
a *Grace Notes* course

Life of Christ 200

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Lesson 202

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Cleansing of a Leper

Matthew 8:2-4: "And behold, a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

Mark 1:40-45: "And a leper came to Him, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying to Him, "If you are willing, You can make me clean." And moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand, and touched him, and said to him, " I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for you cleansing what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news about, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere."

Luke 5:12-16: "And it came about that while He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." And He stretched out His hand, and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him. And He ordered him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and great multitudes were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray."

This occurs in one of the cities in the region of Galilee.

The account follows the usual formula for healing; the man asks; Christ touches; the healing comes to pass.

The man's ailment is significant: it is leprosy, and when one recovered from this disease he was required by the law to make a ritual sacrifice.

Leprosy originated in Egypt, and probably at some time during the slavery of Israel there, 1800-1400 B.C. It is definitely an Egyptian disease.

Since the children of Abraham were living in Egypt, and under somewhat trying conditions, it would have been very difficult for them to avoid it, and apparently they did not.

The book of Leviticus has a very detailed symptomology of the disease, and is quite strict on the necessity of quarantine. See Lev 13 and 14.

The disease itself was considered completely incurable until 1960, A.D. Because of this, when someone did recover, it was an outright miracle. Thus the offerings.

Leprosy is caused by a bacterial organism very similar to the one that causes tuberculosis. Indeed, the two may have a common ancestor. In all of its forms it is a very hideous disease, and can at some points be quite infectious. Hence the Scriptural caution of quarantine.

In some instances, Leprosy resulted from sinfulness. Miriam's judgment of Moses for his genetically (Egyptian) Gentile wife resulted in the disease. She had it for seven days only. Moses had the disease for a moment, as a sign of God's power to him (Ex 4:6). Naaman the Syrian had it, and became healed. He was commanded to undergo seven cleansings in the river Jordan.

The man's faith is remarkable: he says, "if you are willing, you can make me clean." Notice how very grace oriented this is - it all depends on Christ. Christ's response is apropos - "I am willing..."

This sacrifice would be one attended by a priest, and so Christ sent the man in that direction, so that the priests would have a testimony of Christ's messianic powers. At the same time, Christ makes it clear that he is to tell no one else. The ex-leper blew it.

In light of what we know about healings, and how they pointed to the atonement, there is additional symbolism here. The sacrifices for a healed leper were sacrifices based on the atonement of the Messiah.

These sacrifices were all but forgotten in Israel. The last recorded one to be healed from the disease was a Syrian, Naaman.

That a priest would be asked to make this ritual would have been completely unheard of, and therefore a real attention getter.

The ritual went like this:

The priest collected two clean live birds, cedar wood, a scarlet string, and hyssop.

The first part of the ritual involved killing one bird over an earthenware vessel and under running water. Interestingly enough, the word for running is actually 'living'. This etymological observation may explain the initial confusion with the woman at the well.

Then the wood, the string, the hyssop, and the still living bird, and dip them all together into the blood of the already sacrificed bird.

The bird, the branch, the string, and the hyssop are then shaken toward the newly healed individual, sprinkling him or her with the blood and water from the first bird.

Immediately after the sprinkling, the still living bird is set free.

What this all adds up to is a symbolization of the miraculous recovery.

The killing of one bird and the freeing of another has obvious symbolism. The healed leper should by all rights be doomed to a horrible life and death. Only the intervention of God has saved him. He should be the dead bird, but instead he is the living one, free from a terrible disease. It also symbolizes the killing of Christ so that we might have freedom from sin.

The cedar wood was one of exceptionally fine quality, and it represents the body of the now healed leper. Because of its hardness and also its fragrance add it to a tree that is extremely resistant to disease. This is also the new state of the leper. It also points to the perfect body of Christ on the cross.

The hyssop was well known as a fragrant herb, similar to Thyme and Marjoram. Due to the feathery spines on its stalk, it was ideal for use as a sprinkling device. Therefore it came to be a symbol for the purification from sin, Psalm 51:7. Someone used it at the cross to extend a sponge full of wine to Christ. It also represents the saving of Israel in the Exodus and the Passover feast.

The scarlet thread is a little more difficult. The scarlet dye was manufactured through the crushing of a certain species female worm. Christ called himself a worm,

TOLAH refers to the coccus iliacus, a very unusual worm which was harvested, crushed, put into a very large vat. In this manner, its blood was used for the purpose of making a crimson dye used to color king's robes in the ancient world.

On the cross, the perfect and impeccable humanity of Christ was crushed with the judgment of our sins. Therefore, He calls Himself TOLAH, for the weight of those sins crushed Him as He was being judged for them.

So the imputation and judgment of our sins in Christ on the cross by God the Father is analogous to the worm being crushed in a vat, so that its blood can be used for the manufacture of royal robes.

Because our Lord was judged for our sins on the cross, we now wear the royal robes of His imputed righteousness. We were imputed with the righteousness of God the Father, and we share the righteousness of Christ through the baptism of the Spirit.

Summary: the healing of a leper was also a celebration of the atonement of the Messiah on the cross. When Christ ordered the leper to present himself to the priests, it would have been a testimony that He was that atoning Messiah.

Naturally, this would have resulted in a great deal of publicity, and because that information pointed to Christ as Messiah, some of that would have been negative publicity.

