

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. I would like to invite you to take God's Word and turn with me to John chapter 5.
2. We are looking again at chapter 5 where Jesus heals a crippled man at Bethesda.
3. As we look at this today, we're going to see the greatest claim that Jesus ever made.
4. I want to begin our reading at verse 17 and read through verse 24.
5. Read John 5:17-24.
6. As we look at verses 17-24, we need to first see that verses 17-18 are transitional and serve as the climax to the story of healing the crippled man on the Sabbath.
7. Two times in verses 1-16, we hear that this healing took place on "the Sabbath" (vv.9, 16).
8. Because this took place on the Sabbath, the religious authorities were beside themselves.
9. First they confront the healed man in verse 10 by saying "It is not permissible for you to carry your pallet" on the Sabbath but the healed man replied in verse 11 by saying,

“He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’”

10. They wanted to know who told him this but he did not know who it was (v.13).
11. Later Jesus finds the healed man in the temple area and tells him not to sin anymore, “so that nothing worse happens to you” (v.14).
12. The man goes away and tells “the Jews that it was Jesus who made him well” (v.15).
13. Verse 16 says, “For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.”
14. First we need to understand that the accusation of the Jews of Jesus violating the Sabbath was not correct.
15. He did not violate the Old Testament regulation.
16. He violated the rabbinic additions to those regulations.
17. As Gerald L. Borchert says, “Not only in John but also in the Synoptics is Jesus portrayed as seemingly unconcerned for the rabbinic traditions about the Sabbath.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1996). 228.

18. What does the Bible say about the Sabbath?
19. Exodus 20:8-11 (NASB) <sup>8</sup> "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. <sup>11</sup> "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.
20. There are some today who say that Christians are to keep the Sabbath day.
21. The problem with that statement is that it is not binding under the New Covenant.
22. There is convincing evidence for that in Scripture.
23. First, the Sabbath was the sign to Israel of the Old Covenant.
24. Exodus 31:16-17 (NASB) <sup>16</sup> 'So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' <sup>17</sup> "It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased *from labor*, and was refreshed."
25. Ezekiel 20:12 (NASB) "Also I gave them My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them.

26. Because we are now under the New Covenant according to Hebrews 8, we are no longer required to keep the sign of the Old Covenant.
27. Second, the New Testament nowhere commands Christians to observe the Sabbath.
28. Third, in our only glimpse of the early church worship service in the New Testament, we find the church meeting on Sunday, the first day of the week.
29. Acts 20:7 (NASB) On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.
30. Fourth, we find no hint in the Old Testament that God expected the Gentile nations to observe the Sabbath, nor are they ever condemned for failing to do so. That is certainly strange if He expected all peoples to observe the Sabbath.
31. Fifth, there is no evidence of anyone's keeping the Sabbath before the time of Moses, nor are there any commands to keep the Sabbath before the giving of the law at Mount Sinai.
32. Sixth, the Jerusalem Council did not impose Sabbath keeping on the Gentile believers in Acts 15.
33. Seventh, Paul warned the Gentiles about many different sins in his epistles, but never about breaking the Sabbath.

34. Eighth, Paul rebuked the Galatians for thinking God expected them to observe special days (including the Sabbath).
35. Galatians 4:10-11 (NASB) <sup>10</sup> You observe days and months and seasons and years. <sup>11</sup> I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.
36. Ninth, Paul taught that keeping the Sabbath was a matter of Christian liberty.
37. Romans 14:5 (NASB) One person regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.
38. Tenth, the early church Fathers, from Ignitions to Augustine, taught that the Old Testament Sabbath had been abolished and that the first day of the week (Sunday) was the day when Christians should meet for worship. That disproves the claim of some that Sunday worship was not instituted until the fourth century.<sup>2</sup>
39. William Hendriksen asks the question, “Do the Jews really mean to say that the essence of the sabbath is idleness, and that all work on that day is wrong? But then would they not be accusing God himself of sabbath-violation? If up to this very moment the Father of Jesus is carrying on the work of preservation and redemption, how should not the Son, who stands in the closest possible relation to him (5:19–23), do

---

<sup>2</sup>John MacArthur, *Colossians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1992). 118.

the same? In the final analysis, Father and Son are engaged in *one* task. Hence, we read: **But he answered them, My Father is working until now, and I too am working.**<sup>3</sup>

40. John Walvoord says, “God rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2-3) from His work of Creation...[but He did not rest from sustaining] the universe, beget[ing] life, [or] visit[ing] judgments.”<sup>4</sup>

41. About the end of the first century, four eminent rabbis (Rabban Gamaliel II, R. Joshua, R. Eleazar b. Azariah, and R. Akiba) discussed the point, and concluded that although God works constantly, he cannot rightly be charged with violating the Sabbath law, since (1) the entire universe is his domain (Is. 6:3), and therefore he never carries anything outside it; (2) otherwise put, God fills the whole world (Je. 23:24); and in any case (3) God lifts nothing to a height

---

<sup>3</sup>William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary : Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001). 1:196.

