

*The Gospel According to*

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

NOTHING RECORDED	NOTHING RECORDED	NOTHING RECORDED	CHAPTER 5, VERSES 1-9
			<p><b>5:1</b> - After this<sup>1</sup> there was a feast of the Jews<sup>2</sup>; and Jesus went up<sup>3</sup> to Jerusalem<sup>4</sup>.</p> <p><b>5:2</b> - Now there is at Jerusalem<sup>4</sup> by the sheep market<sup>5</sup> a pool<sup>6</sup>, which is called<sup>7</sup> in the Hebrew<sup>8</sup> tongue<sup>9</sup> Bethesda<sup>10</sup>, having five porches<sup>11</sup>.</p> <p><b>5:3</b> - In these<sup>12</sup> lay<sup>13</sup> a great multitude<sup>14</sup> of impotent<sup>15</sup> folk<sup>16</sup>, of blind<sup>17</sup>, halt<sup>18</sup>, withered<sup>19</sup>, waiting<sup>20</sup> for the moving<sup>21</sup> of the water<sup>22</sup>.</p> <p><b>5:4</b> - For an angel<sup>23</sup> went down<sup>24</sup> at a certain<sup>25</sup> season<sup>26</sup> into the pool<sup>6</sup>, and troubled<sup>27</sup> the water<sup>22</sup>: whosoever<sup>28</sup> then first<sup>29</sup> after<sup>30</sup> the troubling<sup>31</sup> of the water<sup>22</sup> stepped in<sup>32</sup> was made whole<sup>33</sup> of whatsoever disease<sup>34</sup> he had.</p> <p><b>5:5</b> - And a certain<sup>25</sup> man<sup>35</sup> was there, which had an infirmity<sup>36</sup> thirty and eight years<sup>37</sup>.</p> <p><b>5:6</b> - When Jesus saw him lie<sup>38</sup>, and knew<sup>39</sup> that he had been now a long time in that case<sup>40</sup>, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole<sup>41</sup>?</p> <p><b>5:7</b> - The impotent<sup>15</sup> man<sup>35</sup> answered him, Sir<sup>42</sup>, I have no man<sup>43</sup>, when the water<sup>22</sup> is troubled<sup>27</sup>, to put me into<sup>44</sup> the pool<sup>22</sup>: but while I am coming<sup>45</sup>, another<sup>46</sup> steppeth down before me<sup>47</sup>.</p> <p><b>5:8</b> - Jesus saith unto him, Rise<sup>48</sup>, take up thy bed<sup>49</sup>, and walk<sup>50</sup>.</p> <p><b>5:9</b> - And immediately<sup>51</sup> the man<sup>43</sup> was made whole<sup>41</sup>, and took up his bed<sup>49</sup>, and walked<sup>52</sup>: and on the same day<sup>53</sup> was the sabbath<sup>54</sup>.</p>

**CHRONOLOGY:** On a Sabbath Day between 18 March 28CE and 1 April 28CE. Passover fell on 27 March 28CE.

**LOCATION:** Jerusalem, at the Pool of Bethesda, just north of Temple Mount and in near vicinity of Jerusalem's Sheep Gate.

**COMMENTARY:** Jesus has come to Jerusalem during one of the feasts of the Jews. It is most probable that the feast is the Passover. While at the Passover, on a Sabbath day, Jesus visits the area north of Temple Mount and the Sheep Gate. This area contained a large pool, comparable in surface area to a modern football field and holding nearly 9 million gallons of water. The Pool is referred to as the Pool of Bethesda. The name Bethesda had debatable meanings, most feeling in means house of mercy or house of the olive. Regardless, it appears to have served as Jerusalem's hospital; a place where the sick and diseased would gather. The pool was fed by a siphon-karst spring, a mineral spring of high output. Periodically, the spring would release mineral and gases that would cause the pool to bubble and move violently. The superstitious nature of the Jews at the time had decided that the bubbling was a result of an angel who would periodically come down from heaven and touch the water transferring the powers of heaven into the waters. They further believed that the first person who entered the water after the bubbling would receive the heavenly power and be healed. Amongst the great multitude, which we would estimate at 2,000 people, Jesus singles out a man who has some form of paralysis. For 38 years, the man has struggled with his physical trial. For an undisclosed time, he has sat near the Pool of Bethesda hoping to be the first one in and be healed. Unfortunately, he had no one to help him into the water. Therefore, when the water was troubled someone else always beat him into the water. Respecting the man's agency, Jesus asked if He wanted to be healed. The man did not comprehend the nature of the question, thinking it was an offer to help him into the water. Even so, the compassion of the Lord commanded the man to gather up his bed and walk. Immediately the man was healed.

**FOOTNOTES:**

1- After this – The word "After" is translated from the Greek word "μετά" or "meta". It means with, after or behind.

After spending about 4 months ministering among the Galilæans (December 27CE to March 28CE), Jesus traveled to Jerusalem. During His four months in Galilee, Jesus performed countless miracles. Among which He healed a nobleman's son, cast out evil spirits, healed a leper, healed a man with palsy and healed Peter's mother-in-law. He also delivered the greatest sermon ever delivered among men: The Sermon on the Mount. He chose Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew to be disciples, and taught and developed His disciples for the work of salvation. It is "after all this" that Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem for the events of this chapter.

We should pause, at this point, to consider the accuracy of our chronology. Given the facts that we have at our disposal, this chronology is the most probable. It is supported by LDS biblical scholars J. Reuben Clark and Bruce R. McConkie. Even so, every scholar who has devoted adequate time to consider the chronology of the Gospels has come to the conclusion that the necessary facts to establish an absolute chronology have been lost to time. Elder McConkie wrote, **“And we repeat that no one is able to make a harmony of the Gospels or to list chronologically the events of Jesus’ life. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did not do it, and the accounts they have left us do not agree among themselves. Every reputable scholar who has made an independent study of the issues involved has found himself at loggerheads, in large or small parts, with every other analyst. In this work we are following – primarily but not entirely – the chronology of President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., who often disagrees with Elder James E. Talmage, just as Edersheim does with Farrar, or as Mark does with Luke, or as every independent analyst does with some or all of his fellows.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 43). We rely on anchor points of time to establish a frame work, and then try to place the events within the framework. Anchor points are often events, like the Passover, which can be readily tied to the calendar. Other anchor points are things like the blooming of the lilies or the death of historical figures, like Caesar. This chapter has the potential of being an anchor point to the chronology of Jesus’ ministry.

Unlike many of Jesus’ excursions during the ministry, it does not appear that the inner circle of disciples were with Him at this Passover. Though the Gospel account doesn’t acknowledge their absence, it makes no mentions or inference to them; which is odd if they were present. Edersheim speculates that they had remained behind in Capernaum. He wrote, **“There may in this instance, however, have been other reasons also for their silence. It has already been indicated that, during the summer of Christ’s first Galilean ministry, when Capernaum was His centre of action, the disciples had returned to their homes and usual avocations, while Jesus moved about chiefly alone and unattended. This explains the circumstance of a second call, even to His most intimate and closest followers.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 460). This would not have been entirely out of place. Capernaum was about 102 miles from Jerusalem on foot. Jewish law required that all males who lived within 15 miles of Jerusalem to attend Passover. Given the distance to Capernaum, they were not legally obligated to attend. It is probable that the disciples worked from time to time to finance the ministry. We also know that they were married and had obligations to feed and sustain their families. Intermittent breaks would seem reasonable and expected. **“But, if Jesus was alone and unattended at the Feast, the question arises, whence the report was derived of what He said in reply to the challenge of the Jews? Here the answer naturally suggests itself, that the Master Himself may, at some later period of His life – perhaps during His last stay in Jerusalem – have communicated to His disciples, or else to him who stood nearest to Him, the details of what had passed on the first occasion when the Jewish authorities had sought to extinguish His Messianic claims in His blood.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 461).

**2- feast of the Jews** – The word “feast of the Jews” is translated from the Greek word “ἑορτή” or “heortē”. It means a feast day or festival; i.e. **“a Jewish feast. Codex Sinaiticus reads ‘the feast’, which would probably be a reference either to Tabernacles (Bernard) or to Passover (Lagrange); but the evidence for the omission of the article is overwhelming. An early tradition in the Greek Church identifies this unnamed feast as Pentecost, a view accepted by some modern scholars. It would explain the references to Moses in the discourse (v 46-47); for in that process which connected originally agricultural feasts to events in Israel’s history, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) was identified with the celebration of Moses’ receiving the Law on Mount Sinai.”** (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 206). Unfortunately, Brown gives little clarity as to which feast is being referred to in this passage. Brown narrows it down to;

1. The Feast of Tabernacles
2. The Feast of Passover, and
3. The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)

Barclay seems to confer with Brown. He wrote, **“There were three Jewish feasts which were feasts of obligation--Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Every adult male Jew who lived within fifteen miles of Jerusalem was legally bound to attend them. If we take John 6:1-71 before John 5:1-47 we may think of this feast as Pentecost, because the events of John 6:1-71 happened when the Passover was near (John 6:4). The Passover was in mid-April, and Pentecost was seven weeks later. John always shows us Jesus attending the great feasts, for Jesus did not disregard the obligations of Jewish worship. To him it was not a duty but a delight to worship with his own people.”** (The Gospel of John, Volume 1, William Barclay, page 177). The dating of the three Feasts would have been as follows;

1. The Feast of Tabernacles – 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei – 2<sup>nd</sup> October 27CE
2. The Feast of Passover – 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan – 17<sup>th</sup> March 28CE
3. The Feast of Weeks – 6<sup>th</sup> of Sivan – 17<sup>th</sup> May 28CE

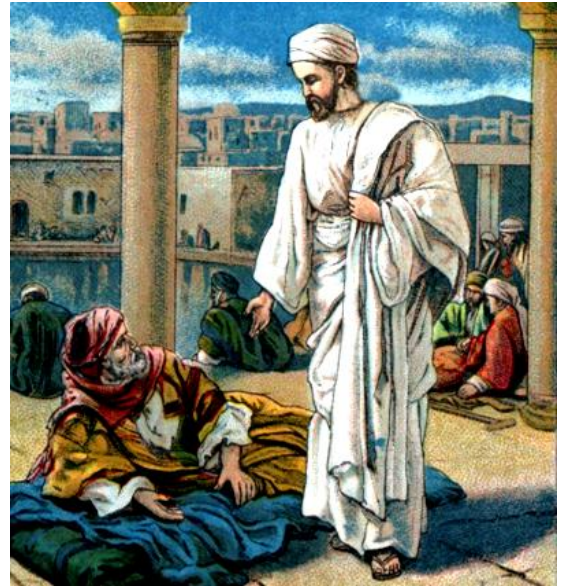


THE PASSOVER PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM

Edersheim admits that the unnamed feast lacks adequate information to be clearly identified. Even so, he places the feast in the autumn season, without any compelling evidence. He wrote, “The shorter days of early autumn had come, and the country stood in all its luxurious wealth of beauty and fruitfulness, as Jesus passed from Galilee to what, in the absence of any certain evidence, we must still be content to call ‘the Unknown Feast’ in Jerusalem.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 460). He then goes on to place the feast in either the month of August or September. He wrote, “Thus much, however, seems clear that it was either the ‘Feast of Wood-offering’ on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Abh (in August), when, amidst demonstrations of joy, willing givers brought from all parts of the country the wood required for the service of the Altar; or else the ‘Feast of Trumpets’ on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishri (about the middle of September), which marked the beginning of the New (civil) Year.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 460). Edersheim seems to be endorsing the following feasts as the feast associated with this chapter;

1. The Feast of Wood-Offering – 15<sup>th</sup> of Abh (Av) – 4<sup>th</sup> August 27CE
2. The Feast of Trumpets – 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishrei – 18<sup>th</sup> September 27CE

Based on the events prior to this unnamed feast, it would have been very difficult for it to be an autumn feast. We know that Jesus started His ministry at the Passover in 27CE. After the Passover, He preached and baptized throughout Judæa. Given the size of Judæa, Jesus would have spent significant time in the province. It is estimated that He was in Judæa for about 8 months. Even if one proposed a shorter Judæan ministry, we know that Jesus followed it with a significant Galilæan ministry. He preached and baptized in the towns and villages of Galilee. It is doubtful that both missions could have been accomplished in a 5 month period, making an autumn feast improbable.



The Sermon on the Mount was given in the spring, most probably during the blooming of the lilies, and the feast in John chapter 5 occurred after the Sermon on the Mount. This makes the likelihood of the feast being a spring feast very probable. Speaking of the feast of this chapter, Elder McConkie wrote, “We are with Jesus in Jerusalem. It is Passover time, the second such feast of his ministry...Our Gospel author, John in this case, does not name the feast, and many volumes have been written to sustain one view or another as to what feast it is.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 43). The footnote in the LDS authorized scriptures states that the *Koine* Greek manuscript (Byzantine) of the New Testament Gospels reads “the feast”, implying the Passover. It makes perfect sense that Jesus would faithfully attend the Passover Feast. The Passover was indeed the Feast of the Savior. It symbolized the very reason that Jesus came into mortality. Like the Passover Lamb that was sacrificed to save the children of Israel, Jesus would be sacrificed to save all of God’s children. Therefore, “during his ministry, on the anniversary of his birth, Jesus always went up to Jerusalem to observe the feast of the Passover. After all, he was the Passover Lamb. At the final Passover he would be offered up – sacrificed.” (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 260).

