

Seeing is Believing

John 9 – p. 895 in pew Bibles

As we come to the Word of God this morning, I want to draw your attention to this very interesting, very powerful passage of Scripture in John's Gospel. And I want to approach this passage of Scripture in two ways. First, I want to just read the chapter all the way through and let the Word of God speak for itself. Second, we'll then go back and I want to observe, or point out some things in the passage, making comments and applications along the way.

Please follow along with me as I read John chapter 9, starting with verse 1.

[Read John 9:1-41]

Now, this passage centers around a miracle that Jesus performed. And one major thing we need to know about Jesus' miracles is that they were used as signs that point to Jesus' divinity. And I think it's important for us to take a moment, hold your place in John chapter 9, and let's look ahead to John chapter 20, verses 30-31 which reveals to us what the whole purpose is of John's Gospel, and especially the account of Jesus' miracles.

John 20:30-31 *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

What we have here in this story is a stark contrast between the Pharisees and their spiritual blindness and unbelief, and the man who was physically born blind gaining not only his physical sight, but his spiritual sight, as well.

The story is split up into three segments, or scenes, if you will. The first scene is the original account of Jesus' miraculous healing of the man born blind which we read in verses 1-7. The second scene is the man's interrogation before the Pharisees *after* the event, which covers verses 8-34. Finally, we have the post-excommunication scene which focuses on Jesus' response to both the man who was healed and the Pharisees who remain blind.

So turn with me again to verse 1 of this chapter and let's look at some observations.

As I said, this first section is the actual account of what Jesus did. Our first point this morning that we draw from this first section in verses 1-7 is this:

I. **Jesus' healing of the man born blind calls us to believe.**

1. The first observation I was to make is in v. 1 – it says **The man was blind from birth.** This is the only recorded instance in the gospels, of Jesus healing an ailment that the person was born with. This may be why many of the early Christian writers often referred to this miracle as an illustration of conversion. When someone becomes a Christian, he doesn't recover what he formerly lost, but rather receive a completely new ability to see and understand the things of God. For the first time in his life this man was going to see

physically. But what we also see throughout this narrative is the man “seeing” Jesus for who He is, more and more clearly as things unfold.

2. v. 3 – **“that the works of God might be displayed in him.”** There’s so much that could be said about this, but what’s important for our point today is to see that in God’s sovereign plan, He allowed the infirmity of this man for the sole purpose of revealing His works in him at this particular time in his life through the ministry of Jesus Christ so that His works might point to who Jesus is.

One might be tempted to ask why God allowed this man to bear this infirmity all his life until this particular time.

Romans 8:28 proves very true here. God absolutely does cause all things to work together for good, and for His greater purpose. We may not always know the reason for someone’s suffering, or even our own suffering. In the end, the important thing is to maintain a humble, repentant attitude, realizing that the suffering around us may be for the redemptive work of God to be displayed in our lives. Such circumstances call for faith on our part that even if we never know all the answers in this life, we trust in the goodness of God that one day we will see the wisdom and beauty of His purposes.

3. Next we see in v. 6 – **“he spit on the ground and made mud with his saliva”** – Now, why did Jesus do this? He certainly didn’t have to do it this way. I believe this is a direct allusion to Genesis 2, and the creative act of God in forming man from the dust of the ground. What we see here, then, and what this points to, is the fact that Jesus is, in fact, the God who was in the beginning who created the world, as John himself explicitly reveals to us back in chapter 1 of his gospel.
4. Notice also where Jesus sent him to wash. It says that Jesus told him to go to the pool of Siloam, and then we’re given a little bit of information from John that Siloam means “sent.” Now why would this matter? Well, I think the answer is found back in verse 4. Jesus said, “We must work the works of him who *sent* me...” The fact that Jesus reveals to his listeners that He was sent by God is a major theme in John, and as we’ll see, it becomes a major theme here in chapter 9 as well.
The pool of Siloam was located near the southeast corner of the city wall. Water flowed to it from another source, the Gihon spring, located outside the city. The fact that the pool of Siloam received its water from another source tells us that Jesus chose that specific pool to send the blind man to, because that pool was an illustration that Jesus Himself was sent from another source, and that source was God.
5. Finally, we see in this section the man’s response in v. 7 – **“so he went and washed and came back seeing.”** That became the man’s testimony. Jesus made mud, anointed his eyes with the mud, told him to go wash in the pool, and the man obeyed. He went, he washed, and he came back seeing. Now the man could have chosen not to obey Jesus’ command. He could have, out of unbelief, simply wiped his eyes and yelled at Jesus for

doing such a thing to him. There were other pools, other sources of water, which were closer to him. He could have gone somewhere else. He could have done any number of other things, but he didn't. He obeyed Jesus. And this means he believed enough to obey.

So this is the actual event as it happened. And since this is the inspired Word of God, the actual words of the one true, living God, we have an obligation to believe it. Jesus performed a creative miracle which points to Him being the Son of God. Our job is to believe it and allow it to change us.

