

# COMMENTARY ON JOHN

## LESSON NUMBER 60

John 5:15 *“The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. <sup>16</sup> And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup> But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. <sup>18</sup> Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making himself equal with God.”* ..... John 5:15-18

### **THE JEWS PERSECUTE JESUS AND SEEK TO KILL HIM**

#### INTRODUCTION

John began His Gospel proclaiming who Jesus was before His entrance into the world: He was *“the Word,” “was with God,” and “was God”* (John 1:1-2). *“All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made”* (1:3). When He shined as Light, *“the darkness comprehended it not”* (1:6). He was *“the True Light”* that gives light *“to every man”* (1:9). *“He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not”* (1:10). *“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not”* (1:11). Those who received Him, *“to them gave He power to become the sons of God”* (1:13). In Jesus, *“the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”* (1:14). This is a most extensive and marvelous introduction to the Person of Jesus Christ, and is the outline of *“the record God has given of His Son.”*

These are the truths that are lived out as Jesus went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (Act 10:38). The opposition of Satan and his hosts were seen in demonic possession, delusion, and the stirring up of those who were the enemies of God. The absolute power and authority of Jesus was lived out before the people – seen in His miracles and the power of His words. The fact that God Almighty supported Jesus was witnessed in what He did. His intolerance for sin and error were seen. The effect truth has upon those who believe it was confirmed in His disciples, and all who believed Him. The power of God was confirmed. The fact that Jesus came to save all man, not just the Jews, was clearly lived out. The unacceptability of a purely routine religion was confirmed. The power of the Savior to forgive sins was made known. I believe you will find it difficult to establish that any fundamental view of God, His power, and His purpose was not made known during the earthly ministry of Jesus, with the apex of it all being seen in His death, burial, and resurrection. It seems to me that believing the record God has given of His Son is the pivot upon which our salvation is suspended, this is how things had to be.

#### **HE TOLD THE JEWS**

John 5:15 *“The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. <sup>16</sup> And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day.”*

**THE MAN DEPARTED.** Jesus had told this formerly impotent man, *"Rise, take up thy bed and walk"* (John 5:8). When the text states, *"The man departed,"* it is conveying to us that this is precisely what Jesus had told the man to do: *"Rise, take up thy bed, and walk"* (John 5:8). This was the first time in thirty-eight years (and maybe even his entire life) when he had walked, to say nothing of carrying a bed when he did. **We see here that when Jesus healed someone there were no lingering effects of the condition from which they were healed.** Some theoretic exceptions are the blind man Jesus healed outside of Bethsaida, whose healing required two touches (Mk 8:23-25), and the nobleman's son who *"began to amend"* (John 4:52). However, in both of those cases the healing wrought by Jesus was thoroughly completed. Also, we have no examples of people requesting Jesus to simply make someone "better," without healing them thoroughly. **It seems to me that it is appropriate for us to think of Jesus doing the optimum.** There are times, it is true, when Jesus allows infirmities to linger, as in the case of Paul (1 Cor 11:30; 12:5), and Timothy (1 Tim 5:23). However, in our initial requests concerning the sick, we can, like Paul, seek a thorough remedy (2 Cor 12:7-8). If that is not the Lord's will, He will make it known to us. Also, by approaching things in this manner, we will experience the inner peace of which Paul wrote: *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Phil 4:6-7).

In our text, the former impotent man, for the first time, left that pool under his own power! That proved the word of Jesus *"was with power"* (Lk 4:32). This outward work also confirmed that God has willed to liberate souls from bondage to sin (Lk 4:18; John 8:36). Fix it in your mind, it took no less power to cause this impotent man to pick up His bed and walk, than it takes to forgive sins, so that a person can keep under his body (1 Cor 9:27), and *"live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world"* (Titus 2:12)! So far as men are concerned, in natural aptitude and natural powers (both physical and spiritual) this is impossible. **However, we must be able to reason from the lesser to the greater – from the physical to the spiritual.** If Jesus can cause an impotent man to pick up his bed and walk, He can enable a sinner to get up, quit sinning, and traffic in spiritual realms. In today's "Christian" culture, it will require considerable grace to think in this manner.

**HE TOLD THE JEWS THAT IT WAS JESUS.** When this man first confronted the critics of Jesus, they asked him, *"What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk"* (John 5:12)? At that time, *"he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed Himself away, a multitude being in that place"* (John 5:13). Now, however, he knows who it was that healed him. The reason is that Jesus had found him in the temple (John 5:14). It was doubtless at that time that Jesus made known to this man who He was.

**THEREFORE, THE JEWS PERSECUTED JESUS.** This persecution did not involve any physical harm, for Jesus' enemies could not lay a hand on Him. As the word *"persecute"* indicates this persecution involved harassment, trying to catch Him on some technicality (Matt 12:1-2), open verbal conflict (John 8:48), asking what they thought were challenging questions, designed to trap Him into saying something they thought was blasphemous (Matt 22:23-28), etc.

