

Healing a Blind Man: Jesus as Light of the World Awakens a Remnant

John 9

Man rejects the Light, God sovereignly works the New Birth. In John 8 we saw the Light (Jesus) “appearing in the darkness, and the darkness apprehending it not.” By the end of John 8, the religious leaders have heard His declaration “I AM” and have taken up stones to kill Him. “He came to his own, and his own received him not.” But in John 9 we find one that “received Him”... and to that poor man - a sample of “those that believe on his name” - was given the right to know himself in the conscious relationship of “the children of God”. Why? Because he was a superior specimen? No... for He was blind. Rather, it was because he had “been born, not of blood, nor of flesh’s will, nor of man’s will, but of God.” Through the opposition of the religious leaders, we see in this blind man that Divine life put on display, and contrasted with the darkness of man’s religion.

Dispensational Overtones. While this chapter gives us a doctrinal picture of new birth leading to salvation, it also contains dispensational teaching. In ch.8 we had the rejection of Jesus as Jehovah by the nation of Israel. But in John 9 we have a single man healed from a condition of blindness, which is a figure of the Jewish remnant being awakened by the Lord. Just as this man is persecuted by the Sanhedrin, so the remnant will be persecuted by the apostate Jews under Antichrist. Like this blind man, in the midst of great tribulation, the remnant will grow in their knowledge of Messiah, and finally be united with Him.

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Healing the Blind Man: The Light Awakens a Remnant (9:1-12)

The Cause of the Man's Blindness (vv.1-3)

CHAPTER 9

1 [And as he passed on, he saw a man blind from birth.](#) v.1 The man who forms the object lesson in John 9 is a blind man from birth (Psa. 51:5). This pictures the natural condition of Israel, and of all mankind; totally ignorant of God, and unable to lay hold of divine things.

2 [And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this *man* or his parents, that he should be born blind?](#) v.2 Jews had a strange idea that God sometimes inflicts punishment anticipatively on one whose eventual sin He foresees. Obviously this is a false idea. The only other possible reason for a birth defect that they could conceive of was the sin of the parents. They based this on Exodus 20:5, which speaks of the iniquity of the fathers being visited upon the children. This condition of blindness would have cast the family in a negative light. You can sense the resulting shame-complex that characterizes the parents in the rest of this chapter.

3 [Jesus answered, Neither has this *man* sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifested in him.](#) v.3 We need to be careful not to make assumptions about the cause of trials in the lives of others. It is true that the Father chastens His children for their blessing. But we are not to impute sin where there may be no sin, such as in this case. We can learn from the Lord's response that *the ultimate purpose of everything that happens in this life is the glory of God*. In chapter 8 we had the Lord's words displayed and rejected, in chapter 9 we have the "works of God" manifested and rejected.

The Lord's Purpose in Working the Works of God (vv.4-5)

4 I must work the works of him that has sent me while it is day. *The night is coming, when no one can work.* **5** As long as I am in the world, I am *the light of the world.* vv.4-5 As long as "*the Light of the world*" was present on earth, it was daytime in a moral sense. The Lord could work in grace - doing the works of the Father who sent Him (v.3), thus declaring God (John 1:18). The Light could shine freely. But soon a "night" was coming; the night is when His rejection would be complete, and the Light would no longer be "in the world". He is absent today, and the night has rolled on (Rom. 13:12). But a morning is coming. The Millennial Day approaches (Mal. 4:2)! While He is absent, "*no man can work,*" in that the flow of grace in its fullness from the Person of Christ on earth has been suspended in His absence. In the meantime, Christians are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). As channels of grace in a world of darkness, room can still be made for God to work in the night. We can still work because we are "*children of the day*" (1 Thess. 5:5), and we have the "*light of life*" (John 8:12).¹

Healing of the Blind Man (vv.6-7)

vv.6-7 Neither this man nor his parents ask for help or healing. This was an act of pure grace to open his eyes. So it is with each one of us. Before there was any motion toward God, He quickened us by the Spirit. Recall from John 3 that new birth is needed to "see" or perceive the Kingdom of God. *There is no spiritual eyesight apart from new birth.*

6 Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud of the spittle, and put the mud, as ointment, on his eyes. **7** And he said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is interpreted, Sent. He went therefore and washed, and came seeing. vv.6-7 The Lord's method in healing this blind man illustrates the way salvation comes to us, and the teaching of this chapter. If the Lord was going to heal him, why not just do it? Why go through this procedure? He was illustrating the truth by His actions. There are two steps: (1) the application of the mud to the eyes, and (2) the washing in the pool of Siloam.

