



## Silverdale Baptist

Encountering Jesus ~ Opening Blind Eyes ~ John 9 ~ 07/23-24/2022

### Big Idea

This story is a contrast between the compassion of Jesus and the lack of compassion of the world. There are many blind people in this story who can't, or won't see, what God is doing. But, only one of them is healed.

### Getting Started

**How do you respond to the down and out you cross paths with?**

**Do you try not to notice them?**

**Do you have discussions with your friends about the general state of the world and how people reach a point they become beggars?**

**Or, do you pray and ask God how to help?**

### Learn

1. The disciples didn't care about him.

|HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:1-12.

**What happens in this story?**

**What do you learn about the blind man in these verses?**

**How is Jesus described in verses 4-5?**

**When the disciples first saw the man born blind, did they care about his situation? How did they respond?**

**But how did Jesus respond?**

It is no coincidence that Jesus is described as the light of the world (vs. 5) in a story about a man who has never seen the light. The man Jesus healed was born in darkness and had walked in darkness his entire life. He was born in darkness so that the light of the world might be made manifest through him to the spiritually blind leadership of Israel.

## 2. The neighbors didn't truly see him.

**After the man was healed, how did the people respond?**

**Who did the people take the healed man to?**

## 3. The Pharisees didn't believe him.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:13-17.

**How did the Pharisees (*the Jews*) respond to the man who had been healed?**

**What exactly was it that bothered the Pharisees?**

## 4. His parents avoided him.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:18-23.

**How did the healed man's parents respond to the Pharisees (the Jews)? Why?**

Are you surprised by the response of the disciples, the crowds, the Pharisees, or his parents? While we might have expected a party, instead, we see skepticism. The only one who seems excited is the man who was healed. Everyone who should have been celebrating is instead questioning. God did a miracle that had never been heard of before, and, so far, His people are not praising Him. Doesn't that seem odd?

## 5. The formerly blind man stands with Jesus.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:24-41.

This is the second time the Pharisees interrogated the healed man.

**What do the Jews believe about Jesus?**

**How does the healed man describe Jesus?**

**What happens when the healed man takes a stand for Jesus?**

**What happens after the man is cast out of the synagogue?**

For his defense of Jesus, the healed man is excommunicated from the synagogue. From that day forward, the man was an outcast within his world. His name may have been erased from the synagogue rolls, but it was written down in the Lamb's Book of Life.

## Apply

**How is Jesus' response to the man born blind different than all the others?**

**Of all of the responses to the healed man's situation, which one resonates with you? Which one sounds like you?**

**What did it cost the healed man to stand up for Jesus?**

**What cost are you willing to pay to take a stand for Jesus?**

Observations:

- Standing for Jesus Will Cost You.
- When You Stand For Christ, He'll Stand With You.
- Following Jesus Means Loving Like Jesus.

## Pray

Father, we were all born spiritually blind. Thank you that the Light of the world came into our lives and healed our blindness. Please allow us to be a light shining in the darkness for others. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Dig Deeper

# CHAPTER NINE

## THE BLIND MAN CALLS THEIR BLUFF

### *John 9*

Our Lord performed miracles in order to meet human needs. But He also used those miracles as a “launching pad” for a message conveying spiritual truth. Finally, His miracles were His “credentials” to prove that He was indeed the Messiah. “The blind receive their sight” was one such messianic miracle (Matt. 11:5), and we see it demonstrated in this chapter. Jesus used this miracle as the basis for a short sermon on spiritual blindness (John 9:39–41) and a longer sermon on true and false shepherds (John 10:1–18).

I am told that in the United States somebody goes blind every twenty minutes. The man we meet in this chapter was *born* blind; he had never seen the beauty of God’s creation or the faces of his loved ones. When Jesus arrived on the scene, everything changed, and the man was made to see. However, the greatest miracle was not the opening of his eyes but the opening of his heart to the Saviour. It cost him everything to confess Jesus as the Son of God, but he was willing to do it.

