
John 9:1-23 Jesus Heals the Blind Man!

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: Jesus was walking about when He saw a man, blind from birth. The Disciples asked Him, *why was this man born blind? Was it his sin or his parents?* Jesus replied, *it was not because of sin; rather, it was to show God's power and glory. All of us are called to carry out the call and abilities we are given with a sense of urgency as we do not know how much time we have left to accomplish the work we are given in this world.* Then Jesus restated: *I am the light of the world.* He then proceeded to heal the man. He spat on the ground, made some mud, placed it on the man's eyes, then told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The man did this and came back with his eyesight restored. His neighbors and friends were amazed; *how can this be the same person they asked?* The man assured them that he was the man; they were amazed and wanted to know what had happened. He told them about Jesus and what He both said and did. They took him to the Pharisees, and a problem accrued because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, which violated their rules (not Scripture's), so the leaders said *this man can't be of God because He does not honor our rules.* Yet, a few leaders were perplexed, saying *how can a man of sin do such a great miracle?* So, they interrogated the man who had been blind, wore him down with accusations and innuendos, and then decided not to believe the miracle even though they sought witnesses and proof. They even interrogated his parents, but they were so afraid of the leaders that they skirted the issues, telling them to ask their son, so they would not be removed from their Synagogue.

Contexts and Background:

This passage continues at the Feast of Tabernacles, perhaps at the last day or day afterward, where Jesus heals a blind man and causes him to defile a ritual for further discourse with the religious leaders. Thus, the religious leaders continued to be aggravated out of their complacency as Jesus challenged them. The blind and disabled people were outcasts mainly because of the popular belief that their plight was due to their or their parent's sin. It was also because of the belief that suffering was because of the sin of one's parents and it was their duty to pay that penalty. There was also the belief that the child was blind because the mother sinned and he/she was not the husband's child. These beliefs were not in the Scriptures, but rather came from Jewish folklore and misguided teachers. This was the theme of Job's friends who thought Job was under God's punishment because he must have sinned, when he did not.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Blind.* People who were blind and lame had no social status; thus, they were social outcasts. For some, it was a safety issue, to protect them from danger. Other times, it was out of fear. People thought if they came in contact with the infirmity, they, too, might be cut off from their community and from society. To have a disabled child meant you were a sinner and could contaminate others; so, you were out and at the bottom of the social register. This could explain the parents' reaction (Matt. 9: 27-34).
- *Who sinned.* Referring to the social custom that suffering was instituted from one's sin. Although, mostly true, but not always, this caused a cruel outlook to those in suffering. Some Jewish teachers taught that if a child was born blind, he/she had sinned in the womb—not a precept from Scripture. At the same time, many trials do come from God to get us to think, trust, and obey, so to produce faith and character, like David after his adultery or Saul after disobeying God (Ex. 20:5; Num. 12; 14:18; Deut. 5:9; 2 Sam. chps. 12-21; Job 2; Luke 13:2-3; 1 Cor. 11:30; 2 Cor. 12:7; Gal. 4:13; James 5:15).
- *Neither.* Answering if this was a result of a punitive action from his personal or family's sin by God, Jesus said "no." He was not rebutting or eliminating the doctrine of Original Sin, which was humanity's rebellion against God; rather, He was challenging social ideas that all trials and tribulations are the result of sin. Jesus used common illustrations and customs but also set straight the bad folklore, and then pointed people in the direction of what could be learned from one's predicament and how it could benefit and give God glory (Matt. 7:1; Rom. 5:12-21).

