

John 5:16-18

- My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working. -

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Introduction

- ❖ John 5 has a strong appeal to the reader:
 - Burge comments: “In a pluralistic society it is a truism that absolute claims to religious truth will lead to certain conflict. More precisely, the ‘higher my claims for Christ—that is, the more I affirm his divinity, his exclusive relationship with God—the more separation and alienation I will feel. It is foolish to think I can have it otherwise. Jesus was judged as a blasphemer, the incriminating designation of someone who trampled on pure religious truth. Jesus was crucified for the strength of his disclosure about himself. But the same is true of Jesus’ followers as well as the church of John that cherished (and lived out) this chapter. John 5 poses a terrible question for me: Am I willing to be labeled as a blasphemer to the religious canons of my day when my hour comes? Is my church equipped to do this? Are we ready to be judged and expelled, to experience social shame and public damning *in the name of religion* because we are holding on to an absolute faith in Jesus, the Son of God?”¹
 - This is also true for an Islamic context, and a Secular context, and a Hinduist context, and a Buddhist context

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of John. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

¹ Burge, G. M. (2000, p. 185, 186).

Context

- ❖ An outline of the book of John:

John 1:1-18	In beginning
John 1:19-4:54	Part I <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ John the Baptist, Nathanael, The miraculous signs in Cana and Jerusalem; the cleansing of the temple; Nicodemus; the Samaritan Woman
John 4:46-10:42	Part II <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ John 5:1-18❖ Increasing tensions between Jesus and Jews, who adhere to “Moses”; Bethesda; Testimonies about Jesus; The feeding of the five thousand; Jesus the bread of life; The feast of Tabernacles; The adulterous women; Testimonies about Jesus; Jesus heals the blind; The Good Shepherd
John 11:1-12:50	Part III <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ The final week: Lazarus raised from the dead; The plot to kill Jesus; Bethany; Glorious entry in Jerusalem; The Jews continue in their unbelief
John 13:1-17:26	Part IV <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ The final day: The washing of the feet; The Last Supper; Farewell discourse in two parts; The Last Prayer
John 18:1-19:42	Part V <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ The day of the crucifixion: The betrayal; The trial; The crucifixion; The death of Jesus
John 20:1-31	Part VI <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ The resurrection appearances and concluding words
John 21:1-25	Conclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ The third appearance; Jesus and Peter; Jesus, Peter and John; Final end of the Book

Form and structure

❖ John 5:1-47

Historical Situation – Bethesda (verse 1-18)	
<i>The setting of the scene (verse 1-5)</i>	¹ Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. ² Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³ Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. ⁵ One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.
<i>First Scene (verse 6-9)</i>	⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” ⁷ “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” ⁸ Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” ⁹ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.
<i>Second Scene (verse 9-13)</i>	The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, ¹⁰ and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.” ¹¹ But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’ ” ¹² So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?” ¹³ The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.
<i>Third Scene (verse 14-15)</i>	¹⁴ Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.
<i>Comment and Fourth Scene (verse 16-18)</i>	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.

First Refutation of the Accusations (verse 19-30)

*Discourse,
first refutation
of Jesus
(verse 19-30)*

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.

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.

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.

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.

Second Refutation of the Accusations (verse 31-47)

*Discourse,
second
refutation of
Jesus
(verse 31-47)*

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.

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.

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.

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?

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?”

- ❖ It is important to read this answer of Jesus slowly and repeat reading a couple of times. The following recurring words have been marked:
 - “I tell you the truth” (three times);
 - “amazement” / “Do not be amazed at this” (both instances in Greek: θαυμάζετε);
 - “a time is coming” (two times);
 - “By myself I can do nothing” (two times).
- ❖ The first part of the answer (verse 19-30) will be analyzed in detail in the next paragraph. This analysis is needed for the understanding of the words of Jesus: “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working” (verse 17).
- ❖ The second part of the answer (verse 31-47) refutes the Jewish accusation in verse 18.

