



## International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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### **John 5:10-18 Commentary New International Version**

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

**(John 5:10) and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."**

In John chapter 5, John did not record everything that we would like to know about the man that Jesus healed. Because we will soon study the sharp contrast between the man Jesus healed in John chapter 9, and this man in John chapter 5, let's ask some questions about what did not happen or what John may or may not have omitted regarding the man's healing and its aftermath. Did the man thank Jesus and glorify God for healing him? Probably not. If he had, it seems likely that John would have said so, since he told us about the man in chapter 9 who gave thanks and glorified God. In Luke 17, we learn that only one of the ten lepers that Jesus healed thanked Him. So, like some others, it is likely that the man Jesus healed at the pool did not express his appreciation to Jesus. Did Jesus rush off before the man would have had time to thank Jesus? Probably not, because Jesus was more concerned about someone's spiritual life and relationship with God than their physical healing, and Jesus would have taken the time to help this man spiritually if the man had been open to changing his life

spiritually as well as physically. Jesus' miraculous healings usually led to spiritual belief in Jesus by those He healed and their families, but this is not indicated here or later in the life of this man. After healing the man, it seems unlikely that Jesus would have rushed off and disappeared so no one would see Him, but as He intended in this situation, somehow Jesus left the crowd without drawing attention to himself. Jesus' healing of the man and then disappearing was highly unusual, because Jesus was usually known for healing crowds of people who came to Him, not rushing off unseen after healing just one person. The reason Jesus disappeared probably relates to the response of the man He healed. John may be showing us the truth that not every physical healing by Jesus led the healed person to believe in Jesus as Messiah and Savior. Similarly, many of the Jews, especially the Pharisees, were more concerned about Jesus healing someone on the Sabbath than praising and thanking God whenever Jesus healed someone. In the Gospel of John, with the healing of this man, opposition to Jesus becomes increasingly pronounced; especially when Jesus healed on the Sabbath contrary to the laws and traditions of the Pharisees.

**(John 5:11) But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"**

What do we know about the man? We know the man blamed others for his current problems. He blamed those around him for not getting into the pool first in order to be healed when the waters were troubled. Maybe that was the fact, or maybe he did not want to admit that he preferred begging to getting well and needing to work to live. When the Pharisees accused the man of breaking the Sabbath law against carrying a burden of the Sabbath, he blamed the man who had made him well and who had told him to carry his mat and break the Sabbath law. Why had Jesus told the man this? At least to show the man that he had been made physically whole: strong enough to walk and strong enough to carry a burden. Strong enough to carry his bed home rather than leave it at the pool. If the man had profusely thanked Jesus and joyfully glorified God, he might have drawn the attention of all the sick to Jesus and He would have healed them too. In any event, for carrying his mat on the Sabbath, the man could have been driven out of the synagogue or even stoned to death for breaking the Sabbath law.

So, knowing the penalty for breaking the Sabbath law, he may have felt compelled to answer as he did. He told the truth. He had been healed, and the man who healed him told him to carry his mat on the Sabbath. Unhappily, the religious leaders thought nothing of the good that Jesus had done, but everything about the law that had been broken by the man and by Jesus who told him to disobey their laws and traditions.

**(John 5:12) So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”**

Notice: the religious leaders did not ask the man, “Who healed you?” Perhaps they did not believe he had been healed. Probably the fact of the man’s healing meant nothing to them. They certainly did not encourage the man to praise and thank God that he could carry his bed and walk.

**(John 5:13) The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.**

Perhaps the man was so startled that Jesus had healed him so completely and unexpectedly that he did not take time to look beyond the fact that he had been healed and for the first time in thirty-eight years he was strong enough to walk and even carry a mat. Perhaps he looked around to find Jesus to thank Jesus, but John does not tell us everything we would like to know. Led by the Holy Spirit, John does not answer all the questions we could think to ask. In any event, Jesus had good reasons to disappear in the crowd. Jesus most probably realized that at that moment in time He could do no more good among the crowd beyond healing the sick man.

**(John 5:14) Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”**

Jesus sought the sick man at the pool to heal him physically and make him whole physically. Then Jesus sought the sick man at the temple to heal him morally and spiritually, to restore the man to total spiritual wellness before God and others. Perhaps around the pool with others watching and wanting to be healed, Jesus did not want to deal with the man’s most important

problems—his problems with sin. Jesus always had and still has good reasons for whatever He says and does. In private, Jesus told the man that his most important sickness was moral and spiritual. In John chapter 9, we learn from Jesus that not all diseases and disabilities are caused by sin. In John chapter 5, we learn that some diseases and disabilities are the result of sin. In this case, Jesus told the man not to sin anymore. Whatever the man had done in the past, Jesus told him not to do it in the future. Perhaps the man did not want to work and had merely changed his location from the pool to the temple for begging. The Bible does not tell us the man's sin; but whatever it was, Jesus warned him that if he continued to sin as he had or turned to new sins, something worse than being unable to walk and too weak to carry his bed would happen to him. Refusing to repent of his sins and refusing to trust in God and the One who saved him would result in everything becoming worse than his previous disease and disability.