The easiest way to grasp the message of this chapter is to note the stages in this man’s growing understanding of who Jesus is.

### **“A Man Called Jesus” (John 9:1–12)**

About the only thing a blind man could do in that day was beg, and that is what this man was doing when Jesus passed by (John 9:8). No doubt there were many blind people who would have rejoiced to be healed, but Jesus selected this man (see Luke 4:25–27). Apparently the man and his parents were well known in the community. It was on the Sabbath when Jesus healed the man (John 9:14), so that once again He was upsetting and deliberately challenging the religious leaders (John 5:9ff).

The disciples did not look at the man as an object of mercy but rather as a subject for a theological discussion. It is much easier to discuss an abstract subject like “sin” than it is to minister to a concrete need in the life of a person. The disciples were sure that the man’s congenital blindness was caused by sin, either his own or his parents’, but Jesus disagreed with them.

In the final analysis, *all* physical problems are the result of our fall in Adam, for his disobedience brought sin and death into the world (Rom. 5:12ff). But afterward, to blame a specific disability on a specific sin committed by specific persons is certainly beyond any man’s ability or authority. Only God knows why babies are born with handicaps, and only God can turn those handicaps into something that will bring good to the people and glory to His name.

Certainly both the man and his parents had at some time committed sin, but Jesus did not see their sin as the cause of the man’s blindness. Nor did He suggest that God deliberately made the man blind so that, years later, Jesus could perform a miracle. Since there is no punctuation in the original manuscripts, we are free to read John 9:3–4 this way:

Neither has this man sinned nor his parents. But that the works of God should be made manifest in him, I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day.

Our Lord’s method of healing was unique: He put clay on the man’s eyes and told him to go wash. Once Jesus healed two blind men by merely touching their eyes (Matt. 9:27–31), and He healed another

blind man by putting spittle on his eyes (Mark 8:22–26). Though the healing power was the same, our Lord varied His methods lest people focus on the *manner* of healing and miss the *message* in the healing.

There were at least two reasons for our Lord's use of the clay. For one thing, it was a picture of the *Incarnation*. God made the first man out of the dust, and God sent His Son as a real Man. Note the emphasis on the meaning of "Siloam"—"sent." And relate this to John 9:4, "The works of Him that sent Me" (see also John 3:17, 34; 5:36; 7:29; 8:18, 42). Jesus gave a little illustration of His own coming to earth, sent by the Father.

The second reason for the clay was *irritation*; it encouraged the man to believe and obey! If you have ever had an irritation in your eyes, you know how quickly you seek *irrigation* to cleanse it out! You might compare this "irritation" to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit as He uses God's Law to bring the lost sinner under judgment.

But the illumination now led to a problem in *identification*: was this really the blind beggar, and who caused him to see? Throughout the rest of John 9, a growing conflict takes place around these two questions. The religious leaders did not want to face the fact that Jesus had healed the man, or even that the man had been healed!

Four times in this chapter people asked, "How were you healed?" (John 9:10, 15, 19, 26) First the neighbors asked the man, and then the Pharisees asked him. Not satisfied with his reply, the Pharisees then asked the man's parents and then gave the son one final interrogation. All of this looked very official and efficient, but it was really a most evasive maneuver on the part of both the people and the leaders. The Pharisees wanted to get rid of the evidence, and the people were afraid to speak the truth!

They were all asking the wrong question! They should not have asked "How?" but "Who?" (Simply rearrange the letters!) But we are so prone to ask "How?" We want to understand the mechanics of a miracle instead of simply trusting the Saviour, who alone can perform the miracle. Nicodemus wanted to know how he could reenter his mother's womb (John 3:4, 9). "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (John 6:52) Understanding the process, even if we could, is no guarantee that we have experienced the miracle.

