



Disciplers Bible Studies

JOHN
LESSON 10

The Light of the World (Part 2) John 9:1-41

Introduction

A. The Main Theme

After the discourse on the Light of the World (Part 1) in Chapter 8, John wrote a symbolic explanation and illustration of Jesus as the Divine Light. It included His sixth sign miracle and was based on the powerful theme of light and darkness, demonstrating Christ's powers in both the physical and spiritual dimensions of life. We also see the continuing polarization of opinion about Jesus between those who believed in Him and those who disbelieved Him.

B. The Blind Beggar

Chapter 9 deals with a remarkable man in the New Testament, a beggar who had been blind since birth. He was not only in physical darkness because of a birth defect, but he was spiritually blind from his natural condition of sin (Ephesians 2:1). Jesus opened his eyes to correct his physical blindness and also provided spiritual illumination that dispelled the darkness of his sin and unbelief.

C. Character, Courage and Logic

When confronted by the Sanhedrin, the blind man showed great strength of character and courageous faith in the Lord. His simple, irrefutable logic enraged the highly educated, sophisticated Jewish leaders and they threw him out with pompous words. Jesus found him and assured him with loving-kindness that his faith was eternally established in the Son of God. Jesus, as the Light of the world, can and does overcome the darkness of man's moral and physical blindness so that man can receive the complete sight which constitutes perfect faith.

D. Three Figures of Speech

It is interesting to remind ourselves of the sequence and meaning of Jesus' figures of speech. In earlier chapters, the "water of life" and "bread of life" represented Him as the One who satisfies and sustains life. In Chapters 8 and 9, the "light of life" describes

the One who dispels the darkness of fleshly pride, ignorance and death.

Outline of John 9:1-41

- I. The Healing of the Blind Man (9:1-7)
- II. Reaction of His Neighbors (9:8-12)
- III. Response of the Pharisees (9:13-17)
- IV. The Parent's Testimony (9:18-23)
- V. The Final Interrogation (9:24-34)
- VI. Light and Darkness (9:35-41)

I. The Healing of the Blind Man (9:1-7)

A. Who Sinned?

The setting for this week's lesson was in Jerusalem after the Feast of the Tabernacles. Jesus and His disciples were walking near the Temple and they saw a blind man. The disciples assumed that the man was blind from birth and asked Jesus, "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents?*" On the one hand, it was a reasonable question since they knew from the Old Testament that sin brings divine punishment (Exodus 20:5, 34:7; Ezekiel 18:4), and Jesus had told the crippled man in John 5:14 after He healed him, "*Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you*". On the other hand, they did not see the man as an object of compassion, but rather as a subject for spiritual discussion.

Application:

Warren Wiersbe writes that it is often much easier to discuss an abstract subject like sin than it is to minister to a concrete need in the life of a person. Do you find that offering prayer and encouraging words to a needful brother or sister is more convenient than a helping deed? Prayer is always in order in good times and bad times, but sometimes the person may need more than words to help him or her through a given situation or trial (James 2:15-16).

B. The Purposes and Plans of God

Jesus answered the disciples, "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should*

be revealed in him.” This meant that not every bad effect in life is caused by an identifiable sin (Job 2; Corinthians 12:7; Galatians 4:13). The cause and effect relationship of sin and suffering is governed by the purposes and plans of Almighty God. As Dr. Constable writes, “Sin does lie behind all the suffering and evil in the world, but the connection between sin and suffering is not always immediate or observable.”

C. The Glory of God

Jesus went on to say that the purpose of this man’s blindness was that a divine work should be done in him and divine glory be revealed. God had permitted the birth defect so that He might display His work in this man’s life through Jesus Christ. He had not deliberately caused the baby to be born blind in order that years later His glory would be revealed by removing the blindness. Rather, God overruled the disaster of the baby’s blindness so that as he matured as a man, he might, by recovering his sight, see the glory of God in the face of Christ. Then other people, when they saw the work of God, might turn to the true Light of the world.

Jesus told the disciples that time was short for Him to do God’s work. The “coming night” meant that He would withdraw physically from the world. However, as the true Light of the world, His truth would continue to be mediated through others.

D. The Miracle

After Jesus made the statement again, “*I am the Light of the world.*” He spat on the ground, made a clay paste and placed it on the blind man’s eyes. He then directed him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The significance of John’s parenthetical statement about Sent spoke of the sent One of God who is the only One qualified to impart inward illumination. So the man went to the pool and washed. He came back seeing.

