The Persecuted Jesus
Scripture: John 5:1-18
Code: 1508B

John chapter 5, we now, this morning, begin a section of John's gospel, the theme is this, the rejection of Jesus Christ. As we come to chapter 5 and chapter 6 we come face to face with the antagonized Jews who in hostility begin to move to persecute and murder Jesus Christ. And we shall see this morning how this hostility is begun, or how really what has been festering is brought into the open. So both chapters 5 and 6 deal with antagonism toward Christ.

Now remember this, Christ came, declared Himself as the Son of God. He came to Israel to declare that. We've already seen it. John's purpose in this gospel is to present Christ as the Son of God. Now in that presentation there hasn't been an open reception of Christ yet in Israel. And on the contrary we find that beginning in chapters 5 and 6 rather than reception there is rejection and open hostility toward Christ.

Now in chapter 5 we see the hostility in Jerusalem in the south. In chapter 6 we see the hostility in Galilee in the north. And both hostile movements finally culminate on the complete national level as the whole nation rejects Christ and then in consort with the Romans they execute Christ in a murderous fashion. So we see that this is a rejection in chapters 5 and 6.

Now you say, "Well why would John include this area of rejection?" Well because it's true first of all, because it belongs here. And secondly, because you remember that I told you at the very beginning of our study that John has a purpose in writing and his purpose is to present Jesus Christ as the Son of God as God in a body. But there are also two sub themes. Not only does he present Christ as the Son of God but secondly, he is concerned with presenting the message that Christ gave. Thirdly, what men did with it. Remember we've emphasized that again and again. And so in these two chapters we see all three of these. He presents Christ again as God, Christ gives His message and men reject it...except for isolated instances where they receive Him.

Now we come to a particular incident in chapter 5 that takes place at the pool called Bethesda. And this really brings to complete focus the hatred and persecution of Christ. Now it had been smoldering prior to this. Naturally it had because the first thing Jesus did when He got into Galilee...pardon me, when He got into Jerusalem was go directly to the temple and He went in there, made a whip out of cords and shot everybody out of the temple, destroyed the whole set up there which is not really the first step to popularity. And as a result, He had already bred a great deal of antagonism.

Then in chapter 4 and verse 1 the indication is underlying there that the persecution of Jesus, or the beginning attitude of hatred toward Him may have been part of the reason that He went to Galilee because as the persecution began to break out around John the Baptist, He knew it was headed for Him. So it was festering but here we see it just full blown and the plain simple statement of the Word of God that they persecuted Him and sought to kill Him. And so instead of Jesus Christ being met with repentance, instead of Jesus Christ being met with open arms and love, He is met with hatred and rejection and persecution and ultimately it's really a case of murder.

Now as we look at this passage I'm going to break it into three parts to help you to get a nail to hang some of this truth on. Part number one, the miracle performed, verses 1 to 9. Part number two, the Master persecuted, 10 to 16, at least the first part of 16. Part three, the murder planned, 16 to 18. The miracle performed, the Master persecuted and the murder planned.

All right, let's look at the miracle performed. Now what sets off this persecution and what sets off this rejection is a miracle done by Christ...now watch this...which He does purposely, directly for the purpose of confronting Jewish legalism. He wants to get a response out of them. He wants them to react. And He knows how they're going to react, too.

All right, the miracle, verse 1. "After this," and that's meta tuta(?)which means after these things, indicating a plurality of ministries in Galilee, after He had done many things in Galilee and John only tells us one, the healing of the nobleman's son, but John just takes that whereas He was there for 16 months and the other gospels tell us He did a lot of things. "So after many things done in Galilee," verse 1, "there was a feast." We don't know what feast, likely either the Passover in April or the Feast of Tabernacles in October, take your choice. "There was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." Now you remember that in the system of Judaism there were prescribed feasts during the year. There were at least five very special feasts when the male members of the family were required to attend them at Jerusalem. And the whole population of the land would just move toward Jerusalem and this was one of those times. As I said, either April the Passover, October the Feast of Tabernacles, and Jesus as was the custom of all the Jews moved toward Jerusalem in order to attend this feast.

