THE QUESTION

Why did the healed man carry his bed on the Sabbath (John 5:11)?

Asked by a THF member on April 14, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 8 numbered quotations · the 13 early Christian passages and 91 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/why-did-the-healed-man-carry-his-bed-on-the-sabbath-john-5-11

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

The healed man pointed to Jesus' authority: the one who made him well told him to carry his bed. Irenaeus explains that the law never forbade healing on the Sabbath. He says the objection came from the elders' added tradition, while the Sabbath rest was about ceasing from ordinary work for gain.

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HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

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POINT 1 OF 7

The man answered by pointing to his healer

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In Tatian's gospel harmony, the leaders object that carrying a bed breaks the Sabbath. The man does not argue the rule. He simply says the one who made him well told him to do it.

1

“When the Jews saw the man who had been healed, they said to him, "It is a Sabbath. You have no authority to carry your bed."”

later in the same passage

“He answered them, "The one who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 22 (c. 150–180 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 1, page 5 Read it in the library ›

POINT 2 OF 7

Carrying the bed was part of the miracle

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

The man had been sick for thirty-eight years. Jesus' command to rise and take up the bed came with the healing itself, so walking with the bed showed that he was truly made well.

2

“A man was there who had been diseased for thirty-eight years.”

later in the same passage

“And immediately the man was healed. He rose, carried his bed, and walked.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 22 (c. 150–180 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 2, page 5 Read it in the library ›

POINT 3 OF 7

The dispute turned to Jesus and his Father

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

When the man named Jesus, the quarrel moved from the bed to Jesus himself. Jesus answered that he works as his Father works, and his opponents heard this as a claim to be equal with God.

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3 “Jesus said to them, "My Father is working until now, and I also am working."”

later in the same passage

“Because of this, the Jews sought even more to kill him, not only because he was breaking the Sabbath, but also because he said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 22 (c. 150–180 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 1, page 5 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 4 OF 7

Irenaeus: the law allowed healing on the Sabbath

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus says Jesus did nothing against the law when he healed on the Sabbath. He points out that the law itself allowed circumcision and priestly duties on that day.

4 “Clearly, He freed and revived those who believe in Him as Abraham did, without doing anything against the law when He healed on the Sabbath.”

later in the same passage

“The law did not forbid healing on the Sabbath; in fact, it allowed circumcision on that day and required priests to perform duties for the people.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 4, page 5 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 5 OF 7

The objection came from added tradition

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus blames the elders' tradition, not the law of Moses, for the complaint against Jesus. He notes that the critics themselves did a kind of healing on the Sabbath whenever they circumcised.

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5 “They even criticized the Lord for healing on the Sabbath, which, as I have already mentioned, was not forbidden by the law.”

later in the same passage

“They themselves, in a way, performed acts of healing on the Sabbath when they circumcised a man on that day, but they did not criticize themselves for breaking God’s command through tradition and the aforementioned pharisaical law, failing to follow the commandment of the law, which is the love of God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 5, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 7

Sabbath rest meant stopping work for gain

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus explains what the Sabbath rest was for. It meant stopping trade and worldly business, while still doing spiritual things and helping one's neighbor.

6 “The law commanded them to refrain from all servile work, meaning from all pursuit of wealth through trading or other worldly activities, but encouraged them to engage in spiritual exercises, involving reflection and helpful communication for their neighbors' benefit.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 4, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

This was one of many Sabbath healings

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The healing at the pool was not the only one. Tatian's harmony records the blind man healed on a Sabbath, and Irenaeus lists other Sabbath healings Jesus defended.

7 “Now the day on which Jesus made clay and opened his eyes with it was a Sabbath day.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 36 (c. 150–180 AD) **Source 3, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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8 “the woman who had suffered for eighteen years and was healed on the Sabbath; the man with dropsy whom the Lord healed on the Sabbath and how He defended His actions”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 6, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not comment directly on the healed man's words in John 5:11.
- They do not explain why Jesus told him to carry the bed rather than leave it behind.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 13 early Christian passages and 91 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–13, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 14–82, in Bible order), then 22 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *13 passages from 6 writers*

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · sources 1–3*

1 *Diatessaron* 22 (1885 English) **Quotes 1, 3, pages 2, 3** “John 5:10 And that day was a sabbath. And when the Jews saw that healed one, they said 19 unto him, It is a sabbath: you have no authority… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Diatessaron* 22 (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** “5:9 And immediately that man was healed; and he rose, and carried his bed, and walked… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Diatessaron* 36 **Quote 7, page 4** he passed by, he saw a man who had been blind from his mother's womb. His disciples asked him, "Our Master, who sinned, this man or his parents, so… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 4–7*

4 *Against Heresies: Book IV* **Quotes 4, 6, pages 3, 4** woman and said to those without faith like Abraham, “You hypocrites, doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey and lead it to water? Shouldn… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 4** “they did themselves, in one sense, perform acts of healing upon the Sabbath-day, when they circumcised a man [on that day… [continues online] **read ›**

