

1037 Healing a thirty-eight-year lame and feeding five thousand (Verses refer to those in NASB unless otherwise specified, and by Whirlwind.)

If we believe absolutely what the Bible says, with logic and the consistency of the Bible, we'll get unique answers for seemingly controversial questions. We would like to ask and answer an example of such a question by using the miracle of healing the man who was lame for thirty-eight years. First, we review the rule used when selecting the seven miracles in the Gospel of John is to have life. According to Jesus, the purpose of reading the Bible is the same, to have life. This also explains the necessity of reading the Bible. Then we explain why our role in having life can only be called "actively passive". Then we describe the relevant verses of the third miracle in the Gospel of John, healing a thirty-eight-year lame, and the associated explanations. A verse mentions 'My Father is working until now,' which is what we discussed before regarding one of the controversial verses. We'll use the beginning of the Book of Genesis, logic, and the consistency of the Bible to provide the answer. Thirdly, we describe the fourth miracle in the Gospel of John which is to use five loaves and two fish to feed five thousand. We state the relevant verses and what we saw. Apparently, this miracle is very important since it is mentioned in all four Gospels. They are all based on one fact but are described with different aspects. Thus, we need to choose their union. In other words, the description must fulfill all four of them, in order not to miss anything.

1. Preface: In having life, why can we only play the role of so called actively passive?

Gospel John said clearly in John 20:30-31 how He chose the seven miracles (signs) out of so many, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." Jesus said Himself the purpose of reading the Bible, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life."(John 5:39-40) Apparently, having life is our goal, and thus is very important. Therefore, there's a necessity of reading the Bible. Furthermore, the Bible is inspired by God. Reading the Bible accurately will let us know what God wants to tell us through the Bible. Therefore, we can conclude that seeing something in the aspect of the Bible is the sufficient condition of seeing the same thing in the aspect of God, but not a necessary condition due to the fact that it is not necessarily to have all things described in the Bible. As an example, the Gospel of John doesn't record all miracles. We cannot make them equal.

We know the life can only come from God as described in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth." So, it needs the revelation of the God to make life grow. Revelation is not all supernatural. God often tells us what to do through people. For example, after Paul saw the big light, the Lord told Ananias through the vision to tell Paul as described in Acts 9:15-16, "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and

kings and the sons of Israel for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

Let us take a look at how Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:17, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." We can see in the Book of James that we can pray to get the heavenly wisdom as long as we are Christians. There is no other condition, but without specifying the time framework. Therefore, there is not any contradictions to the absolute authority of God. Because God has the absolute authority. Therefore, He is active in the matter of having life and we are passive. We can only be willingly active to follow Him. Thus, it is so called actively passive. Realize this point is really important since it is similar to say that a branch must be connected to the vine to bear fruit since the life of a branch is from the vine.

2. Healing a thirty-eight-year lame: The third miracle in Gospel John

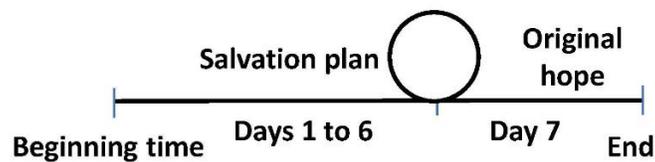
In John 5:1-9, it says, "After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day." From these verses, we can see why there were so many in there. We can also see that Jesus had mercy on that lame actively. We know that Jesus uses different ways to perform miracles depending on the situations. This time, He simply used His words just like in the beginning of the Book of Genesis described, "For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."(Psalms 33:9)

In John 5:10-15, it says, "So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk'?" But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well." We can see that the lame person became lame is because of his committing sin, since Jesus told him not to sin anymore. This is consistent with the gospel Jesus preaches. "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."(Matthew 4:17)

This is not the only time that Jesus told people not to sin. For example, it is said in John 8:4,10-11, "Straightening up, Jesus said to her (this woman has been caught in adultery), "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."" If we look at the corresponding verses of this event, we know why Jesus said so and He had mercy on her actively.

It continues to describe what happened in John 5:16-18, "For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

Based on the words, "My Father is working until now," we can only have one logical explanation for this sentence as the following figure shows, if we believe absolutely what the Bible says.