Now in chapter 6 He is back again in Galilee. So evidently chapter 5 just involved Him going to the feast and going right back. So He's attending the feast as is Jewish custom. And, of course, He's got another purpose in mind which He brings to pass in the light of this.

Now verse 2, "Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheepgate a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda and it has five porches, or colonnades surrounding it." Now, notice the word "is," there IS in Jerusalem. Now that's a very important thought because John is writing this in about 85 or 90 A.D., it happened in about 28 A.D. So John's writing it a good sixty years later. He's also writing it

25 years after Jerusalem was destroyed. And the fact that he says there is a Jerusalem, a pool, indicates that in the destruction of Jerusalem when it was flattened, that pool still stood and that sheepgate likely was still there. So just a historical note. By putting it in the present tense John indicates that it still existed at that time. There is at Jerusalem by the sheepgate a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

Now, the Bible tells us that the lame people at a certain time in this passage would go into the pool in order to be healed. If that pool was 75 feet deep and had a whole lot of lame people diving into it, I would say that the incidence of drowning would be severe. It's very unlikely that that pool would be 75 feet deep and lame people once in would be permanent residents. So it is very unlikely that St. Stephen's gate is the sheepgate. What was the sheepgate? We don't know. The best thing that we could perhaps assume would be that the sheepgate was a gate very near the temple where, and of course, the temple was destroyed and so would this have been and so would the pool that's why we really can't find it today, but the sheepgate would be a gate near the temple where the people would bring the sheep in to be used for the sacrifices and to be sold in the courtyard.

Verse 3, now there are these five porches, in these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, that means sick. So they were sick, then he says blind, lame and paralyzed. Now all of these people were there. There was this gigantic multitude of people, sick people, blind people, lame people, and paralyzed people, and I believe those are four separate classifications, and they were all around this pool.

Now you say, "Well what were they doing there?" Well interestingly enough what they were doing there was waiting for some kind of therapeutic healing from those waters. Now that's not really so abnormal. There are places today in the world that have attached to them some sort of therapeutic value and many people go to these places, you know, mineral baths and hot springs and whatever...they're either some shrines in Europe where they suppose the water to be sort of magical and I understand there's a really fantastic place out in the middle of the desert called "Zizek Springs"(?) run by brother Springer who has since been incarcerated, which means put in jail, and he has claimed a cure for cancer and everything else if you go lay in his pools. So it's not an abnormal thing that there be some..and incidently there perhaps would be some therapeutic value in some kind of hot springs, at least to some degree. And evidently this multitude had found some kind of soothing quality at this pool and also there had a superstition arisen there perhaps, and we shall see that as we look at the next section.

Now, a mental note...in verse 3, "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, blind, lame, paralyzed." Now the next phrase does not appear in the oldest manuscripts and neither does verse 4, I'm convinced that they don't belong there. Let me just give you a little historical thought. The old manuscripts that we have of this account don't have this. Later manuscripts have it inserted in the margin and the newer manuscripts have it stuck into the text which means that it wasn't there in the original, somebody put it in, somebody else put it all the way in. It is evidently a superstition. And

some scribe merely wrote it in the margin of a manuscript so show why these people were gathered there. They believed that an angel stirred up that water and gave it its healing powers. Now with that in mind, read verse 3 at the end, "Waiting for the moving of the water."

Now evidently this pool was fed by an intermittent spring and the water would flow into this pool at certain intermittent times and when it flowed in it would cause a little bubbling. And that bubbling was bringing in that fresh spring water and the people believed that was the stuff that had the healing power. And they also believed that an angel was the one who was making it bubble, verse 4, now remember this is not in the Scripture, this is merely some scribal added thought to explain what they were doing there, "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the water." See, now this...this was not in the oldest manuscripts. We do not believe this is true. This is not the case, this is merely the superstition that some scribe wanted to add and he wrote it in the margin and somebody thought it should have been in the text so they stuck it in the text.