Brown makes a compelling argument against the Feast of Pentecost, referred to as the Feast of Weeks by the Jews. He wrote, “Jews were obligated to go to Jerusalem at the three major feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles...if he went back to Galilee through Samaria in May, identifying this feast as Pentecost would imply a very short stay in Galilee. It is an open question, or course, how much chronological sequence has been preserved in these narratives.” (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 206). Most LDS scholars believe that Jesus returned to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover at the close of the first year of His ministry. The Passover was the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, 28CE. The modern equivalent would be Monday, the 27<sup>th</sup> March 28CE. Consequently, Saturday, the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 28CE would be a Sabbath day, and the law required that if a day was sandwiched between a Sabbath and the day of Passover, it would become a High Day or a special extra Sabbath day. The Passover day also became a High Day or a special extra Sabbath. Additionally, the following Saturday, the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 28CE was a Sabbath, and the Saturday prior was the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 28CE. It is on one of these Sabbath days that the events of this chapter took place. In summary, the most likely dates for this chapter are;

Saturday, 18 March 28CE	Scheduled Sabbath Day
Saturday, 25 March 28CE	Scheduled Sabbath Day
Sunday, 26 March 28CE	High Day, or special extra Sabbath Day
Monday, 27 March 28CE	Passover Day, High Day, special extra Sabbath Day
Saturday, 1 April 28CE	Scheduled Sabbath Day



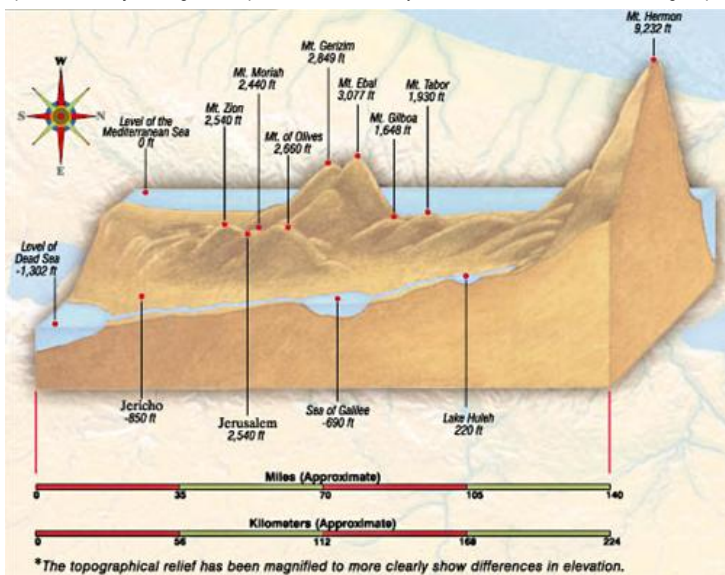
Personal preferences aside, the Passover seems to be the most likely choice for the feast mentioned by John. Bruce R. McConkie taught, “As to the present feast, suffice it to say that it fits as well into the chronology here as elsewhere, and it is logical to assume that Jesus – as yet not subject to the total harassment of scribes, Pharisees, and Sanhedrinists – would appear again in the Passover crowds to make the doctrinal declarations relative to him and his Father that we are about to hear.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 44).

The feast of the Passover would require that all Jews call to remembrance the salvation that God provided their ancestors so long ago. The Israelites were held in bondage to the Egyptians centuries before Jesus’ mortal life. The process of being freed from Egyptian rule required them to make a choice. They could believe in God’s command to sacrifice a lamb, and thereby be preserved and freed by its blood, or refuse to trust God and die in bondage. Ever since, the Jews gathered at Passover to sacrifice lambs and consider their covenants with God.

Like the ancient Israelites, those that had the faith and demonstrated it by sacrificing a lamb, believing that its blood had the power to save them, received the blessings of the sacrifice. Unfortunately, the Jews at the time of Jesus were devoted to the rites and rituals associated with the Passover, but

misunderstand the deep truths they contained. This is made manifest by the fact that the Lamb of God, even Jesus Christ, came to the Passover and yet even the wisest among them, failed to recognize Him. “He had been in the Temple at the Feast; He had necessarily been in contact – it could not be otherwise, when in the Temple – with the great ones of Israel. What a stifling atmosphere there of glitter and unreality! What had He in common with those who, ‘received glory one of another, and the glory which cometh from the One only God’ they sought not?” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 465).

- 3- **Jesus went up** – The phrase “went up” is translated from the Greek word “ἀναβαίνω” or “anabainō”. It means to ascend, to go up, to rise, to mount, to be borne up or to spring up. This is not just a figure of speech. Jesus literally ascended to Jerusalem. Leaving Capernaum, which lied on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus would have started at 690

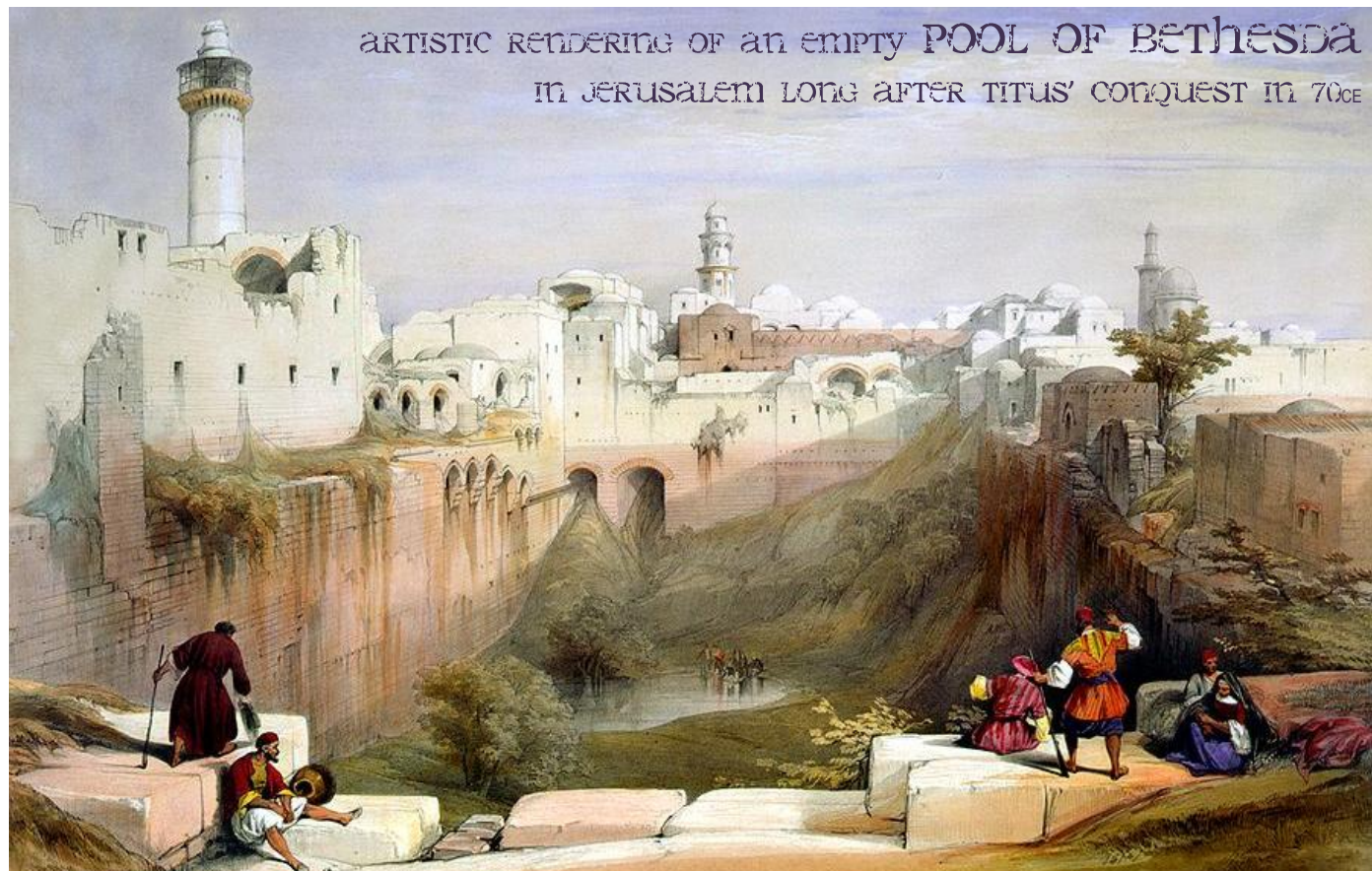


feet below sea level. Walking nearly 102 miles, Jesus would have ascended 3,230 feet to arrive at Jerusalem which lied at 2,540 feet above sea level. He “went up” so that He could properly teach the eternal truths of the Passover. **“Jesus was again in Jerusalem at the time of one of the Jewish festivals”** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 162), but not for ritual purposes but rather to teach the works of salvation. **“The journey of Christ to that Feast and its results are not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels, because that Judæan ministry which, if the illustration be lawful, was the historical thread of which St. John strung his record of what the Word spake, lay, in great measure, beyond their historical standpoint.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 460).

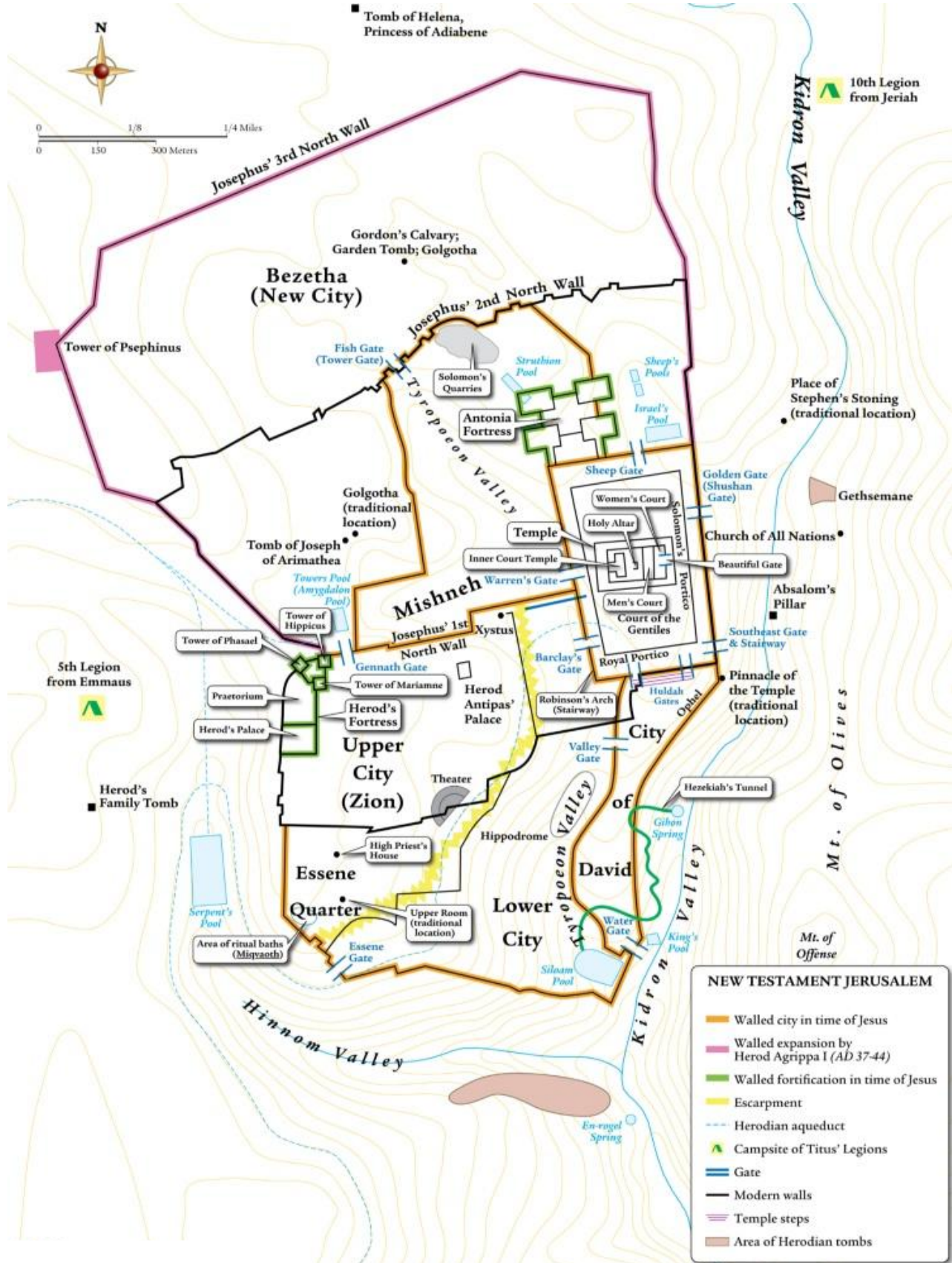


- 4- **Jerusalem** – The word “Jerusalem” is translated from the Greek word “Ἱεροσόλυμα” or “Hierosolyma”. Translated literally, the word means “set ye double peace”. The Greek word is a transliteration of the Hebrew name “ירושלם” or “Yerushalaim”. The form “Yerushalem” or “Yerushalayim” (Jerusalem) first appears in the Bible, in the Book of Joshua. According to a Midrash, the name is a combination of “Yhwh” or “Yi’eh”, meaning “God will see to it” and the word “Shalem” meaning peace. Prior to being called Jerusalem, it was simply referred to as “Shalem”, the name given by Abraham to the place where he began to sacrifice his son. There are some that believe that the “Jeru” in “Jerusalem” is derived from the Hebrew word “עיר” or “iy” meaning “city”. This would define the meaning of the word “Jerusalem” as the “City of Peace”.

