

Notes on John 9

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Healing of the Blind Man – Chap. 9

Verses 1-3

1. What ailment did a man have whom Jesus met? How long had the man suffered from it?
2. What did the disciples think had caused the problem?
3. Special Assignment: Explain some reasons the Bible gives why disease exists.

Jesus met a man who had been blind from birth.

This chapter records another of Jesus' great miracles. It is especially amazing, because it describes great efforts by Jesus' enemies to explain it away. The result is to provide us with even more convincing evidence for the validity of His miracles, which in turn confirms His claims to be the Son of God.

Jesus passed by a man who had been blind from birth. Note the passage expressly said He was blind and had been so all his life. This will be confirmed as the story proceeds (see vv 8,18-23).

The disciples apparently held the view that suffering was the direct consequence of sin committed by the person suffering or by his immediate ancestors. So, they asked whether the man's blindness was the result of his sin or of his parents' sin. Jesus responded that it was neither. Rather, the man was an opportunity for Jesus to demonstrate the works of God.

Job's friends also held the theory that all suffering occurs because of sin committed by the one who is suffering. The book of Job extensively discusses and disproves that view. The Bible actually gives several different reasons why people suffer. Some do suffer for their own sins, as when a criminal is punished or a drunkard dies in an accident, etc. Other people suffer because those around them sin, as when a drunken father beats his family or Christians are persecuted for their faith.

But Job 1,2 shows that sometimes people who have not sinned suffer for reasons that are not obvious. It may be no one has sinned yet, but the devil is causing problems for the purpose of tempting people to sin. Finally, Gen. 3 shows that much suffering is simply the common lot of mankind since sin entered the world. When sin came, death (and the suffering that leads to it) came upon all people.

I doubt that Jesus is here saying that God caused this man to be blind simply that Jesus might heal Him and show His power. Such would bring a lifetime of suffering on the man, when there would always be plenty of people to be healed who were suffering for other reasons. It seems more likely that He was denying that anyone's immediate sin had caused the problem, thereby answering their immediate question. Then He explained that one benefit that could come from the suffering is that it gave Jesus the opportunity to heal him.

Verse 4

4. Explain the illustration Jesus used in v4. What applications can we make of it?

The need to work while we have opportunity

Jesus then explained that this was an opportunity for Him to do the work God sent Him to do. And He had to do it while He had the opportunity, because the time would come when He could not do it. This is illustrated by day and night. In the day one can do certain jobs that cannot be done at night (as farmers working in their fields, etc.). So one must do the work while the opportunity is present.

For Jesus, the opportunity to work would end when He died. That time was drawing closer, as the Jewish leaders became more persistent in opposition. He knew that soon He would no longer be “in the world,” so He had to accomplish His work while still here. Note again that He knew all along He must die.

We also need to learn that we have only limited opportunities to do what God wants us to do. Now is the day. While we are in the world we can be forgiven of sins, grow in God’s service, teach our families and spread the gospel to the lost, worship God, etc. But there will come a time when the opportunities are taken from us. Someday our children will be grown and may be beyond our reach with the gospel. Or friends may die or leave and we can no longer teach them. Or our own lives may end with us unsaved. The night will have come when it is too late to do the work God gave. We must do the work now while we can. Are we doing so?

King notes with interest Jesus’ use of the word “work.” This is interesting, because Jesus was about to heal this man on the Sabbath. Note that He did not deny this activity was “work.” Rather, He Himself called it work. What He denied was that such work was a violation of the Sabbath law.

Verse 5

5. What illustration did Jesus use again in v5, and what did it have to do with the situation?

Jesus as the light of the world

Then Jesus reminded them of another illustration He had used, saying He was the light of the world (see notes on 8:12). This referred to Him as the source of truth by which men could “see” how to receive eternal life.

However, Jesus here is about to demonstrate His power to give spiritual light by giving the blind man physical light. By giving sight to the blind man, He could prove that He was from God and would confirm His claims to be true. Hence, just as the blind man came to see physically, so we can see the way to eternal life through Jesus. And the proof that His claims are true lies in His ability to do such miracles as this. (See vv 39-41.)

Verses 6,7

6. What did Jesus do to heal the man? (Think: Why would Jesus do it this way?)
7. What similarities exist between this healing and our own salvation from sin?
8. What characteristics of miracles are demonstrated in this case?

The blind man is healed.

