

**Two Men On Trial**  
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**John 5:8-18**  
**December 4, 2011**

Amen. Turn with me in your Bibles to the fifth chapter of John's Gospel. We return this morning to the story of the healing at Bethesda. The healing of a paralytic by the Lord Jesus Christ in which we saw last time, we focused on what was exactly the miracle that He did. We looked at Verses 1-9a, the very first part of Verse 9 was where we ended last time. This time we want to pick up on the second part of Verse 9 carrying all the way through to Verse 18, in which we see the emphasis changes from what Jesus did to when He did it.

The Sabbath day, the timing of Jesus' miracle is made quite emphatic in the text. In fact, that detailed the 'when' of what He did, the 'when' leads to a firestorm of controversy and opposition. That controversy has decided legal overtones. In fact, the entire passage, Verses 9-18, reads with a definitive air of courtroom drama. In many ways one of the key words in this passage is found in Verse 17 when it says, "Jesus answered..." The word 'answered' there is not the normal word we find for Jesus answering a question or an issue. You have here the word 'apokrino', which 'apo' means 'from', 'krino' means 'to judge'. The word can be used in rendering a verdict so that when Jesus answers, He's rendering a verdict. We see that the controversy, the firestorm of controversy that rages here is a legal discussion among those who view the law and are concerned about the law of God and its possible violations. In fact, the way I've titled the message today is 'Two Men on Trial'.

What we're going to see, we're going to follow the drama. The first point really, the title is the first point too, 'Two Men on Trial' is the first extended point. We're going to walk through the trials of these two men that overlap. The two men are the paralytic himself and Jesus. Both are accused of violating the Sabbath. So we're going to look at, the way we're going to follow the passage here is to start with the charge. Each of the men is charged with a crime. We're going to go charge of Man #1, charge of the first man. Then defense of the first man. What does he say in defense? Then charge of the second man. Then defense of the second man. Then finally, verdicts that are rendered. We'll find that the verdict on the second man is given clearly and the verdict on the first man is then implicitly given. Now that's the flow of the first major point, the bulk of the message.

After we've looked at this trial, these two trials overlapping, we're going to look for two implications. So two men on trial and two implications from those trials. Those implications concern the real meaning of the Sabbath, the purpose and practice of the Sabbath of God. So let's read, we'll begin reading, we'll actually read from Verse 8 to set the context a little bit. Jesus has found a man among many who are sick at the Pool of Bethesda, waiting to be healed, hoping to be healed because of the belief that an angel stirs the water. They can get in the water and they can be healed. So Jesus finds one man and asks him if he wants to get well, and here we find in Verse 8, Jesus said to him, and here are Jesus' powerful words:

### **John 5:8-18**

*8 Jesus \*said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." 9 Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.*

*Now it was the Sabbath on that day. 10 So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." 11 But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'" 12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk?'" 13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. 14 Afterward Jesus \*found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." 15 The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. 16 For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."*

*18 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.*

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, we ask as we bow before Your Word, that You by Your Spirit might speak to us, that the Spirit Who inspired these perfect words might illuminate in*

*our hearts the living Word of God so that we might see the risen word, the Lord Jesus. We pray in His Name, Amen.*

From the mid-90's O.J. Simpson trial to more recently the trial of Casey Anthony, or Michael Jackson's doctor, there is something about courtroom drama that captivates the attention of the media, and indeed society's popular culture. When one hears some of the details of a case, and charges as we sadly are inundated with in situations like this, aren't we? You can't get away from those things, whether it's the 6:00 news which more resembles the old, silly shows that seem like the National Inquirer. It sometimes seems like they're writing for the 6:00 news now. Sensational stuff, not really news, and they tell you such bizarre, stupid things too. Patti and I will find ourselves saying, "Why are they interviewing that person about him losing his dog? He's sad. Is that really news for all of Atlanta?" But legal dramas captivate the attention, and here in this text, among this glorious Gospel of John, here in the fifth chapter, the apostle presents a case, a legal controversy consisting of charges against two parties: One a healed paralytic and the other a Healer from Galilee. We hear not only the charges but also statements of defense by both of those who are accused. Then we reach a verdict in the passage. We're going to follow that outline. Charge against Man #1, charge against Man #2, defense of the same, and then finally, the verdicts. Then we'll look at those implications.

