



BIBLICAL

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ILLUSTRATOR



FIRST-CENTURY BURIAL: A *Cultural Comparison*

Why Anoint?

Jesus' Family: All We Know

 **LifeWay**
Biblical Solutions for Life

IN FALL 1974, the first issue of *Biblical Illustrator* (originally called *Sunday School Lesson Illustrator*) was published. Since its beginning, the magazine has provided in-depth background information for Bible study leaders and serious Bible learners. Beginning with this issue, you will notice a couple of new features. First, our binding is more substantial, which will now allow you to read the issue date while the magazine is on your shelf. Second, our CenterSpread is no longer a CENTER-SPREAD. It's a fold out, which allows more space for an additional article. Plus, it's no longer in the center. We are calling it *InSites*—since biblical and archaeological dig locations are called “sites.” I think you'll enjoy it.



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During this year I want to highlight some who are part of the *Biblical Illustrator* family. The first is Claude Spainhour, a retired engineer who lives in Crossett, Arkansas. He recently contacted me and said he had every issue of *Biblical Illustrator* since 1980, except one. Did we have a copy of Fall 2012 we could send him? We sent him the copy, which led to delightful e-mails and telephone conversations. Mr. Spainhour teaches a mens Sunday School class at First Baptist of Crossett. I asked about his using *Biblical Illustrator* magazine:

In 1980, our church's Educational Director made a display of all the helpful periodicals produced by Southern Baptists. It was a collage of past magazine covers with a description of the contents under each one. I somehow was drawn to Biblical Illustrator, and I began asking my church to order it for me. Since then I've kept every copy. I use them regularly in my teaching to flesh out the lessons and put them into context—How did these people live? What was the opposition like? What was the logic behind the opposition? How did Christianity affect an early convert's business life in a Jewish or pagan society? Can I make this story funny?

Jesus taught primarily by telling stories rather than by simply stating facts or rules as other Jewish teachers did. I guess I'd have to say that Biblical Illustrator simply helps me to tell Bible stories—in Sunday school, in devotionals, and in conversations.

We are so thankful for persons like Mr. Spainhour who have been longtime users and for the new people we welcome to the *Biblical Illustrator* family each quarter. Aren't you grateful for this magazine? Me too!

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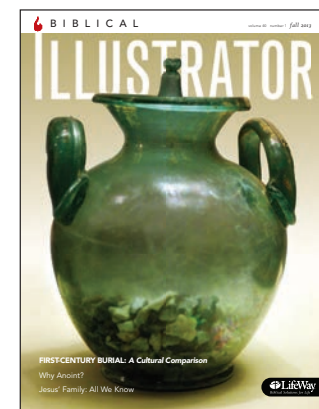
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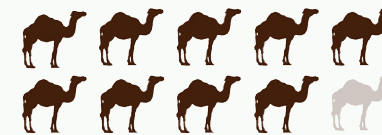


About the Cover: Roman blown blue-green glass jar dated A.D. 50–200; was initially used for storage. It had later use as a funerary urn. It contains cremated bones and a piece of woven asbestos, which was part of a burial shroud. The urn and lid are about 12 inches tall.

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ BRITISH MUSEUM/ LONDON (31/29/21)



On a scale of 1-10, this book receives a rating of 9 camels.



Jesus and the Jewish Festivals, Gary M. Burge. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012; 144 pages, ISBN 9780310280477; paperback.

Book reviews are limited to those the *Illustrator* staff feels confident to recommend, based on ease of reading, quality of content, and doctrinal viewpoint. Each book is reviewed within the guidelines of *The Baptist Faith and Message*. The 1 to 10 scale reflects overall quality and usefulness.

PROFESSOR of New Testament at Wheaton College, Burge specializes in Middle-East studies and Hellenistic backgrounds. He is eminently qualified to write a background study of Jewish festivals, how they inform the New Testament, and how they should be applied today.

He writes in a ready-reference, handbook format. Well illustrated with photos, diagrams, and drawings, the book is inviting and informative. Burge explains the cultural background and observances of each major Jewish festival, carefully relating them to modern observances.

Employing cultural anthropology, archaeology, and biblical backgrounds, Burge helps readers see the Bible in a fresh, accurate way. He states, “If a familiar passage is suddenly opened for new meaning and application, this effort has succeeded” (p. 12). He helps readers experience each of the festivals; they spring to life as Jesus would have celebrated them, set against the backdrop of the temple.