From this point, Christ could no longer publicly enter a city. Instead, He generally stayed out in the countryside, and pray.

The Forgiving and Healing of a Paralytic

Matthew 9:1-8: "And getting into a boat, he crossed over, and came to His own city. And behold, they were bringing to Him a paralytic, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Take courage, My son, your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemeth." And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - then He said to the paralytic - "Rise, take up your bed, and go home." And he rose, and went home. But when the multitudes saw this, they were filled with awe, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men."

Mark 2:1-12: "And when He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. And being unable get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." But there were some of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Arise, and take up your pallet and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - He said to the paralytic - I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose and immediately took up the pallet and went out in

the sight of all; so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

Luke 5:17-26: "And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. And behold, some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in, and to set him down in front of Him. And not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, right in the center, in front of Jesus. And seeing their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise, and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - He said to the paralytic - "I say to you, rise, and take up your stretcher and go home." And at once he rose up before them, and took up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. And they were all seized with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Jesus returns from the city where he had healed the leper and once again pointed to his atonement. In the mean time, He had become ever more popular, and could hardly enter a city without a great uproar, and the formation of a crowd. This is the reason for the sea-borne transport - He could swiftly cross over with the fear of the assembly of a bothersome crowd. Matthew calls Capernaum Jesus' own city - it was where he had received the most positive volition, and where He was living for the time being. His headquarters as it were.

When He had enjoyed several days of rest and anonymity, the people found Him at home, and so a great crowd gathered. This crowd was composed of Pharisees and Scribes from all over Galilee and Judea, and even from Jerusalem. They had put together an investigative committee to see what the big deal with Jesus was all about. There was no room - standing room only. He took the opportunity to begin teaching.

The power of the Lord was unto him for healing. Luke says it in 5:17: KAI DUNAMIS KURIOU EN EIS TO IASTHAI AUTON. A. This is important. Here it says clearly, explicitly, that Christ heals by the power of the Lord, and not by the power of His own deity as the second person of the Godhead. This is the exact representation of the doctrine of kenosis.

Also, there is an implication that there were times when the power was not available. So this was a God given and directed power, and God chose the timing. It includes self awareness of that power. In some way, Christ could detect what was going on, and be prepared to heal.

There was a paralytic who desired to be healed. However, he could not get through the crowd to Christ, even with help from four others, who bore him on a bed or pallet. It was their intent to lay the paralyzed man in front of Jesus (they may have known the thing about touching).

Thwarted by the crowd (and can't you just see the Pharisees and Scribes refusing to budge), the four men then manage to get their charge up onto the roof, and then to dig and remove tiles immediately over the head of Christ. They are persistent, and this is enough for Christ. They let him down right in front of Christ. And by the way, another great sermon was interrupted, but our Lord is quite skillful at turning these kinds of interruptions into opportunity. Besides, He recognized in them a great faith.

Christ's words are a shock to the Scribes and Pharisees. He says, "My child, your sins are forgiven you." Luke has a difference here with the other synoptic writers.

The reason for Luke's difference is one of tone verses literal wording.

Christ's tone in speaking these words was gentle and compassionate. Even though He spoke literally the word ANTHROPE, He said it so gently and compassionately that Matthew and Mark were compelled to translate it from the Aramaic as TEKNON.

When Christ tells the paralytic that his sins are forgiven, this should be nothing new to the Scribes and Pharisees. They should know better.

Christ does not actually say, "I forgive you by my authority". He uses the passive voice, and so only indicates that the source of the paralytic's forgiveness is outside of his power.

Furthermore, in the Old Testament, others are given the authority to communicate the forgiveness of God to His people.

Through a priest in the ritual sin offering, Lev 4:20.

Through an angel in Isaiah 6:7.

The thought process does not match what Christ said, the Scriptures, nor is it even honest with their own practice.

Christ, by saying these words, did not necessarily imply that He was the atonement, or that He had the authority to forgive.

The Old Testament has a prescription for forgiveness which could include the pronouncement by man or angel of the thing which God had done.

The priesthood held it to their own right that they should conduct the sacrifices and rituals, and thus by them forgive the sins of the people. This was a gross perversion of their office, but nonetheless they did become this presumptuous.

Really, the indignation of the Scribes and Pharisees comes from their feeling that Christ is impinging on their territory. Territory that they had obtained illicitly. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees on this occasion is quite evident. When they said to Christ that He was a blasphemer and that forgiveness was the realm of God, what they meant that was they did not want Christ to take over their position as the forgiver of the people.

So Christ must demonstrate to the Pharisees that He really does have the authority to tell this paralytic that he is forgiven.

He first reasons with the Pharisees, in order to point out their hypocrisy.

Which is easier to say: 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Rise up and walk'? It was easy for the Scribes and Pharisees to tell their charges that their sins were forgiven. They would just say the words, and the people would feel good.

But could the scribes speak with authority, and tell the man to rise and walk? They were completely and totally helpless in this regard.

So Christ points out to the Jewish leadership that there is a vital difference between He and them: He has the power of God, and they do not. He has the authorizing, validating gifts of the Spirit and they are impotent beside Him.

And then He says the words (no mention of touch is here, but it was present - Luke 4:40 is still in effect at this time) SOI LEGO, EGEIRE KAI ARAS TO KLINIDION SOU POREUOU EIS TON OIKON SOU. "I say to you, rise and take up your pallet, go to your home".

