

John 9 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Outline of John

I. THE SIGNS Chs. 1-11

In the first half of John's Gospel He centers His narrative on the life of Jesus around specific miracles He performed that pointed to His deity & identity as the Messiah.

The miracle given in ch. 9 is crucial to that end because it was something never seen before.

While prophecies of the Messiah were woven *all through the Tanach*, the Jewish Bible, our OT, *Isaiah* was recognized as the prophet who *most often* spoke of the coming Savior.

He said that The Messiah would "open eyes that are blind." (Isa. 42:7; 29:18; 35:5)

Psalm 146:8 says,

The LORD [Yahweh] opens the eyes of the blind . . .

Now, while there are many miracles and healings recorded in the OT, never do we read of the blind recovering their sight.

This seems to be a healing God reserved for The Messiah, to help serve as one of the signs of Who He was.

When Jesus came, we don't find Him healing just a *few* blind people.

Matthew lists *several occasions* - Matt. 9:27-31; 12:22-23; 15:30; 20:29-34; 21:14.

What makes the healing of the blind man in ch. 9 *remarkable* is that the man hadn't become blind by an accident or illness as is the cause of *most* blindness. He was *born* blind.

It was this origin of his affliction that created such a problem for the people of that day, as we'll see.

While there's a chapter break at this point, we ought to understand John's narrative in ch. 8 continuing right into what we read here in ch. 9.

In v. 12 of ch. 8., Jesus used the lighting of the huge candelabra in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles to say that He was the Light of the World.

The healing of the blind man in ch. 9 is Jesus' *proof* of that claim.

T. A Blind Man is Healed 9:1-41

1. He's healed 9:1-7

¹ Now as Jesus passed by,

Let's not lose the continuity with the larger story John is telling.

Ch. 8 ends with Jesus making an unmistakable claim to being *Yahweh*, the covenant God of Israel.

His opponents clearly understood this & took up stones to *kill* Him. Look at the last verse of ch. 8 . . .

⁵⁹ Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so

passed by.

1 Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.

Ch. 9 isn't *days* later; it happened immediately.

As Jesus was ditching the angry crowd that wanted to kill Him, He passed by this guy who was apparently a well known character.

We can safely assume that from v. 2 . . .

2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

They knew his history. The disciples knew this man's blindness was a *birth defect* & not the result of an accident or illness.

Like many beggars, he sat on the Southern steps leading up to the temple.

As people went up to worship, they would prepare to meet with God.

Part of this preparation was to wash at the bath house.

Another part of the preparation people made was to give alms to the poor & needy.

So many beggars spent their day there, living off the charity of the worshippers. [Present day southern steps]

That's where this blind man was & as Jesus & the disciples passed by, the disciples decided to query Jesus about a pesky theological debate that was a hot topic at the time.

Who was to blame for this man's affliction – his parents or himself?

As we saw last week, the Jews of this time believed that one's physical & financial state were the evidence of either God's blessing or cursing.

If you were *doing well*, it was because you were *godly* & God was *blessing* you.

If you were *doing poorly*, it was evidence you were *wicked* & God was *punishing* you.

One of the reasons Jesus got into trouble with the Pharisees was that He went around healing people they had concluded were *justly suffering* for being evil.

By healing the sick, Jesus was seen as short-circuiting the punishment of God.

What Jesus was really doing was showing His power *over* sin & death.

He was revealing the compassion of God on this lost world.

He was showing that a new age had dawned & that the curse on creation was being loosened.

But the disciples were locked up in *the theological prison of their day* & put the question to Jesus – Who was culpable for this man's blindness – his parents or himself?

One theory said this man's blindness was God's punishment for some sin he'd committed *in the womb*.

In Gen. 25 we read how Jacob & Esau *wrestled* in Rebekah's womb.

The contest was fierce & caused her great concern.

Even before they were born they were going at it & based on this some concluded unborn children could sin.

Now – while it's true that because of Adam's Fall we're all born in sin, it's wrong to conclude that a birth defect is the result of sinning in the womb.

If that were the case, then why weren't either Esau or Jacob born with a

disability?

The other theory said that birth defects were God's judgment on the parents for some sin *they* committed.

The basis for this is what God says several times in the OT – that He visits the sins of the fathers on the children to the 3rd & 4th generation. [Exo. 20:5; 34:7, Num. 14:18]

But physical disability is **NOT** what God meant by this, as the exception in every passage makes clear.