### 1) Two Men on Trial:

First of all, our first point is two men on trial. Let's begin to look at how this case unfolds. It's instructive to stop and ask questions as we read narrative. It's instructive to ask questions as you read Scripture in general, always asking questions of the text in a reverent way. "Lord, why did You say it this way?" One of the first questions we need to be careful not to skip over is this: Why did Jesus tell the man in the first place to pick up his pallet? He could've just said, "Get up and walk." Right? Nothing about the pallet. If He had, He would have saved Himself a big controversy and a lot of opposition, but the Lord never makes mistakes. He doesn't think a second later, "I wish I hadn't of said that." No, that never crosses the mind of God because He always says exactly what He intends to say. So He says, "Pick up your pallet and walk." It seems that Jesus is intending to create a spectacle, to create a controversy because He wants in the light of this spectacle, in the light of this controversy, this attention-getting event to reveal His glory in a heretofore, unparalleled way.

Because the spectacle leads to the charge against Man #1, the paralytic is charged with a crime. The charge is violating the Sabbath. That's the charge against Man #1. The paralytic is charged with violating the Sabbath, and the question is: Is he breaking the fourth commandment? Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days a week you're supposed to work and on the seventh you're to rest, you are to refrain from your work. Is this man violating the Sabbath?

Theologians debate various sides of this. In my opinion, yes and no. Ultimately, no. Hear me carefully, ultimately no, he's not violating the Sabbath because there are extenuating circumstances, and the extenuating circumstance is that he is doing the work of God. We'll see that as we work through this, but apparently he is. In fact, Jeremiah 17 elaborates on rules of the Sabbath. Listen to this:

***Jeremiah 17:21-22 ~ 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. 22 You shall not bring a load out of your houses on the sabbath day nor do any work, but keep the sabbath day holy, as I commanded your forefathers."***

Now those who knew the law, who knew the prophets, were aware that this man appears to be violating the Sabbath, so they rightly reacted to seeing a man carrying a pallet. In fact, we see in Verse 10 the question and the accusation.

***John 5:10 ~ So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet."***

That's the charge. Now what's the defense? The defense of Man #1? Verse 11:

***John 5:11 ~ But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'"***

...***"He who made me well...*** Now at this point, if the Jews had hearts for God, and had not become preoccupied with the minutiae of God's law, but with the heart of God's law, they would have asked the obvious question. They would have stopped and said, "What made you well?" That's the unspoken, obvious response. You see a man carrying a pallet, they don't know this guy. He looks fine. He's obviously in great health, the best health he's been in in more than 38 years. He's been a paralytic for 38 years. He's walking. He's probably got some spring in his step too, don't you think? He is carrying his pallet, he's walking, and he might even be hopping around as he's making his way. They see him and he's carrying a pallet. They rightly say, "Why are you carrying a pallet. You're violating the Sabbath.

You appear to be violating the Sabbath.” He says, really an outstanding defense though. This guy’s knowledge of things is lacking because he doesn’t even know Who healed him. He didn’t get that far. He was so overwhelmed with what happens to him he didn’t say, “Hey, who healed me?” I mean, he saw the man, he heard the man, he answered the man, but when it happens he doesn’t inquire further, “Who are You?” But the question they should have been asking is, “Made you well? What do you mean?” Because if there really has been a miracle done here, those who have a heart for God should have been looking for the Man who did the miracles, because miracles in the Old Testament, we talked about this Wednesday night, are often in accompaniment of a prophet.

I mean the Word of God has returned to Israel. 400 years of silence, the intertestamental period when the Jews knew God had stopped speaking to them. They were in the dark for 400 years. John the Baptist begins to preach and now someone comes doing a miracle. Their ears should have been perked up immediately. “What? Perhaps God has visited His people. Perhaps the Messiah has come!” That’s how they should have responded. “We still have some issues about why you’re carrying your pallet, but tell us what’s going on here.” And the man’s defense is basically, “The One Who healed me told me to.” It’s a pretty good argument because if someone has the power to heal me, He must have the authority to tell me to do God’s work.