The manner of this miracle is somewhat unique. Jesus spat on the ground and made clay with which to anoint the man’s eyes. He then told the man to go to the pool of Siloam (meaning “sent”) and wash the clay off. When the man did so, his sight was restored.

Obviously, it was not necessary for Jesus to heal in this manner. He healed in various manners. Sometimes He touched the person who sought to be healed, but other times He was not even in the same town with them. Sometimes He sought a demonstration of faith; in other cases, people could not possibly have had faith or at least it was irrelevant. Sometimes people just touched him and were healed. He used spittle, not just in this case, but also in healing another blind man (Mark 8:23) and a deaf mute (Mark 7:33).

Why then go through this procedure, if the manner of healing was not necessary? Perhaps it served to prove to others that the manner did not matter! Anyone can see that spittle and dirt cannot heal blind men. Let others try it, and they will see it is irrelevant. Perhaps by doing various different things, all of them impossible by their own nature to heal, He was just making it more obvious that there was no magic or power in any ritualistic format. The power was in **Him**, and He could heal anyway He chose.

Perhaps also the action is symbolic of our spiritual healing. Jesus had said that He would demonstrate that He is the light of the world, meaning spiritually. To be healed spiritually, there is something we must do. We must obey Jesus' command and wash in water (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21). The man washed his eyes because that is what needed to be healed. We wash our bodies because we are completely sinful.

Yet, when we obey and are forgiven, who can say our own power healed us? The spittle, clay, and water had no real power of themselves, but the man still had to obey Jesus to be healed. So washing in water has no real power of itself to remove sin, but it is necessary as a condition to receive Jesus' forgiveness. Whether or not Jesus intentionally set up this parallel, still it is a valid parallel and illustrates clearly that meeting conditions to receive God's grace does not in any way nullify His grace. The blind man was cured by Jesus' grace, but he still had to do something to receive the cure. This same parallel is illustrated by the healing of Naaman the leper in 2 Kings 5.

Also, this healing again demonstrates the characteristics of true Bible miracles. The man was unquestionably blind (cf. vv 1,8,18-23). He was unquestionably cured (cf. vv 7,11,15). The method used to heal him could not possibly have any natural explanation. It had to be impossible by natural law. The healing was instantaneous in that it happened at the very instant Jesus implied it would (vv 7,11,15). It was complete and perfect in that the man was definitely able to see (vv 7,11,15). Modern so-called faith healers cannot possibly duplicate such true miracles.

Verses 8,9

9. What question did the people have about the man, and how was it settled (vv 8,9)?

Neighbors begin the inquiry regarding the miracle.

Following the miracle, came a very interesting interrogation procedure. People were naturally skeptical that so amazing a healing had really occurred. The investigation that followed simply strengthens the conviction of the miracle. What modern faith healer is willing to allow his healings to be investigated like this one was; and who could successfully withstand the investigation if it happened? (Cf. *A Doctor in Search of a Miracle*, which investigates the so-called miracles of Kathryn Kuhlman.)

First, the people investigated whether the man who now could see was the same man who had been blind and begging by the road. Note that the man was a local man who was known to the people in the area. People had seen him and knew his condition. Some confirmed that he was the one. Others, perhaps not yet so sure, nevertheless confirmed that he looked like the man. Then the man himself confirmed that he was the one. Later, his own parents confirmed it.

Hence, there was no substitution of a man with sight for the blind man. Such a possible natural explanation will not work. The various possible natural explanations are considered and excluded, leaving us with the only conclusion that it was a miracle as claimed.

Verses 10-12

10. What further questions did the people have (vv 10-12)?

11. How did the man answer their questions?

People then ask the man to tell how he had been healed.

In response to questions, the man described what had happened and said that it was done by a man named Jesus. Note at this point he had never seen Jesus, but only knew His name. The man's story exactly confirmed the event as previously described (see vv 6,7). Here we have the exact testimony of the man, which confirms John's original description.

The people then asked where this Jesus was, and the formerly blind man said he did not know.

Verses 13-16

12. To whom was the formerly blind man sent next? (Think: Why send him to these people?)
13. Special Assignment: What purpose or advantage is achieved by the fact John tells us all these details? Why didn't he just tell the miracle and stop the story there?
14. When had Jesus healed the man, and what issue was this certain to raise?
15. Where else in John has the issue of healing on the Sabbath Day been discussed?
16. What did the Pharisees want to know first from the blind man? How did he answer?
17. What objection did some Pharisees raise to Jesus, and what response did others give (v16)? What effect resulted within the group?