God not only said that the sins of the fathers would be visited on the 3rd & 4th generation of their descendants, He said He would show mercy & grace on **ANYONE** who turned to Him.

What God meant was that the *fallenness* of mankind is passed from generation to generation.

If we parent our children out of our fallenness, it's to be expected that we'll leave a *negative* mark on them & they will in turn duplicate & expand on that fallenness with *their* kids.

But – if **ANY** generation repents & turns to faith in God, then He will begin a new work & erase the effects of sin.

My grandfather was a womanizer & a drinker.

My Dad was an alcoholic & left my mother & his wife of 28 years for another woman.

Praise God Jesus saved & delivered me from all that.

My wife needs never worry that I will be disloyal to her.

My kids need never worry about where their father is or if he'll get home safely because he's drunk somewhere.

The disciples were forced into an "either/or" situation with this blind man because they'd bought into a faulty presupposition – that our current condition is the result of either God's blessing for being godly or His punishment for being wicked.

3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. **4** I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

Since there are no punctuation marks in Koine Greek, there's some question as to how we're to understand this.

Some parses it this way –

Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned(. **B**)ut that the works of God should be revealed in him(,) **4** I must work the works of Him who sent Me . . .

Those who set it this way want to avoid attributing the man's blindness to God.

But they miss the point of what Jesus is saying.

We ought to take it the way it's given here in the NKJV.

What Jesus is saying is this – the man's blindness was NOT God's judgment.

It wasn't the result of either his or his parents' sin.

Rather, the disciples needed to understand that this man's blindness would

become an occasion for God's glory!
Jesus *never* attributed the man's blindness to God as some suggest.
The man's blindness was the result of the curse that lies on creation because of the Fall.
If anyone was to blame it was Adam & ALL his descendants for *ratifying* his sin every time *they* sin.
We can't blame Adam for the Fall – because every time *we* sin, we're declaring we would have done the **VERY SAME THING** if we'd been in his place in Eden.

A slave name Admonicus was lamenting his bondage.
His master was a Christian who'd been sharing the gospel with him, but the slave failed to see his own error or need of a Savior.
Admonicus had been told all about Adam & the Fall & how the evil in the world was the result of sin.
He hated his slavery & constantly muttered curses against Adam under his breath, lamenting how foolish it was for the first man to rebel against God and plunge all his descendants into misery.
His master heard these mutterings & thought of a way to drive home the lesson of Admonicus' need of Christ.
He called him in one day & pointed to a locked box, saying it held a very important treasure. Admonicus was to guard it but *never*, ever open it.
Days went by while the slave's curiosity grew.
After a week it finally got the best of him, he took a knife & slipped the catch.
Opening the lid, he found a piece of parchment inside that read, "Dear Admonicus, It's no good cursing Adam for the Fall. You've just proven you would have done the same thing in his place."

There is a lot to learn from Jesus' response to the disciples' query.
They saw a man born blind & wanted to turn him into the *object* of a *theological discussion*.
Jesus saw a *man* who needed *healing*.
They looked back to the *cause*, He looked forward to the *result*.
Or let me put it this way – they asked, "*Why* is there suffering in the world?"
Jesus replied, "*Because there is* suffering in the world, *let's do something about it!*"
"Instead of *wondering* how a God of all power & all love could allow evil, let's *reveal* the love & power of God by *overcoming it!*"

You know why there's evil in the world?
It's not because of some failure in God. He *is* all loving, all powerful, & all wise.
But there's evil in the world because **WE** choose it.
If we demand God end all evil then the human race has just ceased to exist because He'll have to nullify free will.
Now, I know what some will say – how is a birth defect a choice?
The child who comes down with leukemia does not *choose* that, nor does anyone else.
When a tsunami washes over Southeast Asia, when an earthquake collapses thousands of buildings in Pakistan, when a hurricane rolls over LA, how is

that someone's choice?

While we may not see a direct cause & effect, an A leads to B, in these things, the fact is, they're the result of living in a fallen world, a world cursed with sin & death because of a *choice* man made & men *renew* every day.

In Romans 8 we're told the creation suffers under the curse & yearns for the day of its liberation. [Romans 8:18-23]

Jesus taught His followers that once they've been delivered from the *spiritual effects* of the Fall, they must seek to give evidence to that change by addressing its *physical effects*.

Jesus adds a crucial word of caution in v. 4 –

4 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

Even though as God Jesus is eternal, as man, He's keenly aware of time.

The days of His mission were winding down & soon He would be returning to Heaven.