Let me just deal with that for a minute. Jesus, in His discussions, the Sabbath controversies are a big thing in the gospels. Nowhere bigger than John, actually. John deals with two healings on the Sabbath. Remember seven signs in the Book of John? He said, “I could have told you about many, many different miracles that Jesus did. In fact, if we wrote them all down there wouldn’t be books to hold them all. But I’ve just chosen these, these signs so that you can see that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing you may have life in His name. I’ve chosen carefully certain ones to illustrate the Person and work of Christ.” Of the seven signs, four, strictly speaking, are healings. Three are non-healings. Walking on water is certainly a sign and it’s one of the signs. Feeding the 5,000 is a sign. But of the four healings, you have Lazarus, you have the blind man, you have the little boy in Chapter 4, the healing of the nobleman, the royal official’s son, and then you have the healing at Bethesda. Four healings and two of them, half of the healings happen on a Sabbath day because the blind man healed in John 9 also is healed on the Sabbath. When you read the gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the previous gospels, you also find this theme. Jesus had a way of healing on the Sabbath, apparently to provoke controversy, to really prick the hardened hearts of the teachers of Israel to examine His Person and His work.

So He does this. He does this decidedly. He goes, guys were walking into Jerusalem for the feast. They're going to an unnamed feast according to the first few verses of Chapter 5. "Let's walk by Bethesda because I've got a divine appointment there. I'm going to heal a man there, and I'm going to create some controversy in the midst of which, in this flurry, in this firestorm of controversy, I am going to unveil My glory." That's His purpose. So the defense of the man is, "If God called me to I should do it." Jesus, in Matthew 12, you have a couple of passages strung together related to the Sabbath. The first is the disciples walking through picking heads of grain in violation of the Sabbath according to the Jews. Now listen, the Jews went way over the top, and I said earlier, they focused on the minutiae, they missed the main things, they missed the purpose of the Sabbath. They were all hung up in protecting the practice of the Sabbath. They had 39, listen to this, they had 39 different categories of work. This isn't like different lines of work, there were 39 different ways you could violate the Sabbath by doing work, all these fences around the law. Well, Jesus in Matthew 12 is dealing with them, their objection, and He says to them, "Listen, you guys don't understand the Sabbath at all. The Sabbath is created by God for man, and don't you understand there are people who have to break the Sabbath when they're doing the work of God?" The priests and the Levites every Sabbath, break the Sabbath. Why? Because they do work on the Sabbath. Are they really violating the Sabbath? No, because the Sabbath is about, "You are not allowed to do your own work for yourself, but if you are doing the work of God, it's not a violation of the Sabbath." The priests, the Levites who were offering sacrifices, who were working around the temple, they are doing the work of God, advancing the glory of God.

Basically, this man doesn't know that his argument is as good as it is. He's going to find out that he is basically functioning as a priest. He picks up his pallet because God has told him, "Go gather me a crowd because I'm going to show My glory," and he's functioning like a priest, under the direction of God Himself. I've already given you the verdict on Man #1. We got ahead of ourselves. I was saving that for the back because that's really an implication from the other, but he's innocent of breaking the Sabbath. He's functioned just like a Levitical priest. Jesus makes that point in Matthew 12 and I think it's Verse 6 or 7. "The priests and the Levites continually break the Sabbath. Don't you understand guys? The Sabbath is the glory of God. It's focusing on God. It's about the heart." In fact, He goes on after that verse, I think that's Verse 5, and then Verse 6 He says, "If you understood what it means when God says, 'I desire mercy more than sacrifice,' what's He saying? It's not about the doing of the things, it's about your heart. The doing of the things is important. It's not unimportant, but it's secondary. Primary is the motivation for doing the things. The motivation for not working is the issue.

Why are you not working? So that you can feel good about the fact that you're keeping this Sabbath and you can be proud in your own self-righteousness? No!" It's the motivation. So the defense of the first man is, "The prophet of God told me to do it. He Who made me well said, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'"