Why? In Genesis 1:1-5, it says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day." If we believe what the Bible says is absolutely true, we know this one day means the present one day since there was evening and there was morning. When we share the Book of Genesis, we'll discuss this in more detail. Please notice that the verses don't say how many days passed before there was the light. To explain the figure, because Adam chose the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it started the circle in the sixth day, which represents the 'salvation plan.' We are in the middle of the circle. That is why "My Father is working until now," not yet in rest. We don't know how big the circle is, which corresponds to the fact we don't know when the Lord comes again as said in Revelation 16:15, "...I am coming like a thief..."

After the salvation plan is completed, men will be restored to the state when created, but already with the choice of the fruit of the tree of life. God will be in rest according to the 'original hope' that Adam might choose the fruit of the tree of life. Of course, if Adam chose the fruit of the tree of life at that time, He would be in rest by the original hope and there's not the circle. From the above discussion, we can see why there is only one logical explanation. Someone may say that we could explain differently by stretching the circle as a straight line before at the end of sixth day to represent the salvation plan. However, this

is incorrect for the following reason. The last segment then represents many and unknown present one days not the seventh day. In the circle, one day represents one present day.

Regarding the true requirements of the Sabbath, it is said clearly in Isaiah 58:13-14, "If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot From doing your own pleasure on My holy day, And call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, And honor it, desisting from your own ways, From seeking your own pleasure And speaking your own word, Then you will take delight in the Lord, And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." What Jesus did was to fulfill the true requirements, not according to the law. He is the Lord even of the Sabbath as said in Mark 2:27-28, "Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

This point can also be seen from examples like the following verses. In Matthew 12:11-12, it is said, "And He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."" And in Luke 13:14-17, it says, "But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, ...And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him."

"Do not quench the Spirit,"(1 Thessalonians 5:19) the Law will be fulfilled automatically. Because the Holy Spirit is the spirit of Truth, He will not lead us to the disobedience to the Law. "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."(Matthew 5:17-18)

3. Feeding five thousand: The fourth miracle in Gospel John

The background of this event is described in John 6:1-4, "After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near." From these verses, we can see that miracles are really important, which could make people at least follow Him.

The situation at that time is stated in John 6:5-7, "Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." Well, Phillips saw the issue in the

aspect of human, and there was no solution. Jesus viewed the same event in the aspect of God, which is simply to perform a miracle.

Regarding the miracle itself, it is described clearly in John 6:8-13, "One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten."

This miracle is often mentioned and is referred to as the miracle of five loaves and two fish, which feed five thousand and even had twelve baskets of leftovers afterwards. Such large quantities of food are not out of nowhere like in creation, since they have the seed from five loaves and two fish. This reminds us the verse in John 12:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." We don't know why the lad was willing to give up the five loaves and two fish, all he had. We can guess, but we never know since the Bible doesn't mention such unimportant things. Please notice that Jesus blessed first before dividing loaves and fish. We also see the reaction of Jesus is very different from normal people as described in John 6:14-15, "Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone." Generally, a normal person may at least welcome the thought of making him a king.

Apparently, this miracle is very important since it is mentioned in all four Gospels. They are all based upon one fact but described in different aspects. Thus, we need to choose their union as they are all based upon one fact. In other words, the description must fulfill all four of them, not to miss anything. In Matthew 14:15-21, "When it was evening, ...the disciples ...said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." And He said, "Bring them here to Me." Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children." Here, it is mentioned when the miracle happened. And there were also women and children. Thus, the total number must be over five thousand. As for how many, some people guessed. As said before, the Bible doesn't say clearly, we will never know precisely how many people were fed.

In Mark 6:35-44, it says, "When it was already quite late, ...And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. ...They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up twelve full baskets of the

broken pieces, and also of the fish. There were five thousand men who ate the loaves." Here, it is mentioned how they sit in detail. No wonder that they could estimate how many. Furthermore, we can guess that only men were counted in the row, which is also consistent with the Jewish custom at that time.

Finally, in Luke 9:10-17, it says, "When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida. But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing. Now the day was ending, ...And He said to His disciples, "Have them sit down to eat in groups of about fifty each." They did so, and had them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the people. And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full." Here, the place of the miracle is given. Although He tried to withdraw by Himself, but the crowds found Him. We can also see that what He talked about before the miracle is about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.

Although the three Gospels offer a slightly different information, they are basically about the same for this miracle. From many such things, we can see why they are called the synoptic gospel.