

## John 5:1-16 & 9:1-41 – A Tale of Two Men – Part 1

The lame man in John 5 and the man born blind in John 9 are a Tale of Two Men. Many think that they were two peas in a pod. They were both examples of faith and obedience. Others see a big difference between these two men despite some similarities. Let's look at these two men with an open mind and eyes that see. Let us observe closely what the text says. Let our interpretation be based on the text and not preconceived ideas. As I lovingly shouted at the screen while listening to a sermon on John 5, "READ THE TEXT".

**Read John 5:1-6. Read John 8:58-9:1.**

How did Jesus meet the lame man? How did Jesus meet the man born blind? In John 8:58-9:1, Jesus had just left the temple. In John 5:1-6, where was the Pool of Bethesda? How was the Sheep Gate relevant to the healing of the lame man? In 5:6, Jesus saw the lame man. In 9:1, Jesus saw the man born blind. Did these men seek out Jesus or did Jesus initiate the meetings? How did Jesus know that the lame man had been at the pool a long time? How did Jesus know that the blind man was born blind?

**Read John 5:6-7. Read John 9:2-5.**

What did Jesus ask the lame man? How did the lame man respond to Jesus? Jesus did not ask any questions of the man born blind before his healing. He did have a discussion with the disciples. According to the disciples, why was the man born blind? According to Jesus, why was the man born blind? What claim did Jesus make about himself in 9:5? Also see John 8:12.

**Read John 5:8. Read John 9:6-7.**

What command did Jesus give to the lame man? What command did Jesus give to the blind man?

**Read John 5:9. Read John 9:7.**

When did the blind man receive his sight? When was the lame man healed? Some believe that the lame man was healed because he obeyed Jesus' command. John said that Jesus gave the command and at once the man was healed. I don't see any room for human effort between the command and the healing. The sequence in verse 9 is that 1) he was healed, 2) he took up his bed, and 3) he walked.

Notice that the Pool of Bethesda was not involved in the lame man's healing even though it was close at hand. It is possible that the blind man was sitting outside the south gates of the temple. It was a good place to beg. The Pool of Siloam may have been a walk of almost half a mile from where the blind man was. There were plenty of places to wash between the temple gates and the Pool of Siloam. Why do you think Jesus sent the blind man to wash in the Pool of Siloam? Was there any healing power in the Pool of Siloam?

**Read John 5:9-10. Read John 9:14-16.**

On what day of the week did Jesus heal the lame man? On what day of the week did Jesus give sight to the blind man? Why was healing on that day a problem when it came to the lame man? Why was healing on that day a problem when it came to the blind man? Why did the Pharisees and Jewish leaders think that the healings were unlawful?

Based on John 5:1-9, was the lame man a believer and follower of Jesus Christ? Explain your answer.

There are some assumptions which many people make which need to be examined.

1) The lame man was seeking healing from God because God sent an angel to stir the Pool of Bethesda and bring healing to the first one in the pool. This assumption is based on John 5:4. The challenge is that the ESV, NASB, and NIV do not include this verse in the text. There is a footnote to the effect that some manuscripts include verse 4. KJV and NKJV do include verse 4 in the text. Based on the UBS 6<sup>th</sup> edition of The Greek New Testament, there are nine known Greek manuscripts written before 500 AD which include John 5:3-5. Eight of the nine manuscripts do not include verse 4. The four earliest manuscripts do not include verse 4. They are Papyrus 66 (about 200 AD), Papyrus 75 (early 3<sup>rd</sup> century), Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ 01, 4<sup>th</sup> century) and Codex Vaticanus (B 03, 4<sup>th</sup> century). Papyrus 66 and Papyrus 75 were both discovered in the 1950s. There are 5 Greek manuscripts from the 5<sup>th</sup> century which include John 5. Four of the five 5<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts do not have verse 4. Why didn't verse 4 show up until the 5<sup>th</sup> century? If you favor including verse 4 then you must conclude that the earliest manuscripts are not reliable manuscripts when it comes to John 5:3-5. Obviously there is a lot of debate about which variant among Greek manuscripts is correct. It can be challenging and not all agree. ESV, NASB, and NIV along with many other modern translations consider the early manuscripts of John to be reliable. The UBS 6<sup>th</sup> edition assigns the strongest confidence that verse 4 was not part of the original text of John 5. Most manuscripts I have cited can be viewed online. If there is no Biblical record of an angel stirring the pool, then all we know is that the lame man believed that the pool had healing power. It may have been no different than the spring in Lourdes, France where a girl claimed that Mary appeared to her and told her about a nearby spring with healing power.

2) The lame man was healed because he wanted to be healed, he believed Jesus could heal him, and he made an effort to walk. The man's faith and action released Jesus' healing power. Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary, "for Christ is willing to heal, if we be but willing to be healed". ... "Rise, take up your pallet and walk: "it is expressed as a command to him to bestir himself. He must rise and walk, that is, attempt to do it, and in the essay he should receive strength to do it. ... But, if he had not attempted to help himself, he had not been cured, and he must have borne the blame;". John Calvin wrote in his commentary, "when he was ordered, he carried his bed, which appears to have been done by the guidance of faith. For my own part, as I do not deny that there was in him some secret movement of faith". Where is the evidence of that in the text?

There are two main takes on the lame man of John 5. They are complete opposites. One group says that the lame man is a model of Christian faith and obedience. The other group says that the lame man, even though he was healed by Jesus, rejected Jesus.

Group 1 (man is a model of faith and obedience):

- John Calvin: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/john/5.htm>
- Matthew Henry: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/mhcw/john/5.htm>
- Joel Beeke: <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermons/62406225241>
- You will probably find that most commentaries before 1900 fall into this group

Group 2 (the man rejected Jesus)

- R C Sproul: <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermons/12111949363>
- John MaCarthur: <https://youtu.be/14-kR4TvyLs?si=M1DZ4r0mjXOZmb07>
- Derek Thomas: <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermons/21819166185957>
- D A Carson: Pillar NT Commentary
- Leon Morris: The New International Commentary on the NT

Some believe that no one can be healed apart from faith. Some believe that illness is always the result of a specific sin committed by the one who is ill or, in the case of the man born blind, possibly by the person's parents. They believe that healing only comes when someone repents and believes that God will heal them. These people basically believe that God's hands are tied when it comes to healing unless we human's unleash his power through our faith. If I believed that, I would not be comforted by a God who is only powerful when human's act. That view brings glory to humans and not to God. That isn't the God I know. God is sovereign and he works everything according to his purposes. It isn't always about me. It is about what God wants to do.

Leon Morris said it much more eloquently: "We must feel that, while faith was commonly the prerequisite of healing, it was not absolutely necessary. Jesus is not limited by human frailty as he works the works of God."