The Jews missed the obvious question because they were always straining at gnats and swallowing camels. We need to beware. Listen, Calvin has a great line on this in his commentary. He basically says, "We need to challenge one another as believers when we see each other violate the Scripture." When you see a violation of Scripture in someone's life, you're supposed to love them enough to reprove them, right? But he says, "This passage itself, they saw what was an apparent violation. It should teach us to come in reproof with great humility and restraint, not assuming you know all the facts." You come asking questions rather than making declarations. They should have said, "Hey, why are you carrying that pallet?" He said, "Listen, I just got healed." Then they would have been so much closer to the Gospel. They would have been listening. "You got healed? What do you mean you got healed?" "I've been sick for 38 years and a Man came and spoke to me and said, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'" "He told you to pick up your pallet and walk? That is an apparent violation of the Sabbath, but he is a prophet, he is speaking for God, he has authority to say something like that. Let's go check him out." And they would have come to Jesus with an attitude of inquiry, honest, open inquiry. "Let me hear what you have to say. Are you the man of God?" No, they've already judged him because they think exactly 180 degrees out of phase, they're looking for offenses. They're throwing their flag and being a referee is not what it means to be a brother or sister in Christ. We're teammates. We come humbly. The way that reproof should look, the most beautiful picture of reproof is given in Jesus washing His disciples' feet. What's that? That's the picture of how you're supposed to go deal with another brother's sin. Lay aside your dignity, lay aside your honor, and become like a humble servant. The lowliest servant in the house washed the feet. Jesus, knowing He had come forth from God, according to John 13, knowing He was about to go back to God, back to the glory that He had left, knowing He was about to be betrayed, knowing He was about to die on the cross. He took His outer garments, laid it aside, and became dressed like the lowliest household servant, got on His hands and knees and washed His disciples' feet. That's a picture of what it looks like to reprove and restore a fellow believer in sin.

So anyway, the Pharisees were missing the boat because they didn't have the heart of the law. The heart of the Sabbath was much more glorious than they understood. So the charge was he violated the Sabbath. The defense of the man was "I did what

He told me to do.” This leads them to the charge of the second man which we see in Verse 12.

***John 5:12 ~ They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk’?”***

They asked the right question but with the wrong motivation. That is the right question, “Who is the Man?” But they’re not asking it to go find Him and learn from Him are they? Now we see in Verse 16:

***John 5:16 ~ For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.***

They wanted to find Him to punish Him. They had already judged Him. In fact, the word ‘persecute’ means ‘to follow hard after, to pursue with earnestness’. They wanted to find Him and punish Him, to put Him in His place. Their heart was, “Who does He think He is?” That’s another great question if they would ask it the right way, but that’s the key question in the whole passage, “Who does He think He is?” Rightly said, “Who is He that made you well?” The charge is that Jesus has violated the Sabbath because He’s healed on the Sabbath. He’s charged with the same crime as the first man. In fact, His crime is greater because He commanded the man, He is violating the Sabbath.

It’s interesting too to note Verse 13, when they asked Him the question:

***John 5:12-13 ~ “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk’?” 13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.***

Now stop and ask yourself, “Why did He slip away?” I mean, the text doesn’t show us for sure but I think we can infer a pretty good answer to that. It seems that Jesus wanted to allow some time for the miracle to be verified and for the controversy to come to a head. He slips away so they don’t immediately know it was Him. He wants them to have time to reflect on the miracle itself. Redemptively, that they might say, “Wait a minute. You’re saying, ‘You’ve been healed.’?” And so He slips away. God has a way of doing that when we would like to ask questions, He slips away. But He knows the right time. That’s what we see in Verse 14:

***John 5:14 ~ Afterward Jesus \*found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.”***

Jesus finds him when He’s ready to find him and when the right time is for Him to find Him and He reveals Himself to him. That’s the charge of the second man.

Now let’s talk about the defense of the second man, the defense of Jesus, the defense of this Galilean that has audaciously healed on the Sabbath day. What is His defense? What does He say when He’s charged? Well, we don’t actually have the charge verbally stated to Him. We know what it is, the Jews were persecuting, Verse 16, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. That is their charge, but they haven’t actually spoken it to Him. Before they speak it to Him, Jesus answers it. He knows what their issue is. He doesn’t need to be told. “I know that you guys are all messed up on this. You’re missing the point. You’re charging Me with sinning by doing work on the Sabbath.” What’s very instructive is to look at His answer, because I think His answer here, for the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jew, remember this is aimed at Jewish proselytes, Jewish synagogue attendees throughout the Mediterranean world, Greek-speaking Jews who have not accepted Christ as Messiah, or who have recently and are needing to be built up in their faith to establish them in the reality that Jesus is the Christ. For them, Sabbath rang bells. Sabbath violation rang bells. And, having been exposed to other Gospels, and for us today, it ought to really peak our interest because I mentioned that the Sabbath violation is a theme throughout the other Gospels, the apparent Sabbath violation. The fact that the Jews were always thinking Jesus was violating the Sabbath. You find it in Matthew 12, you find it Mark 2 and 3, and you find it three different times in Luke’s Gospel. He records events related to what they believe to be apparent violations of the Sabbath.