All right, an angel went down, troubled the water, "Whosoever then first after troubling of the waters stepped in was made well of whatever disease he had." See, they believed that an angel made it bubble. Well, as I said, undoubtedly it was fed by an intermittent spring and the superstition arose that an angel was down there. And whoever got in first when it was still bubbling got healed. This was a superstition. I do not believe these verses have any place in the text. It is a strange idea, totally foreign to anything we know about in the New Testament. And it doesn't seem to fit. Also Christ makes no reference to it, the remaining verses, the man...the man himself who is sick, whom we shall see in a moment, he makes no reference to the pool having healing powers, miraculous. He doesn't say that angels stirred it, he doesn't say it had particularly divine powers. This little vignette just appears there as somebody wanted to explain to us the superstition.

Now with that in mind, verse 5, "And a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty and eight years." Now here's a man, he's been sick for 38 years and he's hanging around this particular pool with all these other sick people. Jesus Christ is about to arrive and fix His attention on this man. Verse 6, "When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been thus now a long time," Christ knew exactly how long cause He knew everything, He was God, "He saith unto him, `Wilt thou be made well?'"

Now you say, "Well that's a little strange to ask the man who has been sick for 38 years whether he'd like to be well. That seems like a rather superfluous question." But it isn't. I believe had two things in mind. First of all, it is perhaps...and again this is conjecture on my part, but it seems to be a fitting thought...first of all, Christ endeavored to gain the man's attention. And I doubt very seriously whether if Christ just sort of ambled by and said, "Lovely day, isn't it?" that the man would have responded at all. Listen, there's no better way to get a response out of a sick person than to ask him how their illness is and Christ knew that to gain this man's interest He would hit him right where his interest was. And you know, that would be a startling thing...starting, because undoubtedly the man

would be lying there with bitterness in his mind, preoccupation, sort of staring into the pool, and listening to the monotonous continuous drone of all the cripples lying around to him like some discordant chant reciting their infirmities and detailing all their symptoms. And he was probably sick to death of hearing all the aches and pains of everybody who was sick. "Well, if you think you've got it, it's right here on me..." you know, and on and constant drone, see. And to have some perfect stranger walk up and want to talk about it with him would really be kind of an exciting interlude to find a willing ear to whom he could detail his symptoms, which he proceeds immediately to do.

So Christ knew where his interest was. He was interested in talking about his sickness. And so, Christ said, "Would you like to be made well?" Which was the perfect opening.

I think there may be another reason that Christ asked him that and that is that maybe the man...just maybe the man had lost all hope and didn't have any will to get better. You know, that happens. If you had been sick for 38 years it would be easy to lose the will to get well. In fact, if everybody had waited on me for 38 years I'm not too sure I'd want to start getting healthy and have to take with it all the responsibilities of health. And so, perhaps these were in the mind of Christ when He asked him these questions.

But most of all what is in the mind of Christ and this had to come through although it doesn't come through on the printed page, it must have come through in the words of Christ, He communicated love and concern, didn't He? He was, in effect, saying, "Man, 38 years sick, I care about you." He was communicating love. And He took that man from an understanding of His love to an understanding of His power to an understanding of His person, see. But He had to start with love and He just walked up to this sick man and said, "Would you like to be well?" Just a caring, just willing to stop and care about that man.

Well the man replied rather hopelessly in verse 7, "The impotent man answered him, `Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled to put me into the pool, but while I'm coming another steps down before me." Now notice he doesn't say anything about an angel there. That's not...in all the old manuscripts the angel isn't even there, nothing about the miraculous, just in that little thing that was inserted there. This man says, "I, when the water gets troubled, nobody can put me in and before I get in there everybody gets in and there's people in front of me and I can't get in." Evidently the bubbling came and went pretty fast and when the intermittent spring fed it and it began to bubble, everybody shot in the pool to get the benefit of the fresh new mineral water or whatever. And by the time this guy got organized and got his immobile limbs moving, the place was full of people and he couldn't get in and the bubbling stopped. He couldn't make it in time. He doesn't make any claim toward the miraculous. They merely believed, maybe he believed this superstition maybe he didn't, but they believed to some degree, evidently, that this pool had a therapeutic value. And he's rather hopeless at this point. And the rule for the pool was, every man for himself. And if you didn't have somebody to help you and you were in his shape, you just didn't make it.

