



Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

“A Sabbath Day Surprise”

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Have you ever wondered what it might have been like to be healed by Jesus as He walked this earth? Have you thought about what it might be like to have Jesus change your life and its direction in one encounter with Him? Such was the case with the man made whole at the Pool of Bethesda.

Jesus became a “son of the Law” at age 12. Jesus is not lawless. He came to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus kept the Sabbath. He went into the synagogues and taught. He also stirred things up by healing on the Sabbath.

One Sabbath day Jesus went to the Pool at Bethesda. (John 5) A man was there who for 38 years (a long-standing condition) had been suffering with an infirmity, something that made him feeble, weak, diseased, impotent. He was lying there waiting for someone to get him into the pool because the popular belief was that the first one in would be healed when an angel stirred the water. There you are, waiting for the stirring of the water when suddenly this Man comes up to you. John 5:6 tells us that Jesus knew this man had been now a long time in this condition. Jesus (but the man doesn't know it's Jesus), asks him, *Are you willing to be made whole?*

What kind of question is that? *Are you willing, do you determine, do you have any intention or desire to be made sound in body, restored to health, whole?* Let this Man make me whole? This Man would be doing the restoration and healing and the infirmed would be receiving.

This tells us that the first essential in receiving the power of Christ to heal is to intensely desire it, to want it. The word is “thelos” in Greek. Do we really want to be changed or are we content to stay as we are? Beggars often lose a good living by being cured; and they have to go to work. Calvin comments: “This sick man does what we nearly all do. He limits God's help to his own ideas and does not dare promise himself more than he conceives in his mind.”

So think about this. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain if this Man really could pull this off. Is that hope rising up inside of us? Yes. And aren't we thankful that Whoever this is moves right past our blah, blah, blah and gets right to it, the means of our healing? Are we ready for this? Can we believe this?

Jesus said to our case in point, *Rise, take up your bed, and walk.*

Wow! Let's try to identify with this. We're lying there year after year looking for someone to get us into this pool because we think we'll get healed if we can just be the first one in. We've said it to ourselves and the Word of God recording this event agrees; we're impotent, weak, fragile, diseased. We can do nothing to effect our own healing. Some Man we don't know comes up to us and wants to know whether or not we want to be made whole. We know we can't do it ourselves and we start going on with this Man about our problem as we see it. Somehow the Man knows the whole truth, and His way to have us made whole is to give us a command. What?!

Immediately, this nameless man in John 5 was made whole. He takes up his bed and walks. He's cured. The thing is, it was the Sabbath. Jesus just came and changed the direction of this man's life, but hey, it wasn't "lawful" for the man to carry his mat on the Sabbath. So the man, who didn't even know who healed him, gets bombarded with questions about who healed him. Jesus finds the man later on, in the temple. Again, Jesus initiates the conversation. "*Behold, you are made whole. Sin no longer, lest a worse thing come unto you.*" The man has been shown mercy; now he must walk in that mercy. Jesus graciously tells him how to avoid further trouble in his life. The man left and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole.

Okay. So we get healed. We obey the command. We don't know who healed us, but we know the result. We're surprised; we're a bit confused about what it all means. Our life just changed and whoever made us whole walks away. And then, some Jews come up to us and bombard us with questions. Nasty surprise: we obeyed the Man but it wasn't lawful to carry your mat on the Sabbath. But we just experienced a miracle. We just had our life changed. And then the Man finds us in the temple, because that's where we headed, and again initiates conversation with us but warns us not to sin any longer. If we go back into the sin that brought our condition on in the first place, a worse thing might happen to us. That's total grace. We, however, are thinking we need to tell the Jews who healed us, that it was Jesus. Are we learning from this?

The Sabbath Day Surprise turns out to be a power point presentation in the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ.

