “hedge” (which they often held as authoritative as the Law itself), they would protect themselves from infringing upon the Law

- **The Pharisees (the Teachers of the Law) focused, primarily, on two aspects of the Law:**
 - **Circumcision**
 - **Sabbath keeping**
- **WHY?**
 - One of the characteristics of biblical covenants was a **sign**.
 - ❖ For example, the *sign* of God's covenant with Noah was a rainbow
 - ❖ **Circumcision** was the ceremonial *sign* of God's covenant with Abraham
 - ❖ **The Sabbath** was the ceremonial *sign* of the Mosaic covenant
 - Therefore, to break the Sabbath was, in some way, to be guilty of breaking all of the Laws of Moses.
- *The Jews* emphasized obedience to the Law
 - They were legalistic in the development and adherence to Rabbinical (extra-biblical) law



Hedge;
Oral Tradition;
Rabbinic Tradition

- Example of the Law vs. the Rabbinical Tradition
 - Law: Remember the Sabbath and Keep it Holy.
 - Rabbinical Tradition: Is it lawful to eat an egg laid on the Sabbath?

- The leaders of the Jews obeyed the Law as far as appearances were concerned; however, their hearts were far from God
 - See Isaiah 1
 - Read Matthew 23:23
- **To ensure that the Sabbath Law was not broken, Jewish rabbis defined thirty-nine types of work that were prohibited on the Sabbath:**

“The main classes of work are forty save one (39); sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, cleansing crops, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, washing or beating or dyeing wool, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying [a knot], loosening [a knot], sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, hunting a gazelle, slaughtering or flaying or salting it or curing its skin, scraping it or cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, putting out a fire, lighting a fire, striking with a hammer and taking out aught from one domain to another. These are the main classes of work: forty save one (39). (*Sabbat* 7:2).”

- Also, “(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 work and therefore forbidden.
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- NOTICE: The man **blames Christ** when confronted by *the Jews*
- The authorities then wonder who it is that is **commanding** people to break the [rabbinical] Sabbath laws (i.e. “take up your bed, and walk”)
- This was the first time in the Gospel of John when the Jewish authorities begin showing hostility towards Jesus

Verse 13

- Why had Jesus “slipped away”?
 - **How does this reveal His deity?**
 - **What would have been the most “human” action at this point?**

Verse 14

- Later, Jesus found the healed man in the temple.

- Jesus words, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore” indicate that, likely, the man’s illness was a result of specific sins in his life.
- Jesus later states that illness and ailments are not *necessarily* the direct consequence of specific sins; however, this situation appears to be the exception
- **This is possibly why Jesus chose this man to heal – because his infirmity was a result of his sin, unlike the other sick, blind, and lame by the pool**
- “do not sin anymore *so that nothing worse happens to you*” probably refers to eternal judgment.

Verse 15

- It is almost as though the words of Jesus agitated the man
- **We do not know the motives of the man**, however, he immediately informs the authorities that it was *this* man who commanded him to “Pick up his pallet and walk”
- NOTICE: The man does not appear to have faith *in* Christ, despite being miraculously healed.
 - What does this reveal about authentic faith?

Verse 16

- Although Jesus had not technically *worked* on the Sabbath, he caused another man to do so (according to rabbinical law)
 - Therefore, the Jews were persecuting Him

Verse 17

- It was understood by the rabbis of Jesus’ day that God worked on the Sabbath
- Towards the end of the first century, a group of prominent rabbis (Rabban Gamaliel II, R. Joshua, R. Eleazar b. Azariah, and R. Akiba) to discuss the issue of God working on the Sabbath
- They concluded that God does work on the Sabbath, and is NOT in violation of the Sabbath law because:
 - The entire universe is His domain (Isaiah 6:3), and therefore, He cannot carry anything outside of it

- In other words, God fills the whole world (Jeremiah 23:24); and
- God cannot lift anything to a height greater than his own stature (*Exodus Rabbah* 30:9; *Genesis Rabbah* 11:10)
- Therefore, both the rabbis and Jesus “recognize that God continues to work on the Sabbath.”
- “His providential care of the world, his administration of justice (when people die on the Sabbath), and his creation of life (when children are born on the Sabbath) all continue unabated.”
- Therefore, only God was permitted to work on Saturday, and for any individual to claim that he could work on the Sabbath was to equate himself with God.
- This was, in effect, what Jesus was doing.
- **First of all, Jesus called God [the Father] “My Father”**
 - No Jew at the time would be so presumptuous to refer to God in such a personal manner
- **Jesus claims to be *working* as His Father does**
 - Christ’s ***work*** in the Gospel of John refers to His work of **salvation**
- Jesus knew that, as the fulfillment of the Law, He was also the fulfillment of the Sabbath:
 - Matthew 11:28-29 states,
“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.”
 - The word *Sabbath*, or *Shabbat*, means “rest.”
 - **Therefore, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, He becomes our *Shabbat*, our true *Sabbath*, our rest.**
 - Mark 2:27-28 states, Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”
 - **“But just as the Fourth Gospel suggests that the various Jewish feasts, rightly understood, anticipated Jesus and thereby ‘testify’ to him, so it may be that the Sabbath festival is understood to point to him. The possibility is strengthened if Jesus is presupposing (as also**

Hebrews 4:3-10) that God's seventh-day rest (*sabbatismos*) at creation has never ended. In the Hebrews passage this 'sabbath-rest' is part of a pattern of 'rests' in the Old Testament: the seventh day, the rest of entering into the Promised Land, the promise of rest in the Psalms. The conclusion is drawn that there is still a rest for the people of God, a rest that can be entered and enjoyed by faith in Christ. This is a rest from dead works, a joyful participation in the salvation that has already dawned in Christ." D.A. Carson

Verse 18

- The Jews were seeking to kill Jesus because He: (1) claimed equality with the Father, and (2) broke the Sabbath (according to rabbinical tradition) willfully
- **How did the Jews fundamentally misunderstand Jesus' equality with the Father?**
- Jesus is _____ from the Father in His _____, yet he is the same in _____.