And he says to him, and I love this, in verse 8, he doesn't say..."Oh poor me, I didn't...and Jesus looks at him and says, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." Man alive, three commands, two aorist one linear, Rise, take up your bed, keep on walking. What a command. Three fantastic commands in one.

You know, somebody comes along and says, "Well, if you have enough faith Jesus will heal you." You know something? This man didn't have any faith, he didn't even know who was talking to him. He didn't even know who it was. Listen, if Jesus had waited for that man to believe in Him, that man probably never would have gotten up. If Jesus wants to heal somebody, He'll heal them whether they've got faith or they don't have it. And you can have all the faith in the world and if He doesn't choose to heal you, He won't. Look at the Apostle Paul. And you can have no faith and if He wants to heal you, He will. But this is a beautiful illustration of saving faith, too, you know that? Just listen to this. If the Savior, if Jesus Christ waited until there was in the sinner's heart a due appreciation of His person, nobody would ever get saved, would they? Never. Listen, this sufferer made no cry for help. He didn't grab Jesus by the leg and say, "Son of David, have mercy on me." He didn't ask for anything for Jesus. Do you know why? Jesus didn't expect him to ask for anything, Jesus was acting in His sovereignty, He just walked over and healed him. And it was the healing that produced the faith, not the faith that produced the healing. This is a perfect example of what sovereign grace is and how it operates, a great illustration of sovereign grace.

Listen, think of this, just think of this, there was a great mob of sick people and Jesus was the Great Physician and He could have gone in to that pool and said, "Okay, everybody's healed. All of you rise up and walk. All of you blind people open your eyes and see." But He didn't do that. Could He have done it? Yes He could have done it.

Now look at verse 21 as a comparative statement from the mouth of Christ. "For as the Father raises up the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son giveth life to...what?...whom He will." See that...whom He will. Here you have the sovereign grace in operation, the sovereign grace of God. This miracle of healing was a parable in action. It sets before us a vivid illustration of God's work of grace in the spiritual realm. Just as the condition of that sick multitude depicts the depravity of Adam's total fallen race, so Jesus Christ singling out that one individual and healing him portrays the sovereign grace of God through Christ which singles out and redeems His own elect. That's the sovereign grace of God. I was weak, I was impotent, I didn't want God and I hated Christ and just like that God sought me and found me and drew me to Himself by sovereign grace.

So these three commands, three thunder strokes of the might of the divine healing will of God shatter this man and shake loose his suffering and release him in health. And he's told to pick up his bed. And it's not a four-poster on wheels like we think of a bed. These were little cotton palettes like a mat, just roll them up and stick them under your arm and he rolled it up, put it under his arm and walked

off. Verse 9, "Immediately the man was made well and took up his bed and walked."

Now this is fantastic. I mean, if I was sick for 38 years and had lost all hope and somebody walked in and said, "Rise, take up your bed and walk," I'd say, "Right, sure." But that's the difference between Christ and me. There was something about the person of Jesus Christ that demanded response. And that man immediately rolled up his bed...and you know what is interesting, that he rolled up his bed first and then he walked. You know what that said? If that would have been me I would have said, "Could I leave it here, just try it out for a couple of steps in case I fall, you know, I want to land?" But he believed, didn't he? He accepted the power of Christ. He rolled his bed up and then he walked. He trusted Christ. Why? Because he knew He was the Son of God? No, he didn't know that. Cause he knew He was the Messiah? He didn't know that either. Cause he knew He was a prophet? Didn't know that either. What did he know? He just knew He was a commanding person...demanding by the very tone of His voice, "Rise up, take up thy bed and walk," and he did. And off he went. And he got so far off before he realized what he had done, he had left.