The Pharisees begin their investigation.

The investigation then was turned over to the Pharisees. We are not told why the people brought the story to the Pharisees. Perhaps some wanted to convince the Pharisees to believe; perhaps others thought the Pharisees could disprove the miracle. In any case, the Pharisees were the alleged experts in the law, and were generally Jesus' enemies. They would no doubt be interested in the case. And if there was any way to disprove it, they would have done so. If they could not disprove it, how then could anyone today disprove it 2000 years later when the witnesses cannot be interrogated?

The Pharisees asked the man how he received sight, and the man confirmed the story again. Note that there was no doubt that the man could see. Even the Pharisees admitted he could see. The issue was not whether he could see. That was admitted by all. The only question was how it happened and whether this was the same man.

Some Pharisees immediately argued this could not have been done by a man of God, since the healing, again, was on the Sabbath. But other people argued properly that the very occurrence of the miracle proved it was from God. Such miracles could not be done except by the power of God and by One who was from God. Hence, division existed.

This repeats issues already discussed through John's account (see notes elsewhere).

The issue of healing on the Sabbath had been discussed in 5:9-18; 7:21-24.

The purpose of Jesus' miracles being a sign to validate His claims and prove He is from God has been discussed repeatedly (see 3:2; 5:36; 7:31; etc.).

The division caused by Jesus, with some people believing and others disbelieving is discussed in 7:43 and elsewhere.

Again the proper approach is to begin with the confirming proof of the miracles and then reason to the conclusions that follow. Do not begin with preconceived ideas and reject the evidence.

Verse 17

18. When they asked the blind man what conclusion he had reached about Jesus, what did he answer (v17)? What does this show about the purpose and effect of miracles?

The healed man confesses Jesus to be a prophet.

The Jews then asked the blind man what he thought about Jesus for having healed him. The blind man said Jesus must be a prophet. Many Old Testament prophets, such as Moses, Elijah, Elishah, etc., had done miracles to confirm they were prophets sent by God. The blind man, having personally witnessed the miracle Jesus did on him, concluded Jesus must likewise be a prophet.

Note the progression of faith in those who are converted (cf. the woman of Samaria in chap. 4). In v11 the blind man called Jesus simply "a man called Jesus." Here he calls him, not just a man, but a prophet. We will see how his faith grows as the story proceeds.

This demonstrates the purpose of miracles: to give evidence as the basis of faith.

Verses 18-23

19. Whom did the Pharisees question next, and what question did they ask?
20. Special Assignment: Did the Pharisees at any point express doubt whether or not the man could now see? Why is this important?
21. What information did the parents give (v20), and how does this confirm the miracle?
22. What had been the Pharisees' intent in asking these questions, and what resulted instead?
23. What part of the Pharisees' questions did the parents refuse to answer, and who did they say should answer it?
24. Why did the parents refuse to answer?

The Jews question the man's parents regarding his healing.

In their efforts to disprove the miracle, the Jews then sought to determine if the man had really been born blind. They called his parents and asked them whether he had truly been born blind and how he could now see. Note that the proceedings here take on the form of a judicial hearing. Witnesses are called and questioned by authorities in the law. In this case, however – as was usual when the Jewish leaders dealt with Jesus – the authorities were determined to disprove Jesus, rather than to determine the truth. Yet, they must follow the form of an honest investigation. The results give us a strong confirmation of the miracle by men who sought to disprove it!

The man's parents testified that this man really was their son, and that he was born blind. However, they were unwilling to state any conclusion about how he was healed, because they feared the consequences. The Jews had said that anyone who confessed Jesus as Christ would be put out of the synagogue. So, the parents simply told the Jews that their son was old enough to speak for himself, so they should ask him how he was healed.

However, note the value of the parents' testimony, in confirming the miracle. The enemies were trying to discredit the miracle, but instead we now have proof that this was the same man and that he had been born blind. There is no possibility that the blind man had been secretly replaced by another man who was not blind. Nor can there be any doubt that the man really had been blind. His own parents testified that this very man had been blind from birth.

