

What is a Pool, and what are the Five Porches at the Pool of Bethesda?

A “Pool” is commonly understood as a vessel for holding liquids like water or tea. Biblically, however, “Pool” refers to a pool or a small pond created for specific purposes, sometimes crafted with skill, other times simply dug out, depending on the intended use.

Types of Pools in the Bible

- Animal watering pools: Jacob had pools or troughs made for watering livestock. This reflects common pastoral life in the Old Testament (Genesis 30:38, “And he set up the pillars that he had taken from the watering troughs...”). These pools illustrate God’s provision for daily life and animal care.
- Water storage pits: Joseph was thrown into an empty cistern or pit, representing danger and abandonment (Genesis 37:23–24). This type of “pool” shows how water reservoirs were part of daily life but could also symbolize trial and suffering.
- Ceremonial washing pools: In the Tabernacle and later the Temple, bronze basins were provided for priests to wash themselves before entering the holy place (Exodus 30:17–21). These pools symbolize ritual purity, essential for approaching a holy God (cf. Leviticus 16:4). Washing in these pools was an external act pointing to internal holiness (Hebrews 10:22).
- Pools for cleansing prostitutes: The Pool of Samaria was associated with ritual cleansing, showing how some pools were used for moral or religious purification (1 Kings 22:37–38).

The Pool of Bethesda

The Pool of Bethesda (John 5:2–3) was a well-known pool in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate, surrounded by five porches (columns). It was a place where many disabled people gathered, waiting for the waters to stir, believing the first person to enter afterward would be healed.

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This pool represents the human tendency to seek healing and salvation through rituals or superstition rather than God Himself.

The story of the man sick for 38 years, healed by Jesus without entering the pool, powerfully illustrates that true healing and salvation come through Christ alone (John 5:6-9).

“Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’ And at once the man was healed...” (John 5:8-9)

This contrasts human effort and waiting for external “waters” with the immediate, sovereign grace of Jesus. It highlights the biblical truth that faith in Christ brings life and restoration, not ritualistic works (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Warning Against False Hopes

Many people today may similarly trust in “silent miracles” or external rituals (like holy water, oils, or pilgrimages) without true repentance or faith. The Bible warns against such superficial reliance:

"They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me"
(Isaiah 29:13).

True healing begins with repentance, faith in Jesus, and receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The Pool of Bethesda's proximity to the Temple reminds us that external religion without heart transformation is insufficient (Matthew 15:8).

Invitation

If you have not yet accepted Christ, now is the time to believe (John 3:16). Receive baptism as a public confession of faith (Romans 6:3-4), and open your heart to the Holy Spirit who guides into all truth (John 16:13).

Jesus is near, seeking those willing to receive Him (Revelation 3:20). Will you respond today?

Come, Lord Jesus!

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