When asked to describe his experience, the man simply told what had happened. All he knew about the person who had done the miracle was that He was "a man called Jesus." He had not seen our Lord, of course; but he had heard His voice. Not only was the beggar ignorant of Jesus' identity, but he did not know where Jesus had gone. At this point, the man has been healed, but he has not been saved. The light had dawned, but it would grow brighter until he saw the face of the Lord and worshiped Him (see Prov. 4:18).

At least twelve times in the Gospel of John, Jesus is called "a man" (see John 4:29; 5:12; 8:40; 9:11, 24; 10:33; 11:47, 50; 18:14, 17, 29; 19:5). John's emphasis is that Jesus Christ is God, but the apostle balances it beautifully by reminding us that Jesus is also true man. The Incarnation was not an illusion (1 John 1:1–4).

### **"A Prophet" (John 9:13–23)**

Since the Pharisees were the custodians of the faith, it was right that the healed man be brought to them for investigation. The fact that they studied this miracle in such detail is only further proof that Jesus did indeed heal the man. Since the man was *born* blind, the miracle was even greater, for blindness caused by sickness or injury might suddenly go away. Our Lord's miracles can bear careful scrutiny by His enemies.

But Jesus' act of deliberately healing the man on the Sabbath Day caused the Pharisees great concern. It was illegal to work on the Sabbath; and by making the clay, applying the clay, and healing the

man, Jesus had performed three unlawful “works.” The Pharisees should have been praising God for a miracle; instead, they sought evidence to prosecute Jesus.

When people refuse to face evidence honestly, but in fear evade the issue (see John 9:22), then it is impossible to come to a united conclusion. Once again, Jesus was the cause of division (John 9:16; also see 7:12, 43). The religious leaders were judging on the basis of one thing: nobody who breaks the Sabbath could possibly be a true prophet of God. They were “one-issue” thinkers, not unlike some religious people today. The Pharisees did not realize that Jesus was offering the people something greater than the Sabbath—the true spiritual rest that comes from God (Matt. 11:28–30).

But the beggar was not intimidated by the threats of the Pharisees. When asked who he thought Jesus was, the man boldly said, “He is a prophet!” (note John 4:19 for a parallel.) Some of the Old Testament prophets, such as Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, did perform miracles. The Jewish people would look on their prophets as men of God who could do wonderful things by the power of God.

But the religious leaders did not want to see Jesus given that kind of high designation. “This man is not of God!” (John 9:16) Perhaps they could discredit the miracle. If so, then they could convince the people that Jesus had plotted the whole thing and was really deceiving the people. He had craftily “switched” beggars so that the sighted man was not the man who had been known as the blind beggar.

The best way to get that kind of evidence would be to interrogate the parents of the beggar, so they called them in and asked them two questions: (1) “Is this your son?” And (2) “If he is, how does he now see?” If they refused to answer either question, they were in trouble; or if they answered with replies contrary to what the leaders wanted, they were in trouble. What a dilemma!

They answered the first question honestly: he was their son and he had been born blind. They answered the second question evasively: they did not know how he was healed or who healed him. They then used the old-fashioned tactic called “passing the buck” by suggesting that the Pharisees ask the man himself. After all, he was of age!

What lay behind all of this questioning and these furtive replies? *The fear of people*. We met it at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:13), and we shall meet it again at our Lord’s last Passover (John 12:42). These people were seeking the honor of men and not the honor that comes from God (John 5:44). To be sure, it was a serious thing to be excommunicated from the synagogue, but it was far more serious to reject the truth and be lost forever. “The fear of man brings a snare” (Prov. 29:25, NASB). The Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus, and the parents were trying to avoid a trap; but all of them were only ensnaring themselves! The parents should have heeded the counsel of Isaiah 51:7 and 12.

The Pharisees could present a “good case” for their position. After all, they did have the Law of Moses as well as centuries of Jewish tradition. What they failed to understand was that Jesus Christ had fulfilled all of this ceremonial law and was now bringing in something new. In Moses, you have preparation; but in Jesus Christ, you have consummation (see John 1:17).