<sup>4</sup>John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985). 2:290.

greater than his own stature (*Exodus Rabbah* 30:9; cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 11:10).<sup>5</sup>

42. In verses 17-24 Jesus essentially says He is equal with the Father in 8 ways therefore making the most startling claim ever made—He is God.
43. This morning we are going to look only at the first one found in verse 17 where He claims *equality with God in His Person*.

---

<sup>5</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 247.

## I. Jesus is Equal to God in His Person (vv.17-18)

He says in verses 17-18, "But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." <sup>18</sup> For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

The NASB is correct when it says in verse 17 that Jesus "answered them" because The Greek says 'Jesus *answered* them', not simply 'Jesus *said* to them': no word from Jesus' opponents has been recorded, but he responds to their opposition and plots.<sup>6</sup>

They were continually "persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath" (v.16), so in verses 17-24 He "answered" them by stating 3 truths:

First He said...

### A. God was His Father (v.17a)

I could just see their eyes light up with fury when He begins by saying, "My Father."

---

<sup>6</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 247.



Jesus did not say “your Father” or even “our Father.” His opponents did not miss His claim to Deity.<sup>7</sup> That is well noted in the next verse.

1. In John’s Gospel, He refers to God as “My Father” 21 times.

Here’s a few of those times:

- a) He says in John 5:43, “I have come in **My Father’s** name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.”
- b) In John 6:32 (NASB) He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is **My Father** who gives you the true bread out of heaven.
- c) In John 6:40 (NASB) He says, "For this is the will of **My Father**, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

---

<sup>7</sup>John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985). 2:290.

- d) He uses it this phrase two times in John 8:19 when answering their question, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor **My Father**; if you knew Me, you would know **My Father** also."
- 2. Not only did Jesus refer to God as His Father but He also referred to the angels, the elect, and the Kingdom as His.
  - a) Of the angels He said in Matthew 13:41, "The Son of Man will send forth **His angels**, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness.
  - b) In Matthew 24:30-31 He refers to both the angels and the elect as His:

"And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> "And He will send forth **His angels** with a great trumpet and they will gather together **His elect** from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.
  - c) In Matthew 16:28 (NASB) He speaks of "His Kingdom":

"Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in *His kingdom*."

3. Jesus assumed the prerogatives of deity.
  - a) He claimed to have control over people's eternal destinies – John 5:27-29
  - b) He claimed to have authority over the divinely ordained institution of the Sabbath – Matthew 12:8 (NASB) "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."
  - c) He claimed to have the power to answer prayer – John 14:13-14 (NASB) <sup>13</sup> "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*."
  - d) He claimed to have the right to receive worship, faith, and obedience due to God alone – Matthew 21:16 (NASB) and said to Him, "Do You hear what these *children* are saying?" And Jesus said\* to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies You have prepared praise for Yourself'?"

- e) He also assumed the right to forgive sins – Mark 2:5-11 (NASB) <sup>5</sup> And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "**Son, your sins are forgiven.**" <sup>6</sup> But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup> "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" <sup>8</sup> Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?" <sup>9</sup> "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'?" <sup>10</sup> "**But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**"—He said\* to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup> "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."
- f) He claimed to be the Messiah to the Samaritan woman in John 4:26 (NASB) Jesus said to her, "**I who speak to you am He.**"
- g) He claimed to be the "I AM" before the Sanhedrin – Luke 22:66-71 (NASB) <sup>66</sup> When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council *chamber*, saying, <sup>67</sup> "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; <sup>68</sup> and if I ask a question, you will not

answer. <sup>69</sup> "But from now on The Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God ." <sup>70</sup> And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "**Yes, I am.**" <sup>71</sup> Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

4. The Jews understood in John 5:17 what He meant when He referred to God as His Father.

Verse 18 says they were "seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, **but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.**"

"Equal" (isos) means, "same" (GING).

Warren Wiersbe says, "Jesus made Himself equal with God because He is God. This is the theme of John's Gospel. The Jewish leaders could not disprove His claims, so they tried to destroy Him and get Him out of the way. Both in His crucifixion and His resurrection, Jesus openly affirmed His deity and turned His enemies' weapons against them."<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989). Jn 5:16.

Addressing their opposition for His healing on the Sabbath Jesus continues by saying...