What we see in the next section is two things which provide a series of contrasts. We see the man who received his sight and his spiritual eyes being able to see clearer and clearer, but we also see the choice the Pharisees make in becoming hardened in their unbelief.

The next section is the account of the interrogation before the Pharisees which covers verses 8-34. And our second point this morning is...

II. **Unbelief and spiritual pride lead to spiritual blindness and condemnation.** (vv. 8-34)

The scene starts when the man came back to the place where he was outside the temple area, as we gather from chapter 8. Notice carefully the man's original state – he was a beggar. That says a lot about his likely attitude in contrast to that of the Pharisees. This man knew he was needy. He knew he was destitute. And such an attitude marks the kind of person Jesus gives His grace to for salvation.

But take a look at verse 11. We see here how the man first sees Jesus. After his neighbors ask him how his eyes were opened, he answered, "The man called Jesus made mud..." Notice carefully, at this point all he knows is that Jesus is a man. He hasn't received the full revelation yet of who Jesus is. So thus far he is "the man called Jesus." Notice also, he gives them his testimony. He anointed my eyes and told me to wash in the pool of Siloam. I went, washed, and received my sight. I went, I washed, and came back seeing. This is what he knows for sure.

Well we see the blindness of the neighbors because, while they are told exactly what happened to the man, obviously they won't believe his story, even though they see it with their eyes. They even doubt it's really him. Some are saying, "Is this the guy?" Others said, "Yeah, I think that's the guy." "That can't be the guy." All the while the man was standing right there. I mean, have you ever been in a situation where people are right in front of you talking about you and you're like, "Hello! I'm right here!" Same thing happens here. It says the man *kept telling them*, "I'm the guy!"

Well, not knowing what to make of this situation, they figure the Pharisees could sort it out, so they take him straight to them.

Now right away we're told another detail of the story, that it was the Sabbath day when Jesus healed the man. And this is kind of a running theme with Jesus and the Jewish leaders. You see, the Jewish leaders took the law of Moses and made up their own legal code of what it means in

practice, often getting down to little nitty gritty details. For instance, according to their tradition, one of things you couldn't do on the Sabbath was knead dough.

Well when the Pharisees asked the man what happened, the man gave his testimony again. He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and I see."

Now the next verse, verse 16, is very telling as to what the Pharisees' attitudes were. It says, "Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.'" Now this is a question of Jesus' identity, which is exactly what John is getting at in this story. Is Jesus from God or is He not? Notice some had already judged Jesus guilty and decided that He was not from God. Not because Jesus broke the law of Moses, mind you. But because He broke their tradition. He made mud on the Sabbath which the Pharisees probably saw as the same as kneading dough! The fact that Jesus did this particular healing this way meant that Jesus was again challenging the authority of human traditions and asserting His own rightful authority as the Son of God and Lord of the Sabbath.

What they do next is crazy, though. They can't figure out what's going on, so what do they do? They ask the man! "What do YOU say about him?" Like he's the resident theologian!

Now this is extremely important here, because what we see in the man's answer shows a progression in how he saw Jesus. Remember, at first he saw Him as, "The man called Jesus..." Now the Pharisees ask him what he says about him, and he answers, "He is a prophet." So first Jesus was a man, now He's a prophet. Which in itself is quite remarkable since the Jews held the prophets of the Old Testament like Moses and Elijah and Jeremiah in great honor. He obviously still doesn't have the full revelation of who Jesus is yet, but we see his spiritual sight getting clearer and clearer.

Verse 18 is very revealing. In stark contrast to the man saying Jesus is a prophet, verse 18 says, "The Jews did not believe that he had been born blind and had received his sight." The Pharisees basically were saying, "there has to be some other explanation."

Unbelief will always seek alternative explanations to manifest miracles. They knew if Jesus had really opened this man's eyes, it would mean something that they simply couldn't admit, because they had already decided that Jesus wasn't from God. So they didn't even believe he was blind to begin with. That must be the explanation.

So they called the man's parents and asked them if this was their son and if he had been born blind. They asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

Now this is amazing here, because the parents essentially throw their own son under the bus! They said to them, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." Oh well thanks a lot, dad!

But before we go too hard on the parents, look at why they said that. It says in verse 22, "His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if

anyone should confess Jesus to be the Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.” Basically meaning they would be ex-communicated from society.

But look at this. It says the Jews had already agreed. They had already decided, regardless of the miracle, regardless of what was plainly evident, regardless of whatever anyone might testify, they had already decided that Jesus was NOT the Christ. Not only that, but they decided that anyone else that said that He was the Christ would be thrown out of the synagogue. This was the nature of their blindness. They didn’t approach the situation with an open heart and mind, they had absolutely no room in their thinking that Jesus could actually prove to be the Christ. Jesus was opposing them and so Jesus was wrong because, well, they obviously couldn’t be wrong!

