

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: When Jesus healed the lame man during one of the Jewish feasts, the Jewish leaders were greatly angered. This was more than improper; they saw this work as a challenge to their position and rules. So, they started their campaign of harassment, but since they could find no fault in Him, they also started their false accusations and even tried to kill Him. Jesus put them in their place for protesting His healing on the Sabbath: *my Father never stops work, why should I?* Such a statement would indicate to a Jew that Jesus is equal with God. Keep in mind they were upset because He broke their traditions (not God's) and disrespected their rules while they truly hindered God's. Hypocrites hate the real thing; it shows them up. Then Jesus further established His position, *I assure you, the Son can do only as he sees His Father do, and what the Father does the Son does too, for the Father Loves the Son and we are in perfect relationship. And the Son will do far greater things than this minor healing. He will raise the dead, give life, and will have the authority to pronounce judgment on all mankind. All will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. If you do not honor the Son, you can't honor the Father. If you believe in my Message and believe that God sent me, you will have eternal life and you will never be condemned. All will hear my voice, the Son of God—even the dead who will rise again, because He is the Son of man. Those who do good will have eternal life; those who continue to be evil will only receive judgment. Nothing the Son does is without the consult and will of the Father and all will be absolutely just, according to the will of God.*

Contexts and Background:

For thirty-eight years, a man was ill and sought healing in a pool that supposedly had healing properties. He seemed determined to be healed, but somehow he was not able to get into the water to be healed. He was a man with all kinds of excuses and reasons why he could not get in and get on with his life. Thus, he chose to sit and wait; the result was nothing but despair and excuses. And, when he was finally healed and could walk, he was filled with ingratitude and did the opposite of what one would do with faith—he betrayed the One who healed him. This incident set off a chain of events that caused the religious leaders to persecute Jesus, which then led to our Lord's betrayal, arrest, and sentence of death—all because a controversy arose from an occurrence during one of the primary feast days.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Sabbath.* This was a weekly celebration of rest and worship, lasting from Friday evening through Saturday evening. Traditionally, the Sabbath was instituted on the seventh day of creation. It was observed at the temple meeting (tent of the Ark) before the Temple of Solomon was built, and continued centuries later in the temple of Solomon. It was a symbol of God's sovereignty and Lordship as well as a reminder of the redemption to come for the people under the Law, the redemption that we now have in the work of Christ. Jesus broke His Sabbath rest to help those in just need because God sent Him, the Savior, to heal humanity's woes (Gen. 3:8; Ex. 20:8; Duet. 5:12; Matt. 2:23; 3:4; 12: 1-8; Mark 2:27; Acts 20:7; Rom. 14:5-6).
- *Persecuted.* The Jewish leaders felt that Jesus was desecrating a sacred act of God, the Sabbath; more to the point, He was attacking their wayward views on it by expanding and explaining who God is, the real role of the Sabbath, and who can indeed work on it. This testimony is used by the attackers of Christianity that there are two Gods, but elsewhere in Scripture, this matter is cleared up as there is One God with three manifestations or personalities.
- *My Father.* Meaning a very close relationship that was not humanly possible. Jesus retorts back to the Jewish leaders that they have no right to criticize Him, because He is doing what God would have Him do. Referring to God, only He has the right and permission to work on the Sabbath. This is a name of reverence and devotion, and not to be taken as a cheap saying, or a word to put God in just a "friend" category. We are adopted into His family, and He loves us ever so deeply (Ex. 20:7; Jer. 34:16; 44:25-26; Ezek. 13:19; 20:14; Amos 2:7; John 20:17)!