But even beyond this, Jesus was looking forward in time to the day when the world would be turned over to its rebellion against God.

We talked about this last Sunday.

During the Tribulation, the salt & light of the Church will be removed, and the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit will be absent, allowing rebel man to have his way.

That will truly be a *spiritual night* for planet Earth.

But it's not that time yet so we must take advantage of the last minutes of daylight & share the life of God with other.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Jesus repeats what He'd said in ch. 8.

Because He's the light of the world, He can give sight to the blind.

6 When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. 7 And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

In all the healings Jesus performed, never do we read of Him doing the same thing twice.

Sometimes He simply spoke, & the healing was done.

Other times He laid hands on the sick & they recovered.

Most times we just read that He healed; no description of technique is given.

Here he does something unique – He uses saliva & dirt to make clay which He applied to the blind man's eyes then told him to go wash.

There's a good reason why the Holy Spirit doesn't give us a pattern for Jesus' healings; God doesn't want us to settle into some kind of formula for healing.

Some years ago, there was a movement that was heavy into healing.

The leaders went around the country holding "*healing clinics*," teaching people *how* to have a "healing ministry."

They taught seminar attendees how to hold their hand 6 inches from the person

& move it around looking for hot spots.

Then they were taught how to pray just the right words so God would heal. I never understood how people could miss what Paul says so clearly in 1 Cor. 12 – that healing is a spiritual GIFT, not skill you learn by attending a seminar.

I attended an ultra-charismatic church in OC for a while where the pastor supposedly had words of knowledge about people God wanted to heal.

He would call them out of their seat & into the aisle & pray for them.

He would tilt his head back & pray in a deep voice of authority, saying, “I see the Spirit of God filling you up, it’s to your knees now. Now it’s rising to your waist. Not it’s to the level of your shoulders. Wait for it, wait for it all. It’s nearing the top of your head. When you’re full you won’t be able to stand any more.” And sure enough, they’d fall over.

What was interesting to observe was how all the other pastors & elders did & said *precisely the same thing* when *they* were praying for people.

Healing had become a *formula*.

The idea that you can hold your hand just so; use the right tremble in the voice; tilt your head at this angle, and the channel to divine power will open is absurd!

I’ve read a dozen different suggestions why Jesus used saliva & dust.

Who knows why He did it this way?

There may be some profoundly deep meaning to it – maybe He meant this to be reminiscent of creation when He *spoke* & created man of the *dust* of the ground.

But then again, maybe He just used this method because it was *different* & He didn’t want His followers to reduce healing to a formula, a method.

Think about all of this from the perspective of the blind man.

He’s never seen a thing in all his life.

Unlike those who go blind after being sighted for a while, he has no visual images to draw from in his memory.

He’s lived in a world of darkness.

Then one day, as he’s sitting in his typical place begging, along come some guys who are engaged in a discussion he’s heard many times – who’s to blame for his blindness.

He’s so tired of being the object of theological curiosity & debate.

What’s doubly hard is when some *accuse him* of being a hideous sinner who’s blindness was his own fault for some sin he’d committed in the womb.

How many times had he thought that one through & pleaded with God to forgive him?

Either God hadn’t forgiven him or that wasn’t the cause because He was still blind.

But on this day, something different happened.

One voice refused to get caught up in the familiar debate.

It said that instead of religious discussions, it was time to DO something about the man’s blindness.

There’s a pause, then he feels wet clay being pressed against his sightless eyes. There’s no sight, but there’s *irritation*! Ever had dirt in your eye? It hurts!

As the man wonders what's going on & why this man who sounded like he was going to help has instead added to his affliction, he's told to go and wash. To the blind man, that was obvious. He knew that the only way to get the irritation out of his eyes was water.

So he made his stumbling way to Siloam, which was a huge public pool not far from there.

As soon as he splashed the water onto his face, the clay dropped away & his sight was made clear.

Now, I think there's a picture of *conversion* in all this but let's wait a bit to see what it is.

2. The reaction 9:8-12

8 Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" **9** Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he."

If the *disciples*' knew this guy, his neighbors were certainly well-acquainted with him.

The reason they were having a difficult time knowing if this is him *now* is because of the miracles of his *new eyes*.

His eyeballs had been deformed or given such evidence of blindness that it was obvious to everyone he was blind.

Now, there are two beautiful eyes in his head & it's altered his appearance.

He has to tell those who see him that it is indeed him!

10 Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" **11** He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." **12** Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

All the man knows about Jesus at this point is His name and that He healed him.