When we come to God’s Word with our mind already made up about what’s true and what’s not, then we are coming blind, unable to see the truth that God is revealing to us. And that’s a very dangerous place to be.

The Pharisees then call the man back in and, once again, show us that they had already had their mind made up. In verse 24 they state openly, “We know that this man is a sinner.”

Now notice the man’s authentic, child-like response. He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” The man had a testimony that nobody could take away from him. And that testimony was getting in the way of the Pharisees’ authority!

The Pharisees asked him once again, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” This man had given his testimony over and over again. And it was the same every time. It wasn’t very difficult. I went, I washed, and I came back seeing. I went, I washed, and I came back seeing. Look at what he says to them. Verse 27 - He says, “I have already told you, *and you would not listen.*” The man is beginning to see more and more, and he sees right through them now. He sees that this is not a true investigation going on. He sees that their eyes are shut, their ears are shut, they don’t want to listen, they don’t want to see, and their minds are already made up. He says to them, rather sarcastically, “Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciple?”

At this point the Pharisees were completely frustrated and didn’t know where else to go, so they retreated to the only thing they knew. Verse 28 - “We are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he is from.”

Well now the man really gets bold. He is seeing pretty clearly by now, and he just comes out and tells it like it is.

Now keep in mind, this miracle was done to point to who Jesus was. It said something very definitive about Him. And the man fully gets it here. “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.” Notice, he’s connecting the miracle he received to identifying who Jesus is. “We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” Notice the Pharisees’ response and how they believed that same thing that

Jesus' disciples did at the beginning, that since he was born blind it must have been because of sin. "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" Um, yes, yes he would. Because he's seeing a lot more clearly than they are at this point.

Well, that was all the Pharisees could take and they threw him out.

Now that brings us to our third section which is the post-excommunication scene found in verses 35-41. Here we also see our third point this morning...

III. Humbly acknowledging our need of Christ leads to spiritual sight and eternal life.

Verse 35 – "Jesus heard that they cast the man out, and having found him..." Which means Jesus was looking for him. Jesus sought him. That's what Jesus does. He seeks us. God doesn't wait for us to come to Him, because we never would. Instead, like a Shepherd seeking his lost sheep, He seeks us and finds us and brings us home.

So Jesus found the man and asked him a very important question. One that Jesus asks all of us at one point or another. "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

Now notice the man's response in contrast to the Pharisees. He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Now stop here and remember the man's journey. He started out seeing Jesus as "The man called Jesus." He then saw Him as "a prophet." Next we see his boldness is answering the Pharisees and he acknowledged that Jesus is from God. So the man knows that Jesus came from God and that He healed him. But he could be just a prophet that points the way to the Christ, so he asks Him, "Who is he, that I may believe." His heart, unlike the Pharisees, is willing to believe. He has had his eyes opened this far, and now he's ready for the full revelation.

Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." Here Jesus reveals himself fully to the man. Jesus said "you have seen him." His response, then, is the only appropriate response. He said, "Lord, I believe," and, it says...he...worshipped...him.

That's the purpose of God's redemption. Turning God-haters into God-lovers. Turning rebels into obedient children. Turning the blind into those who see Christ for who He really is. For when we see God for who He is, in all His awe and wonder, we respond with true worship which is what we were created for.

Jesus finishes by saying, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." This is the same type of saying that Jesus said to the Pharisees in Luke 5:31-32, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." This is the message of this story. It's those who know that they need healing, who know they need to have their eyes opened, who know their need of Christ, they will receive His grace and forgiveness. But those who think they

already see, that think they already have it all together, that think they already have the answers, those are the ones who are truly blind.

The Pharisees heard all this and perceived that maybe Jesus might be talking about them, and they ask, “Are we also blind?” This was the ultimate proof of their blindness. They didn’t even know they were blind! They didn’t even know that their spiritual pride had blinded them to the only hope of salvation they would ever have.

Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘we see,’ your guilt remains.”

Now for those of you here who are already followers of Christ, I want to ask you something. Are there areas of your life where you are being blinded by an unwillingness to see the truth, and an unwillingness to submit those areas to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Are there things in God’s Word that you refuse to see, because you think you already have the issue figured out?

But ultimately, John says that “*these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*”

Maybe you’re here this morning and you know that you have been rejecting the truth about Jesus Christ. You don’t want to hear it. You don’t want to believe it, because that would mean you would have to acknowledge your sin and submit to surrendering to Jesus Christ as Lord and Master of your life. And, oh yes, that would mean your life would be different. And you’ve been fighting against all of this. I want to tell you this morning that you’re fighting against God himself.

Jesus calls each of us today, he calls YOU, to lay down your pride and self-assurance and rebellion. Like the blind beggar, humbly recognize your spiritual state and see Christ for who He is. Then respond in obedience to Jesus’ command. He calls you this day to believe. Jesus came, lived a sinless life so that we could be right with God, He died in our place on the cross for our sins, and rose again so that we may have new life. Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Let’s pray.