In fact, turn back to Luke 6, we’re going to track three different miracles Jesus does on the Sabbath that are distinct from the one we have in John 5. I do this because I want you to see how Jesus defends His actions in the previous Gospel accounts. In the other events where He did miracles like this, He had a basic theme. It was very different from what He does in John 5. In John 5 He comes at it a whole different way, and the way He comes at it would have been stunning to those who first heard the words uttered. Absolutely stunning. Now look how He argues in Luke 6.

***Luke 6:6 ~ On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered.***

So a man with a withered hand.

***Luke 6:7 ~The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely to see if He healed on the Sabbath,...***

They know He's had a habit of doing this. "We're watching You. We're coming after You." You see that?

***Luke 6:7-8 ~ ...so that they might find reason to accuse Him.8 But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" And he got up and came forward.***

He wants the man with the withered hand to be in front of everybody.

***Luke 6:9 ~ And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?"***

Is it lawful for a man to do good on the Sabbath?

***Luke 6:10-11 ~ After looking around at them all, (Of course, they haven't answered.) He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did so; and his hand was restored. 11 But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.***

Look at the hearts of unbelievers, the wickedness. They see His glory and they hate Him. Turn to Luke 13. Again, Luke tells us:

***Luke 13:10 ~ And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness." 13 And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God.***

But look what happens:

***Luke 13:14 ~But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the crowd in response,...***

He doesn't talk to Jesus. He starts talking to the crowd.

***Luke 13:14 ~ ...“There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day.”***

How ridiculous! Isn't that just amazing? He's just seen an act of God. It's like somebody comes out of a coma. I can't even make an analogy of this. You've been sitting by the bedside of someone you love who was in a coma for 2 years. They wake up and in waking up they knock off a glass and break it, and your first words are, “Hey, why weren't you more careful?” I mean, it's that preposterous! “What are you doing coming and getting healed on the Sabbath?” The person has just been healed! So blind is fallen man! God help us! How does He answer after this?

***Luke 13:15-16 ~ But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? 16 And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?”***

Perfect logic, isn't it? “You can take care of your donkey, your ox, but you can't release someone from a bond? You guys are missing the point of the Sabbath.” Now at Verse 17 says this:

***Luke 13:17 ~ As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.***

The entire crowd sees the obvious logic of that. Now turn over to Luke 14.

***Luke 14:1-6 ~ It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely. (They're always watching Him, aren't they?) 2 And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. 3 And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” 4 But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. 5 And He said to them, “Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?” 6 And they could make no reply to this.***

What He's saying is this: "As a man, you have the obligation to do acts of mercy on the Sabbath day, to work, to save a person, to deliver someone, to help someone, to even help your animal. That is appropriate to do." What's interesting is Jesus is arguing in the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the situations that happen, His basic argument is as a man. He says, "You're judging Me for doing good on the Sabbath. You're missing the point. God never intended that the Sabbath was to be a burden to man, it was to be *for* man." In fact, Mark 2 says that.

***Mark 2:27 ~ Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."***

God did not make man for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man. So He's arguing as a man, living under the law, because Jesus is fully God and fully man in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in those particular instances His basic answer is: "As a man, I'm living before God in obedience to the law. I'm fulfilling the law when I do good on the Sabbath. I'm living as man under God's true law, the heart of it. You guys are messed up."

Now with that background, turn back to John 5. Remember John's is the fourth Gospel that was written, probably as much as 20 years after the previous, closest one, Luke, written in about 60 to 65 A.D. John we think wrote probably 80 to 85 A.D. Matthew and Mark are generally regarded to be written in the 40's, so some of the Gospels have been around for almost 40 years when John writes. They've been familiar with many of these stories of Jesus' work. They've had the written Word of God, there are other Gospels, the scrolls. Now they hear this one, so they hear Jesus once again being accused of doing a miracle on the Sabbath, and they're waiting for His defense. Remember the legal drama is unfolding. He's charged with violating the Sabbath. What's He going to say? Listen to what Jesus says.

