

## Pt 25 Healing at the Pool of Bethesda – John 5:1-18

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### John 5:1-18

- 1 After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
- 2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep *market* a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.
- 3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.
- 4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.
- 5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.
- 6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, *Wilt thou be made whole?*
- 7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.
- 8 Jesus saith unto him, *Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.*
- 9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.
- 10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry *thy* bed.
- 11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.
- 12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?
- 13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in *that* place.
- 14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, *Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*
- 15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.
- 16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.
- 17 But Jesus answered them, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*
- 18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

We do not know how long Jesus was in Galilee before he went back to Jerusalem, but he spent some time there ministering, teaching, and healing. Our text picks up with him headed back to Jerusalem for the observance of a Jewish feast.

### 1 After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

In most cases the Gospel writer, John, tells us which feast day he is referring to, but in this case, he does not. It could have been Passover, Pentecost, or the Feast of Tabernacles. It really isn't important which feast it was because that's not what the story is about. John is just letting us know it was a busy time in the life of the Jews and because it was feast time there would be a lot of people present.

### 2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep *market* a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

This **sheep market** would be in the same area as the sheep gate that is mentioned in Nehemiah 3:1. It was built on the East side of Jerusalem, and it was the gate in which the Jews would bring in the sheep that were to be sacrificed.

**A pool.** From everything I have studied of this pool, it appears to have been a place where the sheep would have been washed before they were offered up as a sacrifice.

Some historians say that unclean people were also washed there before entering the temple. Either way, by this time it had become known as a place to receive healing. The name of this pool was **Bethesda**. The word Bethesda means "**house of mercy**," which is suitable since people came there to be healed.

Something else that is interesting to note. For centuries people doubted that this pool existed. They stated that this was just symbolic, and they spiritualized the text. One man even claimed that John made up the **5 porches** thing to represent the 5 Books of Moses. But, in 1915 archeologists were excavating in Jerusalem and guess what they discovered? A rectangular pool with a porch on each side and one porch splitting it down the middle – making a total of 5 porches. You can go online and see pictures of what it looks like today.

These **5 porches** were covered porticos that would shade people and give them some protection from the sun and elements.

There may be some significance in the number of porches being 5. If you study Bible numerology, then you know the number 5 is spiritually symbolic of God's grace.

- In the Tabernacle God instructed Moses to place 5 curtains, 5 gold bars, 5 pillars, and 5 sockets.
- The altar was 5 cubits wide and 5 cubits long.
- The height of the court in the tabernacle was 5 cubits tall.
- David carried 5 smooth stones in his shepherd's bag when he slew Goliath.
- Jesus fed the 5,000 with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes.
- In the Parable of the 10 virgins, there were 5 that were wise and 5 foolish.
- The woman at the well whom Jesus offered living water to, had 5 husbands.

Those are just a few examples. So, when it comes to this pool being a pool of healing which is God's grace, then it is only suitable that it had five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

Now, lying all over these 5 porches were multitudes of sick people. They came here in hopes to be healed from their infirmities. The Bible said there were great multitudes. We don't know how many that was, but you can guarantee it was a bunch. They had all manner of problems; blind, halt, and withered. – **These that are diseased represent sinners.**

The Bible says that they were laying around waiting for the water to be troubled. It seems that on occasion an angel would come and stir the waters. This didn't happen on a daily basis or even weekly basis, but the Bible says at a **certain season**. Perhaps it was during this particular feast season, we don't know but it was not a set time, so people would come and wait and watch the waters. If they saw the waters stir, then they would run down and step into the water and would be healed. – **This stirring of the waters is representative of the Holy Ghost.**

### 5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

We are not given this man's name – he's just called "**a certain man**." The Bible is filled with these "certain men." Their names really aren't important, but I find it interesting that this man has had an infirmity for 38 years, but we don't know his name. **I believe it's because he represents "who-so-ever."**

### 6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, *Wilt thou be made whole?*

Now, right off Jesus asks this man a question which seems like one of those kind that would get a "duh" answer. I mean, this guy has been in this condition for 38 years. He

hasn't been able to walk. He has to rely on the mercy of others to take him places or do things for him. We don't know how long he has been lying here by the pool of Bethesda, whether it was the entire 38-years or just a few years. If I were guessing, I would say he's been laying there for years hoping to get into that pool at the right time. – **This question Jesus asked him is representative of his calling to receive the free gift of Salvation.**

**7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.**

Did you notice that this man doesn't really answer Jesus? Jesus asked him "**Wilt thou be made whole?**" But instead of answering him, he immediately went into this long explanation as to why he wasn't healed. It's almost as if he already had this whole speech memorized. Maybe he had used it before whenever anyone asked him what was wrong with him. Did you know that there are a lot of people with great problems in their life and you naturally assume they want their problems solved but in fact, they are quite satisfied with their life? Many of the homeless people that I ran into in Downtown Knoxville were quite satisfied with their life. They find it a lot easier to sit around and bum enough money to eat on rather than putting in the effort to get their lives straightened up and working a job and being responsible. Could this man possibly be like that?