But notice something else - that Christ refers to Himself as the Son of Man. This was a Messianic term. (Son of Man)

And so the paralytic did exactly as Jesus commanded.

The Call of Matthew

Matthew 9:9: "And as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man, called Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' And he rose, and followed Him.

Mark 2:13-14: "And he went out again by the seashore; and all the multitude were coming to Him, and He was teaching them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax office, and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' And he rose and followed Him."

Luke 5:27-28: "And after that He went out, and noticed a tax-gatherer named Levi, sitting in the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow Me.' And he left everything behind, and rose and began to follow Him."

Christ passes on from his headquarters at Capernaum to a place by the seashore. Since

Capernaum was a seaside town, this was probably not very far at all.

Again Christ was mobbed by the crowds - this time the crowds of commoners, and not Pharisees and Scribes.

Christ and the crowd are moving from one place to another, and just then He noticed a tax-collector sitting in his office.

Matthew and Mark portray this event as a slam bang affair - as though it just happened so quickly that you would hardly know what hit you.

Luke is much more matter of fact, but his account allows for the spirit of Matthew and Mark.

Christ orders Matthew to follow Him. It is the present active imperative of AKOLOUTHEO. Since the verb is in the present tense, it indicates that the act of following should be durative.

And Matthew left everything and rose and followed Christ! Instant obedience, and this from one the religious types of Israel would have nothing to do with.

Matthew - God used an outcast. His name is a transliteration of the Aramaic word which means gift of God.

In his own Gospel, Matthew uses his regular name. In other gospels, the name Levi is used. It is likely that Matthew became his name after his conversion.

Matthew was a Jewish tax collector. It is likely that he was fairly well off financially because of his profession. This makes his decision to follow Christ all the more remarkable, because he left it all behind - Lk 5:28. It is likely that he worked at the toll house in Capernaum.

As a tax collector, Matthew was an outcast in Jewish society. He apparently had no friends who were devout in the Jewish faith for at his party there were only other tax collectors and sinners.

The Roman tax collectors were hated by the Jews because the Roman taxes were in addition to the Jewish taxes.

They were also hated because they represented the occupying forces of the Roman Empire.

The tax collectors made their living by inflating the Roman taxes. They essentially worked on commission.

Tax collectors were wealthy, but hated by their own society. They had to live with a tremendous amount of prejudice.

Because of this prejudice their social options were severely limited. They could only socialize with others who were outcasts.

It was easy for Matthew to follow Christ, considering his personal circumstances. Social isolation does not make it easy to enjoy personal wealth. No doubt he knew of the supernatural essence of Christ's ministry, and he may have even heard Him speak. It is often the outcast that finds it easiest to follow Christ.

Matthew is a rich man who defied the odds.

Remember Matthew if you are an outcast.

Matthew's Banquet for Christ

Matthew 9:10-13: "And it happened that as He was reclining at the table in the house, behold many tax-gatherers and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, 'Why is your Teacher eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners?' But when He heard this, He said, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Mark 2:15-17: "And it came about that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax-gatherers and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. And when the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax-gatherers, they began saying to His disciples, 'Why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?' And hearing this, Jesus said to them, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Luke 5:29-32: "And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax-gatherers and other people who were reclining at the table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with the tax-gatherers and sinners?' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"

Matthew's reminiscence is the best, and he adds one thing that Mark and Luke overlook. It is a most important detail, especially for Jews, and we will get to it.

Matthew held a big reception at his own home for Christ, and invited his tax-collector buddies, and also many sinners were there as well. None of the accounts define just what kind of sinners they were, but in order to gain this appellation they would have been those who were public outcasts. This was truly the outcast's ball.

And Christ is reclining right at the table with them, eating and drinking. No doubt he was also making good of the time to communicate truth.

The Scribes of the Pharisees and the Pharisees participate in a coy and solicitous conspiracy against Christ.

They target Christ's disciples, thinking that they may be susceptible to their conspiratorial lies.

They are attempting to make Christ look bad in front of His disciples. Public opinion was extremely strong against the category of people who were at this banquet. They wanted to manipulate that public opinion in order to destroy Christ. But it was not the proper time yet.

Christ overhears their coy solicitations, and so He speaks to them a principle: 'It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'

This can be posted on the doorframe of every local church. Every ambassador for Christ must remember this principle.

The local church is never to be some kind of social club for the self-righteous, or a place where only

people with nice and friendly personalities are allowed to be

There is a time for the sinner to grow up, but there is also a place for the sinner-beginner to learn the Word of God and learn how to apply it.

Luke, the physician would have loved this statement. It may have been one of the most important things that he had ever heard, even if it was told to him many years after it took place.

Matthew recalls that Christ quoted Hosea 6:6 as a reproof to the Pharisees. It was the perfect verse for them to hear.

In fact, Matthew would recall when Christ quoted this verse on another occasion, in chapter 12 verse 7 of his gospel.

Verse Six: "For I delight in virtue love, and not sacrifice; and knowledge of God instead of whole burnt offerings."

The first verb is haphets, and its meaning reveals a sensual and emotional response to stimuli.

It is used of sexual delight for both men and women, and for matters and things that are fun to do. It is pleasure of any kind, and is the basis for many systems of motivation.