**(John 5:15) The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.**

Though he may have believed in God, the man refused to repent or believe in Jesus. If he had believed in Jesus, as had the Samaritans and the royal official that John wrote about in chapter 4, John would have surely proclaimed another successful conversion by Jesus. The fact that John did not report the man coming to faith in Jesus is strong evidence that the man refused to believe in Jesus. Making matters worse, knowing full well that those who broke the laws and traditions of the Jews regarding the Sabbath could face the death penalty, the man went out of his way to seek out the Pharisees to report that Jesus had made him well. The man could have waited for the Pharisees to see him again and question him again (he was at the temple), where he could have told them about Jesus. Instead, he immediately went to find the authorities. Notice: the fact that Jesus healed the man physically was never doubted. The man told the Pharisees twice that he had been healed, but the religious leaders ignored this miraculous act of healing love, and apparently his healing did not move the man to repent of his sins and believe in Jesus for salvation. Such is the case today. No matter how much God or Jesus do for some people, they simply will not give thanks to God for His many blessings and they will not repent of their

sins and believe in Jesus for salvation to receive the gift of eternal life. This sad fact is a great mystery to those who believe.

**(John 5:16) So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him.**

The fact that Jesus healed people and worked miracles and signs is never disputed by the religious authorities. Jesus gave ample evidence that He had the power of God working through Him; otherwise, Jesus would not have been able to do all that He did. Jesus was not persecuted for the good that He did, nor was He persecuted for healing people. The religious leaders began persecuting Jesus for not complying with, defending, and endorsing the policies of the religious leadership. He was helping people, healing the sick, and working His miracles as signs, but these good deeds made no difference in the minds of these leaders.

**(John 5:17) In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”**

After Jesus healed the sick man, He did not disappear because He feared controversy or to avoid persecution. Rather, Jesus directly told the religious leaders who persecuted Him that by doing His good deeds He was doing the Father’s work. Jesus also declared that His Father was still working in the world. Unlike Deism, that teaches God created the world but now is not involved in history or the world, Jesus taught that God the Father is very involved in the world and that God is working seven days a week—even on the Sabbath. God rested on the first Sabbath day after creation, not from exhaustion, but as an example to us who though created in His image need rest. God works in the life of every person and throughout all of creation. Everything God created depends ultimately on the sustaining work of God moment-by-moment, day-by-day. Though the religious leaders might or might not agree with the fact that God is still working, they did object to Jesus calling God, “My Father.” It was one thing to call God, “Our Father,” or to say that Jews are “children of God,” but quite another for someone to get so personal as to say of God, “My Father.” Out of deep reverence for the name of God, the Jews would not say the name of God, “Yahweh” or “Jehovah.” Therefore, to them it was scandalous for Jesus to be so familiar

to call God, “My Father.” Of course, since Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, it was not wrong for Him to address God or pray to God as “My Father.” Nor is it wrong for the children of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to pray to their Heavenly Father as “My Father,” for those who have received Jesus as Lord and Savior are adopted into the family of God as God’s children. The religious leaders were also offended because Jesus claimed that He and His Father worked together, that His Father and He had the same goals, purposes, and abilities. Increasingly, Jesus showed by word and deed that He and His Father had the same abilities and divine nature, and as Jesus taught and used these same abilities, He demonstrated that His Father and He had the same goals and purposes—that Jesus came into the world as the Savior and to save His people from their sins.

**(John 5:18) For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.**

What Jesus revealed about His Father and himself was and is true. The Gospel of John gives ample reason to believe that what Jesus revealed about God and himself is true. However, the religious leaders viewed the matter differently. They wanted to kill Jesus for three reasons. First, Jesus broke their rules for honoring the Sabbath. Jesus challenged their authoritarianism and their otherwise undisputed leadership of the Jews (given to them by their Roman rulers) by refusing to follow all their rules and traditions. Second, Jesus called God His own Father. Third, Jesus made himself equal to God, which they deemed blasphemy. As the Gospel of John will show us, Jesus was and is not required to obey the traditions that the religious leaders developed over generations. In Matthew 12:7-8, Jesus told the Pharisees, “But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.” As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus was innocent when He healed on the Sabbath. Jesus was and is the only begotten Son of God; so, Jesus by right could call God “His Father.” Jesus is equal to God and has the same eternal essence as His Father; therefore, Jesus is fully God, while at the same time being fully man, which is beyond our understanding—yet demonstrated by Jesus and taught in the Bible.

## Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What did the man Jesus healed say after the religious leaders told him that it was unlawful for him to carry his mat on the Sabbath?
2. Why did the healed man not know who had healed him?
3. Do you think the religious leaders believed that Jesus had healed the man? Why or why not?
4. When Jesus found the man He had healed in the temple, what did He say to him? What lessons might His words teach us that we can apply?
5. Why did the religious leaders persecute Jesus and want to kill Him?

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