

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

### *Because Jesus is God...*

Some liberal professors and even some ‘theologians’ say that Jesus never claimed to be God. The Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons (Latter Day Saints) hold Jesus in high esteem and even claim to believe in Him, but they deny His true deity. There are many others who think that Jesus was a great moral teacher and example, but still refuse to affirm that He is God. Just to be perfectly clear, the **deity** of Jesus Christ is an essential doctrine of Christianity and is a non-negotiable belief if you are a true follower of Jesus. Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God incarnate. Incarnate means in the flesh – Jesus the Son of God came to earth as God in the flesh!

When we concluded our last lesson, Jesus had just healed a paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda. And we learned that the healing occurred on the Sabbath. Was this coincidence or on purpose? Let’s find out.

**Read John 5:8-13 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” <sup>9</sup> And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. **Now that day was the Sabbath.** <sup>10</sup> So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” <sup>11</sup> But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” <sup>12</sup> They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’” <sup>13</sup> Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.

Have you ever experienced something absolutely wonderful only to have someone downplay it or even criticize or belittle the experience? That is the way I see what happened when Jesus healed this man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. This was the ‘real deal’ and all the Jews could say was “*It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.*” According to the Pharisees, carrying a mat on the Sabbath was work and was therefore unlawful. It did not break an Old Testament law, but it broke the **Pharisees' interpretation** of God's command in **Exodus 20:8 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. This was just one of hundreds of rules they had added to the Old Testament law. Instead of rejoicing over the man’s miraculous healing, the religious leaders condemned him for **carrying** his bed which in their eyes broke the law. How sad!

And in my opinion, the man who had been lame gave a lame response when he said. *‘the man who healed me made me do it.’* What a disappointing answer to such a miraculous gift.

It was not the man's fault that he did not know who healed him at Bethesda. The scripture tells us that Jesus left the crowds at the pool. This was something He often did. However, Jesus was not finished with the man since Jesus sought him out again.

**Read John 5:14-15 (ESV)** <sup>14</sup> *Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."* <sup>15</sup> *The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.*

Jesus found the man who was healed, and said something that scholars still debate: *Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.* The debate is over whether or not the man was paralyzed because of his sin. When Jesus healed the blind man, He said that not all suffering is the result of a person's sin. **John 9:3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> *Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. Jesus said in **Luke 12:4-5 (ESV)*** <sup>4</sup> *"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do."* <sup>5</sup> *But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!* Never forget that spiritual healing is always of more value than physical healing.

Verse 14 does not indicate that the man showed any gratitude to Jesus but surely he was thankful. However, not everyone 'touched by Jesus' continues to remember the blessing. The next verse says the man went to the religious leaders to let them know Jesus was responsible for his healing. Possibly he was more concerned about pleasing others than pleasing Jesus.

It was not necessary for Jesus to heal the man on the Sabbath. But, Jesus had His reasons!

**Read John 5:16-18 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> *And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.* <sup>17</sup> *But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."* <sup>18</sup> *This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

There was a pattern to the healing works of Jesus. The healings frequently occurred on the Sabbath. Jesus healing on the Sabbath was a 'teaching' experience. **Mark 2:27 (ESV)** <sup>27</sup> *And he [meaning Jesus] said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Jesus challenged the Pharisees' legalistic traditions. **Mark 2:28 (ESV)*** <sup>28</sup> *So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."*

The conversation between the Pharisees and Jesus went far beyond the idea of whether picking up a mat was work that broke the Sabbath laws. The real **problem** for the Jews was Jesus making Himself equal with God. This is the theme of John's Gospel – Jesus is God! We encounter the same problem in witnessing today – there are those who do not want to acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son.

Verses 17 and 18 reveal Jesus' divinity – meaning Jesus IS the Son of God. Many of those who heard His words understood Jesus' claim that God is His Father and that He is working just as God is working.

British writer George MacDonald explains this way, “Jesus did *instantly* what the Father is always doing slowly. For example, in nature, the Father is slowly turning water into wine; but Jesus did it instantly. Through the powers in nature, the Father is healing broken bodies; but Jesus healed them immediately. Nature is repeatedly multiplying bread, from sowing to harvest; but Jesus multiplied it instantly in His own hands.” MacDonald's words for me are a beautiful picture of the divinity of Christ.

When we are witnessing for Christ, we sometimes have the tendency to do everything we can to avoid conflict. In order to keep from offending, we may even choose to remain silent. It is evident from the life of the Savior that avoiding conflict was not the way Jesus lived His life. In order to follow in His footsteps, we should take the attitude that if we face conflict for proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God and the ONLY WAY to heaven – so be it!

The next passage begins with another of Jesus' *truly truly* statements. Jesus begins by repeating the word *amēn*. This word is often translated as truly or verily. Jesus using such a phrase at the **beginning** of a statement tells us what is said next is first-hand information. When Jesus says, "*Amēn, amēn, legō hymin... "—"truly, truly I say to you"*", He proclaims to know these things personally, directly, first-hand.

**Read John 5:19-21 (ESV)** <sup>19</sup> So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. <sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. <sup>21</sup> For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

This ‘*truly truly*’ statement was spoken in response to the anger of the Jews. Their anger did not cause Jesus to change His claim that God is His Father; instead, He insisted that what the **Father does He does**. He would later say in **John 10:30 (ESV)** <sup>30</sup> *I and the Father are one.*”

### **Equal in Works and Love**

To help us understand how Jesus' works are equal to the Father's work, think of an apprentice. An apprentice copies the work of a qualified artisan. In the ancient world the artisan was often the father and the apprentice one of his sons. An artisan would show his son what to do, because he loved him. Jesus did the work of the Father and promised the Jews *greater works* would soon demonstrate His resurrection power.

The Father and the Son are equal in love as well. **John 3:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal

*life.* God the Father loved the world enough to give the world His Son and the Son loved the world enough to give His life for us. Works and love go hand-in-hand between the Father and the Son. And, works and love must go hand-in-hand in our ministry as well.

### Equal in Judgment

**Read John 5:-22 (ESV)** <sup>22</sup> *The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,*

When Jesus stated that the Father *has given all judgment to the Son*, He was again claiming deity and that went against the grain with the Jews. The Jews knew Jehovah God was the Judge of all the earth. In fact, Abraham had said as much when he was pleading for the righteous people of Sodom to be spared in **Genesis 18:25 (ESV)** <sup>25</sup> ... *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"*

Now, this ‘young up-start’ named Jesus was claiming to be Judge and they didn’t like it even though it was true. People still today do not want to admit that Jesus is the Son of God who will judge all the earth. But, just because we don’t ‘like something’ does not change the truth of God’s Word. **Revelation 20:12 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.*

Judgment will be through a Judge who has nail-pierced hands, the One who has been raised from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a declaration to all men. It is by this that God assures all men there will be a judgment.

### Equal in Honor

**Read John 5:23 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> *that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*

The Father expects His Son—Jesus—to be given honor, just as God the Father is to be given honor. Honor means to esteem, value, give great respect. The Apostle Paul says it best in **Philippians 2:10-11 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* <sup>11</sup> *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

We are currently living in a trying time as our world faces the uncertainties of the corona virus pandemic. Many people are living in fear. However, if we know Jesus as our Savior, we need not fear because Jesus is God! **Jeremiah 32:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> *‘Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.*