It is in the qal perfect, which here reveals a principle of God's nature. This verse reveals God's very soul.

The object of God's delight is hesed - virtue love and the sum of human virtue in every expression of character. hesed is the revelation of motivation as it extends from the complex of thought in the soul. And God delights in this.

The converse of hesed is zabhah, the actual slaughter of the sacrificial animals. The picture here is the actual act of sacrifice. God does not delight in the acts of sacrifice. He created the animals, too. They, too are the objects (thought lesser) of His pleasure, and in sacrifice they are destroyed. God does not take pleasure in that, nor does he delight in just the act.

The Jews had gotten to the point where the ritual system meant absolutely nothing to them; where they just went through the motions, without the slightest thought of the representation.

And yet the sacrifices of the ritual system were magnificent representations of Bible doctrine. The rituals taught many aspects of Divine character and interaction with sinful mankind.

The ritual system was an ingenious way to teach Bible truth, and it was never designed for just going through the motions in order to please God.

Going through the motions was a part of idolatry, but it was not any part of the plan of God. The idolaters perceived going through the motions as a way to please the idol and soothe his wrath, and bring his blessing.

Going through the motions is anti-relationship, and is a philosophy that keeps its adherents ignorant of the person of God.

The second half of the parallel statement is similar, but brings its own distinctions.

yadha is the intimate kind of relationship knowledge that God earnestly desires. He wants His people to have a knowledge of Him.

the converse of yadha is again a part of the ritual system: it is the whole burnt offering, the me'oloth. But the idea again is relationship, and so it has been since the beginning of time.

Genesis 1:26-27, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'" a. Why are we made in His image? So that we might have a relationship with Him, and bring praise to His name. b. The image is the soul image, not the physical one. God is not just a really big human being.

In the garden, there was a spiritual time of day, a time when the man and the woman would meet with God. It was relationship from the very beginning. Gen. 3:8, "And they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the spiritual time of the day."

All of the patriarchs and great believers of old were such because of their quality relationship with God. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Esther, Rahab - all are great because they know Him and reflect His greatness in their own lives.

The ten commandments are based on relationship with God, Ex 20:1-3, "Then God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the

house of slavery. You shall have no others gods before Me."

All of the covenants to Israel were based on the precept that they must function in the framework of relationship with God.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 says it best, "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, also that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlet bands on your forehead. And you shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates."

The content of this verse is quite valid in the church age. Never get means mixed up with substance. a. The means is the ritual system, or in our dispensation the study of the word. b. The substance is a dispensational constant, that is, it is valid at all times in human history. The substance is relationship with God.

We must never ritualize relationship with God. To ritualize that is to trivialize it. God never intended for something so personal to be institutionalized or monopolized in any way.

The means are there for a reason, and are to be employed to maximum advantage. But the means are never going to be the substance, and God is never, ever pleased just by your 'doing' the means.

The Dispensational Change

Matthew 9:14-17: "Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the Bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for its fullness pulls up from the garment, and a worse tear results. Nor do men put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst and the wine pours out, and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

Mark 2:18-22: "And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom do not fast, do they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

Luke 5:33-39: "And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers; the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same; but Yours eat and drink." And Jesus said to them, "You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days." And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear

the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And on one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he say, "The old is good enough."

Introduction

Our Lord receives an opportunity here to give the disciples a basic understanding of a very complex subject: dispensation.

Here also is more evidence that John's disciples are not exactly on the cutting edge of theology, and in fact quite out of touch with Christ's kingdom ministry.

This passage forms the reply for John's statement then, and Christ definitely criticizes John's disciples for taking his viewpoint of the ministry transfer.

After the introductory details, the passage divides into three: the bridegroom analogy; the patch analogy; and the wineskin analogy.

The introductory details: "Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" "And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" "And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers; the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same; but Yours eat and drink."

Matthew has just the disciples of John approaching Jesus with the question of fasting; Mark has both John's disciples and the Pharisees asking; Luke has Christ's disciples making the same inquiry.

Obviously, the reconciliation of the passage takes some work. Two possibilities resolve the existence of contradictions.

The sequential explanation: Mark, Matthew, then Luke. In other words, there was a fast that both Pharisees and John's disciples had - and they noticed that Christ and His disciples were not

participating. First John's disciples, then the Pharisees came to Christ and asked their question.

The separate incidents explanation. The three gospels writers remember separate incidents, and record each as they see them.

Regardless, the Bible is inerrant, and so there is no contradiction here. Pick the incident of your choice.

The 'they' of Luke's gospel refers to the Pharisees and scribes only - John's disciples are not in view at all there. Luke also places this at the banquet at Matthew's house, where there was a big party with lots of food and little fasting.

These individuals are both fasting. Fasting was a legitimate, non-compulsory exercise in Israel. It is not forbidden, and it is not mentioned in a negative light.

Moses fasted at Sinai while receiving the Law from God, Ex 34:28; Deut. 9:9. He did so again in mourning when he saw the golden calf, Deut. 9:17f.

At many times during the history of Israel, fasts were proclaimed at times of national emergency or distress.

Judges 20:26, during the Gibeah disaster.

1 Sam 7:6, during the Mizpah disaster.

2 Chron 20:3, during the disaster that Jehoshaphat had with Moab.

Ezra 8:21-23, during the journey home from the exile.