What kind of miracle was it? It was a miracle of creation, wasn't it? Remember how we saw that the wine made in Cana of Galilee was a miracle of creation cause there never were any grapes, there never was any field, no sunlight, no dirt and no water, nobody crushed them, nobody put them together...wine. Christ created it. Remember how we talked about the feeding of the 5,000, there never was any ocean that held those fish, those fish never swam. And those little loaves never came from any field, no field ever held any grain. Christ just created, didn't He? That's why the Bible says in John 1:3 that all things were...what?...made by Him, He's the creator. And you know what He did right here? He just recreated a whole new system in this man, all knew flesh, tissues, muscles, I know, whatever else is in there. He just made this man all knew on the inside. He made him all well, all those muscles that had never moved and all those bodily functions that weren't operating correctly and all of that diseased part of his body He just recreated it.

And as I said before, that's why I can't believe any of this garbage about the earth coming out of a conclave of gases in the air and man squirting out of a protoplasm in a puddle. Listen, if Jesus Christ could stand over this man and recreate his whole tissue, then he could create this world and there's no need for any other explanation. This is the creator God at work and He just recreated this man's whole system. And he just jumped up and took off. Can you imagine after not walking for all that long you'd have to learn how to walk. Not this man, he knew, just like that.

Then an incidental thrown in that really sets the chaos for the remainder for the life of Christ. This little thing that He did on that day, this small incident, not small to the man involved nor to the revelation of Christ but small in content in terms of only one man, this was the thing that led ultimately to the death of Jesus Christ, this thing right here. And you'll see the key at the end of verse 9, look at it. "And the same day was...what?...the Sabbath." You say, "Oh, that's it...that's it." What are you doing healing somebody on the Sabbath? Don't you know that such activity is a no-no? Don't you

realize that the Jewish legalism says you can't do that on the Sabbath?

And I've shared with you things you couldn't do. You couldn't look in a looking glass because you might pull out a gray hair and that would be work. And, you know, I told you about the chicken, you could eat the egg laid by the chicken on the Sabbath provided you were going to kill the chicken the next day for doing such a thing. And I told about a lot of these crazy rules that they had on the Sabbath, the Pharisees had rules about what you could do with your teeth. They had all kinds of unbelievable things.

And you see what happened was, the Sabbath, now watch this, the Sabbath represented their hypocritical false legalism, see. Everything...all their phony legalism came to a peak on the Sabbath. So you know what Christ wants to do? He wants to smack them right where they live. You say, "Why would He want to antagonize them there?" Just listen to this. Nobody ever comes to a knowledge of Jesus Christ until they meet Christ on the ground of their sin, right? Wherever the weak...the weakest point is, that's where Christ is going to hit. And Christ would never have reached them until He had obliterated the sanctity of their own attitude toward legalism. He had to meet them on that ground, didn't He? He had to...that's the only place He could penetrate. He had to hit them right in the stomach of their sin, and that's what it was, legalism.

Sure He knew that it would set up a confrontation. Sure He knew that Exodus chapter 20 says you're not supposed to work on the Sabbath. Well that's not work, they had perverted the meaning of the Sabbath and pushed it so far out of context that it lost its meaning. You say, "Did Jesus know He'd get a reaction?" Well that's why He did it. You say, "Why? Just to make them hate Him?" No, but because He had to meet them at the point of their need before they could even receive Him or reject Him. Listen, wherever the sin in your life is, that's where Christ is going to have to get in and conquer before He'll ever come to meet him, right?

The law didn't apply to something like a healed man carrying his bed. That wasn't the point. That's why the Apostle Paul said that the letter does...what?...kills but the spirit gives life. If you look at the laws of God like letters, you know, legalistic little deals, that's a killing thing. The spirit of the law was this, don't do things on the Sabbath day for personal gain, don't labor for personal gain. That was the point, not don't pick up your bed and walk if you've just been healed by God. Ridiculous.

But it didn't bother them, they were so hung up on the law. They had added at least 30 laws to the basic law of not working on the Sabbath. And they wouldn't let...in fact, they wouldn't let anything happen on the Sabbath.