1. Clay applied to the eyes. The mixture of spittle (representing Divinity come down to man) with earth (representing a human body) to make mud is a picture of the incarnation. The Son of God took manhood into His own person... a union was formed between His divine nature and His human nature. Applying the clay to the eyes speaks of Christ as a humble man presented to the eyes of men. The result?... It

is not enough to quicken. If we only had the truth of the incarnation applied to us, our lost condition would only be exacerbated. The only thing worse than being blind is to be blind with mud in our eyes. To think of a perfect man who walked the earth only illuminates our fallen condition.

2. Washing in the pool of Siloam. Application of water from the pool, which is interpreted "Sent", is what healed the man. A soul must be presented with Jesus, not merely as a man, but as the Sent One of God. How does a person get this? By being washed with water. By comparing with John 3:5, we see the new birth (eyes opened) is accomplished by "water and the Spirit", or through the Word of God by the Spirit of God (Titus 3:5-7). The soul must recognize that Jesus was the Sent One of God, sent to do His will, and to glorify Him as to the question of sin. "Go and wash" - the activity of faith.

It isn't that the clay was unimportant. We must see Christ as a man in all His perfection. But then the work of the Spirit must come in, presenting Christ as the Sent One of God, in order to receive sight.

Reaction of the Neighbors (vv.8-12)

8 The neighbours therefore, and those who used to see him before, that he was a beggar, said, Is not this he that was sitting and begging? **9** Some said, It is he; others said, No, but he is like him: "he" said, It is I. vv.8-9 Here we find that the neighbors cannot even recognize him by his face. Perhaps "sightless" eyes have disfiguring effect on a person's countenance. His whole face had come alive! So it is with the sinner whose eyes are opened... our friends and neighbors see a transformation of our lives! But also, how common to avert our eyes from a beggar. The natural man cannot look upon a beggar for the shame it brings. But it was important that there were witnesses to this miracle, and as the discussion continued, the truth of his identity became clear. "He said, It is I" - there is no uncertainty with the soul whose eyes have been opened.

10 They said therefore to him, How have thine eyes been opened? **11** He answered *and said*, A man called Jesus made mud and anointed mine eyes, and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash: and having gone and washed, I saw. **12** They said therefore to him, Where is he? He says, I do not know. vv.10-12 They want to know "how"... His first words are "who". What a precious privilege to confess Jesus. But he doesn't know the whereabouts of the one that had healed him. He doesn't answer what he doesn't know. When people ask you questions you don't know about your new-found faith, you can simply say "I know not".

A progression can be seen in this chapter in the blind man's apprehension of the Lord. It is pictured in ch.10 as the Good Shepherd leading His sheep out from the *fold* of Judaism, into the *flock* of Christianity.

- He knows the Lord only as "a man called Jesus" (v.11)
- He knows Jesus as "a prophet" (v.17)
- He recognizes that Jesus is "God-fearing" and does "His will" (v.31)
- He owns Jesus as "the Son of God" (v.38)

There is normal progression, ending with the soul becoming a worshiper:

- He becomes a quickened soul (v.7)
- He becomes a confessor of Christ (v.11)
- He becomes a disciple of Christ (vv.24-28)
- He becomes a defender of Christ (vv.30-33)
- He becomes a worshipper of Christ (v.35)

Light Rejected: Investigation of the Pharisees (9:13-23)

Rejection by Religious Leaders. The neighbors were merely curious about the healing, but we see something different with the Pharisees. They had a positively antagonistic attitude toward the one that Christ had wrought with in grace. They had scoffed at Him at the end of John 8 when He claimed to be "I AM". Now He had proven His deity by opening the eyes of the blind. This presented a real problem to them. Not only did His words declare Him to be the Light, but His works as well. Words are easy to contradict... a public healing near the temple is much more difficult. There is nothing the religious world hates more, than when a sinner is healed by Jesus *apart from* the religious apparatus.

The Jews question the Formerly-Blind Man (vv.13-17)

13 They bring him who was before blind to the Pharisees. **14** Now it was sabbath when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. **15** The Pharisees therefore also again asked him how he received his sight. And he said to them, He put mud upon mine eyes, and I washed, and I see. vv.13-15 The Pharisees want to know how the Lord had healed the man. They

were trying to find fault because this man had gotten blessing outside of the Pharisaical system. Was there any physical “work” involved? His response revealed that the Lord had indeed “labored” on the [Sabbath](#)... by mixing mud and daubing on the man’s eyes. How sad. There was no rejoicing in the man’s healing, no interest in his wellbeing. They merely seek incriminating evidence against Christ. This is always true of man’s religion. There is no love for God or man; and there is no value placed on true holiness. Zeal for God’s glory is a false pretense. Religion is merely a fire escape from judgment, a license to pursue man’s own lusts, and a means to control others. The presence of the Son of God on earth was upsetting the entire religious edifice of the Jews.