Application:

The Importance of Attitude

Notice the difference in attitude between the disciples and Jesus. The disciples saw the man’s blindness as an indication of divine displeasure. Jesus saw it as an opportunity for divine grace. Chuck Swindoll wisely writes, “The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on my life. . . The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the past. . . we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We

cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. . . I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.” Do you realize that your attitude is one thing you have complete control of in your life? Do you react to adverse situations positively or negatively?

II. Reaction of His Neighbors (9:8-12)

A. Is This the Blind Beggar?

After he received his sight, the ex-blind man went back to his neighborhood. He was undoubtedly well known by his neighbors because they had seen him for many years, always doing the only thing he knew how to do – begging for money.

Now, suddenly, his eyes were opened! Even some people who knew him well saw such a remarkable change in him they could not believe he was the same man. They naturally wanted to know what had happened to him.

B. The Miracle Worker

He gave them a brief factual account of who, what and how the transformation took place. He told them the man who is called Jesus did it. Many neighbors marveled at this miracle of sight restoration, but others doubted his story. They asked him where Jesus was, suggesting that they, too, would like to ask Jesus about the healing. Perhaps they wanted to confirm the ex-blind man’s miracle, or ask Him to show them another sign. But Jesus was not available.

Interestingly, this infirmed man was different than the sick man at the Sheep-Gate pool (Chapter 5). This once-blind man knew Christ’s name and gave credit where credit was due.

C. Neighborhood Discussions

The interaction of discussions and opinions between neighbors is typical of John’s writing. In several chapters, he describes instances where many Jews thought Jesus was a deceiver, while a few thought He was a good man. Perhaps John presents these differing opinions to emphasize that as long as the world lies under the sway of the evil one, most of humanity will be blinded by the devil and their own self-righteousness. They will not be able to see the Light, nor believe and trust in the one true and living God and His beloved Son (Matthew 7:13-14; 1 Corinthians 3:3-4.)

III. Response of the Pharisees (9:13-17)

A. Legal Authority of the Jews

The neighbors took the once-blind man to the Pharisees because they thought there was a religious issue involved here. The healing had occurred on the Sabbath and they knew that making clay paste and opening the man's eyes were legal violations. Since the Pharisees were the authorities on the law and its interpretation, it was very natural to consult with legal experts rather than medical men about this unusual case of sight restoration.

B. Sabbath Violation

The Pharisees asked the once-blind man about his eyes being opened. Undoubtedly, he gave them the whole story, but John just wrote a simple statement because his readers already knew the whole story. The Pharisees saw one factor which definitely made it a legal matter. Jesus performed this miracle on the Sabbath. Once again, He had committed the offense which had caused so much trouble during His earlier visit to Jerusalem. He had directed the man to carry his bed, forbidden by their man-made rules. Now, He had kneaded a salve of earth and saliva, and kneading was a category of work which likewise violated their law.

C. Two Opposing Views

Two opposing views came forth from the Pharisees. According to one modern authority on rabbinical scholarship, these two views followed the respective teachings of the rabbis, Shammai and Hillel. The school of Shammai argued from first principles meaning that anyone who broke the Sabbath law was a sinner and was not a man of God. The second view considered the established facts of the situation and concluded that a man who restored sight to a blind man had performed a good work and was a Man of God. The Pharisees were not unanimous in their support, but most of them followed the teachings of Shammai.

D. He is a Prophet

When the Pharisees asked the man what he thought about Jesus he replied, "*He is a Prophet.*" John wrote of three other previous encounters that brought forth that same opinion from people. The Samaritan woman had perceived Jesus as a Prophet when He laid out her life story in Chapter 4. The feeding of the bread and fishes to the 5000 in Chapter 6 elicited the same statement. Many of the Jews who heard His words to come and receive living water in Chapter 7 called Him a Prophet. Perhaps the

former blind man was thinking of Jesus as being like Elijah and Elisha in the Old Testament.

IV. The Parents' Testimony (9:18-23)

A. Jews Search for Disputing Ground

The Jews could not unite on a decision about Jesus so they called in the man's parents. They believed that only his parents could affirm that he had been blind from birth. Maybe when he was young he could see, and then an accident or sickness had caused his blindness. This background would allow the Pharisees to dispute Jesus' miracle.

B. The Parents' Confirmation

The parents, however, testified that this was indeed their son and that he had been blind from birth. They very wisely confined their testimony to what they actually knew. Their statement confirmed that a genuine miracle had happened. They stated plain answers but they did not want to speculate on who or what opened his eyes. They were probably ill at ease in front of these aggravated authorities and did not want to be put out of the synagogue by implying that Christ made it happen.