Neh 1:4, at the discovery of the destroyed Jerusalem.

Esther 4:16, at the attempt of genocide against the Jews. g. Jer 36:9, at a time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

A few times, Israel employed the fast as an act of penitence.

1 Kings 21:27, Ahab, when his evil and idolatry is exposed.

Neh 9:1, at ceremony of commemoration for the destruction of Judah.

They also implemented it as an accompaniment to earnest prayer, public or private. 2 Sam 12:16, David, at the sickness of he and Bathsheba's child.

Fasting also often went alongside mourning.

2 Sam 1:12, David and his men at the death of Saul.

2 Sam 12:21, David, while his child was alive.

Fasting came to be on the annual schedule of religious events during and after the exile, and all of these were related to the fall of the Jewish client nation. They were a sort of remembrance of suffering kind of fast.

But never, never in the history of Israel did God command His people to fast. Lev 23:27-29: "On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the Lord. Neither shall you do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the Lord your God. If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from the people."

There have been many who equate the humbling of the soul with a literal fast, but there is no reason whatsoever to take the passage this way.

The command to humble your souls is entirely self-sufficient, and is another way of saying 'believe the doctrine'.

Fasts were supposed to be a sort of Sabbath from food, wherein greater concentration could be placed on God Himself, and especially during a time of mourning or Divine discipline.

John the Baptist required his followers to observe the annual fasts of the Jews.

Christ condemned hypocritical fasting, but did not condemn the practice outright, Matt 6:16-18, "And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

Although Christ is hard the Pharisees for their approbation lust, He does not come down on fasting.

Instead, He assumes that people will continue to fast, and pushes them all to do it in the right way.

There is a good reason why the Pharisees and disciples of John should not fast at the present time: Christ is on the planet.

The first analogy, aimed at John the Baptist and his disciples. "And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the Bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

The attendants of the bridegroom are the disciples of John; the groom is Christ Himself; and the bride is Israel.

Notice that Christ equates fasting and mourning. Here we have the legitimate reason for fasting, which is a state of mourning.

Christ's question to them is "Why are you mourning?" The truth which lies under the question is, "This should be a time of celebration for all of you".

Christ has arrived, and He is offering to the kingdom to the bride - this is a time for rejoicing. The millennium is upon them, why fast?

The use of the word fast in the last sentence shows an equivalency to mourning. In fact, since Christ uses the two terms interchangeably we can assume that He considered them as synonymous. Therefore, the subject in the last sentence is about mourning.

This is the reason that Matthew's gospel is so valuable - because he remembered the force of Christ's discourse and translated so that we could have insight into the meaning.

Here also is another foreshadowing of Christ's death. The disciples would mourn then.

The bridegroom will be taken away from them through the ascension - Acts 1:9 records this event, and there Luke uses the same verb, APAIRO, to describe the event. Under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, Luke interpreted the ascension as the fulfillment of Christ's prediction. Acts 1:9 is the only other place in the New Testament where this verb is used, other than our three synoptic accounts of this event.

The verb APARTHE. points out some interesting things.

It is in the passive voice, revealing the nature of Christ's passing. It will be not of His choosing, but from the action of God.. The subject receives the action of the verb.

The verb means to be taken away, not in any violent way, but just taken away.

The verb is in the subjunctive mood, revealing that from the human viewpoint, this event is only a potential event. Remember that the church age is no set thing yet from the viewpoint of the Jewish client nation. They may still choose Christ for their king. From the viewpoint of the divine decree and divine foreknowledge, their rejection is set in stone.

The second analogy, that of the patch. "But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results." "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results." "And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old."

Introduction to dispensations

Dispensation is a theological term which describes the Divine outline of human history.

"A dispensation is a period of human history defined in terms of divine revelation. According to the Bible, history is a sequence of divine administrations. These consecutive eras reflect the unfolding of God's plan for mankind. They constitute the divine viewpoint of history and the theological interpretation of history. The doctrine of dispensations is the vehicles by which believers living at a specific time can orient to God's will, plan, and purpose for their lives." (Thieme, p.3).

In human history, God gradually and progressively reveals His eternal purpose for mankind. Although the revelation is gradual and progressive, every generation has all that it needs to glorify God.

Dispensational constants:

Since the creation of man, spiritual growth has come through faith perception, and tested through adversity. This will always be the case, Gen. 3:8, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the spiritual part of the day." There was a spiritual part of every day in the garden.

The truth has always been provided, although the form and mode of communication of the truth is a variable.

The human spirit has always been provided as the frame of reference for spiritual matters. It was there in the garden, and lost through the fall.

In the church age, additional power is provided in the filling ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Since the creation of man, the character and sufficiency of God has always been the issue for mankind. This will always be the case.

Since the creation of man, spiritual opportunity is always equal. So it always will be.

Since the fall of man, salvation has always been by grace through belief in Christ. So will it always be. Since Adam and Eve were in a state of perfection, they had no need for salvation.

Dispensational variables:

The form and agents of communication of the truth.

The form of communication varies widely, from direct communication from God in the garden to oral tradition to written communication and ritual communication.

The agent of communication is closely associated with the form, yet it is distinct. Agents have varied from God to priests to prophets to apostles to pastors.

