

# "Renewal"

## Pool of Bethesda

Start with Jerusalem photos?

People in streets – most dangerous place per our guide

Hezekiah's water supply tunnel

What would you do if you had a crippling handicap all of your life, and today, after many years of depending on others to help you get around, you were healed of this disabling problem? Suppose you were **living under the Jewish Law** and any work on the Sabbath was condemned, and **even the act of making you whole again was considered 'working'?** This event, of course, took place at the **Pool of Bethesda**. The Pool of Bethesda today is 50-60 feet down from the level from which visitors normally view it, because the city has been built up around it. But there are several levels of terrain around the pool and there are sections of steps & **columns** among the growth leading down to the pool. One can only imagine the activity around this area in days gone by as recorded in **John 5!** (read)

**Was this man's faith involved in this healing occasion? (v 13)**  
**For many years, skeptics used this event to question the credibility of this Biblical historical record because there was no known pool in Jerusalem that fit this description. This pool, with its multi-level covered porches (or balconies), was only uncovered in recent years.**

This man, as did others who Jesus healed, found himself with a new life, a new beginning! Each New Year **we resolve** to do things that we have put off, or failed to do in the past.

– **anytime we rededicate, or refocus, our life**

– **the biggest is usually after we obey the gospel -**

How can we improve our life, or the life of others around us? Along with personal improvements, we often ask ourselves 'How can we improve our reaching out to the lost?' - those who are living all around us, but because of our complacency, we have, perhaps, just become desensitized to this fact? Sort of like the language & sin we see all around us, but because it has become so 'commonplace', we no longer speak out?

**But, I think this event can cause us to think – perhaps outside of our 'box' or Comfort Zone! How much more consideration do, or should, you & I give toward someone who is considering obeying the Gospel, as to where they are coming from?**

Their background, former belief system, family life, etc?  
Keep this in mind as we continue this discussion –

Jesus performed many miracles of healing on the Sabbath while teaching in the synagogues. Notice the events recorded in the scriptures below, and in Matt 12:12 he specifically states that one can do good on the Sabbath..

**Matthew 12:12 (NIV)** <sup>12</sup>How much more valuable is a man than a sheep!  
Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

Today, certain streets are blocked off thru the ultra-Orthodox Jewish areas, to keep tourists from driving thru and being pelted with stones. The Jews, under their own law, are very limited in what they can do on the Sabbath, including driving a car, traveling, etc. and they are very active in trying to keep anyone else from doing these things also. **I wonder if the throwing of stones** should be considered a 'work' that in itself should be a violation of the Sabbath law as they see it? **Appears to be more “work” than Jesus’ healings.**

The Jews still worship on the Sabbath (Saturday), while the Christian Jews assemble on the first day of the week, but I understand that those who have been used to the Jewish worship have a much different format than we are traditionally accustomed to. They will sing psalms and will also chant from the Hebrew Torah. There is openness to discussion, even debate, following the sermon, where Jewish converts still cling to observing circumcision and the Sabbath, and eating only kosher foods. Isn't a Jew still Jewish even after becoming a Christian convert?

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These questions are still very real for someone who has just had his religious life 'turned upside down'!

Notice Jesus statement in **Mark 2:27** that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

**(Mark 2:27 NIV)** Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

God's laws are given to man for our own good. Religious routine is good, but showing mercy is better **(Matt 12:7)**.

**(Mat 12:7 NIV)** . {7} If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

Think about this thought –

Are **we** the ones who are guilty of 'shoving the crippled man out of the way' when he was trying to get to the Pool of Bethesda for healing? Do we become so busy with life and trying to dot every 'i', and cross every 't', that we run past those around us with greater needs? Do we fail to stop for, or even see, those who are struggling around us - physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.?

1 tim 2:8 Both within and outside the church?

Are **we** the ones throwing the stones at the passers by, when we should be demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ by our examples, attitudes, and love for each other and the lost around us? **John 13:35** **By** this everyone will **know** that you are my disciples, **if** you **love** one another." Is that always evident enough to be noticed?

When an 'unchurched' individual comes into our assembly –

is even taught & obeys the Gospel – do we **allow** them **'room' to grow**? Do we stand back & criticize their mistakes & shortcomings? ...  
... **or** do we help them to grow & develop? ..... as a child in the faith?