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6 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 5** "man who had the dropsy, whom the Lord made whole on the Sabbath, and how He did defend Himself for having performed an act of healing on that day… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English) "is in accordance with what the Lord said to the man who had been healed: "Behold, thou art made whole… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · source 8*

8 *Instructor* 1.2 (1885 English; on point 2) "up, He said to the paralytic; take the bed on which you lie and go away home… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · source 9*

9 *Against Marcion* 12 (on point 4) Sabbath, He simply acted after the Creator's example. For in the siege of the city of Jericho, carrying the Ark of the Covenant around the walls for eight straight… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 10–12*

10 *Epistles* "Lord taught this in His instruction when He said, "Behold, you are made whole… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *Epistles* (1885 English) "as he knows that it is written, Behold, you are made whole… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 2) "was he only raised from his bed by the divine indulgence, but he also took up his bed itself with his restored and increased strength… [continues online] **read ›**

Archelaus, *c. 270–300 AD · source 13*

13 *Disputation with Manes* 1 (1885 English; on point 2) "Jesus cured a cripple on the Sabbath, and ordered him then also to take up his bed… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *69 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

14 **Exodus 16:29** See, the Lord has given you this day as the Sabbath; for this reason he gave you bread for two days on the sixth day. Each of you shall stay in your houses; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day." **read ›**

15 **Exodus 20:8** Remember the day of the Sabbath, to keep it holy. **read ›**

16 **Exodus 21:19** if the man rises and walks about outside with a staff, the one who struck him shall be guiltless; only he shall pay for his loss of time and for his healing. **read ›**

17 **Exodus 23:12** Six days you shall do your works, but on the seventh day there shall be rest, so that your ox and your beast of burden may rest, and so that the son of your maidservant and the resident foreigner may be refreshed. **read ›**

18 **Leviticus 16:31** It shall be to you a Sabbath of Sabbaths, a rest, and you shall humble your souls; it is a perpetual ordinance. **read ›**

19 **Leviticus 23:3** Six days you shall do work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath, a rest, a holy convocation to the Lord. You shall do no work; it is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings. **read ›**

20 **Numbers 15:32** Now the children of Israel were in the wilderness, and they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. **read ›**

21 **Numbers 15:33** And those who found him gathering wood on the Sabbath day brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the children of Israel. **read ›**

22 **Deuteronomy 2:17** there spoke the Lord to me, saying, **read ›**

23 **Deuteronomy 5:12** Observe the day of the Sabbath, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. **read ›**

24 **Deuteronomy 5:13** Six days you shall labor and do all your work; **read ›**

25 **1 Samuel 21:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

26 **2 Samuel 22:34** He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on the heights. **read ›**

27 **Job 5:18** For he causes pain, and he restores again; he strikes, and his hands heal. **read ›**

28 **Job 10:8** Your hands formed me and made me; after this you turned and struck me. **read ›**

29 **Job 31:15** Were they not made as I too was made in the womb? We were made in the same womb. **read ›**

30 **Psalms 8:8** the birds of heaven and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas. (Septuagint Psalm 8:9 (Psalm 8:8 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

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31 **Psalms 12:3** May the Lord utterly destroy all deceitful lips and the tongue that speaks great things, (Septuagint Psalm 11:4 (Psalm 12:3 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

32 **Psalms 30:2** O Lord my God, I cried to you, and you healed me. (Septuagint Psalm 29:3 (Psalm 30:2 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

33 **Psalms 147:3** He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds. (Septuagint Psalm 146:3 (Psalm 147:3 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

34 **Proverbs 2:2** your ear will listen to wisdom, and you will apply your heart to understanding, and apply it to the instruction of your son; **read ›**

35 **Proverbs 16:9** All the works of the Lord are with righteousness, and the ungodly man is kept for the evil day. **read ›**

36 **Ecclesiastes 7:15** I have seen all things in the days of my vanity: there is a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and there is an ungodly man remaining in his wickedness. **read ›**

37 **Jeremiah 22:3** Thus says the Lord: Do judgment and righteousness, and rescue the one who is robbed out of the hand of him who wrongs him; and do not oppress the resident foreigner and the orphan and the widow, and do not act ungodly, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. **read ›**

38 **Jeremiah 37:1** Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned in place of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar made king to reign over Judah. (Septuagint Jeremiah 44:1 (Jeremiah 37:1 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

39 **Jeremiah 39:3** and all the leaders of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the middle gate: Marganasar, and Samagoth, and Nabousachar, and Nabousaris, Nagargas, Naserrabamath, and the rest of the captains of the king of Babylon. (Septuagint Jeremiah 46:3 (Jeremiah 39:3 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

40 **Jeremiah 40:4** See, I have loosed you from the shackles that were on your hands. If it is good in your eyes to come with me to Babylon, I will set my eyes upon you. (Septuagint Jeremiah 47:4 (Jeremiah 40:4 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