***John 5:17 ~ But He answered them,...***

I mentioned earlier that the word 'answered' is unique. It basically means 'He rendered a verdict'. His defense is actually a verdict. The word itself should really peak our ears for what He's about to say. "Are you guilty of violating the Sabbath?" Here's His defense, which is also a verdict:

***John 5:17 ~ ..."My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."***

I can imagine that some of the people there, their mouths dropped because He's not using His normal argument. "Is it lawful for a man to do good?" No, He's saying, "The Sabbath laws do not apply to Me because I am God." People say Jesus never claimed to be God. That is the stupidest thing someone can say if they've read the Bible. In fact, one of the things I try to get Jehovah's Witnesses that I talk to to do is to read the Gospel of John thoughtfully because in it you have the most clear declarations of Jesus' deity in all of Scripture. He was doing this all the time, and in the Gospel of John, John inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the one who presents this in such a beautiful way—The 'I AM' sayings. "I AM." "I AM." People say that He didn't claim to be God, well the Jews certainly understood Him to claim to be God because look at what Verse 18 says:

***John 5:18 ~ 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.***

Man, now they're really mad! In fact, why was He put to death? What was the only thing they could make stick? They could find no fault in Him, Pilate found no fault in Him, the Jews could find no fault except the charge of blasphemy. He being man, claimed to be God. Of course they were wrong. They never really humbled themselves before the reality that His claim was right. He claimed to be God because He was God, He is God. He remains God, and everyone who rejects Him will someday stand before Him and see the glory of His deity. If you won't bow before Him now, you will bow before Him then, and then you will be sent into eternal torment. The Lord is demonstrating and unveiling, in this instance He gathered a crowd, healed on the Sabbath, hid Himself for a while, to allow the word to get out, to allow the Pharisees to raise the ire, the questioning of the people around. The crowd comes around and then Jesus, without hearing their charge, says, "Let me tell you the answer. The Father is working and I Myself am working." God rested on the seventh day, but He never stopped working.

Resting for God is different than you and me. When God created the world in seven days He didn't say, "Boy, I'm really tired." He spoke and it came into being. The Lord doesn't slumber or sleep, He's not like you and me. That's a staggering thing to think about. Think about that when you go to bed tonight. You know those times when you hit the pillow and you're like, "Wow, why did I wait to come here?" That is one of the greatest reminders of the difference, that you and me, we are men. He is God. He neither slumbers, nor sleeps. He never gets tired. He's always watching us, caring for us, holding the world in order. If He stopped for one moment doing His work, the world would disintegrate, the universe would

collapse into chaos. That's why Hebrews 1 says, "He upholds all things," speaking of Jesus.

***Hebrews 1:3 ~ ...upholds all things by the word of His power...***

So God is working. God has worked from the beginning. He is working and Jesus is working. So the verdict on Man #2 is: Not guilty. Because He is God and that leads to the clear verdict on Man #1. If he had God tell Him, "Pick up your pallet and walk," you better do God says. He was just being a priest, gathering a crowd, so that people could see His glory. And the tremendous irony is that if the scribes and the Pharisees, if the Jews had understood the purpose of the Sabbath in the first place.

What was the purpose of the Sabbath? I want to give this to you really quick, and then I'm going to give you some passages that you can look at on your own. We're not going to take time to go to them. The Sabbath is instituted in Exodus 20:8-11 as a command to man. It's not given as a command to man before that. Now the first occurrence of the Sabbath is at the creation, Genesis 2:1-3. At the end of the six days of creation the Bible says that the Lord rested from His works on the Sabbath and He made it holy. But He doesn't invite man into His Sabbath until Exodus 20, the fourth commandment, Verses 8:11. The longest commandment in the Ten Commandments is the fourth commandment.

***Exodus 20:8 ~ "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.***

He explains what He means by that, and He connects it. At that point, He says, "Set aside a day. Stop doing your own work." Why? Stop doing your own work so that you can look at and glory in the work of God. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy for in six days the Lord made the world and on the seventh He rested. He's saying, "Look at creation. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Look at what God has done. Stop doing your own work." In an Agrarian society they were tilling the fields. They were probably thinking, "Well, I've got some more things I need to do. I need to hoe that row of beans." "Wait til Monday." Oh yeah, "Wait til Sunday." Back then it was on Saturday, the Sabbath, the seventh day. "On the seventh day rest and think about the fact that God made this amazing world. He made it so that you could put a seed in the ground, and the seed would grow and give you something to eat." He is governing His creation every day. He's the One that makes it rain. He's the One that gives you the energy to go out and till the field in the field in the first place. Glory in His work while you stop working.