Technical notes and theological background

- ❖ Three aspects need our attention
 - An analysis of the answer of Jesus.
 - The background of the Sabbath.
 - Who are the Jews?

An analysis of the answer of Jesus

See next page!

Thematic Verbs	Answer of Jesus
<p>A (verse 19-20)</p> <p>to do by himself to see, to do to do to love, to show, to do</p>	<p>¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer:</p> <p>"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.</p>
<p>B (verse 20-23)</p> <p>to raise, to give life to give life to judge to entrust judgment to honor to honor</p>	<p>Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>C (verse 24)</p> <p>to hear, to believe not to be condemned</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>D (verse 25-27)</p> <p>to hear the voice to hear, to live to have life to have life to judge</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>E (verse 28-30)</p> <p>to hear the voice to rise to live // to be condemned</p> <p>to do by himself to judge to please²</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

² In Greek there are two different words used, where the NIV translates two times by to please (verse 21, 30)!

- ❖ A short overview and some remarks:
 - A: Jesus explains the origin of his authority. He acts as the Father acts and has shown to him. Note the importance of the love of the Father for the Son. This love is the basis for everything that follows.
 - B: Jesus explains his task, which the Father has given him to do: to give life, and to judge so that all who receive life will honor the Father and the Son.
 - C: It is by faith only, that someone will receive eternal life.
 - These words make clear that Jesus is not talking about the physical dead but the spiritual dead.
 - D and E: These are parallel passages. In both, Jesus talks about those hear his voice. They will receive life. He calls them the dead. But there is a difference. In D he is talking about the spiritually dead people, in E he refers to the physical dead. Everyone will be judged according to what he has done in life, good or evil.
 - Jesus concludes this passage by referring to his authority, given to him by the Father.
 - The raising of Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11) is an illustration of these words.
- ❖ This passage is embedded in the whole Gospel of John:
 - I can do nothing by myself (verse 19, 30): John 4:34; 5:36; 9:4; 10:37; 14:10, 11; 14:31; 17:4.
 - The Father loves the Son (verse 20): John 3:35; 10:17; 15:9, 10.
 - To give life (verse 21, 24; also 25, 28): John 6:33; 6:63 (the Spirit); to give eternal life: John (4:14); 10:28; 17:2; and other passages, which refer to life that God gives: to save.
 - This has priority over the judgment.
 - To judge / judgment by the Son (verse 22, 27, 30): John 8:50; 9:31; 12:31; 16:11 (the Spirit).
 - To condemn (verse 24, 29): John 3:17, 18.
 - John 3:16-18 is programmatic for the gospel:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”
 - To believe (verse 24): John 20:30, 13.
 - John 20:30, 31 describes the purpose of the gospel:

“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
 - The verb “to believe” = “πιστεύω” is found 98! times in this Gospel.

- To honor (verse 23): John 12:26.

The Sabbath - background

- ❖ The Sabbath was hotly debated between Jesus and the Pharisees. This is recorded by John and by the other three evangelists. It is remarkable that discussions about the Sabbath are not found in the Book of Acts and in the letters of the New Testament.
 - Sabbath (Jn 5:9, 10, 16, 18): John 7:22, 23; 9:16.
- ❖ “Keep the Sabbath holy” was one of the Ten Commandments. There are two redactions, Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. There is a major difference between these two. The original text of the 4th commandment was probably short. The rest of the text, as received, is explanation and application. This can be concluded from the insertion “as the Lord your God has commanded you.”