And note especially that there was no doubt that the man could now see. Everyone agreed to that. Even the enemies said, "How does he now see?" They made no effort to deny that the man could now see. That was undeniable. They have also now eliminated the possibility of mistake regarding whether the man had been born blind. So, the proceedings at this point have established that the man was born blind and could now see, as a result of something Jesus did. The only remaining question is how it happened and what that meant about Jesus' identity. Hence, the miracle was substantiated by the efforts to disprove it!

What modern faith healer could successfully withstand such investigation? Oral Roberts even admitted that healing blind people was especially hard for him, and this man had been **born** blind!

The parents in this story illustrate many people today who are compromisers and middle-of-the-roaders. The evidence was plain before them. If anyone was convinced by the miracle, it should have been they. But they were afraid to accept the consequences, so they refused to take a stand. Being cast out of the synagogue was a serious consequence. It would have made them outcasts among the Jewish people, including their closest friends and relatives. But that society was predominantly Jewish, which would leave them with severe personal and even financial consequences. Being a disciple in those early days carried heavy consequences for many people.

Many people today do likewise when confronted with the evidence of what God's word requires of them. They see the proof and cannot deny it. Yet they know that major sacrifices will be

required, if they embrace the teaching and commit themselves to it. So, instead, they make excuses to postpone a decision or put the responsibility on others.

And note also the strength of the Jewish opposition already at this point. Jesus had made little public effort to claim to be the Christ; He was laying the groundwork by His teaching and miracles. Yet, the Jews had already decreed that those who would declare Him to be the Christ would suffer severe consequences. This also shows the preconceived views with which they approached this investigation. They were already convinced He was a fraud. Their goal was, not to seek the truth, but to disprove that Jesus was from God. This same attitude is what led them to kill Jesus and then to severely persecute His disciples through the early history of the church.

Verses 24,25

25. What accusation did the Pharisees next make against Jesus?

26. What response did the blind man give? Why was this a good response?

The Jews demand that the blind man acknowledge Jesus to be a sinner.

The rulers then called back the man who had been blind. He had been healed. The rulers could not deny that. But they refused to accept that this proved Jesus was from God. They affirmed instead that they knew Jesus was a sinner. Presumably, this was based on their earlier criticisms of Him for healing on the Sabbath.

The expression “Give God the glory” is used similarly in Joshua 7:19; 1 Samuel 6:5; Ezra 10:11. It appears to be a form of charge to one who was testifying in a trial, that he was to glorify God by confessing the truth.

This makes clear that these rulers, though they were investigating the healing, they were not doing so with an open mind. Their minds were made up that Jesus was a sinner. They were just looking for ways to justify their pre-existing conclusion despite the evidence. If they could break down the blind man’s testimony, they would feel justified in their views and could discredit Jesus before the people.

The blind man refused to admit Jesus was a sinner, but he also knew little of Jesus’ life. So, he could not, from personal knowledge of Jesus’ life, conclude whether Jesus was a good man or a sinner. But instead, he called attention to the evidence that did exist: He had been blind, but now he could see. Here again is the clear testimony of the blind man that he had been blind and had been healed.

This is the right approach! Instead of starting with a preconceived idea about Jesus or about what we want or what we are already convinced to be true, we should start with the evidence and then follow it to the proper conclusion. The Jews started with the conclusion that Jesus was not who He claimed to be, and then disregarded the evidence of His miracles. Honest people began with the evidence and reason from there to the conclusion that follows. If so, it follows (and the blind man will soon come to this conclusion) that Jesus could not have done the miracle at all, if God had not been with Him.

Verses 26,27

27. What question did the Pharisees ask the man again (v26), and how did he answer?

28. Special Assignment: Is it ever right to refuse to answer religious questions? If so, when?

The Jews again ask how Jesus had healed the man.

The Pharisees then tried to cross-examine the blind man’s story again. They asked him again how Jesus opened his eyes and exactly what Jesus did. By this time it was obvious that they did not want to know the truth. They were looking for loose ends to unravel. They were only asking in hopes they could find something in the story to discredit. Like Baalam, they wanted to hear more in hopes the story would change and they could find something that fit what they wanted to hear.

So, the blind man explained that he had already told them his story, but they would not accept it. They obviously were not going to accept his testimony, unless he said what they were determined to hear. He asked them why they wanted to hear it again. Did they want to be convinced, so they would become Jesus' disciples?

In saying this, he raised, indirectly (and probably somewhat sarcastically), the issue of their motives. If they did not want to be Jesus' disciples, then why keep going over and over the story? The facts were clear. Their only possible motive was to discredit the evidence.

