

John 5:16-47

Jesus defends his healing on the Sabbath

❖ This passage, which follows Jesus' healing of the man at the pool in Bethesda, is Jesus' response to criticisms from "the Jews" that he was breaking the Law. ¹

1. *Read 5:16-25.* Jesus mounts his defense against the charge of Sabbath-breaking by talking about what *God* does on the Sabbath. What two tasks does Jesus list as being done by (or under the authority of) the Father on the Sabbath in 19-25? Why is this relevant to Jesus' defense (see v. 17)? How was this argument received (v. 18)? How did Jesus do these two things with the man by the pool? How does the Son give life? (See 5:1-15 and 3:3.)

❖ *Read 26-30.* Note that it parallels 19-25:

26	The power of life shared by the Father and the Son	21
27	The power of judgment shared by the Father and the Son	22
28	The reaction of surprise	20
28	An hour is coming (and is now here)	25
29	Those who have done right (have listened) shall live	25
30	The Son does nothing by himself; the Son sees or hears what he must do	19

❖ Note that Jesus temporarily switches in v. 27 from the Father/Son terminology to that of the Son of Man. This term would be known to his hearers both as a term used frequently in Ezekiel meaning "mortal," as well as in Daniel, referring to a humanoid figure in Daniel's vision who executes sovereignty and judgment over the world (Dan 7:13).

2. Jesus said the Son did what he saw the Father doing. *How* did Jesus see this? How do you?
3. Why does the Father give Jesus the task of judging men? *Extra credit:* Who has the task of judging angels? (See 1 Cor 6:3.)
4. Jesus says the Son seeks not his own will, but the Father's. Does this imply a difference?
5. *Read 31-40.* The Law sets a precedent in capital cases requiring that a witness be corroborated (Deut 17:6). What four witnesses does Jesus claim? Read 1 John 5:9-12. How was the Father a witness? How did Paul make use of the multiple-witness precedent? (See e.g. 2 Cor 13:1, 1 Tim 5:19, Heb 10:28; see also Matt 18:16.)
6. Jesus counts this miracles as one of his witnesses. Reconcile this with Matt 7:22-23.
7. *Read 41-47.* "The Jews" make Moses, i.e. the Law of Moses—the pentateuch—Jesus' accuser, claiming that he has violated the Sabbath (v. 46). Where does Moses testify on Jesus' behalf? Read Acts 3:17-23. Give some examples from the rest of Hebrew scripture.
8. Bearing in mind that they were not by nature any more sinful or obstinate than we are, why did the Jewish leaders have trouble believing in Jesus? See Mat 23:23, Luke 18:9. In what ways does your desire for spiritual security keep you from being vulnerable to God?
9. Read Deut 5:12-15, Is 58:13, Col 2:16, Matt 12:5-8. How do you keep the Sabbath holy? Are you following Jesus' example? Given that you are *a child* of God, not *the Son* of God, should you?

¹ Remember that John uses "the Jews" as "almost a technical title for the religious authorities, particularly those in Jerusalem, who are hostile to Jesus" [Raymond Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John* (Doubleday: NY) 1966].

JESUS' WORK ON THE SABBATH: JOHN 5:16-47

INTRODUCTION

^{5:16} So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." ¹⁸ For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

THE TWO-FOLD SABBATH WORK, PART 1

^{5:19} Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. ²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. ^{5:24} I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

THE TWO-FOLD SABBATH WORK, PART 2

²⁵ "I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. ^{5:28} Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. ³⁰ By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I

hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

JESUS' WITNESSES

^{5:31} "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. ³² There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. ^{5:33} You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. ³⁴ Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. ³⁵ John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. ^{5:36} I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, ³⁸ nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. ³⁹ You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

ATTACK ON JEWISH DISBELIEF

^{5:41} "I do not accept praise from men, ⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God? ^{5:45} But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"