Let me show you a comparative passage, Luke 6, it's very important to see this passage cause it will give us another illustration of this same attitude. "It came to pass also on another Sabbath," He constantly confronted them on this Sabbath issue cause this is how He really hit them where they

were, "that He entered into the synagogue and taught." And He was in there teaching. "There was a man whose right hand was paralyzed. And the scribes and the Pharisees watched Him whether He would heal on the Sabbath day that they might find an accusation against Him." That's all they wanted out of Him, they were preset. "But He knew their thoughts. And He said to the man who had the paralyzed hand, `Rise up and stand forth in the midst.' And he arose and stood forth." Again, when Jesus talks...response. "Then Jesus said unto them," that is to the Pharisees and scribes, "I'll ask you one thing, `Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or to do evil? To save life or destroy it?'" And they didn't answer, of course. "And looking around about upon them all He said unto the man, `Stretch forth thy hand.' And he did so and his hand was restored well like the other." And what did Christ say by that? He said, "I'm doing what's good...I'm doing what's good." And if I know do that which is good and don't do it, that's evil.

Then look at verse 11, "And they were filled with fury and discussed one with another what they might do to Jesus." He is breaking our Sabbath, see. Such idiocy. Besides that, have you ever thought of this? There's a higher law than the Sabbath law, Paul said it for us in 1 Corinthians 10:31 and he said, "Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all...what?...to the glory of God." Listen, anything that gives glory to God is higher than any other law, isn't it? Did that healing give glory to God? You better believe it did, didn't it?

In Mark 2:27, "And He said unto them," same problem, Sabbath day, same deal, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." He says the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath. You know what that means? That means the Sabbath was provided to fit into man's schedule, not man to be crammed in to some bondage on the Sabbath. What do you mean by that? Just this, the Sabbath was provided for man that he might have rest and comfort and relaxation. But you know what the Jews had done? They had made the Sabbath infinitely worse than the other six days so you practically had to stand around like a drugstore Indian in order that you didn't break the law. Imagine trying to go through a whole Sabbath without blowing it. It's a practical impossibility. And Christ says you twisted it, Sabbath was for man. And incidently, as the Son of Man I'm the Lord of the Sabbath. And if I say this goes on the Sabbath, it goes. Kind of authoritative, praise the Lord. Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath.

Now this set up the confrontation. All right, so we've seen the miracle performed. Now let's look at the second section, and this is very simple and clear to us, the Master persecuted. Boy, this sets off the persecution. Verse 10, and we'll read 10 through 12, "The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured." Here's this man he's just walking along carrying his little mat under his arm and the Jews say, "Hold it there, it's the Sabbath day. It's not lawful for you to carry your bed." Isn't that warmth and love? Here's a man been sick 38 years and they don't care about his healing, they only care about his carrying this little cotton mat around. "He answered them," and he just kind of wakes up, you know, he answers and says, "He that made me well, the same said to me take up my bed and walk." You know, He told me to do it. The commanding of Jesus Christ and he had nothing to do but do it.

And in verse 12 they said, "What man is that who said unto thee take up thy bed and walk?" Verse 13, "And he that was healed knew not who it was." I don't know. "For Jesus had moved away a multitude being in that place."

Now this is interesting. This man had been healed, that's cause for joy. But not for these disgusting super-pious hypocrites. It was only a means of grabbing him and intimidating him for the Sabbath. And I don't know what they were thinking when they asked who it was, maybe they were afraid it was really a prophet from God and they were about to be done in. I don't know. But in verse 13 it says that the man himself didn't know because Jesus just slid away in the multitude of that...of all those people gathered around the pool, just moved away.

You say, "Well now why did He do that?" This is why, now listen to this, Jesus used this man to set up a confrontation with Jewish legalism, see. "That's really kind of unkind of Jesus, just heal the man and zip away and let the man run into this Jewish confrontation. That doesn't sound a lot like Jesus to do that to somebody." Listen, Christ used this man to bring about a confrontation to point to Israel's sin that the whole nation might come to repentance. But He's done this before. Remember how in each case of John's indications, in each of the individual lives they're merely incidental to the presentation of Christ? Remember Nicodemus, the whole point of the third chapter is to present Christ as the Son of God and Nicodemus just kind of fades away, we don't know what happened to him. You come to the woman at the well and she kind of fades away too and the whole point is Christ is the Messiah. And here you come and this man kind of fades away and the whole point is, "Here I am and what are you going to do about it? Receive Me or reject Me." And, of course, they rejected Him. They rejected their Messiah.