Note that, when people have been given a straightforward, honest answer to a question, but then they repeatedly ask the same question again, it is proper to call into question their motives for asking. If they have been given the proof, but they don't accept it yet ask for more proof, then what is the point in continuing to repeat what they have already heard? It is proper to question them and throw the responsibility back in their laps to give answer. Challenge them to show what was wrong with the answer or why they don't accept it. But nothing is to be gained by going around and around the same circle.

Verses 28,29

29. What did the Jews claim regarding Moses' in contrast to Jesus?

The Jews claim to follow Moses, not Jesus.

When the blind man pointed out that the Jews had no sensible motive for their continued investigation, they reviled him saying they were disciples of Moses, not of Jesus. They were convinced Moses was from God, but could not tell where Jesus was from.

The issue of where Jesus is from had been raised repeatedly in discussions with Him and about Him. Some claimed He could not even be a prophet, let alone the Christ, because He was born or grew up in the wrong place – see notes on 7:27,41,42,52. But the greater question was where He was from spiritually. Was He sent by God from heaven, as He had repeatedly claimed? See on 8:14; 19:9; etc.

Interestingly, Jesus had already told them that, if they believed in Moses they also had to believe in Him since Moses testified of Him (5:45-47). There was no conflict between Jesus and Moses. It was not an either/or situation. One who was a true disciple of Moses should also accept Jesus, because Jesus' teaching fulfilled Moses' prophecies.

The Jews said they did not know where Jesus had come from, yet the evidence was clear. They were just denying the evidence. The blind man proceeded to show them so in the following verses.

Verses 30-33

30. In your own words, state the blind man's argument in vv 30-33.

31. List other ***passages*** that show whether or not God answer prayers for sinners.

The blind man teaches the truth to the supposed legal scholars.

The blind man then returned to the evidence, as all honest people should do. The Jews had said they believed in Moses but did not know where Jesus was from. Yet the evidence for Jesus was of the same nature as the evidence for Moses and even stronger. What proof did these people have that Moses was from God? The major proof was in the miracles Moses did in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness.

The healed man likewise said it was amazing that they did not know where Jesus was from, yet He had done a miracle that even Moses had never done. Jesus had healed the man of blindness he had suffered since birth! This was unknown from the beginning of the world. Jesus could not possibly have done this had his teachings not been from God.

In making this statement, the blind man stated a principle elsewhere confirmed in Scripture: God does not hear sinners, but He will hear one who does God's will and worships Him.

Though this statement is here made by an uninspired man, yet it is confirmed in James 5:16; 1 John 3:22; Proverbs 28:9; 15:8,29; Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 1:15-17; 59:1,2, etc.

This does not mean God is not aware of the prayers of any other people (cf. Acts 10:31). But people in sin do not have the promise and assurance God will hear, as do those who are faithful. A sincere lost person who wants to serve God may, in response to prayer, receive an opportunity to learn the truth. But he is never told to pray for forgiveness (as some people teach), and he has no assurance God will give him anything in answer to his prayer, except an opportunity to know the truth.

In this context, calling on God refers to a prophet who asks God to do a miracle, and God hearing refers to God doing the miracle as in 1 Kings 18:25-37. How can the healed man's statement be harmonized with the fact that people who were not faithful to God had, at times, done miracles, such as Baalam, Cornelius' household, etc.? The answer is in the purpose of miracles. The miracles confirmed the **word** — the message being preached, including the claims of the teachers (Mark 16:20; John 5:36; 20:30,31; Acts 2:22; 14:3; 2 Corinthians 12:11,12; Hebrews 2:3,4; 1 Kings 18:36-39). They did not confirm that everything the man **did** in his personal life was right, but only that his religious **teachings and claims** were valid. But Jesus' teachings and claims were that He was the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Christ, Lord of all, none could prove Him guilty of sin, etc. These other people, who did miracles despite not being faithful to God, never made such claims. Those miracles simply proved that the message they spoke was true.

Note how the blind man's conviction and courage grew stronger as he saw that the Jews could not overthrow the evidence. He had stated Jesus was a prophet (v17). Here he stated plainly that Jesus was from God (vv 30-33). He even had the courage to rebuke these Jewish legal experts for not seeing this.