This was about working and the keeping of the fourth commandment. (Exodus 20:8-11) The significance of this commandment is that God wrote His Name on His covenant with this commandment. In the Mosaic covenant, God signed His name in the keeping of the Sabbath; it is His signature day. The Sabbath was basically this from creation: work followed by rest. According to Meredith Kline, the Sabbath is a sign of sanctification marking that which receives its imprint as belonging to God's holy kingdom with promise of consummation. The Sabbath will have relevance and application at any given epoch of redemptive history only in the holy dimension(s) of the life of God's covenant people.

With the coming of Christ, there is a change. When applied to the pre-fall and Mosaic covenant, the Sabbath day of rest clearly has a "stamping" function. But now, in the new covenant mediated by Christ, the Sabbath rest is sacramental in the sense that the Sabbath rest is realized already in Christ enthroned in heaven. Now, it is the first day remembrance of the resurrection of Christ in a realized eschatology. It is already, and not yet. It is an eschatological sign. We

reign in the heavenlies with Christ, but at the same time, we witness, we suffer with Christ, we experience weakness. We have it, but not yet. It is already, but not yet. The just shall live by faith.

When questioned by the Jews, Jesus responds, *My Father is working and I am working right up to this very moment.*

The issue is work, what's permissible on the Sabbath; and who is this Jesus?

Jesus uses the words, "My Father." That's not the way Jews usually referred to God. If they used the term, say in prayer, they would qualify it with "in heaven" or some other expression to remove the suggestion of familiarity. Jesus doesn't do this. Jesus thinks of God His Father in the closest relationship to Himself. The Jews didn't miss this. "Jesus points to the unceasing activity of the Father. Without Him this whole created universe would cease." (Leon Morris)

No one could survive without God's continual working. Jesus works in the same way. The Sabbath cannot interfere with the work of such a One. Divine rest from Creation does not mean being idle. The compassion of God must be reflected in compassion in God's people.

Jesus made Himself equal with God. The Jews got it. Jesus was not teaching men that God is the Father of all. That would have been okay with the Jews. Jesus was claiming that God was His Father; that He partook of the same nature as His Father and so was equal. So to the Jews, this was Sabbath breaking and blasphemy. What Jesus did proceeded from Jesus' view of His person; that only increased the hostility and desire and attempts to kill Jesus. "The Jews looked to the habitual attitude, not one isolated act and word." (Leon Morris)

Jesus will focus on His own unity with the Father, His divine commission and authority, and on proofs that He is the Messiah. In John 5 He corrects thinking regarding the miracles and healings, everlasting life, the resurrection of the dead and His authority to judge, and on the witness concerning who He is.

Jesus cannot act independently of the Father. He does what He sees the Father doing with continued thought and focus and uninterrupted communication. He and the Father hold a sameness of nature. Jesus' statements not only show subordination, humility, and obedience, but also deity. "The implication is that the authority with which He teaches and acts is nothing less than the authority of God." (Leon Morris)

The Father loves the Son in a continuing habitual love. The Father never ceases to love the Son. Love gives and does not withhold. In a continuous action, the Father shows the Son all the things He does. The Son does the things He is shown. The union is absolute.

The greater works are the Son's activities in giving life and in judging. The Father (and no other) raises people from the dead and gives them life. The OT confirms this. (Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7). No problem for the Jews. The problem is Jesus' assertion that the Son also gives life. He will be the Judge of people at the last day and will raise people up. But there is a sense in which judgment takes place even now. (John 3:19, 36) The Father takes dead bodies and raises them into new life, and the Son likewise takes people who, though their bodies

are alive, are yet in a state of death, and raises them into spiritual life. The Son gives life where He, and not any person, wills or determines. (John 5:21)

The Father does not judge people. This was new to Jews. God judges the world. Jews expected to stand before God the Father at the last day. Jesus says that the Father will exercise His prerogative of judging through the Son (Acts 17:31). Why? So that people will give the Son the same honor as they do to the Father. Those who fail to honor Jesus fail to honor the Father that sent Him. It is dishonoring to the Sender if His messenger is dishonored. **What is done to one is done also to the other.** Dishonoring Jesus has serious implications. (cf. Malachi 1:6ff; Malachi 3)

Unity of Father and Son, in addition to honor, is seen also in the way people are saved. Hear Christ and believe the Father; that affirms the unity between the Father and the Son. “Word” stands in for the whole message of Jesus.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.
John 5:24

The person who accepts the way of darkness and evil has already been judged. The person who has eternal life has already passed from death to life, does not come into judgment on the last great day, enjoys permanent safety, and his way of life will reflect it.