The city of Jerusalem may date back to Shem, who we suppose to be the great high Priest Melchizedek. After the Flood, Melchizedek established the city of “Salem” or “Shalem”. It was there that Abraham visited to pay his tithes and offerings. We suppose that Salem was located on the future site of Jerusalem, being one and the same city. Shalim or Shalem was also the name of the god of dusk in the Canaanite religion, whose name is based on the same root S-L-M from which the Hebrew word for “peace” is derived. The name thus offered itself to etymologizations such as “The City of Peace”, “Abode of Peace”, “dwelling of peace”, or “founded in safety”. Alternately, some translate the name as “Vision of Peace”. The ending -ayim indicates the dual, thus leading to the suggestion that the name “Yerushalayim” refers to the fact that the city sits on two hills. However, the pronunciation of the last syllable as -ayim appears to be a late development, which had not yet appeared at the time of the Septuagint.



An ancient settlement of Jerusalem, founded as early as the Bronze Age on the hill above the Gihon Spring, was according to the Bible named Jebus (Judges 19:10). David is said to have conquered the Jebusites and their city in the Siege of Jebus, and transferred his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem which then became the capital of a united Kingdom of Israel. Since the city contained Mount Moriah, the sacred site that Abraham took his son Isaac to offer him as a sacrifice, the covenant people consider the city sacred. It was by its own right a temple. According to the Bible, King David reigned for 40 years and was succeeded by his son Solomon, who built the Holy Temple on Mount Moriah. Solomon's Temple (later known as the First Temple), went on to play a pivotal role in Jewish religion as the repository of the Ark of the Covenant. Jerusalem came to be a symbol for the abode of God. To the Jews, it was seen as the center of the universe. To them, there was no holier place on earth. The Temple was His house, and the ark was His judgment seat.





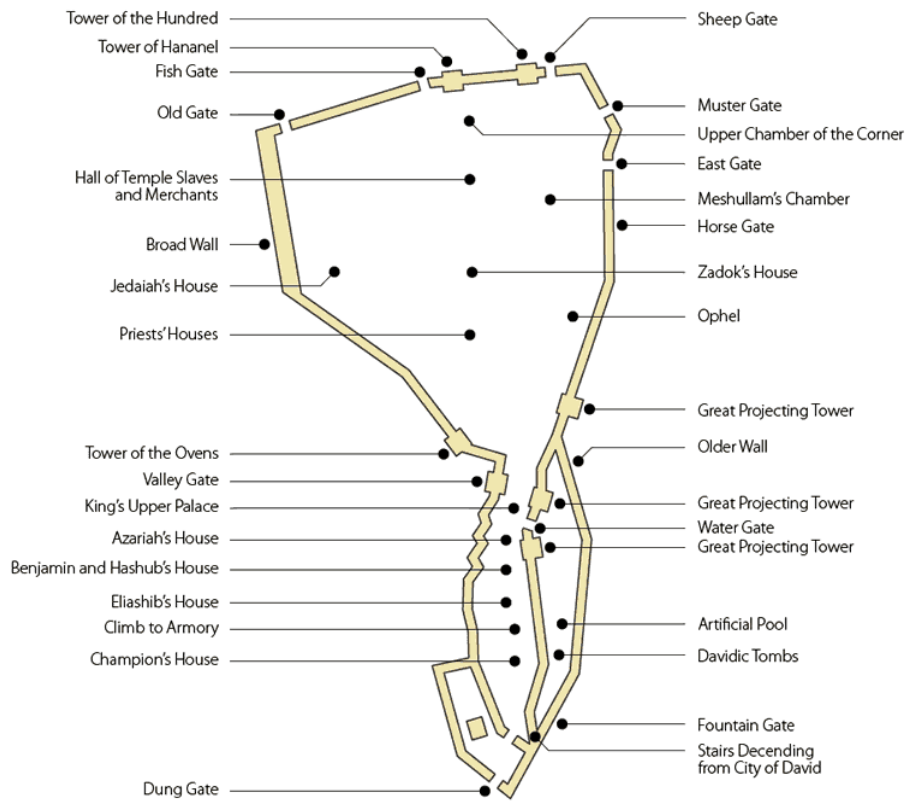
Jerusalem's population at the time of Jesus is estimated at 40,000 people. Being the largest city in the region, it was rapidly growing. By the time of its destruction in 70CE at the hands of Titus, the population is estimated to have been between 60,000 to 80,000 people. Scholars estimate that the city swelled to 250,000 people during a feast, such as Passover. Josephus, who is suspected to exaggerate for effect, records that the city would swell to over 2,700,000 people during the Passover feast. Sanders estimates the number between 300,000 and 500,000. (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE - 66CE, E. P. Sanders, page 126).

Jerusalem would have been filled with people when Jesus visited during Passover. The streets would have been crowded, and all rooms would have been rented. It was not uncommon for people to arrive in advance of a feast to secure lodging and provisions. **"When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem he was apparently alone; there is no mention of his disciples."** (The Gospel of John, Volume 1, William Barclay, page 177). Furthermore, we have no information regarding His lodging or accommodations. Surely, He had followers. They may not have been from His inner circle, but there were surely followers from Jerusalem who had experienced His goodness and wisdom from a previous ministry in the city. We must assume that Jesus adhered to the rites and requirements of the Passover.

5- **the sheep market** – The word "sheep" is translated from the Greek word "προβατικός" or "probatikos". It means pertaining to sheep or the sheep gate. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the phrase "by the sheep market" as "at the sheep gate". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 2, page 168). The translation of this passage is a great challenge. **"The manuscript evidence is quite confused; the best manuscripts have these words, but with two possible interpretations: (a) In Jerusalem, by the Sheep \_\_\_\_\_, there is a pool with the Hebrew name, etc. (b) In Jerusalem, by the Sheep Pool, there is a \_\_\_\_\_ with the Hebrew name, etc.** Each reading seems to demand that we supply a word that has been left understood. We have opted for the second, supplying the general noun 'place'. Those who opt for the first interpretation customarily supply 'gate', for we know of a sheep gate near the temple. It would do less violence to the Greek in either interpretation to supply 'pool', thus indicating two pools: the Sheep Pool and the Pool of Bethesda. In any case, John is speaking of the area northeast of the Temple where the sheep were brought into Jerusalem for sacrifice; and the name of this region and/or its pool was Bethesda." (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 206).

To best understand the gates of Jerusalem, one must understand the history of the city. Jerusalem was a walled city. After the Jews returned from their Babylonian captivity, they found the city of Jerusalem in utter ruins. They wanted to rebuild; however, they faced serious opposition from the Samaritans, Amorites, Philistines, and other local tribes who didn't want the Jews to reestablish themselves. At that time (approximately 445BCE), King Artaxerxes of Persia, had a Jewish cup-bearer named Nehemiah. Learning that the remnant of the Jews were in distress and that Jerusalem was struggling to be rebuilt, Nehemiah asked the king for permission to return and rebuild the city. Artaxerxes sent him to Judah as governor of the province with a mission to rebuild. He carried with him official letters from the King explaining his support for the venture, and provisions for timber from the king's forest. Once there, Nehemiah defied the opposition of Judah's enemies on all sides—Samaritans, Ammonites, Arabs and Philistines—and rebuilt the walls within 52 days, from the Sheep Gate in the North, the Hananel Tower at the North West corner, the Fish Gate in the West, the Furnaces Tower at the Temple Mount's South West corner, the Dung Gate in the South, the East Gate and the gate beneath the Golden Gate in the East.

### Jerusalem's Wall in Nehemiah's Day



The gates of Jerusalem, as built by Nehemiah, were the same gates that existed at the time of Jesus. Granted, Jerusalem had expanded and added additional walls, but the framework that Nehemiah established was still there over 450 years later. The sheep gate was part of Nehemiah's work. Below is a list of the gates established by Nehemiah;

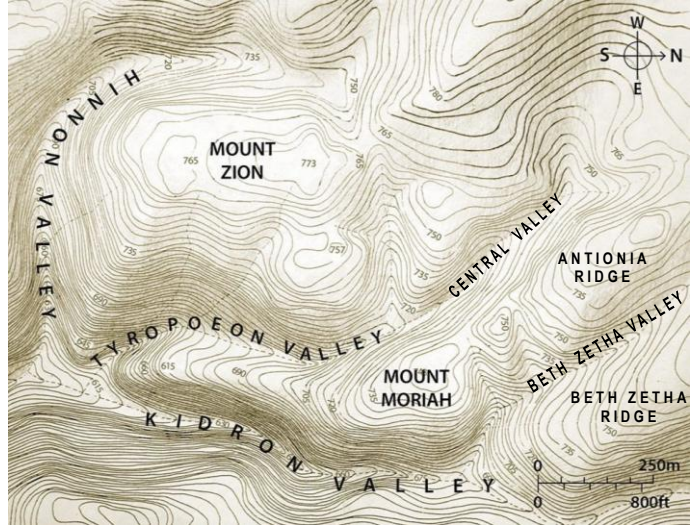
Northern Gates	Eastern Gates	Southern Gates	Western Gates
The Old or Ephraim's Gate	The Muster or Inspection Gate	The Dung or Refuse Gate	The Valley Gate
The Fish Gate	The East Gate		
The Sheep Gate	The Horse Gate		
	The Water Gate		
	The Fountain Gate		



The sheep gate  
Today

Many of the gates of Jerusalem were named after their intended use. This was the case with the Sheep Gate. The Sheep Gate was just north of Temple Mount. It was the most logical place for the ritually clean sacrifices to be brought into the temple for sacrifice. It is suspected that the area outside the gate was used to wash, prepare and qualify sheep prior to being brought to the temple. This location is often referred to as the sheep market. **“At the sheep market there was a pool where the sheep were washed for the sacrifices.”** (The Days of the Living Christ, Volume 1, W. Cleon Skousen, page 204). Even so, there are those that believe that the sheep market was actually inside the city and was accessed through the sheep gate. Elder Talmage wrote, **“There was a pool of water, called Bethesda, near the sheep market in the city.”** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 162). In either case, the area north of the Sheep Gate, by the Pool of Bethesda, was reserved for the washing of sheep. **“Some hold that the place of the pool (northeast of the temple) was where the sheep that would be used for temple sacrifices were kept. Hence, the tendency to refer to it as the ‘sheep gate’ or ‘pool of the sheep’.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 80).

It is important to note the symbolic connection between the washing of the sheep and the miracle that Jesus performed at the Pool of Bethesda. The sheep were washed in preparation for the sacrifice. The sacrifice represented the atonement for sin. Symbolically, the sacrifice took upon itself the sins of the offeror. If the lamb was acceptable before the Lord; i.e. ritually clean, the Jews believed that it had the power to bring forgiveness. The same water used to wash the sheep had alleged healing properties. The Savior requires us to be baptized with water for the remission of our sins, which is made possible through His sacrifice. He is the Lamb of God.

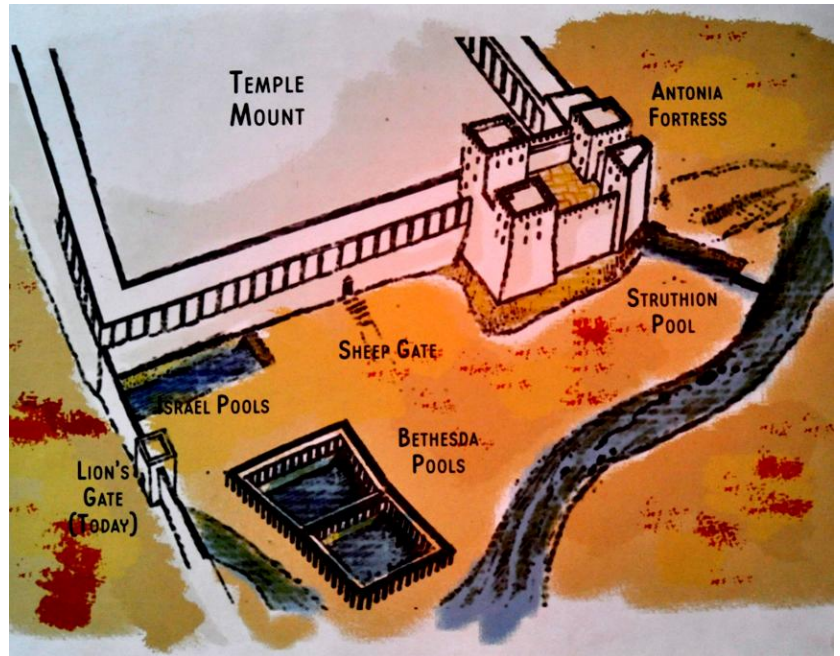


The Sheep Gate and the area referred to as the Sheep Market, which contained the Pool of Bethesda, were located geographically between the Antonia Ridge and the Beth Zetha Ridge in the Beth Zetha Valley. The valley would have naturally funneled the rain water to the Pool of Bethesda and the Sheep Market.



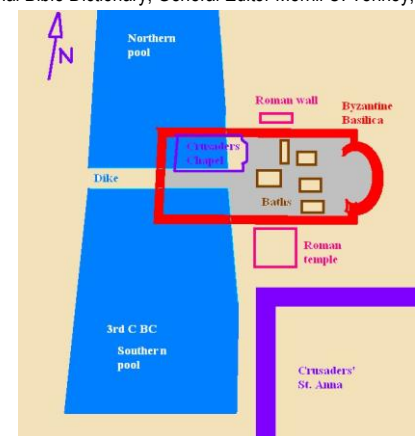
6- **pool** – The word “pool” is translated from the Greek word “κολυμβήθρα” or “kolymbēthra”. It means a place of diving, a swimming hole, a reservoir or pool for bathing. Barclay clarifies, “The word for pool kolumbethron (Greek #2861), which comes from the verb kolumban (Greek #2860), to dive. The pool was deep enough to swim in.” (The Gospel of John, Volume 1, William Barclay, page 178). Skousen describes the pool as “a mineral spring with curative properties called the Pool of Bethesda. A rather large building with five porches had been constructed nearby and underground pressure made the water bubble up at certain intervals.” (The Days of the Living Christ, Volume 1, W. Cleon Skousen, page 204).

