**Sent:** Wednesday, December 17, 2014 7:15 PM
**Subject:** Last Nite's MOB Session

Men--Last nite we held our last MOB gathering for the year!  Lesson #12 in our study of the Gospel of John--this one covering John 5:1-17, which signaled a significant shift in John's account of the reception of Jesus by the Jewish religious hierarchy. This lesson was about the "healing of the paralytic man"--the third miracle, or "sign," that John recorded in his gospel--which provided clear evidence that Jesus was, in fact, the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God.  And yet, rather than turning the hearts of Jewish leaders toward Him, it only led to more hatred and hostility toward Him!  But, looking at it another way, as Paul Logan so ably noted in his presentation to the overall group, it also constituted a "frontal assault by Jesus Himself on false religion!"

Well, looking back, it was a miraculous healing event that took place in Jerusalem!  The "poor and broken" paralytic man--after 38 years of clinging to the idea that if only he could somehow find a way, at just the right time, into the "stirring waters" of the pool of Bethesda (not the one in DC!), he might be healed!  You have to admire his "self-determined" mind-set, if that was the case!  But to anyone else observing, it was probably nothing more than a "pipe-dream"!  And yet, Jesus, "after drawing out the man's own perception of the obstacles facing him" (as Kostenberger notes in his book), simply (?) used His "words" (and not the water!) to make him whole!  And John writes, he "immediately was well and picked up his pallet and began to walk."  Kind of takes one back to the beginning of creation when God "spoke" the world into existence (Gen. 1:1-3).

Can you imagine the wonder and joy that must have surrounded that place! But to the Jewish religious leaders, it was horrific!  Rather than rejoicing with the man, and probably many others, they were "stuck" on the fact that he was carrying around his bedroll, or whatever--on the Sabbath!  And when they found out that Jesus had instigated the whole affair--and that He had identified Himself as the Son of God--they were "blown out of the minds" and, as John says, were "seeking all the more to kill Him"!

So why, we asked, did Jesus do this on the Sabbath?  Well, it was obviously done intentionally on His part!  In fact, the gospels record six other instances where Jesus healed on the Sabbath, and at least one other instance (in Matt. 12:1-14)--where the Pharisees "caught" Jesus' disciples "picking the heads of grain and eating them as they walked with Jesus through the fields"--on the Sabbath!  All of these led to confrontations between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders, and specifically with the Pharisees!  In the latter case, He announced that He was the "Son of Man and Lord of the Sabbath"--and basically affirmed (as MacArthur writes) that the Sabbath was made for man's benefit and God's glory, and "never intended to be a yoke of bondage to the people of God."

Well, there's a lot more to the clash between Jesus and the religious leaders over the Sabbath, and particularly with the Pharisees--which we'll get more into as our study of John continues!  In the meantime, if you want to get a better idea of what God thought of their "religion," check out Matthew 23!  Jesus was obviously concerned more about their "hearts" and, among other things, their "neglect of the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness..." than how they "appeared" and "performed" before men. But we'll save all that for another time!

The real tragedy of it all was that the very people who should have recognized and received Jesus for who He was missed it completely--the most important "revelation" in the history of world!  Instead, they are forever marked with a serious and eternal indictment of their grandiose and hypocritical claims!  What a shame!

Here are some conclusions and applications we can take from last nite's study:

1--The paralytic man was a lot like all of us, from a "spiritual" standpoint.  He was in a hopelessly "lost" condition, and despite his tenacity and best effort, couldn't do anything to change it!

2--Jesus was the "answer" and offered the "words of deliverance and new life" --as He still does today!

3--Everyday, even the "Sabbath" (which essentially "went by the boards" for Christian believers with the "new covenant," etc.--but that another story!), is a good day to worship and acknowledge God and to "do something good for others!"

4--We can "rest" (see Hebrews 4) on the promises of God for eternal life, based on the "work" He has done on our behalf, by sending Christ, the Savior, into the world--so many Christmases ago!

5--We should be careful about setting up a list of our own "rules"--especially ones that we expect others to follow!--that exceed God's revealed truth, and detract from His purpose and design.

6--We can truly rejoice--and particularly during this Christmas season--based on who Jesus was and is, and why He came, and what that means for all of us!

Well, there's really so much more that could be said, in different and better ways, but it sure is challenging and enjoyable--and "good"  to study His word together as brothers!

So that's it for 2014, men!  See you January 6th when we take up Lesson #13, covering John 5:17-47, as we consider more of the "escalating conflict."

Wish you, and yours, all a very merry and blessed Christmas!!!

Lowell Mininger