The amount of truth, due to progressive revelation. Because the revelation of the truth is progressive, and always builds on the body of truth from preceding ages, each successive age has greater amount of the truth than the preceding one. Sometimes the increases are dramatic, sometimes they are less so.

The availability of Divine Power

The ministry of God the Holy Spirit in the church age marks a fantastic increase in the availability of divine power. In future ages, there will be even more. In preceding ages, less so. This may be related to two things: (1) The progressive degeneracy of man; (2) The progressive amount of truth.

Corporate vs. Individual emphasis. In some dispensations, there is a greater emphasis on the corporate than the individual. The age of Israel is such an age. There is no dispensation that fails to recognize the importance of the individual.

The individual emphasis harkens back to the individual decisions of fallen angels to follow Satan and to reject the grace offer of God. The corporate emphasis stresses the effect of individual decisions on the whole.

Time and space relationship to Jesus Christ. The relationship in time of a dispensation to the first and second advents has a direct effect on the conditions of that dispensation, especially what is revealed in the Word.

Trends of Volition

Some dispensations seem to feature more positive volition than negative, and of course vice-versa. Even within dispensations this holds true.

Representation of an age of angelic prehistory. Most dispensations concentrate on the time of grace in angelic prehistory.

This analogy is the first of two which describe the change in conditions in the age of Israel due to the presence of the Messiah.

The dispensation of Israel still continues during the life of Christ, although it will end with the beginning of the church at Pentecost, 30 A.D. However, it really should not continue at all after the baptism of our Lord. There are four reasons why the incarnation should be regarded as a separate dispensation (from *The Divine Outline of History*, R. B. Thieme, Jr., pp.49-50).

God revealed Himself to mankind as never before in history - in the person of Christ. In the Scriptures the life of Christ is recorded four times over, from four perspectives, unlike any other period in history.

God designed the incarnation of Jesus Christ to purchase salvation for all mankind in every dispensation. From God's viewpoint this extraordinary period throws light across all of history and is not hidden away as part of another dispensation. God's design for the incarnation of Christ also included an unprecedented system of power that enabled the humanity of Christ to accomplish His mission.

Our Lord's incarnation is a separate dispensation because it plays a major role in defining other dispensation. One of its characteristics - resurrection - becomes a distinguishing mark of the completion of each subsequent dispensation.

This approximately thirty-three-year dispensation is like a cornerstone or hinge that connects, yet divides, two very different dispensations. Israel and the Church are different from one another because of the Incarnation, which itself belongs to neither of these dispensations. We will briefly present each of these four approaches.

The incarnation runs from the birth of Christ in B.C. 4 to the resurrection and ascension of Christ in A.D. 30, a period of 33 years.

The pre-baptism era

The presentation of the Word.

The total information and complexity of the Word remains the same as in the last era. The means of communication also remains the same. Although the living Word was now in His human body, his time of teaching had not yet come. Although John the Baptist had a special ministry in preparing the way for Christ, he is a prophet, and no more, Jn 1:6-8, "There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light."

The current phase of the angelic conflict

The Pre-baptism era of the life of Christ marked the beginning of the rebuttal phase of the angelic conflict. The intensity of the conflict became much greater. The scope of the conflict was focused on the person of Jesus Christ.

There was a great deal of angelic protection for the person of Jesus Christ, especially in His early

years, Mt 2:13-18 (read). The conflict continued in the lives of other human beings, but the great focus was on Christ Himself.

This era had several purposes within the conflict.

The continuation of the age of Israel, and the era of Divine Discipline, which overlapped the present dispensation (explain).

Jesus Christ lived the perfect life of a believer under the ritual system of the age of Israel, Mt 5:17, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

He proved that it could be done as the last one to take the witness stand under the ritual plan of God.

He began the transition to the church age and the rebuttal phase of the trial.

He was therefore the perfect cornerstone between the two dispensations, Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6,7.

The post-baptism era

Note: At His baptism, Our Lord received the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, and thus began His earthly ministry, and the prototype Christian life.

The presentation of the Word

The total information revealed took a large step forward at the revelation of the living Word in the baptism of Christ. The complexity of the information stayed relatively low. The means of communication took some new turns as well.

The Word was for the very first time communication in a person, that is, Jesus Christ. Our Lord Himself communicated through Word and deed. He taught individuals, small groups, and large crowds. He also taught by the example of His own life. The availability of Divine power.

The general populace had the same power as the preceding eras. Jesus Christ received the full-time filling of the Spirit for the first time in History.

Through it He received all of the spiritual gifts that He needed to establish the Christian way of life. Included were at least miracles, healing, knowledge, prophecy, pastor-teacher, and faith. Through it He was empowered to execute

perfectly the prototype Christian life in the protocol plan of God. Because of it He could remain impeccable and accomplish what He needed to without using His own omnipotence. The current phase of the angelic conflict.

Although the scope of the angelic conflict remained the same, this was perhaps the most intense time in history, Mt 4:1-12; Lk 4:1-12 (read).

The level of chaos, violence, and suffering isn't always an accurate measuring device for the intensity of the spiritual conflict.

In this era, Satan and Jesus Christ underwent an incredibly intense spiritual contest, and our Lord was the winner. The purpose of this era was to establish the new way of spiritual life for Church age believers, and to accomplish the salvation of mankind.