	Exodus 20:8-11	Deuteronomy 5:12-15
<i>Commandment</i> (probably the original text)	“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”	“Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy,” as the Lord your God has commanded you.
<i>Application</i>	Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.	Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates,
<i>Underlying motivation:</i> <i>Exodus:</i> Creation <i>Deuteronomy:</i> Liberation:	For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.	so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

- Additional remarks:
 - The most important difference between the two redactions of the fourth commandment is found in the underlying motivations, the creation (Exodus), and the liberation out of slavery (Deuteronomy).
 - The text of Deuteronomy is more elaborate compared to the text of Exodus, as is also the case with the tenth commandment. This might be due to developments in jurisprudence.
- ❖ Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus (Jn 5:18).? Read: Exodus 31:12-17:
 - “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy. ‘Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.’”
 - The Sabbath was meant as a lasting covenant and a sign of the covenant between the Lord and the Israelites. Here also, it is based on the creation.
 - See also Exodus 35:2; Numbers 15:32-34.
 - If the Jews understood the observation of the Sabbath as a sign of the covenant, then, according to their understanding, Jesus was breaking the covenant.
- ❖ Was there a relation between “breaking the covenant” and the exile? Yes, there was.
 - “The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah” (1 Chron 36:21).
 - After the exile, it was Nehemiah who restored the observance of the Sabbath (Neh 9:14; Neh 13:15-22). This led to a strict observance of the Sabbath
- ❖ The Creation and the Sabbath
 - Genesis 2:1-4: “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens—”
 - Compare this with the comment of Jesus: “My Father is always at his work to this very day (Sabbath), and I, too, am working.”
 - Hasel comments: “The ‘seventh day’ sabbath is ‘blessed’ as no other day and thereby imbued with a power unique to this day. God made this day ‘holy’ by

separating it from all other days. Rest-day holiness is something God bestowed onto the seventh day. God manifested himself in refraining from work and in rest as the divine Exemplar for humankind. The sequence of 'six working-days' and a 'seventh [sabbath] rest-day' indicates universally that every human being is to engage in an *imitatio Dei*, 'imitation of God,' by resting on the 'seventh day.' 'Man' (*'ādām*), made in the *imago Dei*, 'image of God,' (Gen 1:26–28) is invited to follow the Exemplar in an *imitatio Dei*, participating in God's rest by enjoying the divine gift of freedom from the labors of human existence and thus acknowledging God as his Creator."³

- There are different works of God:
 - of creation – God rested on the seventh day;
 - of sustenance of everything that exists – God will never rest, until the new creation;
 - of salvation – God will never rest, until the judgment and the new creation.
 - Hasel comments: "It was God's will at creation that the sabbath have the purpose of serving mankind for rest and bring blessing. The Son of Man as Lord determines the true meaning of the sabbath. The sabbath activities of Jesus are neither hurtful provocations nor mere protests against rabbinic legal restrictions, but are part of Jesus' essential proclamation of the inbreaking of the kingdom of God in which man is taught the original meaning of the sabbath as the recurring weekly proleptic 'day of the Lord' in which God manifests his healing and saving rulership over man."⁴

The Jews

- ❖ Who are these Jews, who wanted to kill Jesus (Jn 5:16-18)?
 - When John wrote his Gospel, his intended readers were familiar with this group. These "Jews" were actively opposing Christianity. Matthew also referred to them but only once:
 - "So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among **the Jews** to this very day" (Mt 28:15). "To this very day" refers to the time of writing. The first readers of the Gospel of Matthew were mainly of Jewish origin.
 - John had informed his readers that Jews already had been critical about John the Baptist (Jn 1:19). They were also critical about Jesus (Jn 2:18, 20). These Jews are clearly distinguished from the disciples (Jn 2:22).

³ Hasel, G. F. (1992). *Sabbath*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.) (Vol. 5, p. 851),

⁴ Hasel, G. F. (1992). *Sabbath*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.) (Vol. 5, p. 855).

