

# **A Sabbath Controversy – John 5:1-47**

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## **Introduction**

Among the numerous lessons in this lengthy story concerning our Lord, I wish to emphasize the perfect balance between His compassionate love for men and His uncompromising proclamation and defense of the Truth.

### **Jesus' Loving and Compassionate Deed (vv. 1-9)**

Many, indeed, most of the miracles of Jesus were miracles of compassion, whether raising the dead, feeding the multitudes, casting out demons, or healing the blind, deaf, diseased, and infirm (see Matt. 14:13; 15:32; et al.). The healing of the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda was apparently from the same motive. It was this same love and compassion that caused Him to humble Himself to live as a man among men and finally sacrifice Himself on the cross for the sins of all mankind (2 Cor. 5:14). Surely, no man ever loved and helped his fellow man like Jesus did. What a powerful example of the love and compassion we should have toward all men (even our enemies – Mat. 5:44) is seen in the Christ! The limitless power of Jesus to speak the Word and cause His will to be done, as in the case of this lame man (as with every other miracle), never ceases to amaze even seasoned believers. How He proved Himself to be the Son of God over and over! (John 20:30-31).

### **Jesus' Uncompromising Proclamation of Truth (vv. 10-47)**

The "Jews" (doubtless the Jewish authorities) accused Jesus of breaking the sabbath because He healed the lame man on the sabbath day. He did not cower before them and apologize but pointed out that He was doing the work of His Father. This enraged the Jews further and they sought to kill Him for "making himself equal with God." (Is it not strange that some liberal theologians aver that Jesus did not even claim to possess Deity, but the Jews certainly understood this to be His claim?)

This controversy concerning the sabbath provoked the Lord to deliver a strong sermon to the hypocritical Jewish leaders in which the following powerful points were made:

1. **His power to work** (vv. 19-20, 30-7). Jesus always gave glory to His Father. He attributed His miracles to the Father, a fact that even some of the Jewish rulers conceded (John 3:2). The miracles were dear evidence to reasonable men that God was with Him. Because God

was with Him there was nothing impossible for Him. He demonstrated His power over all physical, psychic, spiritual, and natural forces.

2. **His power to judge** (vv. 22-25, 27). God delivered all judgment into His hands, which was proof that He deserved the honor belonging to Deity, even as the Father did – one of the most powerful claims Christ ever made of His Godhood. He told those evil Jews that to dishonor or reject Him was to dishonor the Father they claimed to serve and obey. The way to escape the condemnation of His judgment was to hear (obey) His Word and believe the testimony of the Father concerning Him. Christ cannot be misunderstood – men must believe in Him and obey His Word if they would have eternal life (cf. Mark 16:16). All men must stand before Christ in judgment (2 Cor. 5:10). The standard for all who have lived since He died will be His Word (John 12:48).
3. **His power to raise the dead** (vv. 21, 25-26, 28). Christ has the same power to raise the dead as does the Father. He will call them forth with the sound of His voice as He once called forth Lazarus (John 11:43). Christ had “life in himself” even as the Father did. He declared to Mary and Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), and to the apostles, “I am the life” (John 14:6). He will call all men, good and evil alike, from the tombs at the same hour to meet him in judgment. (There will be no separate resurrections of good and evil over 1,000 years apart, as the dispensationalists vainly and falsely speculate.)
4. **The testimony of Scripture** (vv. 38-47). God testified concerning His Son in the Scriptures, but they did not believe Him. Moses had been so explicit (e.g., Deu. 18:15) in his testimony concerning Christ that he could well serve as their accuser to the Father. The very one on whom they claimed to set their hope, and in whom they claimed to trust, wrote of Christ. Truly, what a formidable body of evidence the Old Testament contains in testimony to the Messiah!

### **Conclusion**

This story the life of our Lord demonstrates how He loves men and wants them to believe in Him and obey Him so they can be saved. His message is ever consistent: There is no hope apart from Him because there is no way to the Father but by Him (John 14:6). May we all trust Him and obey Him so that He may be our Savior instead of our condemning Judge at the last great day.

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