Criticisms are few. Editing is consistently good. The cover provocatively asked, “Why did Jesus break the Jewish Sabbath?” Jesus never broke the Law, nor taught others to. He disregarded some human additions to

Sabbath observance to demonstrate that God is not prohibited from healing on the Sabbath. Jesus did not break the Sabbath; He merely restored it to its rightful observance.

Also, Burge states, “Only silver shekels from Tyre were acceptable to the priests for payments” (p. 104). Yes, Judas was paid in royal Tyrian shekels. These coins, though, would have had images of Melqart (Ba'al) on one side and the image of an eagle on the other, which would have rendered them unfit for official temple usage. While these coins would have been accepted by the money changers in the Court of the Gentiles, they would have never made it beyond. The priests refused to take them back because they were payment for murder (Matt. 27:6). The priests may have actually paid Judas with rejected coinage.

These aside, Burge's book would be a welcome addition to any library. The festivals shine through in their former glory, with applications and illustrations to show their applicability in the present.

David E. Lanier is professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina.

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Jesus, the Paralytic, and the Sabbath

By Robert E. Jones

JOHN'S GOSPEL clearly shows Jewish religious leaders growing increasingly hostile toward Jesus because of His ministry and teaching. These religious leaders had, from their point of view, reason to be upset, for they saw themselves as the upholders of Jewish orthodox and traditional teachings. According

to their perspective, Jesus was uprooting and destroying both their teachings and the *status quo*. The religious leaders felt, therefore, the need to stop Him before He was able to do so. Growing increasingly concerned, they began to plot Jesus' death. Two healing incidents in John's Gospel graphically depict this growing hostility toward Jesus. One of them is the healing narrative recorded in John 5:1-9a.

JESUS' SABBATH "VIOLATIONS"	
Picked heads of grain	Matt 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5
Healed man with paralyzed hand	Matt. 12:10-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11
Delivered a demon-possessed man	Luke 4:31-37
Healed Peter's mother-in-law	Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39
In the synagogue healed the woman who had been bent over for 18 years	Luke 13:10-17
Healed man with swollen limbs (dropsy)	Luke 14:1-4
Healed man at pool of Bethesda	John 5:1-15
Healed a man born blind	John 9:1-41

Violation of Sabbath Law

According to John's account, Jesus healed a man by the pool of Bethesda who had been helplessly ill (likely paralyzed) for 38 years. When Jesus saw the man, He asked him if he wanted to become well. After hearing the man's response, Jesus then told him to arise, pick up his bedroll, and walk. Instantly, the man was healed and proceeded to do exactly as Jesus had instructed. At this point, John inserted the key phrase that forms the transition from the healing story to the discourse following: "Now that day was the Sabbath" (John 5:9b).¹ This phrase explains why the Jews so quickly became hostile to Jesus and severely criticized His healing work.

The main issue for the Jews did not concern the man's healing, for that in itself would not have stirred up their ire. Rather their focus was on Jesus violating the Sabbath law. The Jews were upset because all they could see was a man who, by carrying his bedroll, had broken their rules and traditions related to the Sabbath day. At this point we might wonder what was so bad about a person carrying a bedroll on the Sabbath. The answer is based on the Jewish understanding of the Fourth Commandment that instructed the Hebrew people to remember and honor the Sabbath day.

According to Exodus 20:11, God created everything in six days and then rested on the seventh. The Lord then blessed the seventh day and declared it to be holy, setting it apart from the other six days of the week.² Both the Hebrew word *shabbath* and the Greek

word *sabbaton*, translated "Sabbath," mean "to cease, desist."³ In the root word for *Sabbath*, "the double b has an intensive force, implying a complete cessation" of all activity.⁴ The Lord had rested on the seventh day; the Hebrew people were to do likewise.

In order to enforce Sabbath law, Jewish rabbis set forth 39 classifications of work. Their action resulted in the developing and systematizing of numerous rules and regulations the rabbis deduced from the commandment. The rabbis worked out these Sabbath day requirements in an increasingly complicated manner with the goal of applying them to every conceivable situation. For example, Jewish Sabbath law prohibited kindling a fire, carrying on trade, treading the winepress, placing a load on an animal, or holding markets.

IMB PHOTO/JUSTIN VENEMAN (63/1094)



Right: Replica of the trumpeting place that was part of Herod's Temple Mount, where the trumpeter announced the beginning and the close of the Sabbath.

No business activity of any kind nor any other activity could occur that might desecrate the Sabbath.⁵ Jews, therefore, had to make all necessary arrangements for the Sabbath day on the day of preparation so that the day of rest might remain free of all work. Only an urgent obligation or mortal danger could overrule these laws.

