



Lesson 233

Healing at the Pool of Bethesda – Part 1

Story Elements

- **Text:** John 5:1-47
- **Setting:** circa AD 28 in Jerusalem
- **Characters:** God, Jesus, the disciples, an invalid, and the Pharisees
- **Plot:** Jesus heals an invalid on the Sabbath, which angers the Pharisees. Jesus then defends his sabbath healing by equating himself with God, which angers the Pharisees even more.
- **Key word(s):** “_____” – The controversy centered on Christ working a miracle in the sabbath and commanding the healed man to carry his bed, which the Pharisees considered a violation of the sabbath.
- **Climax:** *John 5:9* *And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.* John’s last detail in v 9 sets the scene for the rest of the chapter: Christ had contradicted their understanding of the sabbath, and his defense of his actions further agitated the hatred of his enemies.

Healed by the Pool

- (v 1) Jesus and his disciples again make the journey to Jerusalem to celebrate a feast – though not named it was probably the _____.
 - In John’s Gospel, three Passovers are mentioned (2:23; 6:4; 12:1). If the unnamed feast in this passage was a fourth Passover, then Jesus’ earthly ministry assuredly lasted for about 3 ½ years. The timeline is illustrated in the table below:

Early ministry	1 st Passover John 2:23	Obscurity to Popularity	2 nd Passover John 5:1	Popularity to Opposition	3 rd Passover John 6:4	Opposition to Crucifixion	4 th Passover John 12:1
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- In this second year of Jesus’ ministry, his popularity in Galilee will come to its peak while opposition grows from criticism and debate to conspiracy to murder (cf. John 5:15).
- (vv 2-4) Near the sheep market (Sheep Gate) was a pool called the pool of Bethesda. The pool was named *Bethesda*, which means *house of* _____ – so named because it was believed that an angel would come and stir the waters and impart some healing properties into the pool. Those first in the pool after the water was affected would receive a healing miracle.

NOTE → Some wonder, “Why would such a miracle happen only once a year and why only to one person?” This unusual annual miracle is nowhere else described in the Bible. It doesn’t exist in the Old Testament, and it seems to have stopped during Christ’s ministry because it is never mentioned again. It is my opinion, that this unusual miracle was sent during Christ’s life to draw attention to the _____ and to glorify the Son of God.

- (vv 5-6) In particular was a man who had been an invalid for _____ years who was unable to move and had no one to help him into the pool when the water was stirred.

APPLICATION → “The longer we live on earth, the more we shall find that it is a selfish world, and that the sick and afflicted have few real friends in time of need. ‘The poor is hated even of his neighbor.’ (Prov. xiv.20.) Christ is the only unfailing friend of the friendless and helper of the helpless.”¹

¹ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel*, VOL THREE (Grand Rapids: Baker Books; 2007) 273.

- (a) Jesus saw the man and asked, *Wilt thou be made whole?* J.C. Ryle notes, “The English language here fails to give the full force of the Greek. It means, ‘Have you a will? Do you wish? Do you desire to be made well?’ ...Is not this, to take a spiritual view, the very language that Christ is continually addressing to every man and woman who hears His Gospel? He sees us in a wretched, miserable, sin-sick condition. The one thing He asks us is, ‘Have you any wish to be _____?’”²
- (b) (vv 7-9) Jesus immediately healed the man and said, *Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.*

Harassed by the Pharisees³

- 4. (vv 10-13) The healed man did as the Savior said. But later the Pharisees saw the man and rebuked him for carrying his _____ on the Sabbath. The man's response was, “The man that healed me told me to do it!”
 - (a) The Pharisees were so blinded by their self-righteous legalism, so tragically incapable of discerning between the spirit of the law and the letter of the law, that they did not ask “Who healed you?” but “Who told you to carry your bed?” But the man did not know it was Jesus.
 - (b) (v 14) Later, near the temple, Jesus saw the man and said, *Behold, thou art made whole: _____ no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

APPLICATION → To us it is strange that Jesus would say such a thing to the man. But we must remember that the great need of even the sickest person is not the soundness of the body but the saving of their soul from sin. Jesus saves us from the curse of sin, and demonstrates this power by healing diseases, but he also saves us from _____ himself, and he emphasizes this by commanding us to leave off sinning.

- (c) (v 15) After this second encounter, the man realized that his healer was Jesus, and he informed his questioners. Though some might interpret his acts as a betrayal, we have no reason to think the man had any malicious intent against Jesus. He probably did not pick up on the Pharisees’ animosity – or perhaps he trusted his religious leaders would conduct themselves honorably.

- 5. (v 16) The Jewish leaders were incensed by Jesus’ actions *and sought to _____ him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.*

APPLICATION → In this story is another vivid example of how the Jewish leaders had a form of godliness but denied the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5). “Hypocrites often cover their real enmity against the *power* of godliness with a pretended zeal for the _____ of it.”⁴

Answer Key: Key word(s): “work” • 1. Passover • 2. mercy; → Messiah • 3. 38; a) saved • 4. bed; b) sin → sin • 5. slay; → form

² Ibid.
³ John calls the antagonists in the story *Jews*, by which he meant religious leaders of Jerusalem, not the ethnic Hebrews. I use the term *Pharisee* because they were often the most outspoken critics of Jesus.
⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1944.