

## John 5

1 We don't know what feast this was. The men of Israel were to go three times a year, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Those living within 15 miles were required to go. Jesus was outside that range but I think Jesus desired to worship with his nation.

2 Bethesda/Bethsaida – House of mercy. Bethzatha – House of olives. Bethzatha area covered a third of Jerusalem. Different manuscripts record it differently. Similar pools with colonnades have been excavated. These areas are usually connected to superstitions about Roman or Greek gods that healed. Water often had mystical connotations to ancient people.

3-4 People lay waiting for the moving of the water that they believed had healing power. The best and earliest manuscripts do not have verse 4. A scribe may have added it for explanation. A fact of clarification but it may not be Scripture. It is unimportant to the key point.

5-6 Imagine 38 years of hoping to somehow be first. Had he given up hope? Did he see people healed? Jesus question seems to invite faith to return. Notice Jesus doesn't give him a lesson on superstition. He just shows him the true source of healing. Do you want to be healed? He may have been comfortable living on charity, receiving sympathy. We can become comfortable in our sin handicapped condition. Do we want to be healed? Do we really want the touch of holiness in our life? Luke 18:41; Hebrews 4:13,15

7-8 The man explains why he has no hope. No one will assist him. Jesus asks him to do the impossible. "You want me to carry the bed that has been carrying me?" The man acts on faith in Jesus' command. That is often when we get His touch on our life. We know we are helpless, but He asks us to do what we know we cannot. When we align our will and make the effort to do what we know is impossible, the power of God flows in. Faith is met by power and the miraculous happens. Psalm 72:12; Romans 5:6

Some commentators believe this actual event has a deeper significance. The surface issue is that Jesus sees the helpless and comes to meet their need. If they will have faith in His word there is healing. Barclay shares this interpretation: The man stands for the people of Israel. The five porches stand for the five books of the law. In the porches the people lay ill. The law could show a man his sin, but could never mend it; the law could uncover a man's weakness, but could never cure it. The law, like the porches, sheltered the sick soul but could never heal it. The thirty-eight years stand for the thirty-eight years in which the Jews wandered in the desert before they entered the promised land; or for the number of the centuries men had been waiting for the Messiah.

The stirring of the waters stands for baptism. In point of fact in early Christian art a man is often depicted as rising from the baptismal waters carrying a bed upon his back.

—Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT)

9-10 Oh no! The man is breaking the Law! Well, not exactly. The Pharisees knew the command not to labor on the Sabbath, but in their nit picking way to be technically correct, they interpreted a certain amount of weight that was not work. The bed must have been over the weight limit. For shame! They created thirty nine definitions of what work meant. You could actually be stoned for carrying a burden in a public place on the Sabbath. What an illustration of how they had hardened their hearts to the condition of man to obey legal minutia!  
Mark 1:31, 3:2-4, 5:41-42

11-12 His defense is, "How can it be wrong if the man who could heal me asked me to do it?" It was a defense that should have rung true for many of the Pharisees who believed miracles authenticated a prophet. But the problem was, it violated their traditions. "Who dared to tell you that?" Not, "wow – we want to meet a man whose words could heal a man who was crippled for 38 years."  
Romans 10:2

13 – 15 He didn't get the Master's name as Jesus slipped away in the crowd that was there for the feast. Jesus found him, probably giving thanks for his healing, and gives the man a warning. It may have been that this previous affliction was the result of sin. Jesus warns him not to go down that route again or something worse could happen. I always read this with amazement that the man told the religious leaders, as if it was a betrayal, the scapegoat for his breaking their law. On more reflection, I think he genuinely wanted them to meet the Master and be healed as he was.

16 Incredible! God help us not to hang on to the way we do things so tightly that we miss Jesus! They were so sure that their way was it, that a miracle of mercy right in their face didn't even touch them.

17 What a defense! God stopped his creative work, but His work of justice, grace, and compassion never stop. Jesus says He is participating in HIS Father's ongoing work.