We can understand, then, why the Jews became so upset when they saw the healed man carrying his bedroll on the Sabbath day. They knew their system of Sabbath laws strictly prohibited such action. Of course, Jesus also was aware of this fact. He knew that instructing the man to violate Sabbath law would result in an ugly confrontation with the Jewish authorities. Yet in the account, the Sabbath controversy ended up taking a back seat to an even more serious charge against Jesus—one that became the ultimate reason why the Jews sought His death.

Jesus' Defense

Since the Jews believed Jesus should have waited until after sunset before healing the man, they immediately began attacking Him for His Sabbath law violation. Jesus, however, was ready for their attack and quickly responded by claiming that in healing the man on the Sabbath, He was actually doing work that God always is doing (John 5:17). Jesus justified His actions by calling attention to the fact that, according to rabbinic teaching, God indeed worked on the Sabbath. The rabbis agreed that, "God rested on the seventh day; but he rested from *creation*; his higher works of judgment and mercy and compassion and love still went on."⁶ Actually, among the Jews this teaching had given rise to a great deal of speculation about the reasons for God's continued work on the Sabbath. Some rabbis believed that since people were born and died on the Sabbath, and since God alone can give life or take it,



Left: Partial ruins of the Pool of Bethesda, which was near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem. Above: The Pool of Bethesda as it likely appeared in Jesus' day; the reconstruction is part of the Jerusalem model.



Left: Discovered in 2004 are steps leading into the Pool of Siloam on the southern end of Jerusalem. Pottery found in the excavation indicates the pool was in use in Jesus' day. At the Pool of Siloam and on the Sabbath, Jesus healed a man who had been born blind (John 9:1-41). Below: In the foreground, ruins of a residential area at Capernaum. In the background are the remains of a partially restored synagogue. Although the synagogue itself dates to the 4th cent. A.D., beneath is a basalt foundation that would have been in place in Jesus' day. Because He delivered a demon-possessed man, Jesus' accusers charged Him with violating the Sabbath.



He had to be active and working even on the Sabbath. Still others believed that God's divine will was the sole force that sustained life and kept the world from collapsing on the Sabbath.

The Jewish rabbis were quick to assert, however, that humans could not use these beliefs as an excuse to work on the Sabbath. According to their understanding, to do so was, in effect, to equate one's self with God. Yet this was the very claim Jesus made. Not only did He stress the constancy of divine work that is not affected by the Sabbath commandment, He went on to state that He was working AS the Father was working. This meant that Jesus Himself was doing work only God can do. Immediately understanding the implication of Jesus' statement, the Jewish leaders accused Him of making an outrageous claim. In their minds, Jesus was claiming that He was equal with God and that God had given Him the divine authority to work on the Sabbath. The Jews understood that by making Himself equal with God and asserting that God had sent Him (v. 36), Jesus was both legitimizing His Sabbath day work and claiming to be divine, to be the Son of God. From this point they began attacking Jesus not only as a Sabbath-breaker, but also as a blasphemer. They realized Jesus was not claiming to be God's child

in a general sense, but to be God's Son in a special sense—and thus to be divine.⁷ Jesus knew that because of His complete unity with the Father and based upon unqualified obedience to the Father's will, He could exercise divine function. He understood that every act the Son performed was an act of the Father.

"Do you want to get well?... Get up... pick up your bed and walk!" (5:6,8). Those simple words, which Jesus spoke on a Sabbath, meant life for this man would never be the same.

Incensed, "the Jews began persecuting Jesus because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.... Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (vv. 16,18). Their solution? Jesus had to die. That would be the end of Him—or, so they thought.

1. All Scripture quotations are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB).
 2. See also Genesis 2:1-3.
 3. "שַׁבָּת" (*shabbath*; cease, desist) in Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 804; "Sabbath" in W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, vol. 3, in *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1981), 311.
 4. "Sabbath" in Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, 311.
 5. Eduard Lohse, "σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή" (*sabbaton*, Sabbath) in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 5; see pages 1-35 for a much fuller explanation of Jewish Sabbath laws.
 6. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John: Volume 1*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 183.
 7. Jesus later explained His divinity and unity with the Father more explicitly. He told religious leaders, "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30). They accused Him of blasphemy and picked up rocks to stone Him. Jesus later explained to His disciples, "The one who has seen Me has seen the Father" (14:9).

Robert E. Jones is pastor of Euclid Avenue Baptist Church, Bristol, Virginia.