**THEY SOUGHT TO SLAY JESUS.** This is relatively early in Christ's ministry, and already His enemies were seeking a convenient way to kill Him. Although the Jews denied before Jesus that they were seeking to kill Him (John 7:20), still, *"some of them of*

*Jerusalem said, Is not this He, whom they seek to kill?"* (John 7:25).

In the latter part of Christ's ministry, He told His disciples the Jews would "kill" Him (Matt 26:2; Mk 8:31; 9:31; 16:21; 20:18-19; Lk 18:31). Prior to His death, the disciples never did comprehend what Jesus had said about the Jews killing Him. That is why they were, at the first, devastated by His death (Lk 24:20-21; John 20:19). Initially, the disciples could only think of Jesus in relation to the present earth. Although they knew the writings of Moses and the Prophets, they did not contain enough clarity about the place from which the promised reign of the Messiah would be executed. Even after He had risen from the dead, it is written of the disciples, "When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Suffice it to say, there are still those who have difficulty perceiving Christ's present ministry, executed from the right hand of God, and in strict keeping with God's eternal purpose.

**BECAUSE HE HAD DONE THESE THINGS ON THE SABBATH DAY.** Completely ignoring the work of mercy Jesus had just done, the Jews launched a persecution against Jesus because He had violated their understanding of the Sabbath day. **Here we see what a distorted understanding can provoke a person or persons to do.**

### **MY FATHER WORKETH...AND I WORK**

*"<sup>17</sup> But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."*

I have a particular interest in how Jesus answered His critics. This is an area where men can encounter considerable difficulty. As we sit at the feet of Jesus, we will learn that wisdom and understanding have a lot to do with what we say.

**BUT.** Other versions read, "So," <sup>NET</sup> "In his defense," <sup>NIV</sup> "His answer," <sup>NJB</sup> "and," <sup>TNT</sup> "His reply to their accusation was," <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and "Then." <sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

The word translated "but" {deh} means, "BY WAY OF OPPOSITION AND DISTINCTION; IT IS ADDED TO STATEMENTS OPPOSED TO A PRECEDING STATEMENT; IT OPPOSES PERSONS TO PERSONS OR THINGS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED OR THOUGHT OF -- EITHER WITH STRONG EMPHASIS," <sup>THAYER</sup> "MOST COMMONLY TO DENOTE CONTINUATION AND FURTHER THOUGHT DEVELOPMENT, TAKING ITS SPECIFIC SENSE FROM THE CONTEXT AND; CONTRAST BUT." <sup>FRIBERG</sup>

In other words, this word indicates that the thinking of His opponents (that He had wrongfully "done these things on the Sabbath day") was incorrect. Therefore, Jesus now lays the proper measurement, the truth, along side their thoughts, confirming they were not only wrong, but were unjustified, not being driven by sound thought.

There is something to be seen of the Lord here. He simply will not allow false thinking or speaking to go unchecked. This is seen throughout His prodigious ministry, and in the later ministry of the apostles. Erroneous thoughts and imaginations were thrown down to the ground (Matt 3:9; 10:34; 1 Cor 10:12; 1 John 2:4).

**JESUS ANSWERED THEM.** Now, Jesus will make a statement that totally negates what these critics were thinking. It will call for some deductions on their part, but will totally stop their mouths, and leave them more determined than ever to take His life. Thus, the words of Jesus are confirmed to be enlightening and powerful.

**MY FATHER WORKETH HITHERTO.** Other versions read, "My Father has been working until now," <sup>NKJV</sup> "My Father is always at work, to this very day," <sup>NIV</sup> "My Father is still working," <sup>NRSV</sup> "My Father constantly does good," <sup>LIVING</sup> "My Father works unceasingly," <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and "My Father has worked [even] until now, [He has never ceased working; He is still working]" <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Elsewhere Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). The

Sabbath was not made for God, nor, indeed, for His Son. The Scriptures say, *"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made"* (Gen 2:2), and that God *"ceased from His own works"* (Heb 4:10). That is, **He concluded the natural creation.** He has not added anything more to it: *"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them"* (Gen 2:1).

However, God did not cease to work! In the church, the body of Christ, it is written, *"And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all"* (1 Cor 12:6). Concerning individual believers, *"it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Phil 2:13).

What Jesus is saying, is that this work they were opposing was a work determined by God – who Himself is not in any way restricted by the Sabbath day. He knows they will deny this, but He says it anyway, because His words *"are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63). Settle it in your mind, God cannot do something that is wrong, untimely, or in any way flawed. Of course, the bottleneck is that all men do not recognize the works of God. However, they are not excusable in this fundamental deficiency. The invitation comes from heaven, *"Come and see the works of God: He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men"* (Psa 66:5). These *"works"* are also made *"manifest,"* so that men of faith can see them (John 9:3).

**AND I WORK.** Jesus is saying that He is working in synch with God – doing the works of God. He was driven from within to do so. As He Himself said, *"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work"* (John 4:34). *"I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"* (John 9:4).