- These Jews were observing the Jewish customs and the Jewish feasts (Jn 2:6; 2:13, 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55) and especially the Sabbath (5:10). In John 5:10-18, **the Jews are a specific group**, distinguished from the crowd, the general public.
 - Nicodemus was one of their (former) leaders (Jn 3:10).
 - Jesus himself was recognized as a Jew (Jn 4:9).
 - The Jews said that they knew Jesus as the son of Joseph and they knew his mother (Jn 6:42). These Jews came from Galilee. Here also, John distinguished them from the large crowd (Jn 6:1-40).
 - The Jews from Judea and Jerusalem wanted to kill Jesus (Jn 7:2; 10:31; 11:8).
 - Some of the Jews had believed in Jesus (Jn 8:31). John 8:31-58 reveals a sharp conflict between these Jews and Jesus.
 - The Jews could “decide that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue” (Jn 9:22).
 - Many Jews (from Judea and Jerusalem) had a relationship with Martha, Maria, and Lazarus (Jn 11:19, 31-36). After Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, many of them put their faith in Jesus. But, some of them went to the Sanhedrin (Jn 11:45).
- ❖ Concluding remarks.
 - The Jews (Jn 5:16-18) were a specific group among the Jewish people. They were distinguished from the crowds and from the disciples. They observed the law (Moses) and the Jewish festivals associated with the law. They claimed to be true children of Abraham. They were expecting the Messiah and the Kingdom of God. These Jews had leading positions in the synagogues.

Exposition

Verse 1-15

- ❖ The story of the healing serves as a background of verse 16-18. The narrative can be divided into a setting and three different scenes.
 - Setting: John 5:1-5.
 - Scene 1: John 5:6-9.
 - Scene 2: John 5:9-13.
 - Scene 3: John 5:14-15.
- ❖ Setting: John 5:1-5
 - There are two markers of time.
 - **“Some time later”** and **“a feast of the Jews.”** The exact time is not specified.

- The location is described in more detail. It was a large building, consisting of a pool and five colonnades. John refers to the Aramaic/Hebrew name of the pool. His readers were probably Greek-speaking Jews.
- There were many disabled men. The focus will be on this man who had been invalid for thirty-eight years.

❖ Scene 1: John 5:6-9.

- Compare the NIV and the ESV:
 “When Jesus **saw** him lying there and **learned that** he had been in this condition for a long time” (NIV).
 “When Jesus **saw** him lying there and **knew that** he had already been there a long time” (ESV).
 The NIV gives the impression that Jesus was informed by someone else about the situation of this man. The ESV states that Jesus was informed, just as he knew about the marital status of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4: 16-18). The ESV is preferred.
 - To see and to know are two important verbs in the Gospel of John (Jn 1:18, 14:9).
- Jesus instantly healed the man and told him to stand up, to carry his mat and to walk. He didn’t need the stirring of the water. It is a powerful command.
 - The discourse between the invalid man and Jesus is interesting but will not be discussed here.
- Jesus didn’t heal anybody else. After this healing, Jesus slipped away into the crowd (Jn 5:13). There was a crowd in Jerusalem because of the feast (Jn 5:1).

❖ Scene 2: John 6:9-13

- At this point, John informs the reader that it was Sabbath. This information is necessary for understanding the conflict, which arose.
 - Other controversies concerning healing on a Sabbath are found at Matthew 12:10-13, Mark 3:2-4, and Luke 13:10-16.
- According to the interpretation of the law, carrying a mat was equal to doing labour, and therefore prohibited.
- It seems to be that the man was not aware of the fact that it was Sabbath. He just followed up the instructions of Jesus. Eventually, he didn’t recognize Jesus.

❖ Scene 3: John 5:14-15

- Later that day, Jesus found him again at the temple. He didn’t carry his mat any longer. Why did Jesus warn him: “Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you”? John didn’t inform the reader about previous sins.

- What did Jesus mean by “something worse may happen to you”?
- The Jews had let the man go. It looks like, he had a sort of agreement with the Jews: “When you see this man again, tell us who he is.” In a sense, he betrayed Jesus, instead of being grateful. In the end, he sided with the Jews.
 - Bernard comments: “There is no suggestion that the man had any *faith*, nor did he display gratitude for his healing. He must have known that to point out Jesus as the agent of his cure (v. 15) would bring his benefactor into danger.”⁵