Jesus will be the Judge of all people on the great Day of Judgment. A person’s eternal destiny is determined by his/her attitude to Jesus. The spiritually dead hear with appreciation, taking heed to Jesus’ voice and live. Jesus refers to Himself as “the Son of God.” (John 5:25) This is one of only 3 places in John’s Gospel where Jesus uses this title (John 5:25; 10:36; 11:4).

Life derives from the Father, who breathes life into people (Gen. 2:7). Life is God’s gift. The Father shows people the path of life and holds our souls in life. The Jews accepted without hesitation the thought that all life takes its origin from the Father, all life save His own. God’s own life is inherent in His being. To Jesus is given to have **the same kind of life** within Himself that the Father has within Himself. (1 John 5:11)

God is the Judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25; Judges 11:27). God makes the final verdict. Jesus has divine prerogatives: the giving of judgment to the Son (John 5:22), authority. Jesus will be the final judge of men because He, too, is man. He shares their nature. He is the Son of Man, that Daniel 7:14 messianic figure to whom is given dominion, and glory, etc.

The voice of the Son will call the dead from their graves. (John 5:25) Here and now those loving darkness receive their condemnation. Here and now those believing on Christ enter into eternal life. Likewise, a future resurrection of the dead and a future judgment day await. At the end of the age the voice of the Son will usher in the resurrection. **All** the dead will rise and be judged on the basis of works, either to life or to damnation. Salvation is by grace; it is reflected in one’s works. Judgment is based on men’s works, deeds done in the body.

Jesus speaks of a four-fold witness. **Witness is borne to Him by the Father, the Baptist, His works, and the Scripture.** Jesus is not interested in human witness (John 5:34), and refers to His own works and to the witness of the Father. He doesn't expect the Jews to respond to this witness, for despite a profound reverence for the Scriptures, they do not believe deep down where they live.

Witness commits. When we give a testimony, we have committed ourselves. Jesus is the supreme revelation of God. If we want to know what God is like, then we should look at Jesus and listen to Jesus. God has committed Himself IN Jesus.

Just as Jesus sees the Father and depends on the Father, so also Jesus hears the Father. "Jesus is the Revealer in whom God Himself makes encounter in action and speech." (Bultmann) Jesus' perfect obedience means His judgment is divine. Jesus exercises righteous judgment because He does not seek His own will, but that of the Father.

Witness to someone must be borne by someone else. Deut. 19:15 says by 2 or 3. Jesus' witness of Himself is only true if supported by the Father. Here Jesus looks at the kind of witness, oneness with the Father. This kind of witness cannot be true if unsupported; it needs more. The Other that bears witness is the Father. The witness of the Father may not be acceptable to the Jews; but it is a true witness nonetheless.

The witness of John the Baptizer continues in its message. (John 1:15) But Jesus has divine attestation. Jesus bears witness to John. Jesus emphatically asserts that what bears witness to Him is greater, namely: His works and the Father Himself in sending the Son.

Jesus indicts the Jews. They have never heard God's voice, but Moses did (Ex. 33:11). They should have heard God's voice in Jesus. They have never seen God's form but Israel saw (Gen. 32:30f). They are not true Israelites. They do not have God's word abiding in them, but the Psalmist did (Ps 119:11). They should have received Jesus' message. They don't believe. For us this means, that **we must believe in Jesus first and then we will receive the direct testimony from God.** The truth of God in Jesus is self-authenticating.

