

John 9:1-41
Mixing Mud, Anointing & Healing on the Sabbath

Introduction: John wrote his Gospel as an evangelistic tract. His goal was to persuade unconverted Jews, living throughout the Roman Empire, to believe in Jesus. John brought to light the unreasonable, hardened opposition of the Jewish leadership. As we read this, ask yourself, how did John design this information to cause an unbeliever to believe in Jesus?

******What unusual way did Jesus heal a blind man (9:1-7)?** Jesus made a mud pie out of spit and then applied it as a sort of salve to the blind man's eyes.

Based on past healings, the mud process was not critical to the healing itself. For example, Jesus earlier even healed the official's son by remote control (without being there). Why was all this "ooey-gooey" necessary (9:1-7)? John did here not state the reason Jesus did it this way. As the narrative develops, we shall see that it was designed to have maximum impact on the religious leaders of Judaism. It was an in your face action designed to make them pay attention, take Jesus' claims seriously, and decide about Him.

Secondary Spiritual Application (9:1): This blind man had been born physically blind. The fact of the matter is that all people are born spiritually blind.

What does the question asked by the disciples in 9:2 reveal about their theology? Their theology was that there is an immediate cause and effect relationship between sin and sickness. This is the same understanding that Job's miserable counselors had, who were certain that Job's calamities came upon him because of some sin in his life. It is amazing that no lesson had been learned from the book of Job!

Is this an absurd question (9:2)? Why or why not? Compare 5:14. There often is a connection between sin and sickness. For example, venereal disease can cause woman's baby to go blind after birth.¹ And, Jesus said to a man he had healed:

ESV **John 5:14b** "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."

In any event, all sickness is ultimately the result of Adam's original sin.

Based on 9:3, why did God cause/allow this man to be born blind? In this case, it was to display the works of God in the man.

Worldview: John seems to think that the whole world revolved around Jesus! According to this, God decreed that this man be born blind expressly so that Jesus could heal him. God manipulates history to glorify His name.²

¹ Gonorrhea.

² Brown, *John*, 371.

Application: You never know what God will do in and through suffering in your life. One sure benefit:

ESV **Romans 8:28** . . . we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

What was Jesus' point in 9:4-5? The point is that there was a special urgency in performing the works of God.³

Since Jesus is the light, when did the darkness come that He spoke of (9:4-5)? Since day was the time Jesus was in the world, night refers to the dark time after Jesus was crucified and left the earth.

Jesus left 2,000 years ago. Has it been dark ever since (9:4-5)? There was immediacy to Jesus' words. The darkness only lasted a short time since Jesus sent the Holy Spirit in His place:

ESV **John 14:12** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

ESV **John 16:7** . . . it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

The Light: The healing of this man was not just another miracle, it was sign that the long-awaited Messiah really is Jesus. It was designed to shed light on those who were in darkness.⁴

ESV **John 1:5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The idea of the Messiah bringing light into the world is likely derived from the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah:

ESV Isaiah 49:6b I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

Literary Structure: The healing of the blind man was an dramatic instance of the light coming into the darkness. The narrative begins with the blind man who gains his sight, and ends with the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees.

John had to inform his readers that Siloam means sent. What does this tell us about his original readers? It tells us that they were not familiar with the local language. John wrote to unbelieving Jews living outside the Promised Land.

³ Carson, *John*, 352.

⁴ Carson, *John*, 363.

******What three questions did the blind man's neighbors have (9:8-12)?** They wanted to know:

1. Is this really the same man?⁵
2. How did it happen?
3. Where is the man who did it?

Suppose someone you've known since birth had a life-long disability and then suddenly was healed, with no doubt of its genuineness; what would you think about the person who worked the healing? No matter how you'd feel, wanting to kill him would probably be your last inclination. I think we would all agree that there is something wrong with anyone who would want to kill such a person, yet that ultimately was the inclination of the corrupt religious leaders.

When they asked the man how it happened, what did he say (9:11)? He retold the spit-mud plaster anointing. We will hear about Jesus' chosen method of healing over and over this chapter.

How did the beggar describe Jesus in 9:11? At this point, he simply said that he was "the man called Jesus".

******What division did this healing create among the Pharisees (9:13-17)?** Some said he was not from God since He didn't keep their interpretations of what it meant to not work on the Sabbath, and others said no sinner could do what Jesus did, 9:16.

Arrogance: It never occurred to some of these Pharisees that the problem may have been their interpretation of the Sabbath.

ESV Proverbs 26:12 Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Why did the neighbors bring this man to the Pharisees (9:13)? They knew something of major religious significance had happened, and understandably wanted the religious leaders to know about it. They did the right thing.

What new information did John give us in 9:14? The new information is that the healing took place on a Sabbath day. This is key to the whole problem.

In 9:15, why were the Pharisees so interested in "how" the man had been healed? There were three problems as they saw it. The first was that the healing was done on the Sabbath (they said that only life-saving healings could occur on the Sabbath). The other two were involved making mud⁶ and then anointing the man's eyes, both of which evidently were considered to be work.