Most of us have mental images of Biblical scenes. Some have been derived from artistic renditions of Bible stories which we have seen from our childhood. Others are derived from our imaginations and the cultures that we are raised in. In the case of the Pool of Bethesda, I suppose many of us picture a fountain like enclosure, maybe 20 to 30 feet square, and surely no more than 4 feet deep. Unfortunately, this is not the reality of the pool. From the Bible account, we only understand that “there was in Jerusalem, near the Sheep-gate, a pool, which was believed to possess remarkable healing properties.” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 236). There are no recorded dimensions or indication of size.



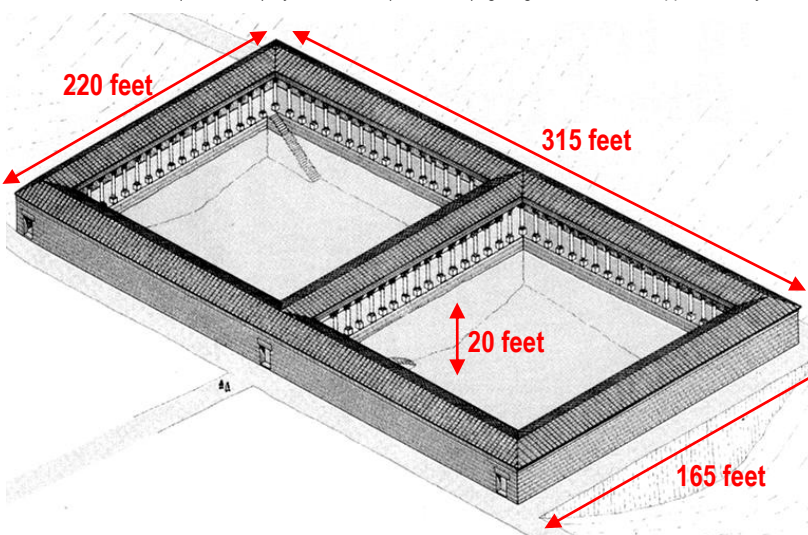
For centuries, the details of the Pool of Bethesda were a mystery. We have the Biblical account, but not archeological evidence that the pool existed and what it looked like. Then, “in 1888, while the church of St. Anne in North East Jerusalem was being repaired, a reservoir was discovered. On the wall is a faded fresco that depicts an angel troubling the water. It was thought therefore, that this best fits the description in the New Testament. The Reservoir is cut from the rock and is rain-filled. It is about 55 feet in length and 12 feet in width. It is approached by a flight of steps both steep and winding.” (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney,

Page 110). This was a portion, and only a portion, of the Pool of Bethesda. As archeologist studied the site, they found the Pool of Bethesda to actually be two pools separated by a dike. Brown records, “The pool was trapezoidal in form, 165-200 feet wide by 315 feet, divided by a central partition. There were colonnades on the four sides and on the partition – thus, John’s ‘five porticoes’. Stairways in the corners permitted descent into the pools. In this hilly area the water may have come from underground drainage; some of it, perhaps, from intermittent springs.” (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 207). Brown is referring to the water that runs off the Antonia Ridge and the Beth Zetha Ridge into the Beth Zetha Valley.



Gaskill provides similar dimensions for the pool, but reports that the trapezoidal shape is actually larger on the southern end. He wrote, “The pool described in John [Chapter 5] has been discovered and excavated in Jerusalem on the property of the [Roman Catholic] White Fathers near St. Anne’s Church... The pool was trapezoidal

in form, 165-220 feet wide by 315 feet long, divided by a central partition. There were colonnades on the four sides and on the partition – thus, John’s ‘five porticoes.’ Stairways in the corners permitted descent into the pools. In this hilly area the water may have come from underground drainage; some of it, perhaps, from the intermittent springs.” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 80). All of this translates into a footprint for the Pool of Bethesda of 315 feet (96 meters) by 187.25 feet (57 meters), giving a total area of approximately 59,063 feet<sup>2</sup> (18,002 meters<sup>2</sup>) or 1.36 acres. It is fairly comparable to a modern football field which measures 360 feet long by 160 feet wide with an area of 57,600 feet<sup>2</sup>. The Pool of Bethesda was gigantic by even modern standards. Just for comparison, the Temple mount platform is also trapezoidal in shape, measuring 1,601 feet (488 meters) along the west, 1,542 feet (470 meters) along the east, 1,034 feet (315 meters) along the north and 919 feet (280 meters) along the south, giving a total area of approximately 492,126 feet<sup>2</sup> (150,000 meters<sup>2</sup>) or 37 acres. Despite its enormous size the Pool of Bethesda was still dwarfed by Temple Mount. The temple Mount was 8.3 times larger than the pool.



A visit to the Pool of Bethesda today may be disappointing. Much of it has not been unearthed, and what has is truly in ruin. Edersheim writes, “At present it is wholly filled with rubbish, but in the time of the Crusaders it seems to have borne the name of the Sheep-pond, and, it was thought, traces of the five porches could still be detected.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 462). Since that time, it has become very difficult to discern where the porches may have been and what the pool actually looked like.

The depth of the pool is an even greater challenge. One source estimates the pool at 80 feet deep, but the current ruins only measure 42.6 feet deep. Such a depth would assume that the entire depth of the



ruins was filled with water. It is far more probable that the current ruins were only half full of water, placing the water level at an astounding 20 feet. Masterman states that the pool, when full, was about 22 feet deep. (The Pool of Bethesda, The Biblical World, Volume 25, Number 2, E.W. G. Masterman, February 1905). Based on these dimensions we can estimate the volume of the pool as follows:

## SIZE OF THE POOL OF BETHESDA

Source	Length	Width <sup>1</sup>	Width <sup>2</sup>	Depth	Cubic Feet	Gallons
Alonzo Gaskill	315 feet	165 feet	220 feet	not available	not available	not available
Raymond Brown	315 feet	165 feet	200 feet	not available	not available	not available
Wikipedia	not available	not available	not available	13 meters, 42.6 feet	not available	not available
E.W.G Masterman	not available	not available	not available	22 feet	not available	not available
<b>Estimated Size</b>	<b>315 feet</b>	<b>165 feet</b>	<b>210 feet</b>	<b>20 feet</b>	<b>1,181,250 feet<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>8,836,341 gallons</b>

If you were a swimming-pool builder and a customer asked you to build a pool that would hold a million-gallons, then they had better have a big yard! You would need to build a pool about 267 feet long (almost as long as a football field), 50 feet wide, and 10 feet deep. It would appear that the Pool of Bethesda was nearly 9 times larger. It acted as a tremendous reservoir for the Temple and the city.

Symbolically, the water of the pool represents purification, renewal, and rebirth. **“Among other things, the pool can serve as a type for those things that the Jews of Jesus’s day perceived as having the power to heal them: those rites and ordinances associated with the law.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 81). The Jews of Jesus’ time were apostate, and lost the understanding of saving ordinances. So it is fitting that they looked to a superstitious tradition about the pool of Bethesda for healing. In reality, the water never heals; however, the ordinance of baptism through proper priesthood authority does. It is easy to see the symbolic message carried with the Pool of Bethesda.

- 7- **which is called** – The word “called” is translated from the Greek word “ἐπιλέγω” or “epilegō”. It means to say besides, to surname, to choose for, or to choose for one’s self.
- 8- **Hebrew** – The word “Hebrew” is translated from the Greek word “Ἑβραϊστὴν” or “Hebraisti”. It means “to be Hebrew” or “of the Jewish (Chaldee) language”. It also means to be “in the Hebrew tongue”. **“The Johannine writings frequently mention the Semite names of places. ‘Hebrew’ is used loosely, often for names that are Aramaic.”** (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 206).
- 9- **tongue** – The word tongue is an implied word in the translation, most probably added by scribes. The word is used synonymously with the word “language”.

10- **Bethesda** – The word “Bethesda” is translated from the Greek word “Βηθεσδα” or “Bēthesda”. Translated literally, it means “house of mercy” or “flowing water”. It is the name of a pool near the sheep-gate at Jerusalem, whose waters had curative powers. The Greek word is a transliteration of two Aramaic words joined together; “בֵּית” or “Bayith” meaning “house” and “טוֹב” or “cheved” meaning “goodness, kindness, or faithfulness”. Edersheim writes, **“Be this as it may, it certainly bore in the ‘Hebrew’ – or rather Aramaean – ‘tongue’, the name Bethesda. No doubt this name was designative, though the common explanation – Beth Chisa ‘House of Mercy’, Beth Istebha ‘House of the Olive’ – seem all unsatisfactory. More probably attaches to the rendering Beth Asutha ‘House of Healing’. But as this derivation offers linguistic difficulties, we would suggest that the second part of the name (Beth-esda) was really a Greek word Aramaised. Here two different derivations suggest themselves. The root word of Esda might either express to ‘become well’ – Beth ἰασθαί – or something akin to the Rabbinic Zit. In that case, the designation would agree with an ancient reading of the name, Bethzatha. Or else, the name Bethesda might combine, according to a not uncommon Rabbinic practice, the Hebrew Beth with some Aramaised form derived from the Greek word ζῆω, ‘to boil’ or ‘bubble up’; in which case it would mean ‘the House of Bubbling-up’ viz. water. Any of the three derivations just suggested would not only give an apt designation for the pool, but explain why St. John, contrary to his usual practice, does not give a Greek equivalent for a Hebrew term.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 462-463).



Until the 19th century, there was no evidence outside of John’s Gospel for the existence of this pool; therefore, scholars argued that the gospel was written sometimes after the death of Jesus, probably by someone without first-hand knowledge of the city of Jerusalem, and that the “pool” had only a metaphorical, rather than historical, significance.

Outside of the Biblical record, Josephus makes reference to the Pool of Bethesda, though he referred to it as Bezetha. Unfortunately, Josephus only makes reference and neglects to record any details regarding the Pool. The translator of Josephus’ works makes the following footnote regarding his mention of Bezetha. **“I take this Bezetha to be that small hill adjoining to the north side of the temple, whereon was the hospital with five porticoes or cloisters, and beneath which was the sheep pool of Bethesda; into which an angel or messenger, at a certain season, descended, and where he or they who were the “first put into the pool” were cured, John 5:1 etc. This situation of Bezetha, in Josephus, on the north side of the temple, and not far off the tower Antonia, exactly agrees to the place of the same pool at this day; only the remaining cloisters are but three. See Maundrel, p. 106. The entire buildings seem to have been called the New City, this part, where was the hospital, peculiarly Bezetha or Bethesda. See ch. 19. sect. 4.”** (Wars of the Jews, Book or the History of the Destruction of Jerusalem, Book 2, Flavius Josephus, Chapter 22, Page 140, footnote 23).

Ancient hospitals were not anything resembling what we have today. They were more of a gathering place of the sick and infirmed. They were gathered no so much for



## RUINS OF BETHESDA



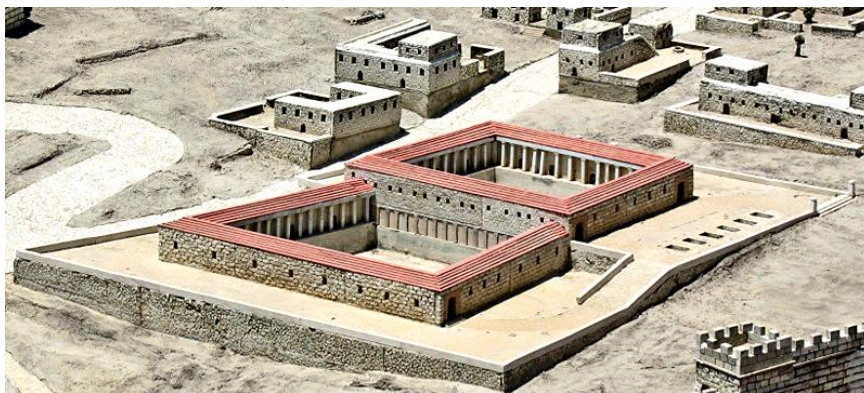
the healing of the sick, but rather to isolate them from the rest of the population. There are many scholars that support Josephus' idea that the Pool of Bethesda was Jerusalem's Hospital. Those who gathered in an ancient hospital had little hope of recovery. Many clung to superstitions and false traditions for hope of healing. Of course, such things don't yield a cure. **"The location of this miracle, Bethesda, is appropriately named, as Jesus quite literally turned that 'house of misery' into a 'house of mercy' and grace. Omnipotence had overcome impotence. Salvation had come to the Jewish people – it had come to the world."** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 84).

There is little doubt as to why the sick and infirmed would choose the Pool of Bethesda for their hospital. The pool was said to of had great medicinal property, even unto healing. It would appear that the pools were connected to an underground mineral spring, which would naturally enrich the water with specific minerals common to the underground aquifer. Such springs were known to bubble, even violently, from time to time as bicarbonates and other similar compounds made their way to the surface. Even today, mineral springs are considered to have medicinal properties; however, they are considered only to help skin conditions, joint and muscle problems, arthritis, and circulation problems. Mineral springs are not considered a cure all for diseases and infirmities. Ogden and Berrett write, **"Certain medicinal or curative properties were ascribed to the pool. A superstitious tradition had an angel coming down and 'troubling' the waters – probably the result of a siphon-karst spring flowing into the pool, causing bubbling at the surface."** (Discovering the World of the Bible, LaMar C. Berrett and D. Kelly Ogden, page 29-30).