The Scriptures witness to Jesus, but the Jews are antagonistic towards Jesus, to whom the Scriptures witness. The Jews refuse to come to Jesus but instead seek to kill Him. (Luke 13:34)

Not only does Jesus not receive witness from men, He also does not receive honor or glory from men. Here the word "glory" means honor, praise, or esteem. He's not out to please men, but to please the Father. The Jews professed loving God but in fact, there was no real love. Their religion is self-willed. The Jews had worked out a pattern of religion and sought to fit God into it. They did not seek first the way of God in order to adjust their lives to that way. For religion, it is always thus. The Jews loved the honor of men.

Jesus' mission is rooted squarely in the will of God. *How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only? John 5:44.* The thing is impossible with men who look to each other for honor and praise and esteem and worth.

And then there's Moses. The Jews were proud of the connection with Moses. But it is Moses, not Jesus, who is accusing them before God. The Jews thought they followed Moses, to a "T;" but they perverted the writings of Moses. The Law of Moses does not save, but accuses and exposes men as sinners. Had they really paid attention to Moses, they would have been convicted of sin and seen their need for a Savior. Moses' writings were prophetic and pointed to Christ. Rejecting Christ means not really believing what Moses had written. The Jews professed to be Moses' disciples and honored Moses' writings as sacred, but they did not really believe and so did not believe Jesus, do not believe **into** Jesus, becoming one with Jesus and abiding in Jesus.

Jesus has the authority to change the order of things. He transforms creation. He transforms people's lives. He transforms the covenant. He is the Mediator of the New Covenant in His Blood. He is the promised Messiah, the suffering servant of God and the Son of Man as noted in Daniel 7. As Son of Man, Jesus claims authority to forgive sins and to regulate the observance of the divine ordinance of the Sabbath, both clearly prerogatives of God alone. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. As Son of Man, Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. (Mark 2:27, 28) As Son of Man the angels are His, making Jesus their Lord and tying us back to Captain of the Heavenly Armies, Lord Sabaoth (1 Samuel 1:3). As Son of Man, Jesus would suffer and die for the purpose of ransoming others. A person's eternal destiny turns on his relationship to the Son of Man, for unless the Son of Man gives a person life, there is no life in him (John 6:53). As Son of Man, Jesus would rise from the dead and sit at the right hand of power and come in clouds with great power and glory. This coming in glory is a coming with all His holy angels in the glory of His Father but also coming in His own glory. As Son of Man, He has been given the authority to execute judgment upon all people.

As Son of God, Jesus claims essential divine oneness with God. We have seen Jesus claim that God was His Father in such a unique sense that Jewish religious leaders clearly and correctly perceived that Jesus was claiming a Sonship with God that constituted essential divine oneness and equality with God, considered blasphemy if not true.

"Servile work" was prohibited on the Sabbath days, but Jesus says to look at David and the priests of their own time (Matthew 12:1-8). Ceremonial observances must give way before moral duties, and particularly the necessities of nature. There is a higher law of love (Lev. 19:18; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8). The Sabbath was made for man. It is man who needs to rest. *My Father is working and I am working even up to this very moment*, Jesus had said. Jesus is bringing in a new order of worship, the Lord's Day, in remembrance of the Resurrection and that final Rest in God that comes through faith in Him. Jesus is bringing in a new measure of love and liberty, an inward reality rather than outward rule.

It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, to save life. Works of necessity are lawful. There is that higher law of love (Lev. 19:8; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8). And just to prove His point further, Jesus had another Sabbath surprise for a man with a withered (dried up) hand. (Mark 3:1-6) The Jews were out to accuse Jesus on Sabbath issues. Jesus calls the man to stand in the midst, right up there with everyone watching. Jesus saw in the Jews hardness of heart, so He commands this man to stretch forth his hand, and it was restored. Surprise!

May we move beyond believing in Jesus to believing Jesus and to believing what Jesus believes. The times in which we live demand it. The time to know the Word, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ is worth it to us. Our lives depend upon it. You can find out more at www.mcmtffr.org where our teachings and study handouts and radio broadcasts are archived...free to you.

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Surprised by His grace,

Mary Craig

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The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath:

Therefore the Son of Man is LORD also of the Sabbath.

Jesus, Mark 2:27, 28

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