Verse 34

32. How did the Jews react to the blind man's argument?

33. What evidence did the Pharisees find to disprove the miracle? What did they demonstrate about their own attitudes? (Think: Who today agrees that people are born in sin?)

34. Application: If modern "miracles" were examined in this way, what would happen?

The rulers reject the man who had been healed.

The rulers responded with the bigotry typical of prejudiced people determined at all costs to defend their position regardless of the facts. They had earlier claimed that, since none of them believed in Jesus, it followed that no one else should believe in Him either (7:45-49). Others who disagreed were ignorant and accursed.

They here repeated that approach with the blind man. They had been totally unable to refute his evidence or find any flaw any it. Yet, they concluded that he was born in sin and could not possibly teach them anything, so they cast him out of the meeting. And all this despite the evidence! The evidence is irrelevant; just don't disagree with us because we are always right! Such arrogance!

The claim that the man was born in sin may refer back to the concept discussed in 9:2,3. The idea was that the man was born blind, therefore he must have committed some horrible sin. While the reasoning may not be the same, we have people today, such as those who hold the Calvinist and Catholic concept of original sin, who claim that all babies are born guilty of sin. But who is it that here believes and defends the view of a baby born in sin? It is not Jesus and not faithful teachers, but those who are manifestly evil and in error. It became a way to avoid admitting they were wrong and others were right, despite the evidence.

For further discussion of original sin and inherited depravity, see our article on these subjects on our Bible Instruction web site at www.gospelway.com/instruct/.

Verses 35-38

35. Who found the blind man and what question did He ask (v35)?
36. What question did the man ask? How did Jesus reply, and how did the man respond?
37. How can this passage be harmonized with such verses as Matt. 4:10; Acts 10:25,26?)
38. Trace the progress of the blind man's concept of who Jesus was.

Jesus again speaks to the man who had been healed.

The blind man, who had been healed, had been cast out of the gathering of the Pharisees. When Jesus heard this, he found Him and asked if he believed in the Son of God. The man had never seen Jesus, since he could not see till after Jesus had sent him to the pool to wash. His conclusions about Jesus, as stated to the Pharisees, showed that He knew Jesus was a prophet sent from God. But he did not yet realize the fullness of Jesus' nature. So, Jesus found the man with the intent of teaching him further. (The account implies that, though he had not seen Jesus, the blind man recognized Him when he spoke to Him again, perhaps by His voice, etc.)

When Jesus asked if the man believed in the Son of God, the man asked who He was so he could believe in Him. Jesus' question was obviously asked to get this response. Jesus then stated that He Himself was the One. The man confessed Jesus, saying that he believed and he then worshipped Jesus. Note the power of the man's conviction. As a result of witnessing this great miracle, the man was ready to accept as Divine whomever was indicated by the One who healed him. He was certain the One who had healed him was a prophet from God, so the healed man could be sure that He would speak the truth.

This is a further major claim of Jesus recorded by John. In this case, Jesus did the miracle that confirmed His claim before He even made the claim. The statement of who He is followed the giving of the evidence that the claim was true. The claim was that He is the Son of God. Here then is an instance in which Jesus directly stated this claim.

And note that the man received the ability to see physically in order that he might be able to see spiritually something even more important. He could now see that Jesus was the Son of God. See vv 39-41 to learn more about this.

The healed man confesses and worships Jesus.

The formerly blind man then confessed his acceptance of Jesus' claim. This is a clear example of confession of Jesus. Other such examples and related statements are found in Romans 10:9,10; Matthew 10:32; 16:15-18; John 1:49; 4:42; Acts 8:36-38; 1 Timothy 6:12,13; 1 John 4:15. The Jews had said that such confession of Jesus would lead to people being cast out of the synagogue (John 9:22), and this is why some people later would not confess Him (cf. John 12:42,43). Hence, confessing Jesus was an outward act that separated Jesus' disciples from those who were not disciples. Confessing Jesus is likewise necessary today, before one is baptized, in order to become His disciple.

Surely, no one would deny that this man did confess Christ, but notice that he did so simply by saying, "Lord, I believe." Some today become technical in demanding some specific form for confessing Christ. They may require one to speak a complete statement, such as "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Or, "I confess Jesus is Lord and Christ." I have even known of people who mistakenly concluded that their baptism was not valid, because in their confession they simply said, "I do," when asked if they believed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God. But this and other Bible examples of confession demonstrate that there is no required specific form of confession. Confessing Christ may take different forms. Here, one confessed simply by saying, "Lord, I believe." Clearly, he meant that He believed Jesus to be the Son of God, but he

never used the phrase “Son of God” nor the word “Christ.” The essence of confession is a statement with the mouth that clearly affirms acceptance that Jesus is all who He claims to be.