A siphon karst spring is a spring that is part of a karst system. A karst is a landscape underlain with limestone, which was typical for the area of Jerusalem. The area was primarily made up of a unique limestone which has come to be known as Jerusalem limestone. A Karst is where the underlain limestone has eroded by dissolution creating underground caverns, caves, ridges, towers, sinkholes, and other characteristic landforms. A karst system generally collects drainage from a much larger area. Often streams and rivers disappear underground feeding the karst system. The caves and caverns underground are often so large that divers will find an entry point and explore a karst in scuba gear. Generally speaking, the karst will fill creating underground pressure. At some point the karst will discharge water through a spring. Because of the large supply of water generally associated with a karst, the spring is commonly one of large discharge. Along the way the water become highly enriched with underground minerals. This would explain why millions of gallons of water got into a pool in Jerusalem. It would also explain why the people considered the waters to have healing properties.

## MODEL OF THE POOL OF BETHESDA LOCATED AT THE HOLY LAND HOTEL IN JERUSALEM



The problem with karst springs is that they change over time. The water that feeds them can erode the underground caverns and eventually cause them to collapse or change. Additionally, they are dependent upon a supply of surface water to feed them. As rivers and stream dry up, so do the karst springs. Today, there is no active karst spring in the area where the Pool of Bethesda was located. Aside from some drainage from rain, the ruins are dry and lack anything resembling a pool.

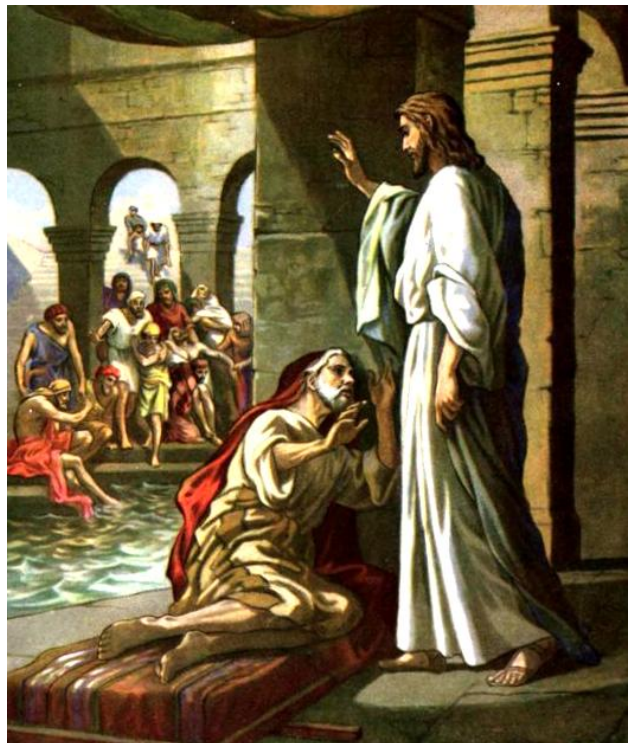
Even so, it would appear that the Jews, at the time of Jesus, were smart enough to recognize the spring and build a very large and elaborate structure to contain the precious water it provided. It must have been seen as a miracle in and of itself. The Temple needed vast supplies of water, and the Lord miraculously provided them out of the earth just 500 feet from the Temple entrance.

# RUINS OF BETHESDA



The Dead Sea Scrolls give implication to the fact that there may have been a smaller pool, associated with the very large reservoir of Bethesda, where people could wade into the waters. The translated scroll reads, **“Next to them, at Bet-Eshdatain (Bethesda), in the reservoir where you enter the small pool: vessels of offering of aloes, offering of ... (?)”** (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 685). Though this portion of the scroll is fragmented, it leaves the reader with the impression that there was a small pool. This makes sense when considering the story in the Bible. It is hard to believe that the sick and infirmed would wade into waters that were 22 feet deep. We also get the impression that there were lots of people gathered in a relatively confined space. Matthews records, **“The Pool of Bethesda is to be found just inside the Eastern wall, between St. Stephen’s Gate and the Northern, wall of the temple enclosure. It was here that many sick ones bathed in Christ’s time, believing its waters had healing properties. It was here Christ healed the impotent man.”** (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 384).

Josephus refers to the pool by the name “Bezetha”, which is actually the name of the northern district of Jerusalem, or the New City. The northern city, and consequently the Pool of Bethesda, lied adjacent to the Mount of Olives. The area is suspected to have been one covered by olive groves. Speaking of Jesus’ travels that day, Barclay writes, **“He found his way to a famous pool. Its name was either Bethesda, which means House of Mercy, or more likely, Bethzatha which means House of the Olive. The better manuscripts all have the second name, and we know from Josephus that there was a quarter of Jerusalem actually known as Bethzatha.”** (The Gospel of John, Volume 1, William Barclay, page 178). This brings interesting symbolism to the Pool and the story. If indeed it was called the Pool of the House of Olive, there may be reference to Jesus’ atonement. The olive produced an oil that was used as a medicine for cleaning and healing wounds. It could only be extracted under extreme pressure, upwards of 2,000 pounds per square inch. It is only through this pressure that the healing oils are derived. Jesus retired to the Mount of Olives where he took upon Himself the extreme pressures of the sins of the world. It caused His blood to seep from every pore. Through His blood we are healed.



# RUINS OF BETHESDA

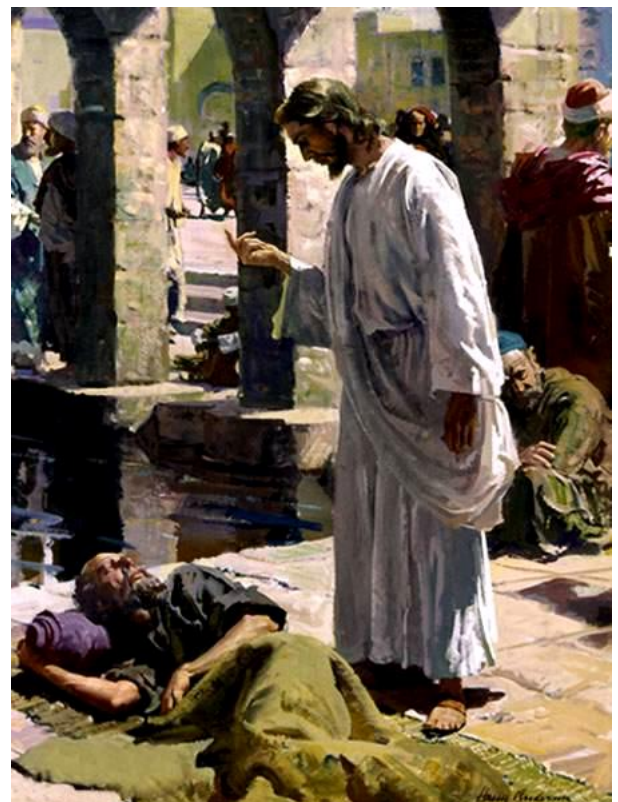
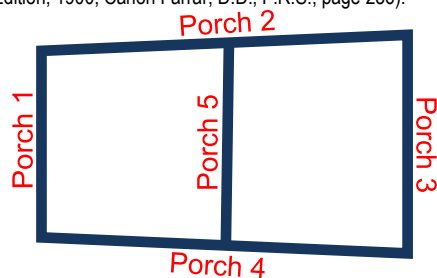


- 11- **five porches** – The word “five” is translated from the Greek word “πέντε” or “pente”. It means the number five. The words “porches” is translated from the Greek word “στοά” or “stoa”. It means a portico, or a covered colonnade where people can stand or walk protected from the weather and the heat of the sun.

Until 1888, modern man had lost track of the location of the Pool of Bethesda. Upon its discovery, it was evident that the Pool was not lost for a good portion of the Dark Ages. **“A very large fifth-century Church of the Paralytic was built over the pool, but it was destroyed by the Persians in 614. The Crusaders built a chapel over the Byzantine ruins, and the apse and entrance are still visible above the remains of the excavated pool.”** (Discovering the World of the Bible, LaMar C. Berrett and D. Kelly Ogden, page 29-30). Even so, by the 1800’s Biblical Scholars were unaware of the Pool’s location and even its appearance. This is very evident when considering the Bible’s description of the five porches. One of the world’s leading Biblical Scholar’s in the late 1800’s was Canon Farrar. In spite of his great insight into the Bible, he described the Pool of Bethesda as a pentagon, assuming that a five sided porch could only form such a shape. He wrote, **“It had been called in Hebrew ‘Bethesda’ or the House of Mercy, and under the porticoes which adorned the pentagonal masonry in which it was enclosed lay a multitude of sufferers.”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 236).



Since the discovery of the Pool of Bethesda, archeologist has found that the five porches are derived from a dike or divider placed in the pool creating a northern and southern pool. The dike appears to allow for an upper and lower pool. To accommodate the sloping terrain, and still provide for an enormous reservoir of water, the builders ingeniously built a dam into the structure.





that John wrote it as an allegory. It has the vivid stamp of factual truth. But we do well to remember that any Bible story has in it far more than fact. There are always deeper truths below the surface and even the simple stories are meant to leave us face to face with eternal things.” (The Gospel of John, Volume 1, William Barclay, pages 180-181).

It is more than ironic that the sick and infirmed laid before the healing waters for such long lengths of time without being healed. If the porches of the pool represented the law, it shows that the law in and of itself was not capable of saving the people. It also shows the spiritual condition of the people as a whole. They were apostate, and consequently lacked the ability to bring down the powers of heaven. **“One Latter-day Saint commentator suggested that the pool and its inhabitants likely represent the spiritually impoverished condition of the religion of the day (in part because of how the law was being interpreted and applied).”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 81).

**12 - In these** – The word “these” is translated from the Greek word “ταύταις” or “tautais”. It means those or these. This refers to those that lay sick under the porches of the Pool of Bethesda.

**13 - lay** – The word “lay” is translated from the Greek word “κατάκειμαι” or “katakeimai”. It means to have lain down, or to lie prostrate. It can also mean to be sick. **“On a certain Sabbath day, Jesus visited the pool and saw many afflicted folk thus waiting.”** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 162). Acting as a hospital, the Pool of Bethesda attracted the diseased and infirmed who lay in wait to be healed.

**14 - a great multitude** – The word “multitude” is translated from the Greek word “πλήθος” or “plēthos”. It means a great number of men or things. The Codex Sinaiticus removed the term “great” from the translation and simple records “a multitude”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 3, page 168).

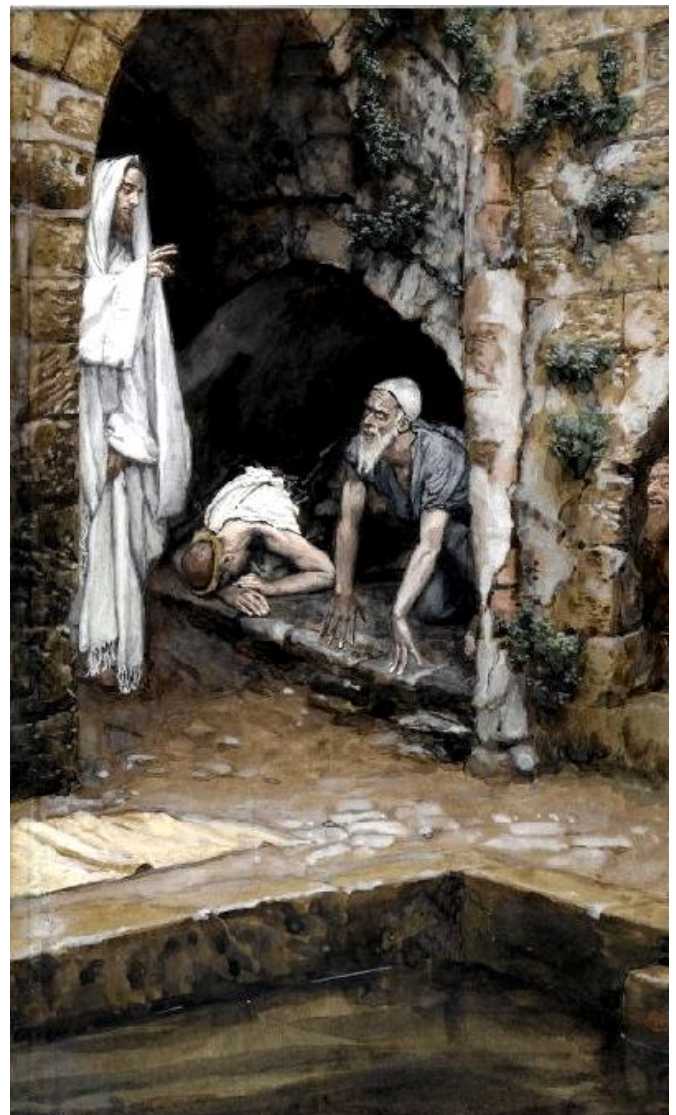
Our understanding of Jewish term would suggest that a multitude is 2,000 or more people. Surely this gives perspective to the term ‘great multitude’. Edersheim writes, **“In the five porches surrounding this pool lay ‘a great multitude of the impotent,’ in anxious hope of a miraculous cure. We can picture to ourselves the scene. The popular superstitious, which gave rise to what we would regard as a peculiarly painful exhibition of human misery of body and soul, is strictly true to the times and the people.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 463).