In explaining His work Jesus said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise"* (John 5:19). What God does is right, and cannot be questioned or doubted with impunity. Because Jesus only did what the Father was working, and only engaged in the *"works"* of the Father, what He did was right, and was not to be questioned. If God was doing a work on the Sabbath day, Jesus would enter into it. Such works would not be filtered through the traditions of the scribes, Pharisees, and elders. Even though they considered themselves experts in the Word of God, they were now in the presence of the *"Word"* that was *"made flesh, and dwelt among us"* (John 1:14).

If it can be established in truth that Jesus is working among us, what He is doing cannot possibly be wrong. If He is widening our spiritual understanding, it is right. If He is separating us further from the world, it is right.

### **THE JEWS SOUGHT THE MORE TO KILL HIM**

*"<sup>18</sup> Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."*

Here we are exposed to the aggressive nature of the flesh – how that when confronting the wonderful works of God, it only becomes more determined **not** to submit to Him, but to more aggressively seek its own will.

**THE JEWS SOUGHT THE MORE.** Other versions read, *"were seeking all the more,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"tried all the harder,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"had an even greater desire,"* <sup>BBE</sup> and *"made the Judaeans all*

*the more intent.* " CJB

You see the nature of the flesh, as it is guided by the devil himself. It is said of evil men and seducers, "*But evil men and seducers shall wax **worse and worse**, deceiving, and being deceived*" (2 Tim 3:13). It is said of wicked Manasseh, "*So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to **do worse than the heathen***" (2 Chron 33:9). God Himself said of those in Jeremiah's day, "*Yet they hearkened not unto Me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: **they did worse than their fathers***" (Jer 7:26; 16:12). Jesus spoke of a state that is "*worse than the first*" (Matt 12:45). Peter also wrote of those who are "*again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is **worse with them than the beginning***" (2 Pet 2:20).

There are two directions in which a person can go: forward or backward, upward or downward, toward the Lord or away from the Lord. Both directions are characterized by increase. Neither of them is static. Either a person is advancing forward more and more, or going backward more and more; increasingly moving upward, or decreasingly moving downward. A "*change*" is taking place in every professing believer. Either they are being changed from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18), or they are becoming "*worse and worse*" (2 Tim 3:13).

Every child of God must be alert to changes that are taking place in them. When they become pronounced, then everyone can see them. But while they are in the stage of increasing or decreasing, you must be aware of them. If any aspect of your spiritual life is "*less*," you must do something about it immediately. The plummet will increase. If there are areas where you are increasing, you must praise the Lord for it, and culture that "*change*," giving every opportunity for it to continue.

**HE HAD NOT ONLY BROKEN THE SABBATH.** Actually, as Jesus pointed out to them, He had not "*broken the Sabbath day.*" However, they could not see this, and therefore their downward spiral accelerated. Instead of abandoning their erroneous pattern of thinking, they nurtured it, imagining that it was right. It therefore became easy for them to continue their downward descent of reasoning.

**HE SAID THAT GOD WAS HIS FATHER.** Jesus said, "*My Father.*" This is the first time those words are found in the Gospel of John. It will be found twenty-nine more times in this Gospel. "*My Father*" is found forty-seven times in the Gospels. "*The Father*" is found sixty-six times in John, and seventy-two times in the Gospels. Concerning the Messiah, Isaiah said, "*His name shall be called . . . The everlasting **Father***" (Isa 9:6). This clearly indicated the close association of God the Father with the Messiah – but this was hidden from those who objected to Jesus referring to God as "*My Father.*"

**MAKING HIMSELF EQUAL WITH GOD.** Other versions read, "*claiming equality with God,*" CJB "*equating himself with God,*" MGI "*putting himself on a par with God,*" MIT "*putting himself on the same level with God,*" IE and "*on equal terms with God.*" PHILLIPS

The doctrine of Jesus developed this thought. It is a central consideration. The humanity of Jesus is always depicted as a voluntary forfeiture of the prerogatives of Deity. Jesus stepped down, as it were, humbling Himself in order that He might lay down His life, putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26).

**THE FATHER AND THE SON ARE ONE.** "*I and My Father are one*" (John 10:30). Concerning their nature, there is no essential difference between the Son of God and God Himself.

**ALL JUDGMENT HAS BEEN COMMITTED TO THE SON.** "*For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son*" (John 5:22). This necessarily infers

that all of the wisdom required to judge every man is possessed by Jesus.

**THE SON IS TO BE HONORED AS THE FATHER.** *That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him*" (John 5:23). Obedience to Jesus is obedience to God, and disobedience to Jesus is disobedience to God.

**HE THAT SEES JESUS SEES THE FATHER.** *"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"* (John 14:9).

**ALL THINGS THE FATHER HAS ARE CHRISTS.** *"All things that the Father hath are Mine"* (John 16:15). *"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in thee"* (John 17:21). By nature, Jesus is not minus any Divine quality.