

Deliverance Is a Decision

Part Two: Jesus Healing on Shabbat

In Part One, we looked at the roots of Shabbat—a day meant for rest, rooted in the idea of “ceasing” from work. But that raises a bigger question: why did Jesus choose to heal on the Sabbath, knowing it would provoke controversy? In this next section, we’ll explore how his actions fit within the broader conversation happening in Jewish thought at the time. Rather than breaking the Sabbath, Jesus may have been offering a new way of seeing it—one that puts compassion and restoration at the center. By looking at the historical and religious context, we’ll see how healing on the Sabbath wasn’t just a miracle—it was a message.

In Mark 3:4, Jesus asks,

And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

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This question reflects His understanding of *nephesh*—that true life, the very essence of one’s being and purpose, is worth saving. In His healings on the Sabbath, Jesus is not just offering physical restoration but is actively bringing people closer to the life God intends for them, both physically and spiritually.

So in John 5:1–9, when Jesus heals on the Sabbath, He is not breaking it, He is fulfilling the law of pikuach nephesh.

Now there is at Jerusalem... a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk... waiting for the moving of the water. 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. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.

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Bethesda was a place in Jerusalem where those deemed impure by the Pharisees due to physical conditions gathered, excluded from observing Shabbat in the temple. They were outcasts, cut off from community, worship, and rest.

Jesus visiting Bethesda on Shabbat is deeply significant. On His way to the temple where others were celebrating; He stopped to see first the ones who could not celebrate Shabbat. There, He asks the man, “Wilt thou be made whole?” – an invitation to wholeness, to cease from the cycle of shame.

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Jesus then says, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” And

immediately, the man's entire nephesh, his spirit, soul, and body is fully healed and restored.

Some of us are stuck in patterns that defeat our purpose. Jesus comes to interrupt the cycle, silence the torment, and fill us with His peace. Shabbat means: to stop, to cease, to rest. And that is often the first step in our deliverance.

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Jesus is still walking amongst the outcast. He seeks out the weary, wounded and waiting. Sometimes, it's not just sin that isolates us, it's pain, shame and sorrow. Life wounds us in ways that leave us feeling resigned. But Jesus doesn't approach with condemnation. He comes with a question and offers us a choice: Will you be made whole?

Deliverance is a decision, and healing begins when we respond in faith.

Dr. Michelle Corral is Founder of the Day of Destiny podcast and CEO of Breath of the Spirit Ministries, Dr. Michelle Corral has spent over 45 years spreading the prophetic Word of God worldwide. Through Chesed for Humanity International, she provides global humanitarian aid—most notably to Syrian refugees—and shares destiny-focused principles through her books, broadcasts and outreach.