B. God Works on the Sabbath (v.17b)

He says, “My Father is working until now.”

This implies that the Sabbath was not instituted for God’s benefit but for man’s (Mark 2:27). In other words, the Sabbath restriction on working did not apply to God; He was not required to rest on every seventh day. It is true that at the end of creation week, He “rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done” (Gen. 2:2). That, however, was not because He was tired or received some benefit, for “the Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired” (Isa. 40:28). Instead, it was to set a divine example for man to rest one day out of each week (Ex. 20:9–11).<sup>9</sup>

The Father’s work in maintaining and redeeming the world has continued from the creation until the present moment (ἕως ἄρτι): *until now*, not interrupted by the Sabbath.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary : John 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006). 185.

<sup>10</sup>Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002). 2:134.

When Paul healed a man in Lystra, they called him Zeus and wanted to worship him. When he understood this, he cried out seeking to stop them and said that “you should turn to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness” (Acts 14:15-17).

What kind of witness did He give? One that speaks of God’s continual work “in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness” (v.17).

Because He rested on the seventh day from His creative work, does not mean He stopped doing “good” or giving “rains” and “fruitful seasons” and “food.”

Nor does it mean that He stopped the work of redemption.

Jesus told Philip in John 14:10 (NASB) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

J. Vernon McGee says, “When that man got down into the ditch of sin, the Lord Jesus and the Father could no longer rest on the Sabbath Day.”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup>J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981). 4:396.

Jesus continues by saying...

C. He is Working Also (v.17c)

“and I Myself am working.”

His “working” according to the context refers to healing the sick and calling those whom He has chosen to follow Him (e.g. the disciples and the Samaritans).

He came, as Luke 19:10 says, “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Matthew 4:23-5:2 tells us about Jesus’ work: <sup>23</sup> Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, *teaching* in their synagogues and *proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom*, and *healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people*. <sup>24</sup> The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and *He healed them*. <sup>25</sup> Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan. <sup>1</sup> When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> He opened His mouth and *began to teach* them.

D.A. Carson says, “The work Jesus does includes telling the healed invalid to carry his mat, but it also includes the healing itself, and, principally, all the redemptive activity Jesus undertakes. In the minute circumstances of the immediate crisis, the healed man



is justified in carrying his mat because Jesus has ordered him to, and in doing so Jesus is ‘working’, just like the Father. Just as the fact that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath can be used to defend the actions of Jesus’ disciples (Mk. 2:23–28), so the fact that Jesus’ works fall into the same category as his Father’s works serves to exonerate the man who carries his mat.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus’ defense is shattering to their rabbinic additions to the Sabbath. God did not stop working on the Sabbath day and neither did he. Any scholarly Jew would grasp its full force. Philo had said: “God never ceases doing, but as it is the property of fire to burn and snow to chill, so it is the property of God to do.”<sup>13</sup>

In verse 18 we see the Jews response to Jesus’ statement...

#### D. The Jews Wanted to Kill Jesus (v.18)

Verse 18 says, “For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only

---

<sup>12</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 248.

<sup>13</sup>*The Gospel of John : Volume 1*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975). 183.

was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”

They instantly grasped the import of Jesus’ words and intensified their efforts to take His life, not just for exposing their self-styled legalism, but now with justification (in their minds), because He was asserting His deity.

The verb “seeking” in verse 18 is an imperfect and it indicates continuous action. In other words, John is saying the Jews were continuously seeking to kill Him.

1. John 7:1 (NASB) After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea **because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.**
2. John 7:19 (NASB) "Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? **Why do you seek to kill Me?**"
3. John 7:25 (NASB) So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "**Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?**"
4. John 8:37 (NASB) "I know that you are Abraham's descendants; **yet you seek to kill Me,** because My word has no place in you.
5. John 8:40 (NASB) "But as it is, **you are seeking to kill Me,** a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.

6. John 8:58-59 (NASB) <sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." <sup>59</sup> **Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him,** but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.
  
7. John 11:47-53 (NASB) <sup>47</sup> Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs." <sup>48</sup> "If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." <sup>49</sup> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup> nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." <sup>51</sup> Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, **he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation,** <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. <sup>53</sup> **So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.**

## **CONCLUSION**

1. There is only one of two responses to Jesus: believe in Him or kill Him.
2. What is your response to Him today?
3. Either He is God or He is not.

4. C.S. Lewis said, “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.”

“You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”<sup>14</sup>

5. Lord or lunatic? You decide.
6. Let’s pray.

---

<sup>14</sup> Josh MacDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Volume I* (San Bernadino, CA: Here’s Life Publishers, 1986). 103.