People always ask me, "Why did Israel reject their Messiah?" Well there are many reasons. One is perhaps as good as another and perhaps a combination. Maybe I could suggest a couple of thoughts. One reason they rejected Him was because of their self-styled hypocrisy. They thought they were right and anybody who came in and told them they were wrong was no way to be received. Another reason I believe they rejected Him was because they wouldn't face their sin and when He told them it was sin, they wouldn't admit to it. Another reason they rejected Him, I think, was because they were convinced that the Messiah would come through the system. And when Christ came in and started knocking things down in the temple, and telling the Pharisees what they were and calling it like it was, they said that can't be Messiah, He's got to be one of us, see. I think another reason they didn't receive Him was because they expected the Messiah to throw off the Roman yoke, not start throwing around Judaism. And when Christ didn't do that...and another thing, they never dreamed their Messiah would be crucified or die. So there were a combination of reasons they didn't receive Him. Sin being the leader.

But Christ makes this confrontation, nevertheless. And the man doesn't know what happened. You say, "Well, it's still unkind of Christ to leave him," it would be but that's not Christ so He doesn't leave

him. Look at verse 14, this is beautiful. "Afterward Jesus finds him in the temple." I've often thought about that, isn't that something? Christ goes, there's a big mob at the temple and Jesus goes through and He knows right where this guy is, He can see him, you know, His omniscience, right over there and He just moves through. That's a fantastic thought. I mean, let's face it, that is really an unbelievable personal touch, isn't it? I mean, here is Jesus, God in a human body coming to redeem the world, He should be bothered with one little man. But He is and He always was because He's a personal Christ, isn't He?

You see, now watch this, while He is bringing about a dynamic confrontation with the whole nation of Israel, He is stopping to minister to one man. But didn't He always do that? Remember in Mark chapter 5 that really beautiful story where Christ is teaching a vast multitude and it says the crowd was just pressing against Him. And right in the middle of it He stops and He says, "Who touched Me?" Who touched Me? You know, the disciples, "Who touched You?" I mean, you know, who touched You? He says, "I mean, who touched Me?" And you remember what happened, a little lady had said, "If I could just touch Him I'll be healed, the hem of His garment." And He felt that touch. He pulls her out of the crowds, come out, lady, I want to talk to you. And He stopped and brought her to a knowledge of Himself.

Remember John 11, Mary and Martha, "O Lord, if You would have come here sooner Lazarus wouldn't have died." What does He do, drops everything, goes clear to Bethany, raises Lazarus. Time for people, time for individuals. Remember on the cross, bearing the sin of the world, dying, men spitting on Him and cursing, bleeding profusely in the great act of redeeming the world, He stops long enough and gathers one thief into His arms, doesn't He? And says, "Today shall you be with Me in paradise." See, He's ever the personal Jesus. It's good to know, isn't it? And if Jesus was like that and He's the expressed image of God, then God's like that. God cares about you, did you know that? He really does. I mean, personally...personally. That's the way Jesus was and He sought this man and He found him. Jesus is that way.

In verse 14 right in the middle it says, "Behold...Jesus says to him...Behold, thou art made well." Now watch this. "Sin no more lest a worst thing come unto thee." Now what is that? I'm sure there was more conversation to this, but what does He mean, "Sin no more lest a worse thing come to you?" Well it means one thing, first of all, it means that the 38 years of sickness came from...what?...sin which tells you that sin can produce ill and it can even produce illness. Does that mean everybody who is sick is sinful? No, that's what Job's friends tried to tell him and that's not always true. But it means that God can use illness to punish sin if He so desires. And evidently the 38 years of illness in this man's life had been a result of sin. And so Jesus says to him, "Sin no more lest something worse happen than 38 years of illness."

Now commentators really have a hard time with this and everybody's got different thoughts. But I want to give you two options, take your pick. This statement has either two basic possibilities.