Don't forget – the name "Jesus = Yeshua" was a common name in that time.

3. He's excommunicated 9:13-34

13 They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. **14** Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. **15** Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." **16** Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

The Pharisees fancied themselves the Sabbath police.

They went around making sure other Jews kept the Sabbath.

One of the reasons they so hated the Romans was because they didn't observe the Sabbath day inside the borders of Israel and this really irked them.

When they heard that Jesus had made clay on the Sabbath, they freaked because

this constituted work according to their rules.

They said that it was prohibited to spit on the ground on the Sabbath, lest you accidentally kick your spit with your sandal, mixing it with dirt & make clay.

Here's the dilemma facing the Pharisees:

In front of them stands a man who'd been born blind who now sees.

But he got his sight from a man who broke their rules.

Weighing the evidence, they decide Jesus can't be legit *because* He breaks their rules.

Some others see the error in their logic & call them on it.

Because looking good in the eyes of others was what was so important to the Pharisees, they decide to try another round of questioning with the blind man.

17 They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

This seems like a pretty silly question – what are you gonna' say about someone who's just set you free from a lifetime of darkness?

You're probably going to have a pretty high opinion of him!

18 But the Jews

Remember – this is John's way of referring to the religious & civil leaders of Israel

18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight.

You gotta love this – because they refused to accept Jesus, they refused to accept the reality of this miracle.

You know why? Because they realized if they admitted the miracle, it would mean they had to recognize Jesus!

This is ever the way it is with unbelief!

Because people **WON'T** accept God, they reject any evidence of the supernatural.

I'll tell you why Judge John Jones ruled against the Dover Area School Board a couple weeks ago and said Intelligent Design cannot be taught in public school science classes.

It had *nothing* to do with the scientific merits of ID.

Intelligent design is a reasoned and logical conclusion of the evidence in even the simplest forms of life.

But it necessarily postulates the existence of a Divine Creator – and **THAT** is something unbelievers like Judge Jones **CANNOT** tolerate.

They cannot tolerate it because it makes them morally & spiritually responsible.

They're like little children who're hearing their mommy say something they don't like so they stick their fingers in their ears & go "Blah, blah, blah."

God still heals. There are miraculous healings taking place all around the world *every* day.

But no amount of miracles will persuade the determined agnostic or atheist.

No matter how dramatic the healing or clear the evidence, the dogged unbeliever will find a way to explain it away.

The Pharisees & rulers launched an official investigation & called on the blind man's parents to question them. They asked 3 questions –

19 And they asked them, saying,

1) “Is this your son,

2) who you say was born blind? (Was he really born blind?)

3) How then does he now see?”

20 His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

Yep, this is our boy & that's affirmative – he was born blind.

21 but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.”

22 His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that

He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

Word had gone out from the priests that if anyone endorsed Jesus as the Messiah, they would be *excommunicated!*

In our culture, being kicked out of a church is really no big deal – you can just go down the street to another church.

But what would it have been like to be a Pilgrim or Puritan and be kicked out of Church in Plymouth or Boston in the 1600's? Brutal!

Well, it was even *worse* for Jews. The synagogue was the center of social life.

If you were booted from the synagogue, you were numbered among the publicans & sinners, the dregs of society.

No one would frequent your business anymore & there was no way you'd be able to find spouses for your kids.

These parents knew their son had been healed & how but they didn't want to risk excommunication so they ducked the question & threw it back on their son.

24 So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, “Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.”

What they mean is – “Don't attribute this healing to this guy ‘Jesus.’ Give the glory to God!”

Try as they might, the miracle is too obvious to deny. There are too many witnesses.

The guy is too well known to argue with the fact he's been healed.

They call on him to renounce his attributing the miracle to Jesus.

Their august & learned opinion is that Jesus is a sinner.

Watch his reply to their high & mighty conclusion . . .

25 He answered and said, “Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.”

He's being humble; “Unlike you religious scholars, I'm in no position to determine my healer's moral condition – but one thing is certain – **HE DID heal me!**”

They realized this placed them in an awkward place – one his answer clarified; If Jesus is just a sinner, then how did He heal this blind man. Remember that in the OT, no one was ever healed of blindness but healing the blind was something Isaiah said the Messiah would do.

26 Then they said to him again, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?”

They want to go back over the same ground they’ve already covered.

The man who was healed realized they wanted to talk this thing to death & wear him down, getting him to give in to their opinions.

He won’t betray the truth he’s come to know & refuses to play along.