### **“A Man of God” (John 9:24–34)**

Anxious to settle the case, the Pharisees did call the man in; and this time, they put him under oath. “Give God the praise” is a form of Jewish “swearing in” at court (see Josh. 7:19).

But the “judges” prejudiced everybody from the start! “We know that this Man is a sinner!” They were warning the witness that he had better cooperate with the court, or he might be excommunicated. But the beggar was made of sturdier stuff than to be intimidated. He had experienced a miracle, and he was not afraid to tell them what had happened.

He did not debate the character of Jesus Christ, because that was beyond his knowledge and experience. But one thing he did know: now he could see. His testimony (John 9:25) reminds me of Psalm

27. Read that psalm in the light of this chapter, from the viewpoint of the healed beggar, and see how meaningful it becomes.

For the fourth time, the question is asked, “How did He open your eyes?” (see John 9:10, 15, 19, and 26) I can imagine the man getting quite impatient at this point. After all, he had been blind all his life, and there was so much now to see. He certainly did not want to spend much longer in a synagogue court, looking at angry faces and answering the same questions!

We admire the boldness of the man in asking those irate Pharisees if they wanted to follow Jesus! The man expected a negative answer, but he was courageous even to ask it. Unable to refute the evidence, the judges began to revile the witness; and once again Moses is brought into the picture (John 5:46). The Pharisees were cautious men who would consider themselves conservatives, when in reality they were “preservatives.” A true conservative takes the best of the past and uses it, but he is also aware of the new things that God is doing. The new grows out of the old (Matt. 13:52). A “preservative” simply embalms the past and preserves it. He is against change and resists the new things that God is doing. Had the Pharisees really understood Moses, they would have known who Jesus was and what He was doing.

The leaders were sure about Moses, but they were not sure about Jesus. They did not know where He came from. He had already told them that He had come from heaven, sent by the Father (John 6:33, 38, 41–42, 50–51). They were sure that He was the natural son of Mary and Joseph, and that He was from the city of Nazareth (John 6:42; 7:41–42). They were judging “after the flesh” (John 8:15) and not exercising spiritual discernment.

It seemed incredible to the healed man that the Pharisees would not know this Man who had opened his eyes! How many people were going around Jerusalem, opening the eyes of blind people? Instead of investigating the miracle, these religious leaders should have been investigating the One who did the miracle and learning from Him. The “experts” were rejecting the Stone that was sent to them (Acts 4:11).

The beggar then gave the “experts” a lesson in practical theology. Perhaps he had Psalm 66:18 in mind: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” The leaders called Jesus a sinner (John 9:24), yet Jesus was used of God to open the blind man’s eyes.

He added another telling argument: Jesus healed a man *born* blind. Never, to their knowledge, had this occurred before. So, God not only heard Jesus, but He enabled Him to give the man sight. How, then, could Jesus be a sinner?

Religious bigots do not want to face either evidence or logic. Their minds are made up. Had the Pharisees honestly considered the facts, they would have seen that Jesus is the Son of God, and they could have trusted Him and been saved.

Again, the leaders reviled the man and told him he was born in sin. However, he would not *die* in his sins (see John 8:21, 24); because before this chapter ends, the beggar will come to faith in Jesus Christ. All of us are born in sin (Ps. 51:5), but we need not live in sin (Col. 3:6–7) or die in our sins. Faith in Jesus Christ redeems us from sin and gives us a life of joyful liberty.

The religious leaders officially excommunicated this man from the local synagogue. This meant that the man was cut off from friends and family and looked on by the Jews as a “publican and sinner.” But Jesus came for the “outcasts” and never let them down.

### **“The Son of God” (John 9:35–41)**

The Good Shepherd always cares for His sheep. Jesus knew that the man had been excommunicated, so He found him and revealed Himself to him. Remember, the man knew our Lord’s voice, but he had never seen His face.