In His life, Our Lord became the first witness of the rebuttal phase of the trial, and underwent a severe cross examination by the devil. It was also necessary for Him to die a substitutionary spiritual death on the cross, so that our salvation might be made available. In the rebuttal phase, every mature believer is an example of what Satan and the fallen angels could have had if they would have accepted the grace offer of God. In Christ, Satan had an example of what He could have had if he had never sinned in the first place. Whereas Adam became an example of the fall of Satan, Our Lord was an example of Satan without the fall, 1Cor 15:45-49. The life of Christ after His baptism begins a string of witnesses which bring individual recrimination against the fallen angels.

Jesus Christ is the patch of new cloth; the dispensation of Israel is the old garment. The one central truth that is communicated by this parable and the next is that of unsuitability.

The new cloth does not fit with the old garment.

The old garment is unsuitable for the new patch; so the conditions of the dispensation of Israel are unsuited for the coming of Christ.

The Pharisees were fasting as a part of their ritual system. John's disciples were fasting as a part of his ministry. Both are unsuited for the dispensation of the incarnation. We have seen that fasting was related to mourning. However, mourning was

particularly unsuited to the celebratory nature of Christ's appearance and ministry.

Both Matthew and Mark use the word PLEROMA for what we have as 'new'. Actually PLEROMA is a word which means fullness. The new patch is full, like a sponge, but later it will be empty and smaller. Thus, the tearing. Christ certainly was the fullness of God in a human being, and could not be coupled with a dispensation that is all about compensation for sin.

The second parable is much the same as the first: it has as its one central truth the idea of unsuitability.

This time, Christ is the new wine, and the old wineskin is the dispensation of Israel, and more specifically, the idea of fasting.

The difference here is that the unsuitability lies in the idea of expansion instead of shrinking. The new wine expands, whereas the new patch of cloth shrinks.

In both cases, Christ and the dispensation of the incarnation are the new things, and the dispensation of Israel and fasting are the old things. In both cases, the old is unsuitable to the new, and Christ urges them to bring new to the new. The new is a new dispensation.

In essence, Christ is telling them that their dispensation, with its ritual form of teaching, is outdated, and in fact they should be letting it pass.

The way to let that dispensation to pass is to take hold of the new one, and its distinctions, or dispensational variables.

The followers of John the Baptist should be the first ones on the case, because they were supposed to "be prepared" for the coming of the Lord. How could they be prepared through legalism? How through clinging to the former dispensation, now obviously past?

Nor do the Pharisees have an excuse.

John Chapter 5

Jerusalem

John 5:1, "After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem"

Chronology.

This is the spring of 27 A.D., the second Passover during Christ's ministry. This feast is not tabernacles, although many assert it to be.

The great day of atonement was the day of fasting mentioned by the disciples of John and the Pharisees.

Jerusalem was a few days' journey from Galilee, and so it would have been difficult to make it while the feast was still going.

The phrase META TAUTA - "after these things" is an allusion to what has just gone previously in his gospel, but was some time before if this is the feast of Tabernacles.

The previous event at the end of John chapter four is the healing of the royal man's son. This in turn was only a few days after the incident with the Samaritan woman at the well. And that event just when Christ was entering Galilee and starting up His ministry there.

In a nutshell, META TAUTA would encompass about one year in time! This stretches the meaning of the phrase a little too far.

The apostles made the connection between the feast of tabernacles and the transfiguration of Jesus Christ.

Read Mark 9:1-8.

The transfiguration was a preview of the glorification of Jesus Christ at the second advent.

Read Rev. 19:11-16.

Our Lord testified to this very thing.

Read John 7:2-8.

If Christ would not go up to this feast the next year, then why the year previous.

Conclusion: this cannot be the feast of tabernacles.

The handicapped in ancient Israel were cared for, but it was just about a guarantee that one would live in poverty for all his life.

John 5:2-5, "Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is nicknamed in Hebrew Bethzatha, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered. And a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness."

The sheep gate is a gate that opens to the North side of the temple area, but not the temple itself.

About two hundred yards to the North from this gate there are two man-made pools, standing next to each other in north-south orientation.

John's account mentions only one pool, that one by the name of Bethzatha.

The other name possibilities (Bethesda, Belzetha, etc.) exist because of some confusing place names in the area, but must be discounted on the basis of the weakness of their manuscripts.

This confusion exists because Herod the great, the man who had the pools built a few years before Christ's birth, called the complex the 'house of mercy', or, Bethesda. And, nearby, there was a suburb called Bezatha. The two place names collided and over the years they became one - 'Beth-zatha'.

The two pools issue from the same underground spring, and so were often lumped together. Bethzatha was the name for the complex. Even we say we are going down to the neighborhood pool, when there may be a baby pool or a lap pool in addition to the main one.

The word for 'called' is EPILEGOMENE, which means to place one word on top of another, or to assign a nickname. Thus we know that Bethzatha is a nickname and not its proper name.

This pool complex had five porticoes. A portico is a porch that has a roof supported by columns. This was really a magnificent looking area, typical of Solomon's building program.

The story about the angel stirring up the waters is certainly not included in the original manuscript of John's writing.

The earliest manuscript that contains the angel story is from the fifth century; the earliest that omits it from around 200. Case settled.

What the inclusion of the angel story does is attempt to provide a rationale for why so many of the sick, blind, lame, and withered went there, and why they wanted so much to go into the waters.