27 He answered them, “I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear *it* again? Do you also want to become His disciples?”

These words reveal that this man was one sharp, sharp cookie!

He says, “I already told you what happened, but you didn’t listen.”

They’d *heard his words* but hadn’t *listened to the message*.

Because they had already decided to reject Jesus, nothing he said would make any difference.

So what would be the point in repeating it – unless the evidence had convinced them & they were no ready to commit to Jesus.

28 Then they reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.”

Here they go again making fun of Jesus’ shady reputation as an illegitimate child.

They’ve put him down as the follower of a fool while they fancy themselves as Moses’ elite scholars.

What he says next shows that a post-graduate decree in unbelief has nothing on the newest believer who simply trusts in Jesus.

30 The man answered and said to them, “Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! ³¹ Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. ³² Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. ³³ If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.”

His logic is flawless!

“Jesus healed me in a way unheard of in all our history as the people of God.

Both scripturally & logically, there’s only one conclusion – He’s from God.

If you guys can’t see that, then you are more blind **than I EVER was!**”

Now, watch *their* incredibly perceptive & educated reply -

34 They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out.

They fall back on something that doesn’t even matter anymore – the debate about

why he was born blind. They try to discredit his testimony by pointing to his past.

You can always tell when you've won an argument when the other guy resorts to ad hominem attacks.

"Ad hominem" is Latin for "to the person."

An ad hominem attack is common in debates when a person has exhausted his points & come up short.

Instead of sticking with the subject, you start attacking the credibility & character of you opponent.

That's what the rulers do here. They've lost the argument to this man so they attack him as an uneducated sinner.

If you throw a rock into a pack of dogs you can always tell which one got hit by who yelps the loudest.

4. He's saved 9:35-41

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, **"Do you believe in the Son of God?"** ³⁶ He answered and said, **"Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"**

While the rulers dug in their unbelieving heels & refused to commit to Christ no matter what evidence they were given, this guy was eager to believe.

He was an "eager believer." {Eager beaver?!}

37 And Jesus said to him, **"You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you."**

Jesus poignantly touches on the fact that the guy *now sees* – **"You have seen Him"**

38 Then he said, **"Lord, I believe!"** And he worshiped Him.

Let's chart the progression of this man's faith.

- 1) He starts out with congenital blindness – just like all of us.
Though we might be able to see with our physical eyes, we are all born in sin & lack spiritual sight.
We begin in spiritual death & darkness which we inherited from Adam.
- 2) Then Jesus came to him.
He didn't go to Jesus; he didn't *find* Jesus; Jesus *found* him.
We're fond of saying the we found Jesus. Nonsense! We were lost and Jesus found us!
- 3) The next step was irritation when Jesus applied the clay.
That clay was made from that which came from Jesus mouth.
I think this is meant to be a picture of the Holy Spirit who comes to convict us of our sin & make us aware of our spiritual need.
- 4) Then the man went to wash.
Water is used over & over in the Bible as a symbol of the Word of God.
The Holy Spirit couples the conviction of sin with the message of God's love & forgiveness in Christ.
It's this word which brings a relief to the irritation of conviction.
- 5) When the man's eyes were opened, all he knew as that Jesus had done it.
And though he hadn't seen Jesus yet, the evidence of genuine faith was manifested in his fierce loyalty to Jesus.

The more he was pressed & questioned, the greater his dependence on God became, the more wisdom was granted to him.

In a similar way, as others challenge us about our faith, as we stay true to the Lord, we'll find wells of wisdom opened wide and answer will come to mind that surprise even us.

6) Finally, Jesus appeared to this man and completed his journey to full, experiential faith.

Right now, you and I believe in and follow Christ having never seen Him.

One day He will come & we will see Him.

The faith he hold in part now will be completed.

Then, like this man, we will worship like never before.

39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."

Those who *admit* their spiritual blindness can find sight through faith in Christ.

But those who proudly boast of their personal goodness & great spiritual insight will remain blind.

40 Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?"

This is said with a sneer – "Oh, are you saying we're blind?!"

41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin;

That is – if they *acknowledged* their blindness -

but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.

Because they *refused to admit* their need, they remained lost.

This is the great peril the lost are in – they stand in danger of hell simply because they refuse to admit that they're in need of help.

We never know the name of this man Jesus healed .

Though he shows more faith & perseverance than most others in the gospels, he remains nameless.

The lesson is this - a true disciple is content to remain anonymous if his/her

Lord gets the glory. ^[1]

^[1] David Guzik, *Online Commentary on John*