God says, “Stop and focus. Stop doing your own thing and look at My thing, what I’ve done.”

Now it’s interesting, He connects it with creation in Exodus 20:8-11. In Deuteronomy 5 you have the second statement of the law in Chapter 5 actually, of Deuteronomy. As they get ready to go into the land, 40 years after the Exodus, the Lord gives the law again, reminding them of the law. In Verse 12, it’s interesting when the Lord says, “**Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.** It doesn’t say, “For in six days the Lord created the earth, and on the seventh He rested.” He says, “Remember that your Lord delivered you from bondage and slavery in Egypt. Don’t just think about creation. Don’t just think about God’s finished work of creation. As the people of God, enter into My rest.” Now God’s rest is a celebration of what He’s done. God takes delight in what He does. You know like whenever I do a job at home and it goes well, which is very rare. I’ve done some things and I got done and I thought, “Wow. I had the right tool. That was exactly the way it should be done.” It’s like, “Am I awake? Is this a dream?” It doesn’t happen like that for me, but when it does I celebrate it. I try not to be too over the top with it, but I’ll say, “This looks pretty good, doesn’t it Patti?” and she’s more amazed than anybody else.

There is something about celebrating a job well done. Well the Lord never doesn’t do something well, but the Lord loves to glory in His works. He manifests His glory and He loves to share His glory in His works. God doesn’t need us, He invites us in to His party, His celebration of all things that He’s done well. He wants us to come in and enjoy the glory of His creation. On the Sabbath they were supposed to stop and think about, look at the intricacy of what God has made, but then also to think about the finished work of redemption, for them, the Exodus, the deliverance from slavery. “Look at the strong arm of God that reached into the dark land of Egypt and delivered us. Look at His power. Look at how He did it, the blood of the Passover lamb. How can that be? We who were nobody, we defeated Egypt. We plundered them. Look at the finished work of God.” The Sabbath was about stopping the work so that you could reflect on and glory in the work of God.

Now fast forward to John 5. It’s a Sabbath day. It’s a time for remembering and celebrating the work of God. What happens in John 5 is God unveils His glory in a miraculous work. What should be happening? People should be glorying in the work of God. “Look what has happened! Praise be to God.” They should be glorying in Him. They should be falling down before Jesus. That’s the heart of the Sabbath. “The Lord of the Sabbath has come! He can set aside things. He can say, ‘Today you’re a Levite. Pick up your pallet and walk!’” “Glory in this. We have

been visited. God is here!” “Emmanuel, God with us!” If they had understood that’s what would have happened, but the Sabbath is all about glorying in the finished work of God. Listen, that’s the purpose of the Sabbath. The purpose of the Sabbath is to stop your working so that you can look at, and glory in, and trust in the finished work of God. That’s the heart of it.

Today, we can argue over exactly what the Sabbath looks like. Today is Sunday. Do you think you should go to a park on a Sabbath? Do you think you should go out to eat on a Sabbath? Let me just cut to the chase and say Romans 14:1-8 says, “Let each one do as he’s convinced in his own mind.” Between you and God, but let me tell you this, no matter what you decide about what you can do and what you can’t do, don’t miss the heart of it. The reason is so that you can glory in the finished work of God and listen in one sense, the Sabbath has been fulfilled. In reality, when Jesus walks onto the scene, He is fulfilling the Sabbath, He *is* the Sabbath. That’s what Paul says in Colossians 2:16-17 when he says, “Don’t let anyone be a judge in regard to a festival, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day—things which are merely a shadow. But the substance is Christ.” All of those things were shadows, Jesus is the substance. Now what does that mean? What’s the practice of the Sabbath? What’s the heart of the practice of the Sabbath? That’s the second implication. The purpose of the Sabbath is to look at the finished work of God, glory in the finished work of God.