The blind man went further and worshipped Jesus. The word “worship” can, in some contexts, be used for bowing as honor in a secular sense to a civil ruler. But when offered as an act of religious honor, it was not to be offered to anyone but to God. Peter refused to allow Cornelius to bow in religious honor to him (Acts 10:25,26). Angels likewise refused to accept worship (Rev. 19:10; 22:8,9). We are forbidden to worship any created thing (Rom. 1:25,26). Jesus refused to worship the devil, and said worship should be given only to God (Matt. 4:10; Cf. Ex. 20:3-6; 34:14; Rev. 9:20; etc.).

Yet, here Jesus allowed the blind man to worship Him, and the significance is clearly religious honor. He worshiped Jesus as the “Son of God,” not as some mere earthly ruler. Many similar examples exist in which Jesus accepted worship. Before His resurrection, Jesus accepted worship in Matt 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; Mark 5:6, as well as here in John 9:38. After His resurrection, He accepted worship in Matt. 28:9,17; Luke 24:52; and John 20:28,29. In fact, Heb. 1:6 says angels are commanded to worship Him. Jesus’ acceptance of worship, in light of His teaching, means that He was claiming Deity. The only alternative is that He was a total hypocrite, and not even a good man. Yet, these alternatives are untenable in this context, because His miracle confirms His claims. He did a miracle to prove He was teaching truth, then He claimed to be the Son of God, then He allowed a man to worship Him as the Son of God. Therefore, He is the Son of God, God in the flesh, possessing Deity even as does the Father and the Holy Spirit. He receives honor just as the Father does – 5:23. Once again, John is demonstrating the magnitude of who Jesus really is.

And then note the progression in the healed man’s understanding of who Jesus is. As with the Samaritan woman in John 4, his faith grew as the story progressed. First, he stated Jesus was “a man” (v11), then “a prophet” (v17), sent “from God” (v33). Finally, he recognized Jesus as “the Son of God” (vv 35-38).

Verses 39-41

39. Why had Jesus come into the world, and what did this demonstrate about the Jews’ character (vv 39-41)? (Think: Explain this illustration.)

Physical blindness compared to spiritual blindness

Jesus had not come into the world to condemn man, as He had said earlier in 3:17 (though when He comes again He will condemn men for sin). However, judgment will result in the sense that people who do not accept His teaching will stand condemned because they remain in their sins. Men must believe in Him and obey His teachings to be forgiven (John 8:32). If they do not believe, they will die in their sins (John 8:24). Hence, acceptance of Him becomes the criteria which separates people who are pleasing to God from those who are not. This results in judgment on those who do not accept Him.

He expressed this in terms of seeing versus not seeing. Those who accept Him see the light spiritually. He had introduced His healing of the blind man by saying that He is the light of the world (v5), the source of true knowledge, righteousness, and spiritual enlightenment. Even physically blind people can have this enlightenment. He proved He could give this spiritual light by giving physical sight to the blind man.

Hence, those who do not see (physically) can through Him see (spiritually). But people who reject Him, though they have physical eyesight, will yet not see (spiritually). (Or perhaps the point is that people who **claim** to see, like the Pharisees, will actually remain spiritually blind. Only when we admit that we are in spiritual darkness will we begin to search for the light and accept it — see below.)

The Pharisees (who had rejected the blind man) responded by asking if He was including them among the blind. Jesus responded with one of His typical spiritual statements. He said

that, if they were blind, they could be freed from their sins. Since they claimed to not be blind, their sins remained.

The point is that, if they would admit that they had been wrong and spiritually blind — i.e., if they would repent of their sins and of their rejection of Him — then they could be forgiven. But as long as they continued to claim that they had sight, they would remain in sin. I.e., as long as they continued to claim that they had the truth and other people, like the blind man, were in error, they would refuse to recognize their own sins. So, they would continue in the sins.

The only way to remove sin is to admit that you have been in darkness and error. Then there is hope that you will search for the light and be saved. These Pharisees would not admit they were in darkness, so they remained in darkness.

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