⁵ The Greek behind "I am the man" is *ego eimi*, an emphatic way of identifying himself. It is also similar to how Jehovah God identified Himself to Moses in the burning bush. Sometimes when Jesus identified Himself with *ego eimi*, it did not necessarily mean He was claiming to be God. Other times, it clearly did mean He was claiming to be God.

⁶ A violation of their rule that one could not knead on the Sabbath (Brown. *John*, 373).

Jesus already knew that doing this on a Sabbath would upset the Pharisees (9:14-16).

Since this man had been blind from birth, why didn't Jesus just wait one more day to heal him? Jesus was pressing His case. He was calling their hand. What He did might be compared to a legal case that keeps getting appealed until it reaches the Supreme Court.

Sabbath Breaker? Jesus was the only man who perfectly kept the Law of Moses. What Jesus did break were various wrong applications of the Law that the Pharisees had developed.

How did the blind man describe Jesus in 9:17? This time, he said that Jesus was a prophet.

Back in 9:11 he simply said that Jesus was a man. There appears to be a growing realization by the man of who Jesus was.

******Why were the man's parents afraid to answer the Jews (9:18-23)?** They knew that the Jews⁷ had already predetermined that if anyone believed Jesus to be the Christ, he should be excommunicated from his synagogue.

ESV **John 7:13** . . . for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

Application (9:22): Scripture tells us that the fear of man is a snare (Pr 29:25). The author, John, realized that many of his Jewish readers were afraid to believe in Jesus because they feared other people.

ESV **John 12:42-43** . . . many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

Fair Warning: John wanted his readers to know that if they became disciples of Jesus, they too could expect to be cast out of the synagogue.

Bad Parents: It's sad that the parents sort of threw their son under the bus: "He is of age; ask him." I get the impression that there were probably not the greatest parents in the world. Imagine being born blind, and on top of that having parents like this.

Why did the Jews haul the parents in for questioning (9:18)? They did not believe he had really been born blind before he received his sight. Since they wouldn't believe in Jesus, they couldn't accept the fact that He had done a major miracle.

Disturbing Testimony: The Jews must have been disappointed with the parents' testimony because their witness established that a notable miracle had indeed taken place.⁸

⁷ "The Jews" (9:18) refers here not to Jewish people in general, but specifically to the religious leadership, which included the Pharisees.

⁸ Carson, *John*, 369.

******What problem did the Jews run into the second time they questioned the blind man (9:24-34)?** Ever heard of the game, blind man's bluff? You might say the blind man called their bluff! He went on the offensive against them, becoming a hostile witness. He became openly antagonistic (I like this guy!).

The Jews made a statement in 9:24. What did they expect the man to say in response to "Give God glory"? This was like saying, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" Earlier when Jesus healed a lame man and told him to walk around with his bedding, the man turned Jesus in to the officials for breaking the Sabbath (Jn 5:15-16). Perhaps they were hoping he would say something incriminating about Jesus, evidence that Jesus was indeed a sinner, or at least distance himself from Jesus. They wanted to flush out some dirt.

How did the blind man cut right to the point in 9:25? He said he didn't know if Jesus were a sinner or not, but he did know that Jesus had supernaturally healed him. This remained a stubborn fact that wouldn't go away.

Why, in 9:26, did they ask him the same old things again? They were cornered and desperately seeking some way to discredit Jesus. They were hoping to find a new piece of evidence, previously overlooked, that would provide a way out of their dilemma.

Incredulous that the Jews wanted to hear it all again, the blind man asked, "Do you also want to become his disciples?" (9:27). Do you think the blind man asked this sincerely or sarcastically? This guy was no dummy. I think he'd had enough of their foolishness and asked it sarcastically. Notice also their response; they "reviled" him and accused him of being a disciple of Jesus (9:28).

The Jews claimed to be disciples of Moses, since they knew God spoke to Moses (9:28-29). What did they say about where Jesus came from? Earlier they rejected Jesus because they thought he came from Nazareth (7:50-52), so they thought they knew where he came from geographically. This time when they say they didn't know where Jesus came from they meant metaphysically. They did not know if he was from God or Satan.

As regards the Jews being disciples of Moses, Jesus already told them:

ESV **John 5:46** If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.

How did the blind man go on the offensive in 9:30-33? He mocked their self-professed ignorance, then drew the conclusion that even a blind man could see that only someone who came from God could open the eyes of a man born blind.

What progression of faith can be seen in 9:30-33? He clearly believed that Jesus was a man to whom God listened and was thus "from God".

Paradox: There are none so blind as those who will not see. The blind man could now clearly see both physically and spiritually, and it was the Jews who were the truly blind ones.