41 **Lamentations 3:11** He pursued me when I had turned aside, and made me stop; he has made me desolate. **read ›**

42 **Ezekiel 3:2** And he opened my mouth and fed me the scroll. **read ›**

43 **Ezekiel 6:1** And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, **read ›**

44 **Ezekiel 9:1** And he cried out in my ears with a loud voice, saying, “The vengeance of the city has drawn near”; and each had the instruments of destruction in his hand. **read ›**

45 **Ezekiel 12:1** And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, **read ›**

46 **Ezekiel 16:1** And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, **read ›**

47 **Ezekiel 16:7** multiply’; as the sprouting of the field I have made you. And you multiplied and grew great, and you entered into cities of cities; your breasts were formed, and your hair grew; yet you were naked and shamed. **read ›**

48 **Ezekiel 19:1** “And you, take up a lament for the ruler of Israel, **read ›**

49 **Ezekiel 21:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

50 **Ezekiel 23:1** And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, **read ›**

51 **Ezekiel 26:1** Now it came to pass in the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came to me, saying: **read ›**

52 **Ezekiel 29:11** The foot of man shall certainly not pass through it, and the foot of cattle shall certainly not pass through it, and it shall not be inhabited for forty years. **read ›**

53 **Ezekiel 29:15** beyond all kingdoms; it shall never again be exalted over the nations; and I will make them few, so that they may not be many among the nations. **read ›**

54 **Ezekiel 34:13** And I will bring them out from the Gentiles, and gather them from the countries, and bring them into their own land, and feed them on the mountains of Israel and in the ravines and in every inhabited place of the land. **read ›**

55 **Tobit 8:8** And she said with him, “Amen.” **read ›**

56 **Tobit 12:3** for he has brought me back to you in good health, and he healed my wife, and he brought my silver, and he healed you likewise.” **read ›**

57 **Bel and the Dragon 1:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

58 **Bel and the Dragon 1:17** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

59 **1 Maccabees 2:2** He had five sons: John, called Kaddis; **read ›**

60 **1 Maccabees 16:9** At that time Judas, John’s brother, was wounded; but John pursued them until he came to Kedron, which Cendebeus had built. **read ›**

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61 **2 Maccabees 7:15** Next they brought forward the fifth and mistreated him. **read ›**

62 **2 Maccabees 14:31** When Nicanor realized that he had been thoroughly outmaneuvered by the man, he came to the very great and holy temple while the priests were offering the appointed sacrifices, and he ordered them to hand the man over. **read ›**

63 **Matthew 9:22** But Jesus turned and saw her, and said, “Take courage, daughter! Your faith has made you well.” And the woman was made well from that hour. **read ›**

64 **Mark 2:11** “I tell you, arise, take up your mat, and go to your house.” **read ›**

65 **Mark 5:34** He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be free of your disease.” **read ›**

66 **Mark 10:52** Jesus said to him, “Go your way. Your faith has made you well.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the way. **read ›**

67 **Luke 8:48** He said to her, “Take courage, daughter; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.” **read ›**

68 **Luke 11:40** You foolish ones, did not he who made the outside make the inside also? **read ›**

69 **Luke 17:19** Then he said to him, “Rise and go. Your faithfulness has saved you.” **read ›**

70 **John 5:6** When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had been sick for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to be made well?” **read ›**

71 **John 5:7** The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.” **read ›**

72 **John 5:8** Jesus said to him, “Arise, take up your mat, and walk.” **read ›**

73 **John 5:9** Immediately, the man was made well, and took up his mat and walked. Now that day was a Sabbath. **read ›**

74 **John 5:10** So the Jews said to him who was cured, “It is the Sabbath. It is not lawful for you to carry the mat.” **read ›**

75 **John 5:11** He answered them, “He who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’ ” **read ›**

76 **John 5:12** Then they asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your mat and walk’?” **read ›**

77 **John 5:14** Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you are made well. Sin no more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” **read ›**

78 **John 5:15** The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. **read ›**

79 **2 Corinthians 3:4** Such confidence we have through Christ toward God, **read ›**

80 **2 Corinthians 3:9** For if the ministry of condemnation is glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. **read ›**

81 **2 Corinthians 3:11** For if that which passes away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory. **read ›**

82 **1 Thessalonians 1:5** because our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, just as you know what sort of men we were among you for your sake. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *22 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

1 Samuel 21:3

Psalms 86:2

Isaiah 1:14

Matthew 5:3 · 5:17 · 9:2

Luke 6:1 · 6:5 · 6:7 · 6:9 · 6:29 · 14:33 · 16:16

John 11:43

Romans 2:28 · 4:1 · 4:2

1 Corinthians 15:46

2 Corinthians 3:6 · 3:7

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Galatians 1:8 · 2:18

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

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THE END OF THIS STUDY