This place was a sort of Lourdes of the ancient world. A local legend, totally untrue, had an angel stirring up the waters and giving healing to any who could get there while the water roiled. What a

terrible false hope these people had! Many of them would have come just for the feast, and gone to this place as a special pilgrimage. Perhaps the rumor that Christ was near stirred up the frenzy of interest even more.

The roiling of the waters was a pretty bad tease. All of the scrambling to get into the pools must have been a horrifying spectacle.

Thirty eight years is a really long time to be ill! There is hope and hopeless hope. How he must have rationalized his presence there. How he must have hoped a hopeless hope to be healed. The man's illness left him in an incapacitated state - he did not have the physical capability to reach the roiling of the pool.

John 5:6-9, "When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to cast me into the pool whenever the water is stirred up. But while I myself am coming, another goes down before me." Jesus said to him, "Arise, take up your pallet, and walk." And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day."

John reveals Christ's motivation through the statement, "[Christ] knew that he had already been a long time in that condition."

Christ's offer comes from His compassion. Christ had seen thousands and thousands of the sick and lame, and even many of them were present at this scene, but this man is among the worst.

Christ did not come to heal every sick or lame person in the world. It is a point of fact that He did not.

He did choose this man out of compassion. He was the most pitiful of the bunch at the pool.

Christ uses the word HUGIE.S to define the man's desire. It denotes physical soundness or wholeness. It portrays the absence of disease or defect. Paul uses this for sound doctrine in Titus 2:8.

Also remarkable is that the poor man had no one to help him. There is no compassion in Israel.

Healing this man will be a sign that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and especially the suffering Messiah. How appropriate then that this healing occurs at the Passover feast, which is a ritual that teaches the same principle.

A typical misunderstanding occurs. Christ asks the man if he wishes to get well, and the man assumes that Christ speaks of the healing powers of the waters.

The sick man has no idea whatsoever as to the identity of Christ. If he had, then he would have been on to what Christ was offering.

Remember also that Christ has been away in Galilee for a year or so, and that he did not announce His return to Jerusalem. And this: if this man had no one to put him in this pool, then who would have carried him to Galilee and Christ.

But Christ had to come here, because this man was positive, and had no way to physically come to Christ.

The man says, "Sir, I have no man to cast me into the pool whenever the water is stirred up. But while I myself am coming, another goes down before me."

The man addresses Christ respectfully with the appellation KURIE. This is the 'sir' of the koine Greek. It does not indicate that he knew Christ's true nature. Remember this from the woman at the well? She used the same form of address.

The use of HOTAN, 'whenever' indicates that the water is stirred up on random occasions.

TARASSO describes the stirring up of the waters. The sick man uses the passive voice, which most likely indicates his belief that the stirring up does not come from a natural source. Note the difference: "The water stirred..." "The water was stirred by the angel..."

The man also emphasizes that he is alone in this endeavor by the intensive use of the personal pronoun EGO combined with the verb ERCHOMAI. Together, these are translated, "I myself."

This is a most pitiful plea.

"Jesus said to him, "Arise, take up your pallet, and walk around." And immediately the man became

well, and took up his pallet and began to walk around. Now it was the Sabbath on that day."

Not only does Christ command the sick man to get up and walk, but also to take up his pallet.

The KRABATTOS was a small portable bed, perhaps in the form of a mattress-stretcher combination. The same word was employed by the synoptic writers for the man who was lowered through the roof to Jesus. That mattress was obviously on some kind of frame, and rigid.

While the pallet used to carry him, now he carries the pallet. Christ's command is very appropriate, and designed to bring a great demonstration of the power of God.

The verb for walk is PERIPATEO, and it means literally to 'walk around'.

The idea is definitely that of demonstration.

Imagine the scene: all those scrambling madly to get into the waters whenever they stir, a pitiful, wild, weird freak show. Does the cure work immediately, or does it take time? Do I have to be where the water stirs, or just in the pool anywhere when it does stir? How can you tell the difference between the stirring of the angel, and the wind. Or worse yet, the stirring of the angel and all the splashing and confusion as the scramble occurs.

And then, of all things, one of their number, clearly outside of the pool, arises and begins to walk around with his pallet in hand.

There is a hushed silence... amazement... "HEY IT'S THE SABBATH! YOU CAN'T DO THAT ON THE SABBATH! ALERT! ALARM! SABBATH BREAKER! SABBATH BREAKER!"

John puts a shadow on this happy moment by mentioning that it was the Sabbath. Surely this man knew it was the Sabbath, but how could he disobey the one who had healed his illness of thirty eight years?

John 5:10-13, "Therefore the Jews were saying to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, "Take up your pallet and walk." They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you,

"Take up your pallet and walk?" But he who was healed did not know who it was; for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place."

The Jews are angry because of this Sabbath violation - notice how little true compassion they have - they could care less about the man's medical history, and the hopelessness that he experienced during that thirty eight year illness.

The Jews have forgotten the true meaning of the Sabbath, which is concentration on God and His

work. Surely they should understand this magnificent healing as a work of God, and worship Him for it.

Not only have they forgotten the true meaning of the Sabbath, but they have also distorted it, replacing it with cheap legalism and a multitude of rules. Let's look at the Mosaic rule concerning the Sabbath...