**15 - impotent** – The word “impotent” is translated from the Greek word “ἀσθενέω” or “astheneō”. It means to be weak, feeble, without strength, or powerless. It can also be used of the weak; referring to the poor or needy. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “impotent” as “sick”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 3, page 168). Brown translates the term as **“atrophied limbs.”** (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 207). He then adds, **“The fact that the people are laying outside in the porticoes indicates that this is not a winter scene.”** (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 207). Though this is an interesting thought, the sick and infirmed often had nowhere to go regardless of the season or the weather.

**16 - folk** – The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “folk” as “persons”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 3, page 168).

Jesus was a perfectly humble man. Though He was the Son of God, and by inherent nature was Godlike in His attributes, He treated people in such a way that they never felt belittled or insignificant. As He went about the work of salvation, He didn’t limit His work to

There is a theory that the five porches have significant symbolic meaning. A porch, in and of itself, symbolizes protection, security, and refuge. The number five symbolizes perfection, wholeness, strength and severity. (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 116). Consequently, people have theorized that the five porches symbolize the Torah or the first five books of Moses, which are considered the law. Barclay records, **“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. It may well be that it is now possible to read all these meanings into this story; but it is highly unlikely**





Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 462). We would suspect that Jesus touched other lives while in the area of the Pool of Bethesda. It was in His character and nature to teach, bless and heal.

the worthy or the righteous, rather He sought out those who the world might have classified as the undeserving. “Why, indeed, did He go into those five porches, since He had neither disease to cure, nor cry for help had come to Him from those who looked for relief to far other means? Not, surely, from curiosity. But as one longs to escape from the stifling atmosphere of a scene of worldly pomp, with its glitter and unreality, into the clearness of the evening-air, so our Lord may have long pass from the glitter and unreality of those who held rule in the Temple, or who occupied the seat of Moses in their Academies, to what was the atmosphere of His Life on earth, His real work, among that suffering, ignorant multitude, which, in its sorrow, raised a piteous, longing cry for help where it had been misdirected to seek it.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 464). Now came the Master Healer. In simple unannounced glory, He came to the physically and spiritually sick to provide what no other man could.

It is difficult to say who the Savior taught and blessed while in the area of the Sheep gate. The term “great multitude of folk” surely applied to this area, most especially during the time of Passover. We do not know the number of people who would congregate there. We know that the Pool of Bethesda “opened from the busy northern suburb of markets, bazaars, and workshops, east-wards upon the road which led over the Mount of Olives and Bethany to Jericho. In that case, most probably would attach to the identification of the Pool Bethesda with a pool somewhat north of the so-called Birket Israil.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the

17 - **blind** – The word “blind” is translated from the Greek word “τυφλός” or “typhlos”. It means physically or mentally blind.

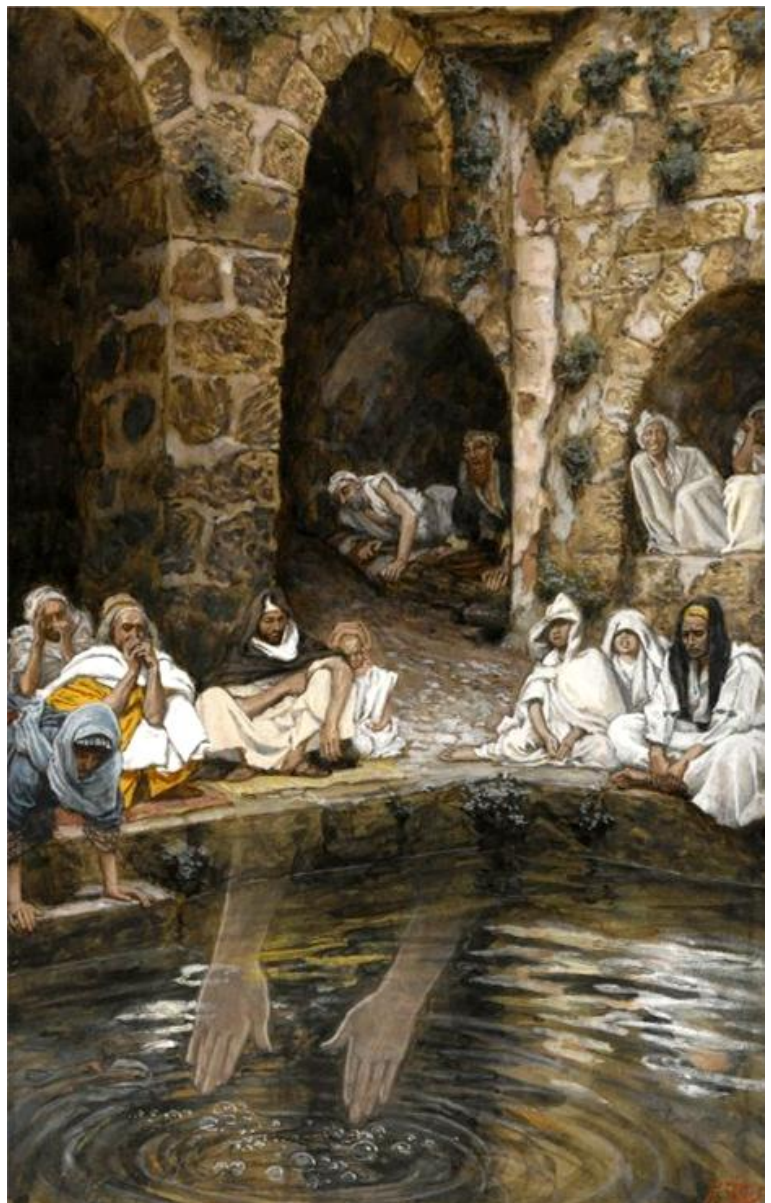
18 - **halt** – The word “halt” is translated from the Greek word “χωλός” or “chōlos”. It means lame; specifically deprived of a foot or maimed. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “halt” as “lame”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 3, page 168).

19 - **withered** – The word “withered” is translated from the Greek word “ξηρός” or “xēros”. It means dry, shrunk, waster or withered.

20 - **waiting** – The word “waiting” is translated from the Greek word “ἐκδέχομαι” or “ekdechomai”. It means to receive, accept, to look for, expect or await. The Codex Sinaiticus eliminates all of verse 4 and the end of verse 3 for John chapter 5 since it is not found in the ancient manuscript. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 3-4, page 168). Hence, this portion of John reads, “5:3 - In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. 5:4 - 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. 5:5 - And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.” Gaskill writes, “In the most ancient manuscripts, verse 4 is missing from the text. The verse is believed by many scholars to be an interpolation added later, either to explain the phrase ‘when the water is troubled’ (verse 7) or because that was a popular tradition about the pool that John did not explain to his readers and thus scribes felt the need to add it. The legitimacy of the last clause of verse 3, ‘waiting for the moving of the water,’ is also frequently called into question. The occasional ‘troubling’ of the waters (verse 7), which some attributed to an invisible angel, is believed to have been caused by bubbling, which took place because of the underground springs that fed the pool.” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, pages 80-81).

Regardless of the fact that this passage may have been added by scribes, it contains important information that helps us understand the beliefs harbored by the Jews of the time. “The popular idea was, that an Angel descended into the water, causing it to bubble up, and that only he who first stepped into the pool would be cured. As thus only one person could obtain benefit, we may imagine the lamentations of the ‘many’ who would, perhaps, day by day, be disappointed in their hopes.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 463).

People throughout time have created explanations, sometimes outlandish ones, for things that they didn’t understand. The ancient Chinese didn’t understand mercury, so they decided that it was a magical elixir for extending life. Consequently, men of great power and wealth consumed it to their death. Similarly, the people of Jerusalem observed the periodic bubbling of the Pool of Bethesda and developed their own explanation for the occurrence.



The people held to this belief and therefore they waited patiently, often for years, for the opportunity to be healed. Such waiting is a sign of great faith, though in this case misplaced. The people at the pool were eager for something to believe in. They wanted salvation from their sickness and diseases. Many believe that the situation at the Pool of Bethesda was a foreshadowing of the spirits that waited for centuries in spirit prison for salvation to come and free them from physical and spiritual death. J. Reuben Clark said, **“Forecasting his visit to the imprisoned spirits and his preaching to them, Jesus, attending his second Passover during his active ministry and speaking to the multitude assembled at the pool of Bethesda”** (Behold the Lamb of God, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., page 80) brought physical salvation to the afflicted. With His death and resurrection, He would do the same for the deceased souls in spirit prison.

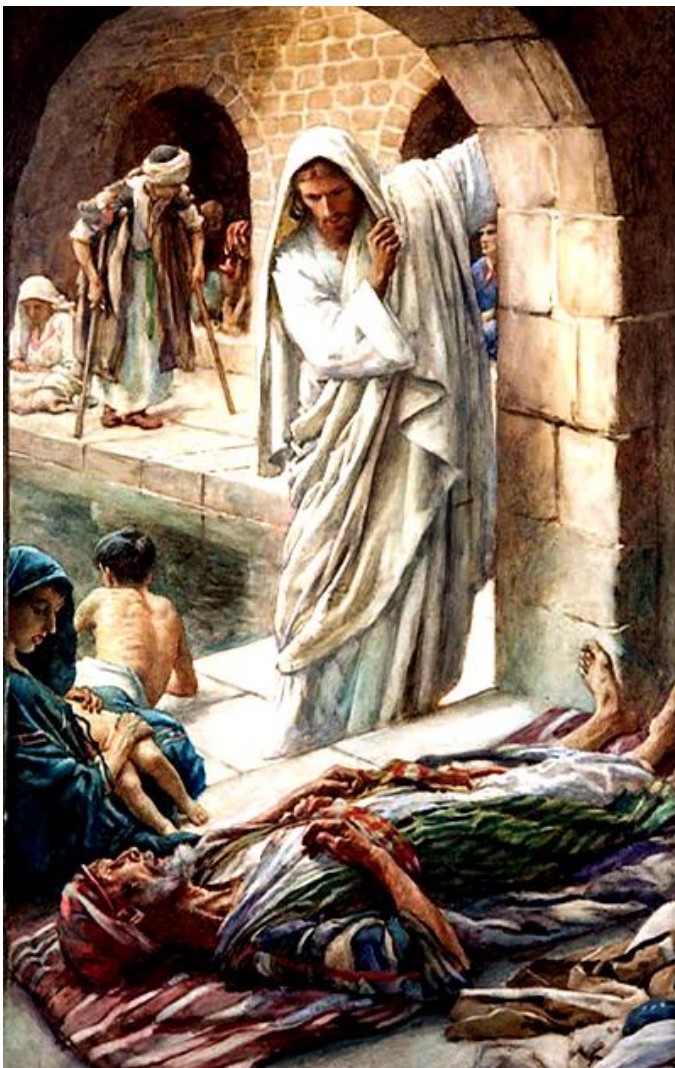


**21 - for the moving** – The word “moving” is translated from the Greek word “κίνησις” or “kinēsis”. It means a moving or agitation.

Not finding rescue from the apostate Jews, the sick and diseased desperately looked to the superstition associated with bubbling water for reprieve. **“This bubbling of the water was, of course, due not to supernatural but physical causes. Such intermittent springs are not uncommon, and to this day the so-called ‘Fountain of the Virgin’ in Jerusalem exhibits the phenomenon.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 463).

Footnote 10 of this Chapter clarifies the moving of the water in further detail. Talmage summarizes, **“From the recorded description, we may understand this to have been a natural spring; possibly the water was rich in dissolved solids or gases, or both, making it such as we would call today a mineral spring; for we find that the water was reputed to possess curative virtues, and many afflicted folk came to bathe therein. The spring was of the pulsating variety; at intervals its waters rose with bubbling disturbance, and then receded to the normal level. Mineral springs of this kind are known today in many parts of the world. Some believed that the periodical upwelling of the Bethesda waters was the result of supernatural agency; and it was said that ‘whoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.’ The Bethesda pool was wholly or partly enclosed; and five porches had been built for the shelter of those who waited at the spring for the intermittent bubbling up of the water.”** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 162).

**22 - water** – The word “water” is translated from the Greek word “ὕδωρ” or “hydōr”. It means water. Water is used symbolically in scriptures to represent purity and cleansing. The Jews say water as the medium between the mortal and Celestial spheres. It was considered the source of life. The Jews used large fonts of water called Mikvah’s for ceremonial cleanings. Converts to Judaism were immersed in a Mikvah. Women were immersed in the water of a Mikvah prior to their wedding. Similarly, new dishes and utensils were immersed in the water of a Mikvah to establish ritual cleanliness. Water also symbolizes birth and rebirth. (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 186-188). **“Further, ancient peoples were specially impressed with the holiness of water and especially of rivers and springs. Water was so precious and rivers in spate could be so powerful that it is not surprising that they were so impressed. In the west we may know water only as something which comes out of a tap; but in the ancient world, as in many places still today, water was the most valuable and potentially the most dangerous of all things.”** (The Gospel of John, Volume 1, William Barclay, page 178).