- *Work of God.* Referring, that we may suffer just to show and experience the greater wonder of God's mercy and power. Meaning God's goodness and sovereignty will prevail and a call for us to glorify God by our efforts of faith, as we are His display cabinet.
- *As long/while as it is day.* Two meanings: one, while Jesus walked this earth, His light shined, and even after He went back to heaven and into our lives, His light still shines through us. We become His display. Secondly, this was a metaphor; as long as we have breath and life, we have a chance to learn and grow, to know God, and to build good relationships with Him and others. But, one day, we will be called home to eternity to face judgment and condemnation or reward, commendation, and eternal life (Rom. 8).
- *Night is coming.* Pointing to His crucifixion (See the John 8:12-30 study).
- *Light of the world.* Here referring that we are to reflect His light—as in character—and obey His precepts (See the John 8:12-30 study).
- *Spit/spittle.* A referral to Jesus as God the creator making humans from the dust of the earth. Perhaps Jesus made the man new eyes from the mud. This was not a medicinal compound; rather, it was an opportunity to see if this man had faith. It is interesting that Jesus used this, which was also the practice of pagan doctors and shaman, and was considered vulgar to do in public—as it is today. This was perhaps a test for obedience—to do something when one is uncomfortable or unsure. Why did Jesus' healing work, when the pagan's did not? The key word in the passage for this is *sent*. Jesus *sent* him, not by ritual or ceremony, but by His power and the man's obedience (Gen. 2:7; Mark 8:23-25; John 20:22).
- *Pool of Siloam.* This was a sacred pool, southeast of the Temple, cut out of the bedrock on which Jerusalem and the Temple were built. It was the major water system commissioned by King Hezekiah. This is the water that was used for Jewish ritual purification and baptism, including the water ceremony for the Feast of Tabernacles. To wash off mud and spit in it would have been an offence and a challenge to the religious leaders, setting Jesus up for another direct confrontation (2 Kings 5:10-14; Neh. 3:15; Isa. 8:6; 22:9-11; John 7:37-39).
- *The man went.* He obeyed; and we can follow his journey of faith from his first encounter to the second, and then to worship. This also corresponds to the steps of faith we take to overcome our barriers as we encounter Jesus and go from unbelief to faith, to worship, and then to service (John 20:31).
- *Seeing.* This would be an unprecedented miracle; people born blind did not recover their sight—just like today. Only a supernatural event could do such a thing. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would restore sight to the blind. A cross-examination proved that the man who was blind could now see, and this could not be refuted. Thus, these miracles were additional evidence that Jesus was the Messiah (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7; John 20:31).
- *Beg.* The blind were barred from participating in normal society and occupations. Thus, the only socially acceptable way for a person of disability to earn a living in this culture was public charity—as in to beg, and it was also the social custom to give to them. "Begging for alms," is a similar practice in many Middle Eastern cultures today. To give alms to the blind and lame was, and still is, considered a righteous deed; only the sickest people of society, the proud and the arrogant, would refuse. Sometimes, their families took care of them. Most of them in Jerusalem either kept close to the Temple, or they would position themselves on busy roadsides, just as many do today at airports and bus stations (John 8:59; Acts 3:1-7).
- *Where... know.* These are classic law enforcement interrogation tactics; *Who knew what*, and *what happened*, repeatedly asked to seek the one who has the correct information or if a different answer is given—all done to test validity or to force a confession.