The man now reached the climax of his knowledge of Jesus Christ and his faith in Him. It is not enough to believe that He is “a man called Jesus,” or even “a prophet” or “a man of God.” “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1). John wrote his Gospel to prove that Jesus is the Son of God, and to present to his readers the testimonies of people who met Jesus and affirmed that He is God’s Son. This beggar is one such witness.

Jesus identified Himself as the Son of God (see John 9:35; also 5:25), and the beggar believed and was saved (John 9:38). “My sheep hear My voice” (John 10:27). He did not “see and believe”; he *heard* and believed. Not only did he trust the Saviour, but he worshiped Him. If Jesus Christ is not God, then why did He accept worship? Peter, Paul, and Barnabas certainly didn’t accept worship (see Acts 10:25–26; 14:11–15).

John the Baptist affirmed that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:34) and so did Nathanael (John 1:49). Jesus stated that He is the Son of God (John 5:25; 9:35), and Peter also affirmed it (John 6:69). Now the healed blind beggar has joined this group of witnesses.

Wherever Jesus went, some of the Pharisees tried to be present so they could catch Him in something He said or did. Seeing them, Jesus closed this episode by preaching a brief but penetrating sermon on spiritual blindness.

John 9:39 does not contradict John 3:16–17. The *reason* for our Lord’s coming was salvation, but the *result* of His coming was condemnation of those who would not believe. The same sun that brings beauty out of the seeds also exposes the vermin hiding under the rocks. The religious leaders were blind and would not admit it; therefore, the light of truth only made them blinder. The beggar admitted his need, and he received both physical and spiritual sight. No one is so blind as he who will not see, the one who thinks he has “all truth” and there is nothing more for him to learn (John 9:28, 34).

The listening Pharisees heard what Jesus said and it disturbed them. “Are we blind also?” they asked, expecting a negative answer. Jesus had already called them “blind leaders of the blind” (Matt. 15:14), so they had their answer. They were blinded by their pride, their self-righteousness, their tradition, and their false interpretation of the Word of God.

Our Lord’s reply was a paradox. “If you were blind, you would be better off. But you claim to see. Therefore, you are guilty!” Blindness would at least be an excuse for not knowing what was going on. But they *did* know what was going on. Jesus had performed many miracles and the religious leaders ignored the evidence to make a right decision.

Jesus is the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5). The only people who cannot see the light are blind people and those who refuse to look, those who make themselves blind. The beggar was physically blind and spiritually blind, yet both his eyes and his heart were opened. Why? Because he listened to the Word, believed it, obeyed, and experienced the grace of God. The Pharisees had good physical vision, but they were blind spiritually. Had they listened to the Word and sincerely considered the evidence, they too would have believed on Jesus Christ and been born again.

In what sense did the Pharisees “see”? They saw the change in the blind beggar and could not deny that he had been healed. They saw the mighty works that Jesus performed. Even Nicodemus, one of their number, was impressed with the Lord’s miracles (John 3:2). If they had examined the evidence with honesty, they would have seen the truth clearly. “If any man wills to do His [God’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17, literal translation). “And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40).

John 10 is actually a continuation of our Lord’s ministry to the Pharisees. The healing of the blind beggar is the background (John 10:21). In fact, the word translated “cast out” in John 9:35 is translated “puts forth” in John 10:4. The beggar was cast out of the synagogue but taken by the Good Shepherd



and added to His flock! The emphasis in John 10 is on Jesus Christ, the Good and True Shepherd, as opposed to the Pharisees who were false shepherds.

We never meet this healed beggar again, but surely the man followed Jesus closely and was among those who witnessed for Him. We hope that he was able to win his fearful parents to the Lord. While being excommunicated from the synagogue was certainly a painful experience for him, he certainly found in his fellowship with Jesus Christ much more spiritual help and encouragement than he could ever have found in the Jewish traditions.

Even today, there are people who must choose between Christ and family, or Christ and their traditional religion.

This blind beggar made the right choice, even though the cost<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, [\*The Bible Exposition Commentary\*](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 323–328.