

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Take God's Word with me this morning and turn to John chapter 9.
2. We are returning to our study of the Gospel of John and this morning looking at John 9:1-12.
3. We completed the dialogue between Jesus and the religious leaders which took place "in the treasury...in the temple" (8:20) in Jerusalem.
4. Read John 9:1-12.
5. Blindness was a common occurrence in the ancient world just as it is today.
6. Today there are 42 million people blind in the world while 1,100,000 legally blind in the US.
7. This chapter addresses two kinds of blindness: physical and spiritual.
8. Jesus addressed and healed both kinds of blindness during His earthly ministry.
9. All of us were spiritually blind before coming to Christ.
10. Like the hymn writer said, "I once was blind but now I see."
11. To see is to have your spiritual eyes opened.

12. The text begins with “As He passed by.”

13. It is here where we are given *the setting*.

**I. The Setting (v.1a)**

The last scene of chapter 8 tells of...

**A. Jesus Going Out of the Temple**

He had said He was the “I AM” (v.58)

As a result of this statement they “picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself” (v.59)

Now chapter 9, verse 1 says...

**B. As He Passed By**

D.A. Carson says this phrase is “sufficiently vague as a connector that very little precise information about time and place can be deduced.” <sup>1</sup>

Others say “this incident may have taken place as Jesus was leaving the temple area.” <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 361.

<sup>2</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997). Jn 9:1.

R.C.H. Lenski says, “This is the Sabbath (9:14), hardly the same day on which the Jews sought to stone him.”<sup>3</sup>

D.A. Carson again says, “Though the phrase is somewhat vague in 9:1, we must suppose Jesus is still in Jerusalem, presumably at some point between the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication.”<sup>4</sup>

John continues in verse 1 by saying Jesus saw...

C. A Man Blind from Birth (v.1b)

Besides through His omniscience, John doesn't tell us how Jesus and His disciples knew this man had been blind from birth.

William Barclay says, “He must have been a well-known character, for the disciples knew all about him.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961). 674.

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 361.

<sup>5</sup> *The Gospel of John : Volume 2*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study

He further says, “THIS is the only miracle in the gospels in which the sufferer is said to have been afflicted from his birth. In *Acts* we twice hear of people who had been helpless from their birth (the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple in Acts 3:2, and the cripple at Lystra in Acts 14:8), but this is the only man in the gospel story who had been so afflicted.”<sup>6</sup>

Notice...

## **II. The Question (v.2)**

The disciples asked a very important question—one many ask today.

“Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind”

Before we hear Jesus’ answer in verse 3, we need to understand that...

A. Some Sicknesses Are Directly the Result of Sin

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Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000). 37.

<sup>6</sup> *The Gospel of John : Volume 2*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000). 37.

For example...

1. Disobedience

- a) **Exodus 15:26 (NASB)** And He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer."
- b) **1 Corinthians 11:29-30 (NASB)** <sup>29</sup> For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. <sup>30</sup> For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

2. Disrespect

Miriam - Numbers 12:1-12

Some sicknesses are due to the sins of the parents. Like that of David and Bethsheeba's adulterous affair.

**2 Samuel 12:15 (NASB)** So Nathan went to his house. Then the Lord struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was *very* sick.

Even though there are some sicknesses that are directly the direct result of sin...

**B. Some Sicknesses Are Not the Result of Sin**

Jesus says in verse 3, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents.”

The reason why the disciples immediately assumed this man or his parents had sinned is because Scripture declares that all mankind’s troubles come from sin.<sup>7</sup>

If there was no sin then there would be no disease or death.

But John Calvin raises the point that “Whenever we see anyone in a bad state we cannot help thinking that the distresses are punishments inflicted by God’s hand.”<sup>8</sup>

That was true of the people of Malta in Acts 28 who said after Paul was bitten by a snake that “undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live” (v.4).

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<sup>7</sup> Jean Calvin, *John*, The Crossway classic commentaries (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994). Jn 9:2.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Calvin, *John*, The Crossway classic commentaries (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994). Jn 9:2.

The question the disciples were asking assumed the popular Jewish doctrine that anyone's physical suffering is the direct result of personal sin.

Therefore they saw only two possible explanations for his condition: either the sins of this man or those of his parents had caused his blindness.

But the man, having been born blind, could not have been responsible for his condition unless he had somehow sinned before he was born.

Perhaps the disciples considered that a possibility, since the view that children could sin while still in the womb was widespread in contemporary Judaism.

In addition, some Hellenistic Jews, influenced by Greek philosophy, argued for the soul's preexistence.

Therefore, they believed people could be punished in this life for sins they committed in a previous existence.<sup>9</sup>

Jesus responds with...

### **III. The Answer (vv.3-5)**

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<sup>9</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary : John 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006). 391.

By saying, “it was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (v.3).

In this case, sin is not the cause for this man’s blindness.

It was...

A. So the Works of God Might Be Displayed in Him (v.3)

The word “displayed” (phaneroo) means to “reveal” or “show.”

Spiros Zodhiates says this word means “To make apparent, manifest, known, show openly.”<sup>10</sup>

The “works of God” were to shine out for many others to see.

R.C.H. Lenski says, “The verb...implies that the works of God are so often hidden from general view; so this

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<sup>10</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament*, electronic ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

man's blindness is to serve God in making these works of His public before men.”<sup>11</sup>

What are the “works of God” Jesus is referring to?

The one He is about to do—giving sight to a blind man.