What did the man point out in 9:32 that showed the magnitude of Jesus' miracle? It was one thing for a blind man to be cured, but no one ever heard of a man born blind being healed. The Pharisees had forgotten that one of the signs of the coming of the Messiah was that the blind would receive their sight (Isa 29:18, 35:5, 42:7).⁹

What brilliant argument did the Jews produce to counter the man's logic (9:34)? They had no counter argument. Unable to refute him, they insulted him and threw him out of their offices.

Application: Have you ever wished you could perform miracles to prove to unbelievers that Jesus is true? A major miracle was done by Jesus and it did not cause these men to believe.

Comparing 9:34 back to 9:2, what made them conclude that he blind man was "born in utter sin" (9:34)? They evidently concluded that God had punished him with blindness because of his family's extreme sinfulness.

*****What progression of faith do we see in the blind man (9:35-41)?** He declared that he believed Jesus to be the Son of Man and then he worshipped him (9:38). Remember that this was the first time the man had actually seen Jesus (9:35-37)!

Jesus asked him if he believed in the Son of Man (9:38). What is the significance of that title? It is drawn from a prophetic passage in the writings of Daniel. It was a Messianic title given to the man upon whom the Father had put his approval. Jesus was the one who uniquely reveals God to mankind.

The man "worshipped" Jesus (9:38). What does that tell us about who he believed Jesus to be? To worship anyone other than God would be idolatry.

Worship or Homage? The Greek behind "worshipped" is *proskuneo*; *pros* means toward and *kuneo* means to kiss. The root idea is to fall down or bow down; it conveys an attitude of reverence or submission.¹⁰ Sometimes subjects would "worship" their king, meaning simply that they showed homage to him, not that they actually believed him to be a god. It is possible that at this stage the man was merely showing allegiance to Jesus, not yet actually worshipping Him as God. However, John has made it clear since chapter one was Jesus is God and worthy of our worship. Thus, this record is one more example of someone beginning to draw the correct conclusion about Jesus. The culmination of right thinking is seen in Thomas:

ESV **John 20:28** Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

What Jesus said in 9:39 is full of double meanings. Who would venture to explain it? When light shines into the darkness, some are made to see and others are blinded.¹¹ The saving of some entails the condemnation of others.

⁹ Carson, *John*, 375.

¹⁰ Thayer, *Lexicon*, #4352.

¹¹ Carson, *John*, 359.

ESV **Matthew 6:23** but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Why did some of the Pharisees speak up in 9:40? They evidently suspected that Jesus spoke with reference to them as the blind ones.

Read 9:41. Since the Pharisees had physically seen the miraculous healing of the blind man, and yet still refused to see that Jesus was from God, where did that leave them spiritually? It left them in the dark under the guilt of their sin.

ESV **John 8:24** I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.

All these learned Pharisees were unable to deter the blind man from believing in Jesus.

Why was that? The man had experienced the real thing. Imagine you just finished eating an apple pie, when someone come along, sits down next to you, and says, “I don’t believe in apple pie”. Is he going to be able to convince you that it doesn’t exist?

Someone once gave this scenario: imagine trying to explain color to a world filled with blind people. You couldn’t prove that color exists. The blind could even offer theoretical proof as to why color can’t exist. A child with eyesight would know more about color than the greatest intellectual ever could.¹²

So What?

According to Jesus, why was this man born blind (9:3)? It was to display the works of God, not only to those who saw it, but to us too!

Exactly how was the work of God displayed in his life? 9:7, 38. There are actually two miracles here, two works of God. One was his physical healing. The other was him coming to faith in Jesus. His physical healing was a means to an end.

What progression of faith is evident in this blind man? His thoughts on Jesus went from that He is a man, to He is a prophet, to He is from God, to He is the Son of Man.

Based on John 9, who is Jesus? He is a miracle worker, a prophet, Someone to whom God listened, from God, the Son of Man, God in human form who deserves our worship. John wanted his readers to understand that Jesus was Jehovah God in human form. Such a claim would force his readers to decide if Jesus were God, an evil deceiver, or a madman.

Based on John 9, what does God want from you? He wants you to believe in Jesus and worship Him as your God.

What social price did the healed man pay for becoming a disciple of Jesus? He was reviled and cast out of the religious system (9:22, 29, 34).

¹² Source unknown.

Perspective: The earliest copy of John dates back to A.D. 120. If all this is a lie, it is a first-century lie, and John made it up. Either this happened, or it didn't. Either John was there with Jesus, or he wasn't. If John were a liar, what would his motives have been? It brought everyone else imprisonment and early deaths. It didn't get him wealth or power or popularity. Who would die for a lie, knowing it was a lie?

John wrote this to unbelieving Jews to cause them to believe. How does what John wrote in this passage about the leadership explain to them about why Jesus was rejected? The problem was not with Jesus, it was with the leaders. They were not of God. It was ultimately not a head problem, it was a heart problem.

Overall Lesson: This chapter shows the triumph of the light over the darkness.

**** = Ask this question before reading the text. This will engage people's minds and focus their attention.

- You can hear this lesson being taught at SermonAudio.com/NTRF.
- Stephen E. Atkerson NTRF.org Revised 12/22/2019