The practice, what does that look like? First of all, it means you come to Christ as your Sabbath. The reason God gave the Sabbath in the first place, when He created the world was to say, “The only way that you can come to Me is to stop working and start trusting. That’s the only way you’re ever going to come to Me.” When it came to redemption, the Exodus, “Stop working and look at My finished work. Look at Who I am and what I’ve done.” How do you get saved? The author of Hebrews, let me mention it to you, Hebrews 4:1-10. In Verses 8 to 10 he basically says, in fact I’ll just read those to you quickly. He says that Joshua had given rest. Rest is a type, going into Canaan was the rest. It’s a type of salvation.

***Hebrews 4:8-10 ~ For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that.9 So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.10 For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.***

He’s saying, “The way you get saved, the way you enter the Kingdom of God, the way you come into the true Canaan, the way you get to Heaven is to stop working to get there, and to trust completely in His work. To stop trying yourself and glory,

and put all of your confidence in what Jesus has done.” Paul makes the same point in Romans 4:5:

***Romans 4:5 ~ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,***

That’s what Jesus said in, I love those verses Matthew 11:28-30, He’s saying in a sense, “I am the Sabbath.” What’s He saying?

***Matthew 11:28-30 ~ “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”***

“Come to Me. Stop your labor. Stop your efforts. Stop trying to make it into Heaven and just rest. I am the One.” So when Jesus comes on the scene, He is the One that is supposed to still be working on the Sabbath because He is God. He’s the only One that can work on the Sabbath. And salvation, that means you stop trying to make yourself clean and you realize what the prophets had said, “Can a leopard change his spots? Can an Ethiopian change the color of his skin? Neither can you who are wicked do righteousness.” Stop trying and just trust. Look at what Christ has done. He’s done everything. He is the author and finisher of our faith. Rest in Him. Turn from every sense of trusting in yourself, acknowledge your absolute poverty. You are truly poor in spirit. You have nothing to bring, but only to the cross will you cling. That’s salvation.

And then sanctification, listen to this, we need to live in the Sabbath every day. Every moment of every day ought to be lived in the Sabbath. What do you mean? It means that your sanctification is the same way you got saved. Now there’s a paradox here, you have to read the words, you have to pray, you have to at times be taking steps to do things, to put off and put off, but the undergirding principle under all of that is absolute dependence. The way you put off sin is to learn, “He is my righteousness. He is my strength. He is my hope. Lord Jesus, I feel the tugs at my heart again to explode in anger, to sin. Look at me, Lord. Bought with Your blood and still sin dwells in me. Lord, I’m looking to You because You lived a perfect life. You still have the power to deliver me. You died so that I could be free from the reign and rule of sin. I’m free in You and I’m looking to You, Lord. Live out Your life in me.” So looking to Christ say, “He is all my hope. He is all my trust. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in

me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God. Lord, I want to do this. That's how awful I am, yet I want you more. Help me."

You entrust yourself to Him, you put yourself upon Him and His power, and as you've been filling your mind with His truth the Spirit quickens it and you start walking. You take the first step, but God takes the second step. I heard a pastor say one time, "You take the first step, God takes the second step, and by the time you get to the third step, you will realize it was God Who took the first step." That is it. He is our righteousness. He is our strength. The Sabbath is our glory and we need to not be preoccupied with the minutiae, the secondary things. We need to be preoccupied with the main thing which is Jesus Christ. Our righteousness, our wisdom, everything that we need is Jesus. You lack meekness, look at Christ. You lack holiness, look at Christ. He is everything. Those men that tried Him and judged Him in their own minds will find that one day He will stand in judgment of them and they will know that they gave away everything that they could have ever longed for. Would that not be true of you or me? Look to Christ. Let's pray.

*But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ by Whom the world is crucified to me and I unto the world. Lord, we glory today in the finished work of Jesus Christ. We glory in the fact that You took humanity to yourself, lived under the law, a perfect life, fighting against temptation and sin and winning, triumphing, and then dying so that we don't have to die the death that we deserved. Lord, we glory in your salvation. We pray for those who are here who have been around the things of God, but have not stopped resisting, stopped making their own way, making their own kingdom, trusting in themselves, living for their own purposes. Lord, help them today to stop working, and to cast themselves completely on Christ. We know that when we do that we find a glorious, precious friend and Savior. We pray that He might be magnified as we find Him to be our sufficiency. We pray in His Name, Amen.*

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