

JESUS IS LORD OVER SICKNESS AND THE SABBATH

John 5:1-18

In the face of daunting challenges in our world and nation, let us turn afresh to the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is worthy of our full allegiance, complete trust, and total obedience. Jesus is Lord! Jesus is life!

1.JESUS IS LORD OVER SICKNESS – John 5:1-9 – “Do you want to be well?”

- Jesus comes to a man in miserable, desperate need. Jesus seeks him out. He has been an invalid or paralyzed man for 38 years, a whole lifetime or more for many in the ancient world. He has been lying at the pool of Bethesda (“house of outpouring”). His condition may be the result of some sin on his part – verse 11. But sickness is not always the result of personal sin – John 9:2,3. Sometimes sickness is simply from living in a broken, fallen world.
- Jesus now asks an unusual question: “Do you want to be healed?”- verse 6. Jesus knew he had been there a long time, so he simply may be asking if the man is willing to acknowledge his desperate need. The paralyzed man responds with a reason or excuse why he has not been healed. He has no one to help him. We all, like this man, have to face the truth about ourselves. Without Jesus, we are hopeless and helpless. But Jesus also may be asking if the man is ready to change his whole life. To be an invalid invited dependency on others – for mercy and alms. This pool was near the Temple. To be healed meant “standing on one’s feet again.” This man would have to again take responsibility for himself and his needs. Jesus may be leading this man to see in Jesus the ONE who has life-transforming power.
- Jesus gives a powerful command to this paralyzed man – verse 8. The power and glorious authority of Jesus is seen in His command to “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” – verse 8. The man is instantly healed by Jesus and takes up his bed and walks – Acts 3:5-10. Just as the 38 years prove “the gravity of the disease”, so his walking proves the “completeness of the cure.” The bed was a mat or pallet of reeds with straw. The man is personally healed by the Son of God not a mere angel.
- Application: We need to face the truth about ourselves before we can be changed by Jesus. If Jesus asked you today “Do you want to be well?” What would you say? We must admit the fact of our own helplessness and stop making excuses like “it’s just the way I am.” No one can turn their life around on their own. But enter Jesus – *“The natural helplessness that is ours is overcome by the invincible and irresistible power that is Christ’s, and our lives are changed forever.”* – Mark Johnston, John.

2.JESUS IS LORD OVER THE SABBATH – John 5:10-18 - “My Father is working, and I am working.”

- This healing happened on the Sabbath. This leads to a legalistic nitpicking charge against this man and ultimately Jesus. In Jewish tradition it was not legal to carry a bed on the Sabbath. Jesus DID NOT break God’s Law in the Bible or the Sabbath command of Exodus 20. What Jesus was breaking was Jewish tradition about the Sabbath. The Jews had identified 39 categories of work forbidden on the Sabbath. This was part of #39 – carrying something from one domain to another. *“in practice the letter of the law had come to dominate its spirit. Outward conformity replaced heart commitment. They lost sight of the ultimate purpose of the law, its modelling a life which pleased God and witnessed to the gracious choice of Israel.”* – Bruce Milne. These legalists seem to express no wonder or interest in the man’s miraculous healing and recovery!

They can't see the woods for the trees. They have no interest in Jesus' power to transform lives, only that Jesus is a Sabbath-breaker.

- The healed man blames his Healer – verse 15. This man doesn't even know who Jesus is – verse 12. But when Jesus later reveals Himself to him, it comes with a serious warning – “stop sinning or something worse may happen to you!” – verse 14. Jesus may be simply warning this man and us that physical healing is not the most important healing. You can be physically well and still go to Hell. Sin is always our deepest and worst problem. Only Jesus can rescue us from sin's power and ultimate consequences – Hell (“something worse”). But then the man tells the authorities the one who commanded him to carry his bed was Jesus. Many consider this an outright betrayal of Jesus.
- Finally, in setting up the coming controversies about Jesus, Jesus makes a bold claim. Jesus links Himself with God the Father as ONE who works even on the Sabbath – verse 17. God does not rest from ruling over the world on the Sabbath. God sustains all things even on the Sabbath. God the Son Jesus actually sustains everything! - Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3. Jesus is linking Himself to God so that the entire universe is His. Jesus is Lord over the Sabbath – Mark 2:27,28. Even worse to the Jewish authorities, Jesus calls God “MY Father.” The Jewish authorities get what Jesus is saying. They accuse Jesus not only of being a Sabbath-breaker, but the One claiming to be equal with God – John 19:7. The Jewish religious authorities are so upset with Jesus they want to kill Him! – verse 18; Mark 3:4-6.
- Application: Today Jesus still divides people into only two categories – those for Him and those rejecting Him. One of the worst ways to reject Jesus is apathy. It is seen is not even wanting to know more about Him or His Word.

Concluding Applications:

- Have you acknowledged your own helplessness apart from Jesus?
- Do you want to be well? What steps are you taking to obey Christ?
- Are you a legalist who judges everyone else by your own interpretations even on issues like observing a Sabbath Day or other personal convictions? – Colossians 2:16,17; Romans 14:1-5.
- Are you glorifying Jesus as God the Son and your only hope in this life and the next?