A.W. Pink says, “God has His own wise reasons for permitting sickness and disease; often times it is that He may be glorified thereby. It was so in the case of Lazarus (John 11:4). It was so in connection with the death of Peter (John 21:19). It was so in the affliction of the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:9). It was so with this blind beggar: he was born blind that the power of God might be evidenced in the removal of it, and that Christ might be glorified thereby.”<sup>12</sup>

R.C. Sproul says God “uses the worst pain, the worst suffering, the most confusing event in our lives to bring about, ultimately, His glory.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961). 677.

<sup>12</sup> A.W. Pink, *The Gospel of John*.  
[http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/John/john\\_31.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/John/john_31.htm)

<sup>13</sup> R.C. Sproul, *John* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2009). 174.

It's as David Thomas says, "The ultimate object of evil, as of things in general, is the glorification of God."<sup>14</sup>

The blind man's life is a concrete example of suffering that went on and on for year after year until it finally resulted in glory.

That's why the apostle Paul wrote, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom.8:18).

If the blind man had remained sightless for eighty years or ninety years, what would have been compared with eternity in the presence of the glory of God?

By God's grace, however, the blind man didn't have to wait to go to heaven to see the face of Christ.<sup>15</sup>  
Jesus' mission is revealed in verses 4 and 5.

It is...

**B. The Works of Him Who Sent Me (vv.4-5)**

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<sup>14</sup> David Thomas, *The Genius of the Fourth Gospel : A Homiletical Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Kregel Bible study classics (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997). 260.

<sup>15</sup> R.C. Sproul, *John* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2009). 174.

He includes the disciples in this work by the use of the first person plural “we.”

“We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.”

Jesus had a task to complete during His limited time on earth, and healing this blind man was obviously one of them.

He is the “Light of the world” and works such as these reveal that wonderful truth.

Thematically, this chapter is tied to the Feast of Tabernacles (ch. 8) through the explicit reference to Jesus as the light of the world (9:5; *cf.* 8:12).

This chapter portrays what happens when the light shines: some are made to see, like this man born blind, while others, who think they see, turn away, blinded, as it were, by the light (9:39–41).<sup>16</sup>

Now in verses 6 and 7 we see...

#### **IV. The Miracle (vv.6-7)**

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<sup>16</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 359.

The apostle John says, “When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.”

A. This is Not the First Time Jesus Used Some Object As An Agent in Healing (v.6)

When He was “within the region of Decapolis, they brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him.”

1. **Mark 7:33 (NASB)** says, “Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva.”

In Mark 8 when He was in Bethsaida, “they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him.”

2. **Mark 8:23-25 (NASB)** says, “Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?”<sup>24</sup> And he looked up and said, “I see men, for I see *them* like trees, walking around.”<sup>25</sup> Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and *began* to see everything clearly.”

3. Here in John 9:6 Jesus “spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes.”

Jesus didn’t need to do this.

There was no chemical in the Palestinian clay that could bring sight to blind people.

That wasn’t the point. Jesus was giving an object lesson.

For reasons we don’t know, He dramatized this healing.

It was almost as if He were saying: ‘Not everyone who was born from the clay got everything right the first time around. Some people are born from the dust with birth defects, and this man was one of them. Let’s go back to the clay.’<sup>17</sup>

Yes this is pure speculation but anything is possible.

**Psalms 146:8 (NASB)** The Lord opens *the eyes* of the blind; The Lord raises up those who are bowed down; The Lord loves the righteous.

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<sup>17</sup> R.C. Sproul, *John* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2009). 174-5.

The rest of verse 7 tells us the blind man “went away and washed...”

**B. The Blind Man Came Back Seeing (v.7)**

This man was seeing things for the first time and the first person he wanted to see was Jesus.

It says he “came back” but Jesus was not there only those “who previously saw him as a beggar” (v.8).

Notice now...

**V. The Response (vv.8-12)**

**A. From His Neighbors (vv.8-10)**

One said, “Is not this one who used to sit and beg?”

Others were saying, ‘This is he,’ still others were saying, ‘No, but he is like him’” (v.9a)

Some thought it was him. Others said he is like him.

He settled all doubt and said, “I am the one” (v.9b).

Notice that it says, “he kept saying, ‘I am the one.’”

They were so startled. They didn’t know what to think.

They didn’t believe that lifetime blindness could be overcome.

Naturally they were curious about what had happened, so they ask in verse 10, “How then were your eyes opened?”

Now we hear...

B. From His Own Experience (vv.9-12)

William MacDonald says, “Whenever Jesus performed a miracle, it provoked all kinds of questions in the hearts of men. Often these questions gave the believer an opportunity to witness for the Lord. Here people asked the man how it all happened.

His testimony was simple, yet convincing. He recited the facts of his healing, giving credit to the One who had performed the miracle.<sup>18</sup>

This should be the response of every believer!

“I was blind but now I see!”

How? Jesus opened my eyes!

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so

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<sup>18</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997). Jn 9:10–11.

that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

It is only when opens the eyes can one see!

The only testimony that the man born blind can offer at this point is his summary of the bare facts of the case.

He refers to the one who gave him light as ‘the man they call Jesus’—*i.e.* he had learned of his name from the talk of the time, but had not yet seen him, and still had little theological opinion about him.

That his friends ask, *Where is this man?*, does not betray a desire to check their neighbour’s story, but a natural desire to meet the man who had performed such an astonishing miracle.

But not even the healed man could answer the question.<sup>19</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

R.C. Sproul says, “The Bible uses the metaphor of blindness again and again for people who have never perceived the truth of Christ. The eyes of their hearts are blind until God the Holy Spirit, without the help of spit and

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<sup>19</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 366.

***Blind from Birth***

***John 9:1-12***

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clay, opens them. When He does, they not only perceive the light of day, they see the light of the world. John said in his prologue, 'We beheld His glory' (1:14). All those whose spiritual eyes have been opened may say the same. Are you among them?"

Let's pray!