

John 9a 9:1- 41 Healing blindness

Read John 9:1-12

1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.

Jesus never wandered aimlessly. It was the end of the Feast of Tabernacles and he would have been expected to travel north to return to Galilee. Instead it seems that together with his disciples, he left the Temple on the south side. They immediately encountered the blind man who had taken up a position on the edge of main road going south in the hope of receiving alms. [There is a useful map of Jerusalem at http://www.bible.ca/maps/maps-jerusalem-33AD.jpg](http://www.bible.ca/maps/maps-jerusalem-33AD.jpg) You may copy this map freely for bible study purposes.

2 His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'

Blindness is common in underdeveloped countries today, as it was in the time of Jesus. But back then it was commonly believed that it was punishment for sin. But for a man **born** blind, might it have been caused by the sin of his parents?

3a 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus,

But was sin the cause of blindness?

When the world was created, it was perfect; there was no sickness or death. But as soon as sin entered the world, it was subject to disease, deterioration and death. 'Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned' (Romans 5:12). (It is a fact however that some sickness, either mental or physical, can also be directly attributed to people's sin – e.g. children born with AIDS).

3b 'but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.'

This was not a random encounter. The first and last days of the Feast of Tabernacles were treated as Sabbaths. Again Jesus would heal on the Sabbath with the expected consequences (Just like the passage in John 5).

4 As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.

Jesus had just escaped stoning, but nothing would divert him from his work: here was an ideal opportunity to not only heal a man, but also to speak about spiritual blindness in a world where shortly the light would be extinguished.

5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'

In what way does Jesus bring light in the darkness?

6 After saying this, he spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7 'Go,' he told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam' (this word means 'Sent'). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

Why did Jesus do that?

We are not told, but it was intentional. Maybe Jesus needed to be seen 'working' on the Sabbath. Maybe he needed the blind man to create a stir by going to the nearby pool to publicly wash and receive his sight.

The name 'pool of Siloam' had been attributed to a small pool, until in in 2004 The edge of a large pool was unearthed just south of the Temple.

8 His neighbours and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, 'Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?' 9 Some claimed that he was.

Others said, 'No, he only looks like him.'

But he himself insisted, 'I am the man.'

10 'How then were your eyes opened?' they asked.

11 He replied, 'The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.'

12 'Where is this man?' they asked him.

'I don't know,' he said.

Look over these verses again and picture the people gathering round the once-blind man, remembering he had been blind from birth. Very obviously a miracle has taken place. People must be told – but who? Logically they would have entered the Temple and quickly found some Pharisees.

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. 14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. 'He put mud on my eyes,' the man replied, 'and I washed, and now I see.'

What do you make of the word 'Therefore' in v15?

The Pharisees whole attitude was not 'Hallelujah – a miracle!' but rather 'How dare he be healed on the Sabbath'.

16 Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.'

But others asked, 'How can a sinner perform such signs?' So they were divided.

The Pharisees had decided that God had to obey the Law (not **his** law, but **their** law!) and therefore Jesus couldn't be 'from God'. But that left them with the obvious problem of a man born blind now able to see. And probably a growing crowd of people looking for answers. But they were at a loss, so:

17 Then they turned again to the blind man, 'What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' The man replied, 'He is a prophet.'

Perhaps it wasn't a miracle after all, and the man hadn't been blind in the first place.

18 They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. 19 'Is this your son?' they asked. 'Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?'

The Pharisees, who knew all the answers, were really struggling. They had been reduced to first asking the blind man and then his parents how the miracle had occurred.

20 'We know he is our son,' the parents answered, 'and we know he was born blind. 21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.' 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. 23 That was why his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'

To be put out of the Synagogue was a major punishment, and the excommunication meant that no-one was allowed to have anything to do with you in any way; you could no longer buy or sell anything, nor could you speak to anyone.

24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. 'Give glory to God by telling the truth,' they said. 'We know this man is a sinner.'

This is not 'Give God the glory for performing this miracle', but rather 'Swear before God that you are telling the truth'. They had hoped that they could force the admission that the story had been made up – it couldn't be true, Jesus was a sinner!

25 He replied, 'Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!'

26 Then they asked him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?'

27 He answered, 'I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?'

28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, 'You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! 29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from.'

The Pharisees were in deep water here. It was very obvious that the man had been miraculously healed, yet Jesus had again healed on the Sabbath which made him a sinner. In desperation they gave way to insults.

Verse 28: Remember John 8:48, where having lost the argument, the Pharisees insulted Jesus.

And verse 29: remember John 7:27 where the Pharisees themselves had said: 'But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from'

30 The man answered, 'Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.'

Not bad for an uneducated man:

1. God does not listen to sinners.
2. He listens to the Godly person.
3. The Godly person does his will.
4. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.
5. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

34 To this they replied, 'You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!' And they threw him out.

Of course the Pharisees other problem was that to have been born blind, there must have been pre-existing sin. How dare this man presume to produce a faultless list of facts which proved **them** wrong? Their response was the same as their response to Jesus: get rid of him.

35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'

There has been much discussion over whether verse 35 should read 'son of man' or 'son of God'. Biblehub.com lists the nine Greek texts ([out of 5,800 complete or fragmented texts that have been discovered so far](#)) that are most often used in translations of the Bible. Five of these have 'son of man' and four have 'son of God' ([See also John 10:36 where there is no disagreement](#)).

Although Jesus more often referred to himself as 'Son of man', personally I think that it would seem more likely that Jesus would have used 'Son of God' here. The man had not seen Jesus before this encounter – he had to go to Siloam and wash before he could see. He knew that he was called Jesus (verse 11) and he would probably have recognised his voice.

To use the term 'son of man' would be meaningless, but to refer to 'Son of God' would mean more to a man who himself had said '*If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.*' (v33).

36 'Who is he, sir?' the man asked. 'Tell me so that I may believe in him.'

37 Jesus said, 'You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.'

38 Then the man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and he worshipped him.

For the man who had been given physical sight, he now also received spiritual sight and automatically responded in worship.

It's a shame that the Pharisees seemed to have forgotten Isaiah chapter 35:5-6 ([It's probably worth having a quick look at it here](#)).

39 Jesus said, *'For judgment I have come into this world,*

What does Jesus mean? (see John 3:17-18 – keep this place!)

He did not come to judge, rather to provide evidence for judgement:-
Those who believed in him would be saved; those who rejected him had
already condemned themselves. (Covered fully in study John 5d).

so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.'

See John 3:19-21

There are only two responses to the light of Christ – either to welcome it into the darkness in which we find ourselves, or to turn from it and retreat into the shadows.

40 *Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, 'What? Are we blind too?'*

While Jesus was near the Temple, wherever the disciples gathered round Jesus, the Pharisees were not far away. They continued to listen for evidence on which they could have him arrested; but what they heard spoke to their hearts and raised doubts in their minds. Could they have got it wrong? Were they in danger of resisting God himself?

41 *Jesus said, 'If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.'*

Jesus' reply was that it was not a sin to be spiritually blind; but to claim that you can see, and then to claim that you can tell others the way, that is a terrible sin.

Matthew 15:12-14:

12 Then the disciples came to him and asked, 'Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?'

13 He replied, 'Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. 14 Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.'