- *Sabbath*. The Pharisees were protecting “their” Sabbath rituals from what they felt was an attack by Jesus when He “worked” on it. Jesus did not violate the fourth commandment—only their wayward interpretation of it. They showed contempt and ingratitude to this fantastic event (John. 5:9-17).
- *Not from God*. Again, a cynical retort because, they reasoned, He could not possibly be from God if He violated their rules. And yes, Jesus violated their regulations and false convictions, not God’s. The Pharisees were perhaps jealous that this blind, social outcast had a divine intervention, whether Jesus was involved or not by their thinking, and they had no such experience (Deut. 13:1-5).
- *Miraculous signs*. Meaning an extraordinary event that cannot be done by human will or means. God uses these to point to and prove His Glory and Power. The significance is never the marvel of the event; rather, it is what the event showcases—and that is Christ (Isa. 35:1-2; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13; John 4:54; 6:14; 9:16; 11:47; John 2:1-12).
- *Prophet*. This was not to demean Jesus, but from the man’s perspective, was a term of great reverence and respect. There was no greater title to come from him at this time (John 4:19, 44; 14; 7:40).
- *Did not believe...he is like him*. It was hard for people to comprehend this miracle. They looked for rational excuses or magician tricks as this is what they were used to. The irony is that the Pharisees, who had good eyes, could not see what a blind man was showing them, so they remind in spiritual darkness while the man experienced spiritual light and physical healing (2 Cor. 4:3-6; Col. 1:12-14).
- *Of age*. Meaning past the age of thirteen and thus responsible for their own actions and keeping the Law. This man may have been young by our standards; here, he is older than thirteen. He still may have lived with his parents; perhaps he was a teenager.
- *Afraid of the Jews*. Referring to the leaders, and that they were more afraid of people than the fear / respect of God. The parents must have been worn down because of the gossip and innuendoes. As they saw it, the Synagogue was their only source of social interaction, community, and hope. Yet, the real Hope was so near to them (Luke 4:16)!
- *Put out of the synagogue*. This meant excommunication, the severest form of punishment—to be removed not only from their place of worship and community but also from any social interaction with anyone who was a fellow Jew. This would be devastating, being cut off from family, friends, work, and inheritance rights. The parents were questioned to compel an answer to see if this could be true, and they were threatened to answer truthfully if this man was indeed born blind. (Ezra. 10:8; John 9:24-34).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

This passage addresses a common complaint to those of us in sufferings and mishaps; *why did this happen?* But the *why* we usually seek is *personal; why me and not someone else? I do not deserve to go through this*. But, Jesus’ response was for us to look beyond the “why” to the “how”—how can we lift ourselves up from the mud and muck of life so we can see His purpose for us? How can we, with Christ’s empowerment and precepts, go wash, so to have meaning and a call, and to heed it, to learn and grow for God’s glory? How can we look beyond our circumstances and strive for the goal of what Christ has for us so we can grow out of our fears and hurts and not be held captive by them and not be founded on our inadequacies or limitations but be able to move forward in the faith? God will take us beyond what we think we can do or even dream if we let Him in His time. Further, how can we refuse to allow ourselves to be hindered by perceived ability, but seek how God can use us where and how we are? What steps can we take to not let setbacks, past disappointments, or wounds limit us and keep us from moving, but rather progress toward a better, more godly and contagious example for the faith? How can we fulfill what God has sent us to do in the journey of our lives and relationships, no matter what situation in which we find ourselves or kind of past we have?

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Why do most people want things their way and do not like authority for the progress of their faith (like being disciplined)?
2. How has your life been honed by life's irritations and opportunities?
3. How can rules, like God's instructions and insights, be used to protect, to serve, to glorify God, and to grow in faith?
4. What events have occurred in your life that have or could have shown God's power and glory? How have you shown someone the power and compassion of Christ?
5. How do rules help us grow, mature, and create community and fruitful living? How do rules get in the way? How can you better utilize rules for God's glory?
6. Do you see trials as personal attacks or opportunities to be refined, to grow, and to be better? What causes whatever outlook you have?
7. The instructions and principles from God's Word are meant to help, guide, mold, shape, and protect us. So, why do so many refuse them? How can you better model God's purpose and love with His call for you to obey?
8. How can God use you where and how you are? What can you do not to let setbacks, past disappointments, and wounds contain and keep you from building faith and being used for His glory?
9. What would your life look like with a more godly and contagious example and display for the faith of others?
10. What are the things that cause mud and muck in your life? How can you lift yourself up from the mud so you can see His purpose for you? How can you do it with Christ's empowerment and precepts?
11. What do you need to wash off, so you can have more meaning, hear your call, and then heed it, learn, and grow for God's glory?
12. What do you need to do to have a sense of urgency to know your call to accomplish the work you are given in this world?