- *His work.* Referring to the activity of God through His creation, that He is living and active in the universe and in us personally and thus, also Lord over the Sabbath. This also means God is the Creator and sustainer of all things and persons and even works on the Sabbath Himself (Gen. 2:1-3).
- *Working.* Referring to Jesus' activity in creation, a very powerful expression of Deity that He is the One who sustains the universe including all life, time, matter, and thought. The Jews knew that God does not take a break, so when Jesus says the same thing, He equates Himself with God (John 7:22-23; Col. 1:15-18; Heb. 1:1-14).
- *God his own Father.* It was Jewish custom that sons imitate their father; Jesus uses this as an illustration to make His point.
- *Equal with God.* These leaders belied what Jesus was saying—that He is equal with God, because He has the same authority. Jesus, being God in His role as the second person of the Trinity, points to His Godhood and His and His Father's role. His purpose on earth was to glorify God and point all people to worship Him as LORD so they could serve Him well. This passage begins His sacrifice, as these leaders refused to recognize or bow to Him, missing His salvation. The question is, are we like the lame man who, when healed, became even more lame in faith and purpose or are we grateful for His work so we worship Him as Lord (Jer. 7:11; Matt. 21:13; Luke 6:5; John 1:14; 2:13-25).
- *The Son.* Jesus clarifies His role—that He is still obedient and only does what the Father called and sent Him to do. This did not mean Jesus did not have ability, rather that his actions had purpose and obedience to His Father. Thus, their contention was not really with Him but with the Most Sovereign Holy God, and if they usurped Him, they usurped His honor as well. This is also the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy that a king would come under God's authority (Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 11:29; John 5:27; 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 3:13; Phil. 2:6-8).
- *Father does the Son also does.* Here, Jesus very clearly claimed to be God. (Strange—the liberals say He never does.) God gives Jesus this authority and He is equal with God, a proof of the Trinity. This does not mean that Jesus was an honored representative; rather He is to be honored and worshiped—something that an agent or angel could never claim (Ex. 20:5; Psalm 2:11-12; Isa. 42:8; 48:11).
- *Father raises the dead... Son gives life.* This is also a proclamation of Godhood and the right to judge. These are greater than healing and were things that only the One True God, Yahweh, could do. This is also a retort to some of the leaders who were Sadducees; they denied life after death or a resurrection (Matt. 22:23).
- *Honor.* Meaning the holy awe and fear of the Lord, our reverence and utmost respect, and how we come to Him for worship, for we all will give account for our lives and choices as well as receive His forgiveness when we receive Him and repent (Phil. 2:9-11).
- *Condemned.* This means judgment, and this will happen, but the point is that Christ's main mission is to save. He does not want to condemn nor does He delight in our bad choices. He hates sin and death, but because of our hardened pride, we condemn ourselves and bring judgment upon us. Only Christ can save. This also means that Jesus was not ready to judge at the time of this Gospel and this study's writing; His Second coming and Judgment day had not yet occurred (Ezek. 18:23-32; John 9:39; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). This also means we no longer have to fear the penalty and wrath of Christ. We are not just saved from our sins; we are saved from God by God. He is pure and sinless and cannot intermingle with us in our sinful state. We no longer need to fear death, punishment, or judgment as long as we are in Christ! (John 14:19-20; Rom. 8:1-39; Rev. 20:11-15)
- *The dead.* Referring to those who have died as most Jews believed that the body and soul are separated at death. The soul either goes to *Sheol*, the place of the dead, to be tormented and separated from God (hell), or to Abraham's Bosom (heaven.) The Greeks had similar beliefs at this time. Elsewhere, this can also mean those who are dead spiritually; this does not mean "soul sleep,"

that we go to sleep and rise when Christ returns or some other esoteric theory (Matt. 5:22; Mark 9:43-48; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8).

- *Granted the Son.* This does not mean the Father created the Son. Both are one and eternally existing (John 1:1-3; Phil. 2:6-11).
- *Life in himself.* Meaning The Supreme God, Who is the only one who has life and can bestow life. Also means that God is uncreated, timeless, and eternal, and has no outside source to sustain Him, whereas we must have His life sustaining us for us to exist. As some translations say, He is *self-begotten*. This applies, in context, in another sense to the spiritual union of believers with Christ. In Galatians (Gal. 3:26-28), we see both the inward and outward means of this relationship in faith (John 3:15-17; 11:25; 14:6).
- *Son of man.* Usually the messianic title of Christ. Here, it refers to Christ as Lord of the eternal realm as in the other Gospels. This is also a “Semitic” form as an indication for or the identification with humanity. Even though this entire passage is set to prove Christ, this is also an illustration of Christ’s love for humanity and why He sacrificed Himself for us. (Dan. 7:13-14; Mark 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33-34; 14:21, 41; Matt. 24:30-26:64; John 1:51; Heb. 2:5-11; Rev. 1:13; 14:14).
- *All... will hear his voice.* Showing there is no annihilation after death. All will rise, all with be resurrected, the righteous going to heaven and the guilty to eternal damnation. If you worship God, then you must also worship Jesus Christ. If not, you are not truly worshipping God. If you refuse to worship Jesus, you dishonor Him and in so doing, dishonor God (Matt. 28:18; John 17:2).
- *Have done good.* Meaning receiving His favor, election, and salvation. This does not mean we earn it; it comes by who Christ is and what He did for us that we receive by faith alone and not by works. Works are always evident, like the Fruit of the Spirit, to show that one is regenerated. Pride shows one is in deep trouble, but only Christ judges eternally (John 3:21; 6:29; Rom. 2:5-10; James 2:14-20).
- *Will rise/resurrection.* Jesus has the power to grant life and to save the lost. Except for the Sadducees, most in Judaism believed and had this hope. For Christians, our lives here on earth are just the beginnings of what is to come in eternity (Dan. 12:1-2; John 3:36; 5:25-29; 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:21, 35-54; 2 Cor. 4:14; Eph. 2:1; Phil. 3:14-21; Col. 2:131 John 1:7; 5:11-13; 14:15).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