Verse 16-18

- ❖ This healing is not the most important part of the story. The healing unmasks the unbelief and motivations of the Jews. At the same time, Jesus can reveal his true identity and mission.
- ❖ **“The Jews persecuted him.”**
 - To persecute = “**διώκω**”: 2. **to harass someone, especially because of beliefs, persecute.**⁶
 - Because of the imperfect, John depicts the Jews as constantly persecuting Jesus. It is was not a single moment.
 - They had already some plans to kill Jesus. Verse 18 describes the intensification.
- ❖ **“Because Jesus was doing (Greek imperfect) these things.”** Was doing implies that Jesus had done similar things before on the Sabbath.
- ❖ **“My Father is **always at his work** to this very day, and I, too, am working.”**
 - The Jews were astonished when they heard these words.
 - Sabbath: “By the seventh day **God had finished the work** he had been doing; so **on the seventh day he rested from all his work**” (Gen 2:2).
 - Augustine comments: “Indeed, the very expression employed by the Lord, ‘My Father is working until now,’ points to the continuousness of his work by which he holds together and manages the whole of creation. It could, you see, have been understood differently if he had said, ‘and is now working,’ where we would not have to take the work as being continuous. But by saying ‘until now,’ he forces us to understand it in the other sense as meaning, that is, from the time when he had worked at the original establishment of all things.”⁷
 - See also John 14:8-11: “Philip said, ‘Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.’ Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my

⁵ Bernard, J. H. (1929, p. 230).

⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 254).

⁷ Elowsky, J. C. (Ed.). (2006, p. 187).

own. **Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.** Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.”

- To understand the words of Jesus, it is necessary to distinguish between the different works of God the Father.
 - The works of creation (Gen 1).
 - The works of salvation.
 - Jesus referred to the works of salvation: **to give life to all who believe.** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (Jn 3:16, 17).
 - Jesus will explain this saying in the following verses (Jn 5:19-30) where he defends his identity and his work. See above.
 - These works of the Father encompass also the following:
 - Acts of Healing – people get well seven days a week.
 - Acts of Providing Food to the animal kingdom.
 - Acts of Life and Death – babies are begin born, and people die seven days a week.
 - Acts of Grace – the Father forgives sins seven days a week.
 - The Jews accepted life-saving acts on the Sabbath and covenantal obligations when a child was born on Sabbath. These acts didn’t break Sabbath.
 - “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?” (Mt 12:11).
 - “Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath?” (Jn 7:22, 23).
 - **“To this very day, and I, too, am working.”** This earthly ministry of Jesus will come to an end with the crucifixion, resurrection and glorification, and will be continued by the church. It also implies that Jesus was at work before his incarnation.
 - **The Father is Lord of the Sabbath, so is the Son Lord of the Sabbath.**
- ❖ **“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 Jews bring in two charges against Jesus:
 - Breaking the Sabbath.
 - Making himself equal to God, which is blasphemy.
 - Compare John 10:27-36: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them

to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.'

Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?' 'We are not stoning you for any of these,' replied the Jews, 'but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.'

Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken— what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?"

- "At no point does Jesus in the following discourse deny the inference drawn by the Jews but emphatically supports his claim to equality with God in his nature (verse 18) by claiming equality in power and works (verse 19, 20), in resurrection power (verse 21), in judgment (verse 22), in honor (verse 23), in giving eternal life (verse 24, 25), in self-existent life (verse 26), in power over death and eternal destiny (verse 28, 29), in absolute justice (verse 30), supported by the witness of John (verse 33), his own works (verse 36), the Father (verse 37, 38), and the Scriptures (verse 39)."⁸

❖ It is important to recall the opening verses of chapter 1:

- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it" (Jn 1:1-5).
- "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (Jn 1:10, 11).

Verse 19-30

- ❖ For a detailed analysis of this refutation of Jesus to the Jews, see above.
- ❖ In this passage Jesus is talking about the work, he and the Father are doing.
 - A (verse 19, 20): The Father took the initiative, the Son followed.
 - B (verse 20-23): The Son raises, gives life, and is entrusted judgment by the Father, so that man will honour the Son and the Father.
 - C (verse 24): whoever believes will not be condemned.
 - D (verse 25-27): the spiritual dead will hear his voice and live. The judgment has been given by the Father to the Son.