Because water was so vital to life in the ancient world, nearly every culture revered water to one extent or another. **“Sir J. G. Frazer in Folk-lore in the Old Testament (ii, 412-423) quotes many instances of this reverence for water. Hesiod, the Greek poet, said that when a man was about to ford a river, he should pray and wash his hands, for he who wades through a stream with unwashed hands incurs the wrath of the gods. When the Persian king Xerxes came to the Strymon in Thrace his magicians offered white horses and went through other ceremonies before the army ventured to cross. Lucullus, the Roman general, offered a bull to the River Euphrates before he crossed it. To this day in south-east Africa some of the Bantu tribes believe that rivers are inhabited by malignant spirits which must be propitiated by flinging a handful of corn or some other offering into the river before it is crossed. When anyone is drowned in a river he is said to be ‘called by the spirits.’ The Baganda in Central Africa would not try to rescue a man carried away by a river because they thought that the spirits had taken him. The people who waited for the pool in Jerusalem to be disturbed were children of their age believing the things of their age.”** (The Gospel of John, Volume 1, William Barclay, pages 178-179).

The waters of the Pool of Bethesda would have been revered, especially since they came from spring water. Spring water held an even higher state of reverence among the people. Spring water was considered living water. Jesus likened Himself to living water when teaching the Samaritan woman by the well. His water is baptism, which is bound by His atonement. John Chrysostom (approximately 344-407CE) believed that the miracle at the Pool of Bethesda was symbolic of Jesus’ baptism. He believed **“the story was a foreshadowing of the ordinance of baptism, which would be central in conversion to Christ in the ancient Church. The man whom the waters of Judaism could not heal was cured by Christ instead. Chromatius, bishop of Aquileia (flourished AD 400), held a view similar to that of John Chrysostom. He taught that the miracle pointed to the fact that Christianity offered salvation, which the law of Moses could not offer. Christianity offered salvation, which the law of Moses could not offer.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 83).



The moving of the waters may in fact symbolize the gift of the Holy Ghost which is a companion ordinance to baptism. In the case of the Pool of Bethesda, “no doubt these waters had – as hot mineral springs do in our day – some curative and healing powers which gave rise to a legend, among the superstitious and spiritually illiterate Jews, that ‘an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water,’ and that ‘whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.’” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 44). The association here is that the water’s of baptism represent our covenant with God to follow Him, while the moving of the waters represent the Gift of Holy Ghost which sanctifies and purifies the faithful patron.

Sanders supplied some interesting insight into the water supply of Jerusalem. He wrote, “The temple was provided with a great supply of water. Ben Sira 50.3 refers to a reservoir like the sea in circumference; Aristeas said that the supply of water was so great that it was as if there were a plentiful spring, and that there were underground reservoirs. According to the Mishnah, there was a chamber in the Court of the Priests that enclosed a cistern that provided water for the temple court, and Josephus also mentions a huge reservoir for collecting rain. It is now known that two major aqueducts supplied Jerusalem with water, wince the local springs were not adequate. The lower aqueduct entered the temple over Wilson’s Arch and filled one or more cisterns inside the temple. A great deal of water was required: the priests had to wash their hands and feet, and sometimes immerse, and the inwards of sacrificial animals were washed. Still more water was required to flush the blood down drains. At festivals, especially Passover, when thousands of lambs were slaughtered, there was a large quantity of blood. It was washed down into the book Kidron, which ran through the deep valley to the east of the temple mount. According to the Mishnah, the water of the brook became so thickened that it was sold to farmers as fertilizer, but since it was sacred, the temple received the proceeds.” (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE, E.P. Sanders, pages 117-118).



WILSON'S GATE

- 23 - **an angel** – The word “angel” is translated from the Greek word “ἄγγελος” or “aggelos”. It means a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, or a messenger from God. The Sadducees didn’t believe in angels. The common belief among the Jews that an angel came down to touch the waters is an indication of the limited number of people who agreed with the Sadducean ideology. They were the aristocrats and therefore they were few in number and far away from main stream belief. The Pharisees on the other hand embraced the doctrine of angels and heaven.

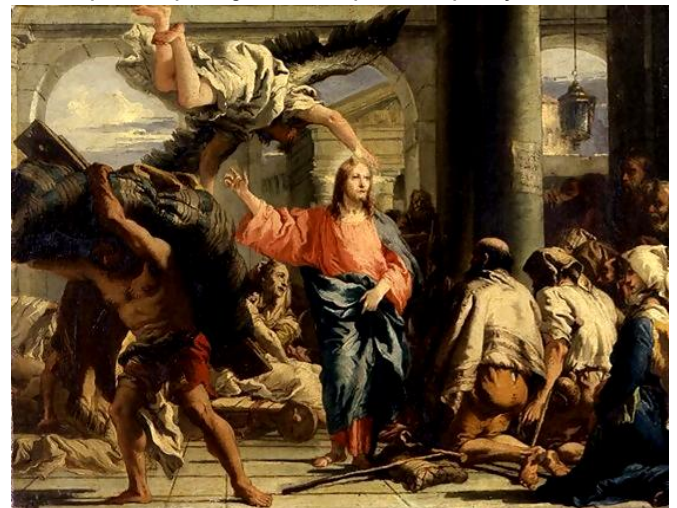


Most of the Jews believed that there were angels, but their belief didn’t end there. They believed that angels were assigned to the earth. It was a common belief that angels were assigned to bodies of living water. Edersheim wrote that there was a “**Jewish belief at the time attached such agency to Angels, and how it localized special Angels in springs and rivers; and we shall have presently to show, what were the popular notions about miraculous cures.**” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 463-464). Their belief took on a pagan type view of how the work of angels was conducted. In the case of Bethesda, the Jews believed that an angel had been assigned to the living water in the pool. His was a heavenly charge to touch the water’s periodically and stir the waters. In this process, the powers of heaven would be miraculously transferred to the water. Subsequently, the first to enter the water after the stirring would transfer the power of heaven from the water to their own being; healing that which ails them. “**To us this is mere superstition. But it was the kind of belief which was spread all over the world in ancient days and which still exists in certain places. People believed in all kinds of spirits and demons. The air was thick with them; they had their abodes in certain places; every tree, every river, every stream, every hill, every pool had its resident spirit.**” (The Gospel of John, Volume 1, William Barclay, page 178).

that God would send the Holy Ghost to make the ordinance of baptism efficacious. The Prophet Joseph taught that the Spirit is inseparably connected to the ordinance of baptism. He said, ‘You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half – that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost.’ Joseph added, ‘The baptism of water, without the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost attending it, is of no use; they are necessarily and inseparably connected.’” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, pages 83-84).

- 24 - **went down** – The term “went down” is translated from the Greek word “καταβαίνω” or “katabainō”. It means to go down, come down or descend.

The concept that an angel went down on a random basis to trouble the waters of Bethesda doesn’t fit with the fact that God has a coherent and organized plan for His children. Angels are messengers from God and are always on His errand performing His will. Angels do not act rogue or on their own will. How then did the Jews of Jesus’ time believe such nonsensical traditions regarding angels and troubles waters? The answer lies “in accordance with the Semitic habit of mind, that, in the universal ignorance of all scientific phenomena, and the utter indifference to close investigation which characterize most Orientals, the populace would not likely to trouble themselves about the possibility of any other explanation. But whatever may have been the general belief about the cause, the fact that the water was found at certain intervals



to be impregnated with gases which gave it a strengthening property, was sufficient to attract a concourse of many sufferers.” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar's Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., pages 236-237). Even today, believe it or not, there are cultures that place great trust in the mystical and superstitious. “The Mohammedans of Palestine in modern times have traditions about the jinni of a particular spring.” (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 207).



25 - **certain** – The term “certain” is implied in the Greek text, and carries with it an idea of a specific or designated time.

26 - **season** – The word “season” is translated from the Greek word “καιρός” or “kairos”. It means a dry measure. It is also used for a measure of time, the right time, or a limited period of time. The idea is that the pool would bubble at regular intervals of time, perhaps not on precise time schedule, but none the less with enough routine that the people expected a subsequent troubling of the waters.

27 - **troubled** – The word “troubled” is translated from the Greek word “ταράσσω” or “tarassō”. It means to agitate or trouble a thing by the movement of its parts to and fro. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “troubled” as “stirred”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 7, page 168). The troubling of the water was a result of mineral and gas releases from a naturally formed by a siphon-karst spring. Farrar wrote, “There is no indication in the narrative that anyone who thus used the water was at once, or miraculously, healed; but the repeated use of an intermittent and gaseous spring – and more than one of the springs about Jerusalem continue to be of this character to the present day – was doubtless likely to produce most beneficial results.” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar's Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 236).

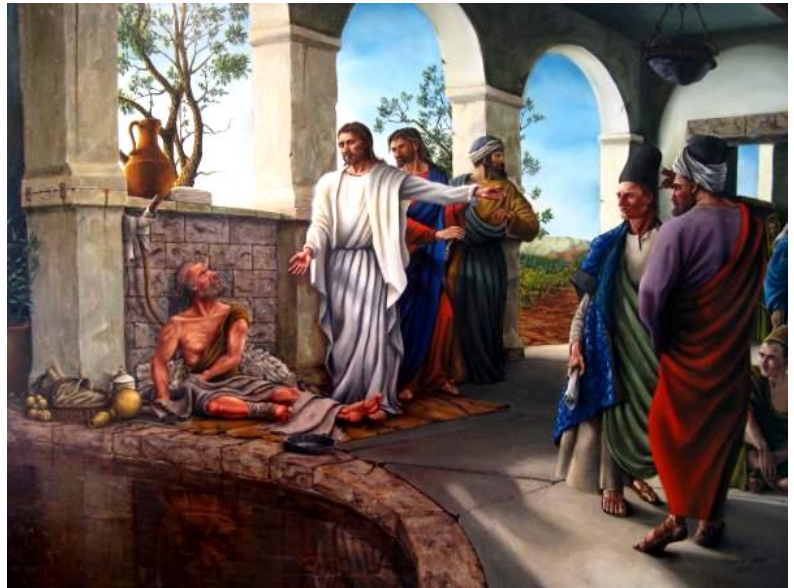


28 - **whosoever** – The word “whosoever” is translated from the Greek word “οὗν” or “oun”. It means therefore, the, accordingly, consequently, or these things being so. The qualifications for healing seem to be very few. “Whosoever” entered the water was expected to be healed. Such is not our Father in heaven’s plan. While it is true that we may

receive miraculous healing during mortality, such healings are always tied to our faith and the will of God. Not everyone that seeks a miracle will receive that which they desire. The Lord always answers prayers, but He answers them according to His plan for us.

- 29 - **first** – The word “first” is translated from the Greek word “πρῶτος” or “prōtos”. It means first in time, rank, influence, honor or place. Only the first person that entered the water’s of Bethesda was said to have been healed.
- 30 - **after** – The word “after” is translated from the Greek word “μετά” or “meta”. It means with, after or behind.
- 31 - **troubling** – The word “troubling” is translated from the Greek word “ταραχή” or “tarachē”. It means disturbance or commotion.

Augustine introduced an interesting thought that coincides with the troubled waters representing baptism. He theorizes that the troubles waters of Bethesda symbolized the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of course, we know that baptism symbolizes just that, so if the waters represent baptism, they also represent the death and resurrection of Jesus. **“Augustine wrote, ‘What, then, is meant by this, unless it be that there came one, even Christ, to the Jewish people; and by doing great things, by teaching profitable things, [He] troubled sinners, troubled the water [which symbolize the Jewish people] by His presence, and roused [or pointed them] towards His own death?...Wherefore, to go down into the troubled water means to believe in the Lord’s death. There only one was healed.’”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 82). Of course because of His sacrifice and resurrection all mankind may be fully healed.



- 32 - **stepped in** – The phrase “stepped in” is translated from the Greek word “ἐμβαίνω” or “embainō”. It means to go into or step into. The feet symbolize the power to act and do. The action of “stepping in” represents an act of agency or choice.
- 33 - **made whole** – The word “made” is translated from the Greek word “γίνομαι” or “ginomai”. It means to become, as in coming into existence, begin to be or receive being. The word “whole” is translated from the Greek word “ὕγιος” or “hyiōs”. It means sound, as in a sound idea or sound of body. It can also mean to make one whole, as in restored to health.
- 34 - **whatsoever disease** – The word “whatsoever” is translated from the Greek word “δῆποτε” or “dēpote”. It means now at length, at any time, at last, or just exactly. The word disease is translated from the Greek word “νόσημα” or “nosēma”. The word means disease or sickness.
- 35 - **man** – The word “man” is translated from the Greek word “ἄνθρωπος” or “anthrōpos”. It means a human being, whether male or female. The man which Jesus approached at the Pool of Bethesda was a symbol of all mortal men and women. **“As with so many of the miracles of the Bible, the ailing man is (at least) a potential symbol for any man or woman who is debilitated by sin. In the case of this man, some see his sins as the cause of his sickness (physical and spiritual). Some, on the other hand, see the fact that he had yet to be converted to Christ as symbolized by his ailment. He may also symbolize the unhealthy condition in which the law found itself in the first century. It’s semi-apostate state left it unable to bless others because it could not help itself.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 81).



The man, like many of us, has found himself amongst the trials of mortality. He has patiently endured years of suffering and tribulation hoping that relief would find him. We know little of the man; other than he was paralytic and had few to no friends. He was left to his own abilities and they appeared to be inadequate. We might deduce that there were periods of sorrow and depression associated with his condition. **“Thus the man and his circumstance mirrored the law’s inability (at that time) to functionally save and bless. This particular interpretation was commonplace among those of the early Christian Church.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 81).