Notice also that he wants to blame other people for the reason he isn't healed. "**I have no man to put me into the pool.**" "**Another steppeth down before me.**" Could it be he wants to blame all of his trouble on others instead of assuming responsibility for himself? In fact, if you skip ahead to verse 14 you will see that the reason he's in this predicament is because of some sin he had committed. Jesus told him: **sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.**

May I say to you this morning that if you aren't careful, you will find yourself blaming everyone else for your sin instead of assuming responsibility for your own actions. You don't know what my childhood was like. My daddy beat me. My mama didn't love me. I was mistreated. I got made fun of in school. And the list goes on and on. The truth is, when people are confronted with their sins, they have two choices: acknowledge them and take ownership of them and repent, or blame someone else or society and refuse to repent. – **this represents the decision of the lost sinner.**

Perhaps we have it all wrong and he really did want to be healed and nobody would help him. Why would no one help him get into the water? I mean, even in today's wicked society people usually have mercy on those that are not able to fend for themselves. You would think eventually they would say, "you know, this poor guy has been laying here for years and there's no way he can get to the water before everyone else. How about next time the water is stirred we all go and pick him up and take him to the water, so he can be healed?" I mean, wouldn't that just be the thing to do?

Imagine you are this man. You are helpless. You can't stand up or walk, all you can do is lie on the ground and perhaps pull yourself along with your arms. The way this pool was designed, you would have to go down the steps to even get to the water. The steps were not large enough to sit or lay on so it's not like he could go down to the bottom step and just roll in when the water was stirred. Don't forget the Bible says there was **a great multitude of impotent folks.** Hundreds or possibly thousands would be there with ailments not as bad as yours. There is a better chance of this man being struck by lightning than him being able to make it to the pool before someone else.

**8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. 9a And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked:**

Why didn't Jesus say, "here, let me help you get closer to the pool." I mean, Jesus could have commanded an angel to come and stir the waters and helped this man get down to the pool. After all, that's what the man really wanted wasn't it?

Today's so-called preachers would have told this man he first would need to buy his bestselling book, "**7 Steps to a Better Bethesda.**" Then he would need to sign up for the 12-week study course that goes along with the book and attend one of his life changing seminars, etc...

Look, the answer for this man's problems and the answer for all of our problems is simple: **Obey the Word of the LORD and place your faith in Him.** We don't need steps and programs or anything else, we just need to have faith in Jesus. – **I think it goes without saying, but this represents the sinner placing faith in Christ for salvation.**

**9b and on the same day was the sabbath. 10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.**

First of all, there was no law of Moses that said you could not carry your bed on the Sabbath day. But the Pharisees had created law upon law of their own based upon the laws of Moses. So, they took the law to the extreme:

**Exodus 20:8-11 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.**

Forget the miracle of the healing of this impotent man. Oh sure, he's been unable to walk for 38 years but that's nothing compared to him carrying that bed on the Sabbath! Now the Pharisees, Sadducees, Sanhedrin, folks are all in a dither. – **I believe this is representative of the broken religious system.**

**11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. 12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? 13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.**

So, the man didn't have a full understanding of Who Jesus was. He had enough faith in him to obey and rise and walk but it would take some time before he learned about him. Friends, that is called our sanctification process. After you are saved, you are to start on a daily walk getting to know Christ and His ways. This is called being a disciple.

Now we see something very interesting. **14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.**

So according to this verse, the man suffered all of those years because of some sin he had committed. We don't know what that sin was, but you can guarantee he was suffering from the repercussions of sin. You see, God forgives sin but that does not take away the repercussions of the sin. If you kill someone you go to prison. Christ doesn't take away your prison sentence even if you get saved and ask for forgiveness of your sin.

**15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. 16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him,**

because he had done these things on the sabbath day. 17 But Jesus answered them, **My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.** 18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

The Jews had been suspicious of Jesus from the beginning and had been keeping tabs on him, but this starts their hated persecution of him. From this moment on they sought to kill him.

Now, let me ask you this morning - "wilt thou be made whole?" Do you really want to be made whole today? The Gospel call is for whosoever – you are a whosoever. Jesus can save you, but you must be willing to receive Him.

Is your plan to wait around for a later time, perhaps the stirring of the waters before you are willing to be saved? Oh sure, everyone wants to be saved so they don't go to hell, but not going to hell is just a benefit of being saved. What you are being saved from is your sins. Do you really want to be saved from your sins this morning? Or do you want to remain in them, helpless, hopeless, an impotent man or woman with no way to get out of your problem?

**Wilt thou be made whole?**