⁸ Smith, J. H. (1992, p. 1193).

- E (verse 28-30): the physical dead will hear his voice. Everybody will be judged according to his works.
 - John 17:2 gives a succinct summary: “For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.”

Verse 31-47

- ❖ Jesus refutes this second accusation in verse 31-47 by appealing to:
 - The testimony of John the Baptist (verse 33-35; Jn 1:19-27);
 - The testimony of his own works (verse 36);
 - The testimony of the Father by doing the works and speaking his words (verse 37-38; Jn 1:18, 14:9-11);
 - The testimony of the Scriptures (Moses)(verse 39).

Application

Praise Christ and the Father

- ❖ For revealing the Father by his works and words. (See also John 1:18; 14:9-11).
 - Christ is at Work:
 - From the beginning!
 - As the incarnate Son of God.
 - Through the church in this world.
 - The power of healing and life-giving power. His saving acts.
 - The authority of judgment.
 - Christ is Lord over the Sabbath.
- ❖ For the ultimate claim of Jesus, as our Lord and God (Jn 20:28) and Savior.
- ❖ For the works he does:
 - Acts of Healing – people get well seven days a week.
 - Acts of Providing Food to the animal kingdom.
 - Acts of Life and Death – babies are begin born, and people die seven days a week.
 - Acts of Grace – the Father forgives sins seven days a week.

Encourage the church facing persecution

- ❖ The Jews, who were opposing Jesus, wanted to persecute Jesus because of:
 - the violation of the fourth commandment, Sabbath;
 - blasphemy.
 - These accusations can be found in countries where Christianity is a minority.
 - The Gospel proclaims the good news, salvation, shalom, and eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ, the son of God, alone. This is a unique claim:

- “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3).
- “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (Jn 20:30, 31).
 - John 5:1-15 is among the miraculous signs.
- ❖ Persecution will continue. John 15:18-20: “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ **If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.** If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”
 - Burge comments: “To make an absolute claim about Jesus is to invite precisely the thing that John 5 describes: persecution. A strong witness to Jesus as Lewis (*C.S. Lewis*) describes it *necessarily* offends. This is as true today as it has ever been. We live in a world of pluralism and tolerance that exerts enormous pressure on us to refine away the distinctives of our faith that might offend. We will hear: It is fine to make Jesus one way to God, but do not make him The Way. It is fine to affirm Jesus as one version of the truth, but make no claim that he is The Truth against which all other truths must be weighed.”⁹
- ❖ **Persecution also reveals the heart of men!**
- ❖ **Persecution because of the ultimate claim of Jesus.**
 - In a secular context.
 - In an Islamic context.
 - In a Hindu context.
 - In a Buddhist context.
 - In an animistic context.

Grateful / ungratefulness

- ❖ The man was ungrateful for his healing, he betrayed Jesus to his opponents.
- ❖ Be grateful for the wonders Jesus has done.

Quotes

- ❖ “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish things that people often say about Him: “I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of

⁹ Burge, G. M. (2000, p. 185).

things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher.”¹⁰

- ❖ Augustine: “Therefore it is as if he said to the Jews, “Why do you expect that I should not work on the sabbath? The sabbath day was ordained for you as a sign about me. You observe the works of God: I was there when they were made. They were all made by me.... The Father made the light, but he spoke that there should be light. If he spoke, it was by his Word that he made it. I was his Word, and I am [his Word]. The world was made by me in those works, and the world is also ruled by me in those works. My Father worked when he made the world, and he still works while he rules the world. Therefore, just as it was by me that he created when he made the world, so it is by me that he rules when he rules.” Tractates on the Gospel of John 17.15.”¹¹

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¹⁰ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1952), 41.

¹¹ Elowsky, J. C. (Ed.). (2006, p. 187).