V. The Final Interrogation (9:24-34)

A. The Skeptical Pharisees

In spite of the facts that the former blind man could now see, and that Jesus somehow had been connected with the miracle, the Pharisees still thought some evidence was missing. Jesus could not be a prophet because He had violated their interpretation of the Sabbath law. Something was deliberately being hidden from them, or was eluding them in some fashion. After all, they were the educated, knowledgeable theological experts on all religious matters. They had the authority to investigate a situation until they found a shred of evidence that satisfied their self-righteous wills.

B. "Give Us the Truth"

So, they called the man in again to try to badger him into denying his previous testimony. In today's language, they were saying, "Own up and give glory to God. Tell us the truth. What are you concealing from us? Give it to us straight. This man, Jesus, is a sinner, isn't He?"

Dr. Tom Constable writes, "The Pharisees' disdain for Jesus comes through in their calling Him simply 'this man.' A sinner in their eyes was someone who broke the oral traditions as well as the Mosaic

Law. They hoped the restored man would identify some instance of disobedience that would confirm their conclusion. Notice that these judges prejudiced everyone against Jesus from the start by saying that they had already determined that He was a sinner.”

C. The Profound Response

The healed man answered them like this: *“You are the authorities that know whether or not He is a sinner. No one would expect me to know that. But one thing I do know: that though I was blind, now I see.”* Like his parents, he stated only what he knew for sure. He refused to speculate on the question of Jesus’ sinfulness. The frustrated Pharisees could not deny or refute what he said or what his parents had confirmed.

Application:

These powerful words are the most meaningful statement that any of us can make about God’s amazing grace. Being born again is our own personal experience of deliverance from spiritual blindness by the Light of the world, Jesus Christ. Apart from singing with other Christians, if the Holy Spirit nudges you, are you ready and willing to say the following words and explain your “born again” experience to an unbelieving neighbor or acquaintance in a one-on-one conversation: *“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound; that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found; was blind but now I see.”?*

D. The Contemptuous Pharisees

The annoyed leaders continued to try to trip him up by asking for the fourth time how the miracle happened (vss. 10, 15, 19, 26.) He suspected they were trying to discredit his positive testimony about Jesus, so he jabs them with the sarcastic question, *“Do you also want to become His disciples?”*

The Pharisees became abusive and started belittling the man. They brought Moses into the conversation saying that, as Moses’ disciples, we are better informed than you, an uneducated sinner. We don’t know about this man Jesus, but God spoke to Moses as His preeminent Prophet (Numbers 12:8.)

E. The Courageous Man

It was a very intimidating situation, but the restored blind man reacted with great courage, honesty and spiritual understanding. He knew that God responded positively to godly people, but did not hear, in the sense of granting requests, those who sin. He told them it was amazing that they could not see

that Jesus had come from God. He had done something that had never been done before. Congenital blindness was incurable, and yet Jesus opened his eyes. But these great interpreters of the law did not know where He was from.

F. The Angry Response

The Pharisees knew they were losing the argument. They had no answer for the common sense and logic of this simple, unlearned beggar. They thought he was brash, impudent and out of order with his offensive remarks. Arguing with the acknowledged authorities of the law was synagogue suicide. So they retreated to the authority of their office and expelled him.

VI. Light and Darkness (9:35-41)

A. Full Faith

Jesus found this courageous man and proceeded to give him further light to bring him to full faith. He asked the man, *“Do you believe in the Son of God?”* The healed man must have begun to realize from the sound of His voice and seeing Him in person, that this was Jesus. But he answered, *“Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?”* Jesus identified Himself and the man prostrated himself before the Lord in reverence. Note that his faith was a growing phenomenon from his first encounter with Jesus to this full response to God’s grace.

B. A Form of Judgment

In vs. 39, Jesus said that He came into the world, not to execute judgment, but to speak words and do works that would compel people to declare themselves for or against Him. In other words, His appearance and deeds constituted a form of judgment. Those who opposed Him had already passed judgment on themselves (John 3:18.)

B. Spiritual Blindness and Illumination

The question of blindness by the Pharisees was answered clearly by Jesus. They believed that in their self-righteousness, they could see and had no need of enlightenment. His answer was that in their self-deception they had deliberately rejected the Light. Therefore, they were spiritually blind and their sin remained.

Application:

The miracle of the blind man is a story of physical and spiritual illumination. The symbolism of the helpless beggar being in physical darkness because

of his natural defect from birth is significant. We, too, like all mankind, are born in spiritual darkness because of our natural condition of sin. As the Light of the world, Jesus gave sight to the blind man and provided the spiritual illumination that dispelled the darkness of sin and unbelief (Psalm 146:8.)

As a true believer, Jesus has given you hope by calling you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9.) His word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Psalm 119:105.) Since the whole world, including our post-modern culture, lies under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5:19.) how do you personalize the truths and promises of these three Scriptures in your life and to those around you?