Number one, the man He's talking to is still an unbeliever, he's still just a guy, Jesus walked up and said be healed, and that's it. He doesn't know anything about anything or anybody. He's just an unbeliever. And what Christ is saying is this, "You suffered 38 years because of sin in your childhood, ow you watch out that you don't sin more and suffer eternity in hell," see. That's one possibility that this man is an unbeliever and Christ is warning him that if sin caused him 38 years of illness, continued sin will cause him an eternity of hell, and that's true, isn't it?

But I think there's a better possibility here. It's the one that I accept and you're welcome to whatever your's is. I feel he was a believer and I feel he was a believer for several reasons. Number one, I think he was a believer because he put his faith initially in Christ when He told him to get up and walk, didn't he? And that was a first little step. I think also he was a believer because the Jewish critics when they attacked him couldn't intimidate him in the least, could they? I think also he was a believer because immediately upon being healed and confronting those Jews he went directly to the temple. And the temple was the house of prayer and praise, and what was he doing but praying to God and thanks and praising Him. I think he believed in God. I think he believed God had healed him. He wasn't a Christian in the sense of a New Testament Christian after the cross, but I believe that he had accepted the revelation that God had given him and believed it and was giving God glory for what happened. I believe he qualified as an Old Testament saint.

Not only that, immediately after that incident in the temple when he did find out who Jesus was, he went straight back to the Pharisees and said, "I know, I know who healed me, it was Jesus." He wasn't afraid of them. Perfect love casts out...what?...fear. I think his love toward God was in a state of perfection, maturity. I think he was a believer. And it's also characteristic of a believer to want to share what he knows and he did. All this leads to believe then that he was a believer.

And if he was a believer then what does Christ mean when He says to him, listen to this, very important, "Sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee." What does that mean for the believer? It just means this, don't ever forget it, listen, God's wrath against sin works just as strongly in the life of a Christian as it does in the life of an unregenerate person. You sin and God will punish you, believer or not believer, right? "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, every son He scourges."

So I believe He's saying to this man, "You're well," and listen, the fact that he was well, now watch this, the fact that he was well indicated that something had happened to the sin that made him sick, right? It had been forgiven. He couldn't have been well if that sin had been held against him and the sin...if his disease was the punishment for sin, it could only be removed if the sin was forgiven. So I believe he was a forgiven man, he was a believer. And the lesson for us is great, we're still under God's moral law, sin still brings consequence.

And I love this in verse 15, the man didn't have any fear at all, boy, "The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who made him well." He went right back and said it was Jesus who made me

well. Verse 16, "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus." Why? Because of what He did on the Sabbath, that's why. He stepped on their ecclesiastical toes.

Very quickly, the third thing that we see here, we've seen the miracle performed and the Master persecuted, now let's look at the murder planned, verse 16, "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus and sought to slay Him because He had done these things on the Sabbath day." They were so hung up on legalism that they were literally going to murder the Son of God because He broke their piddly little laws. Verse 17, oh what a statement, evidently Jesus at this point confronts them face to face, "Jesus answered them, `My Father works hitherto and I work." Oh what a statement.

You say, "What's He saying?" He's saying this, "God My Father and I His Son do not stop working on the Sabbath, God's love, God's mercy and God's compassion and God's judgment and all of God's attributes goes seven days a week, 24 hours a day. God doesn't rest." He says, "I and My Father God, we keep on working."

What a statement! He was claiming to be equal with God, wasn't He? And you want to know something? The Jews got the message that that's what He was claiming, verse 18, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him." Now they're getting really down to planning it because He not only had broken the Sabbath but said also that God was His Father making Himself equal with God...equal with God. And they knew that's what He was saying, didn't they? Listen, if Jesus Christ had not meant to convey that He was equal with God, He would have stopped right there and corrected them, wouldn't He? And all the cults and all the isms and all the false teachers who say that Christ is not God and He didn't claim to be God should reread that where He claims it. And when they receive that claim He does not deny it. He's God. Now this begins the persecution.

Father, we thank you this morning for Your Word to us, clear, concise, thank You for Jesus Christ.

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