He found himself at the Pool of Bethesda, which is considered by many to be the hospital of Jerusalem. How he got there we do not know. He was there hoping that he might enter the waters after they were troubled that he might be healed. Unfortunately, he had been there many years without his reward. **“The waters had not yet been ‘troubled’, when,” Jesus, “stood among that multitude of sufferers and their attendant friends. It was in those breathless moments of the intense suspense of expectancy, when every eye was fixed on the pool, that the eye of the Saviour searched for the most wretched object among them all. In him, as a typical case, could He best do and teach that for which He had come. This ‘impotent’ man, for thirty-eight years a hopeless sufferer, without attendant or friend among those whom misery – in this also the true outcome of sin – made so intensely selfish; and whose sickness was really the consequence of his sin, and not merely in the sense which the Jews attached to it – this now seemed the fittest object for power and grace. For, most marked in this history is the entire spontaneity of our Lord’s help.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 467-468).

- 36 - **infirmity** – The word “infirmity” is translated from the Greek word “ἀσθένεια” or “astheneia”. It means want of strength, weakness, or infirmity. It is also used to describe weakness or infirmity of the soul. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “infirmity” as “sick”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 5, page 168). **“From the man’s statement of his helplessness we may infer that his malady was paralysis, or possibly an extreme form of rheumatism; whatever his affliction, it was so disabling as to give him little chance of getting into the pool at the critical time, for others less crippled crowded him away; and, according to the legends regarding the curative properties of the spring, only the first to enter the pool after the agitation of the water might expect to be healed.”** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 162).

**37 - thirty and eight years** – The word “thirty” is translated from the Greek word “τριάκοντα” or “triakonta”. It means thirty. The word “eight” is translated from the Greek word “ὀκτώ” or “okto”. It means eight. The word “years” is translated from the Greek word “ἔτος” or “etos”. It means a year. There are many who suppose that the 38 years that the man suffered with his infirmity was a symbol of Israel when he wandered in the desert for 38 years. Brown disagrees stating, “**The suggestion that the number is symbolic, e.g., the 38 years of wandering in Deut ii 14, is unnecessary. That an ailment was not temporary is often indicated in New Testament miracles: the woman of Luke xiii 11 was sick 18 years; it was one of the ways of underlining the hopelessness of the case.**” (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 207). Even so, it is interesting that the number 38 is involved given the circumstances of the man and his needs.

The man had suffered with his affliction so long that he was in that state long before Jesus was born. His lot had become a way of life. He must have depended on the good graces of God to provide his daily bread. Like the children of Israel, as they suffered and wandered in the desert, the man’s hopes were just out of his reach and he was required to live by faith. He was there “**almost as long as the whole history of Israel from the going through of the Red Sea to the crossing of Jordan. Jesus sees the paralytic sufferer, knows how long he has been thus, and picks him out from all the rest – for reasons best known to himself, but unquestionably involving the man’s faith and spiritual stature – as the object of his divine healing power.**” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 44).

Mortality often requires that we are patient as the Lord molds us towards our potential. As we wait on the Lord, we must be cautious that we do not focus on our sorrows, but rather keep our eyes focus on He who is mighty to save. “**Waiting as he had those many years, the impotent man was undoubtedly watching the water with intensity and may not have even noticed Jesus. His answer indicated his only concern, even though his healer stood before him. ‘I have no man,’ he stated, ‘To put me into the pool.’ The man, like Israel, was so intent upon a false hope that he did not (or could not) see salvation embodied in Christ’s presence... He did not realize that true healing was not to be found in the water of the pool.**” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 82).

**38 - Jesus saw him lie** – The word “saw” is translated from the Greek word “εἶδω” or “eidō”. It means to see or perceive with the eyes or the senses; to discern, notice or discover. The word “lie” is translated from the Greek word “κατάκειμαι” or “katakeimai”. It means to have lain down; for example to lie prostrate. It can be used of those that are sick or those that have reclined for meals.

The picture here is one of great determination and steadfastness. He does not appear to have shrunk from his lot in life. “**John Chrysostom wrote, ‘Astonishing was the perseverance of the paralytic, he was of thirty and eight years standing, and each year hoping to be freed from his disease, he continued in attendance, and withdrew not...Let us be ashamed then, beloved, let us be ashamed, and groan over our excessive sloth. ‘Thirty and eight years’ had that man been waiting without obtaining what he desired, and withdrew not. And he had failed not through any carelessness of his own, but through being oppressed and suffering violence from others, and not even thus did he grow dull; while we if we have persisted for ten days to pray for anything and have not obtained it, are too slothful afterwards to employ the same zeal [as he did]. And on men we wait for so long a time, warring and enduring hardships and performing servile ministrations, and often at last failing in our recompense greater than our labors,... on Him we endure not to wait with becoming diligence. What chastisement doth this deserve! For even though we could receive nothing from Him, ought we not to deem the very conversing with Him continually the cause of ten thousand beings’.**” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 84).



**39 - knew** – The word “knew” is translated from the Greek word “γινώσκω” or “ginōskō”. It means to learn to know, to come to know, or to get a knowledge of something. Our Father in Heaven is very aware of us. He knows our mortal struggles, both those assigned to us and those acquired as consequence of sin. In both cases, He cares about our well being. He is eager to bless us, when it best serves us. “**Jesus recognized in the man a fit subject for blessing, and said to him: ‘Wilt thou be made whole?’**” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 162).

**40 - a long time in that case** – The phrase “in that case” is translated from the Greek word “λέγω” or “legō”. It means to say or to speak. It can also mean to call out, command, teach, or direct. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “a long time in that case” as “already been sick a long time”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 6, page 168).

**41 - Wilt thou be made whole?** – The phrase “wilt thou” is translated from the Greek word “θέλω” or “thelō”. It means to will, have a mind to, or intend. It can also mean to desire or to wish. The word “whole” is translated from the Greek word “ὑγιής” or “hygiēs”. It means to be sound, as in mind or body. It means to make one whole, as in restored to health. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the question “Wilt thou be made whole?” as “Wilt thou be restored to health?”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 6, page 168). “**The question was so simple as almost to appear superfluous. Of course the man wanted to be made well, and on the small chance of being able to reach the water at the right moment was patiently yet eagerly waiting. There was purpose, however, in these as in all other words of the Master. The man’s attention was drawn to Him, fixed upon Him; the question aroused in the sufferer’s heart renewed yearning for the health and strength of which he had been bereft since the days of his youth.**” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 162).

There appears to be a firm respect, by the Savior, for the agency of man even when extending blessings. “**Jesus began by asking the man if he wanted to be cured. It was not so foolish a question as it may sound. The man had waited for thirty-eight years and it might well have been that hope had died and left behind a passive and dull despair. In his heart of hearts the man might be well content to remain an invalid for, if he was cured, he would have to shoulder all the burden of making a living. There are invalids for whom invalidism is not unpleasant, because someone else does all the working and all the worrying. But this man’s response was immediate. He wanted to be healed, though he did not see how he ever could be since he had no one to help him.**” (The Gospel of John, Volume 1, William Barclay, page 179).



42 - **Sir** – The word “Sire” is translated from the Greek word “κύριος” or “kyrios”. It means he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; lord or master. The title was often used to refer to the Messiah.

43 - **I have no man** – The word “man” is translated from the Greek word “ἄνθρωπος” or “anthrōpos”. It means a human being, whether male or female. **“His answer was pitiful, and revealed his almost hopeless state of mind; he thought only of the rumored virtues of Bethesda pool as he said: ‘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’.”** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 162). In other words, the man believed that only the waters of Bethesda could heal him, and since he had no one to help him, he was doomed to his infirmity.

So many of us find struggles in life that lack comprehension and understanding to our mind. We lack the personal strength to maneuver through our trials, and desperately need the help of another stronger than us. **“Just as the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda needed someone stronger than himself to be healed (see John 5:1–9), so we are dependent on the miracles of Christ’s atonement if our souls are to be made whole from grief, sorrow, and sin. ... Through Christ, broken hearts are mended and peace replaces anxiety and sorrow”** (The Ensign, “The Power to Heal from Within”, Merrill J. Bateman, May 1995, 13).

44 - **put me into** – The word “put” is translated from the Greek word “βάλλω” or “ballō”. It means to throw or let go of a thing without caring where it falls. It can mean to scatter or throw. It can also mean to put into, insert, or pour. **“Like the Jewish leadership of the day (who looked to the law and their own piety for salvation), the paralyzed man focused on that which could not bring the cure he so desperately desired. He had faith but it was initially misplaced.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 82).

45 - **while I am coming** – The phrase “am coming” is translated from the Greek word “ἔρχομαι” or “erchomai”. It means to come from one place to another, and used both of persons arriving and those returning. In other words, when the man sees the troubling of the pool, and starts to make his way towards the pool, i.e. I am coming.

46 - **another** – The word “another” is translated from the Greek word “ἄλλος” or “allos”. It means another or other.

47 - **steppeth down before me** – The phrase “steppeth down” is translated from the Greek word “καταβαίνω” or “katabainō”. It means to go down, come down or ascend. The word “before” is translated from the Greek word “πρὸ” or “pro”. It means before. The word “me” is translated from the Greek word “ἐμοῦ” or “emou”. It means me, my, mine, etc. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “steppeth down before me” as “goes down before me”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 7, page 168).

48 - **Rise** – The word “Rise” is translated from the Greek word “ἐγείρω” or “egeirō”. It means to arouse, or to cause to rise. It can be used of arising from sleep, death, a seat, a bed or illness. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “Rise” as “Arise”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 8, page 168). **“Without more ado, Jesus says: ‘Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.’”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 45).

**“A miracle is thus wrought, such a one as is seldom seen. After thirty-eight years of paralytic impotence, a man known to have spent long hours on a pallet in the porches of the pool of Bethesda – desiring and hoping and praying to be healed – in an instant arises; full strength comes into his whole body; he walks – yea, more: he carries his bed. He is seen by the multitude, many of whom no doubt rejoice with him at the new vigor and vitality exuding from every pore of his once pain-hidden flesh.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 45).

49 - **take up thy bed** – The phrase “take up” is translated from the Greek word “αἴρω” or “airō”. It means to raise up, elevate, or lift up. It can also mean to carry or bear off something. The word “bed” is translated from the Greek word “κράββατος” or “krabattos”. It means a pallet, camp bed, or a rather simple bed holding one person.

This simple command was much more than a miraculous healing. For the man to take up his bed, he must be capable. To be capable, he must be healed. What we do not initially see or understand was that the command was issued on a Sabbath day. Brown explains, **“Carrying things from one domain to another is the last of 39 works forbidden in Mishnaic tractate Sabbath 7:2; carrying empty beds is implicitly forbidden in 10:5”** (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 208). Furthermore, the Oral Law prohibits cripples to move their beds on the Sabbath because their beds were considered unclean. The Mishnah records, **“6:8 A cripple... D. his kneepads (1) are susceptible to uncleanness imparted by pressure [to something upon which a Zab may lie or sit], (2) they go forth with them on the Sabbath, and (3) they go into a courtyard with them. E. His chair and its pads (1) are susceptible to uncleanness imparted by pressure, (2) they do not go out with them on the Sabbath, and (3) they do not go in with them into a courtyard.”** (The Mishnah: A New Translation, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 187).

50 - **walk** – The word “walk” is translated from the Greek word “περιπατέω” or “peripateō”. It means to walk. In Hebrew, it is used to mean to live, to regulate one’s life, or to conduct one’s self. The man who was unable to walk was commanded by the Savior to walk.

51 - **immediately** – The word “immediately” is translated from the Greek word “εὐθέως” or “euthēs”. It means straightway, immediately, or forthwith. The Codex Sinaiticus omits the word immediately. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 5, Verse 9, page 168). **“Stress on the immediate effect of Jesus’ power is not unusual in the Synoptic tradition; it is explicit in Luke xiii 13, implicit in Luke vii 15.”** (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 208).

52 - **walked** – The word “walked” is translated from the Greek word “περιπατέω” or “peripateō”. It means to walk. In Hebrew, it is used to mean to live, to regulate one’s life, or to conduct one’s self.

53 - **on the same day** – The word “same” is translated from the Greek word “ἐκεῖνος” or “ekeinos”. It means he, she, it, etc. The word “day” is translated from the Greek word “ἡμέρα” or “hēmera”. It means the day, used of the natural day, or the interval between sunrise and sunset, as distinguished from and contrasted with the night.

54 - **the sabbath** – The word “sabbath” is translated from the Greek word “σάββατον” or “sabbaton”. It means the seventh day of each week which was a sacred day on which the Lord’s covenant people were required to abstain from all work.

The Jews had elevated the Sabbath higher than their reverence for God. They worshipped the day itself, worrying more about defiling the day than they did about worshipping God. They devoted a large part of the Mishnah to Sabbath day observance. **“While they were discussing the niceties of what constituted labour on a Sabbath, such as what infringed its sacred rest of what constituted a burden, multitudes of them who labored and were heavy laden were left to perish in their ignorance. That was the Sabbath, and the God of the Sabbath of Pharisaism; this rest, the enlightenment, the hope for them who labored and were heavy laden, and who longed and knew not where to find the true Sabbatismos!”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 466).

The Savior respected the Sabbath, surely He would not violate the Law that He Himself gave. Even so, it must be remembered that the Oral Law was not the law of God. The Oral Law was the interpretation of men who were not authorized representatives of God. The work of God is always appropriate on the Sabbath. Elder McConkie wrote, **“It is the Sabbath, that holy day when servile work ceases and the children of Jehovah – those who have become his sons and his daughters through the waters of baptism – assemble to worship the Lord and renew their covenants. But worship of the Father, in spirit and in truth, is almost a thing of the past among them. Those who used the sacred Sabbath to gain spiritual refreshment are few in number. In the true and eternal sense, the Sabbath is universally desecrated among them through misuse, through failure to use it as a day for confessing their sins in the holy convocations, and through neglecting to partake of the spiritual food prepared on that day, by a gracious God, to give to all those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 44).