The leaders hid behind their traditions, and as they continued to add countless regulations to the original Law, so the original Law became too distant to see. They created a barrier of traditions that prevented them and the people who followed them from ever seeing the One True God and His plan for them. Perhaps this originally was a wall of protection, a hedge to make sure no one accidentally strayed into unrighteousness. But, it went from a position of piety to a position of legalism and hypocrisy. Let us not do this heinous act. They felt they were justified by their acts. We can come up with all kinds of ideas and arguments for why we should stay the way we are or think the way we always have. Yet, these ideas are persecutions to our Lord. These are ideas that keep us back from His plan and our continued growth in Him. They prevent us from being effective with others in our relationships and opportunities (Mark 7:8).

What were their real motivations for attacking Jesus? They probably had seen this man for years and perhaps, they had never even thought to help him or done much of anything to help anyone, and here comes someone who does! Nobody likes to be shown up—especially hypocrites! So, instead of saying, *wow, you are healed; wow, Praise God*, they decided to go after, with vengeance, the person who healed him. Perverse, wicked, strange, or, we can just say, human. So, they found a regulation from their own law—not God’s Law—and used it to go after Jesus. It would be like being stopped by a police officer, not because you were speeding but because you had an annoying bumper sticker. You did not break any law, but you broke one of his personal “pet-peeves.” Or, he decides to write you a ticket for driving a Toyota instead of a Chevy. The man is thinking that he is in big trouble because he was confronted by the leaders of the Law. The Law said that anyone caught bearing a burden on the Sabbath was to be stoned. This punishment was not often carried out, but still the man was in real trouble. Yet, he seemed to show no

gratitude or loyalty to the One who healed him. Notice that the minute this man got in trouble, he blamed Jesus and passed the responsibility; yet, Jesus was there, bailing him out. How has Jesus bailed you out?

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How has Jesus bailed you out? How did you feel and respond?
2. What do you think were their real motivations for attacking Jesus? How have you attacked Jesus? Tough question—think this one through!
3. What can you do to make sure that you have more in your spiritual arsenal than just belief? Why is this important?
4. Do you know someone like the lame man (no names please) who, when released from a bad situation, came out of it lame with faith and not grateful? How would a redirect to truly worship Christ as Lord help your attitude?
5. What does this passage, especially verse 24, tell us about how we get eternal life?
6. How have you lost sight of Christ? What happens when a Christian leader loses sight of his or her mission to glorify Christ? How does this create problems in His Kingdom?
7. Why is it that real ministry and effectiveness can never come from a person's will, or efforts to seek power and control or to make a name for ourselves, but real ministry can only come from our Lord? I
8. What are some ideas or fears or hurts that keep you back from His plan and your continued growth in Christ? How does this prevent you from being effective with God and others and in your opportunities?
9. As Christians, our lives here on earth are just the beginnings of what is to come in eternity. How does this help you with faith, anxiety, or what lies ahead for you?
10. How confident are you about the holy awe and fear of our Lord? What can you do to improve your reverence and utmost respect for Him? Do not forget how we are to come to Christ for worship matters, for we will give account for our lives and choices as well as receive His forgiveness when we receive Him and repent!
11. What kind of despair and excuses have you given to God and others? What do you need to do to get a grip on what hurts you or causes you anxiety or dread?
12. How can you better allow the holiness of our Lord, His grace, patience, understanding, faith, loyalty, goodness, and love to be exhibited in you?