Also, how much of what we expect them to comply with is actually our 'tradition' as opposed to God's law?

When someone comes in to our assembly & raises his or her hands to pray, what would be our individual feelings & reaction?

Our tradition does not include doing this, yet note what Paul's instructions (commands?) were! (Note 1 Tim 2:8) **I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.**

And Fasting? Do we typically follow this?

A current example, or application, of how this might apply to us today?

With our prison ministry efforts – Someone who hears & responds to the Gospel while in prison and decides to change his / her life:

While facing some unique problems.

**Before prison:** Possibly no loving family, no value system, wrong crowd  
No church or religious teaching or examples

**In prison:** Probably even worse conditions, associations, & experiences, but ...hears God's word & converts.

Do we consider the difficulty of their living a Christian life behind bars?  
Having no real visible examples & Christian fellowship or encouragement?

When **Released**: What do we expect of that individual?  
A full Christian maturity?  
A **maturity level** that most of us have had a full life  
to work on and we still find ourselves falling short?

Example of David Green's experience coming out of prison the first time.

An old popular song had these words: "You only hurt the ones you love..."  
Probably a lot of truth or application in families and the church family  
over the years. But I think it is improving?

Why is it that we often have less patience with our spouses, &  
often within our church family than we have with others?  
Observation – More extreme conservative congregations seem to  
have a higher expectation of their fellow members.

**(1 John 3:17-20 NIV)** If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? {18} Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with **actions** and **in truth**. {19} This then is how we **know** that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence {20} whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.  
(read from New Century version:)

**1 John 3:17-20 (NCV)** 17 Suppose someone has enough to live and sees a brother or sister in need, but does not help. Then God's love is not living in that person. 18 My children, we should love people not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring.

19 - 20 This is the way we know that we belong to the way of truth. When our hearts make us feel guilty, we can still have peace before God. God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

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**(Mat 12:9-14 NIV)** Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, {10} and a man with a shriveled hand was there. **Looking for a reason to accuse** Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" {11} He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? {12} How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." {13} Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. {14} But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

**(Mark 3:1-6 NIV)** Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. {2} Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. {3} Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." {4} Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. {5} He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. {6} Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

I actually had a long-time church member, & deacon, tell me once,  
 "I can't get anything out of the sermon, because I am too busy watching  
 for anything wrong the preacher might say!"

The problem was Personalities, Pride & Assumptions of what could happen!

**(Mat 12:1-8 NIV)** At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. {2} When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath." {3} He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? {4} He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread--which was not lawful for

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them to do, but only for the priests. {5} Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? {6} I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. {7} If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. {8} For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

**(Mark 2:27-28 NIV)** Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. {28} So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

**(1 Sam 15:22 NIV)** But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.  
**Should we consider "sacrifice" – as religious 'structure', or format?  
 Or procedure?**

**(Hosea 6:6 NIV)** For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. **Is "Mercy" here, for us, understanding & assistance?**

**(Luke 13:10-17 NIV)** On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, {11} and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. {12} When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." {13} Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. {14} **Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath**, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." {15} The Lord answered him, "**You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water?**" {16} Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" {17} When he said this, **all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted** with all the wonderful things he was doing.

**Did Jesus understand the religious authority & teachings?  
Of course, all too well!**

**(John 5:1-15 NIV)** Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. {2} Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. {3} Here a great number of disabled people used to lie--the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. {4} {5} One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. {6} When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" {7} "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." {8} Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." {9} At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, {10} and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." {11} But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" {12} So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?" {13} **The man who was healed had no idea who it was**, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. {14} Later, Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." {15} The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

**What saved this man? Was it his faith in this case?**

**Notice how the Jewish leaders responded!**

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**(John 5:16-23 NIV)** So, because Jesus was **doing these things on the Sabbath**, the Jews persecuted him. {17} Jesus said to them, "**My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.**" {18} For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. {19} Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the

Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. {20} For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. {21} For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. {22} Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, {23} that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

**(1 Tim 2:8 NIV)** I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.

Former Bus Ministry example – many members not wanting the “unchurched” kids; saw only as a disruption to our “orderly” assembly....

But, do we often not reach out to those who might respond for much the same reasons? When they are ‘not like we are’?

Just some things to keep in mind as we go through this life!