16 [Some of the Pharisees therefore said, This man is not of God, for he does not keep the sabbath. Others said, How can a sinful man perform such signs? And there was a division among them.](#) v.16 Division among the Pharisees. We read of three divisions (“schisma”) in John; (1) John 7:43 is a division over *His Person*; (2) John 9:16 is a division over *His works*; and (3) John 10:19 is a division over *His sayings*. Here the division was between those who were more entrenched in the legal system, and those who are less entrenched. Those who were more legal could not even get past the Sabbath controversy, and showed that they were the more blinded. Jesus had previously refuted their accusation about breaking the Sabbath (John 5:17), but their spiritual blindness rendered them unteachable. For others who were more honest with themselves, the greatness of the Lord’s miracle was a startling testimony, and they questioned the judgment of the others. Not that they were acknowledging His absolute holiness, or His identity as the Son of God.

17 [They say therefore again to the blind man, What dost thou say of him, that he has opened thine eyes? And he said, He is a prophet.](#) v.17 What is Your Opinion of Jesus? In v.15 they had learned the facts of the case, but spiritual darkness is not merely passive (John 1:5) ... it is restless in its hatred of the light. They now want to force him to express his opinion of the Savior. Their motive is to uncover grounds to condemn the Lord, and even the one who was healed. In his response, we see that the formerly blind man has grown in his apprehension of Jesus, although still far short of the truth. “He is a prophet” indicates that he knew that the Lord’s words as well as His miracles were of God.

The Jews Question the Formerly-Blind Man’s Parents (vv.18-23)

18 [The Jews therefore did not believe concerning him that he was blind and had received sight, until they had called the parents of him that had received sight.](#) v.18 The natural man

will not believe the goodness of God (Rom. 2:4), and will doggedly search for some disproof of the facts. They had assumed the man's history in v.17, but on getting an unsatisfactory answer they switch tactics. Such is the heart of man.

19 And they asked them saying, This is your son, of whom ye say that he was born blind: 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; **21** but how he now sees we do not know, or who has opened his eyes we do not know. "He" is of age: ask "him"; "he" will speak concerning himself. **22** His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one confessed him *to be the Christ*, he should be excommunicated from the synagogue. **23** On this account his parents said, He is of age: ask "him". vv.19-23
The man's parents did not want to get involved because they feared the Sanhedrin. Excommunication from fellowship was the price to be paid for confessing Jesus as the Messiah. Their unbelief causes them to deflect the blow back to their son, which they ought to have shared with him, if not taken on themselves as his parents. They care more for their own status in the community than for their son.

The Remnant Excommunicated by an Apostate Nation (9:24-34)

vv.24-34 What is different about this second "inquisition"? In vv.13-23 they were questioning the formerly blind man and his parents for the purpose of incriminating Jesus. But now they call the man "a second time" to force a confession from him, in hopes of silencing the mouth of the remnant. The facts of the case had previously been established beyond any reasonable doubt. The man was blind, and Jesus had healed him. The Pharisees could not contest the facts, but they couldn't bear the logical consequence: they could lose their position among the Jews in the face of a greater spiritual claim. It manifested that they were spiritually blind, no matter how clear the evidence was. This explains why they drop the line of questioning with regard to the miracle. Now they attack the Person of Christ, and those who confess Him.

The Jews Claim the Spiritual High Ground to Deliver an

Ultimatum (vv.24-25)

24 They called therefore a second time the man who had been blind, and said to him, Give glory to God: we know that this man is sinful. v.24 The Jews say “we know” showing their high thoughts of themselves. They demand that this man agree with their foregone conclusion about Jesus. That “they” could be wrong was inconceivable to them, and they threw their weight around among the people. They preface their ultimatum with “give glory to God”, making it out to be a simply binary choice. To agree with the sentence of the Sanhedrin was to glorify God, according to them. They were claiming to honor the Father while they denied the Son. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (1 John 2:23). But is it any different today? Do not men claim Divine ground to teach evil doctrine?

25 He answered therefore, If he is sinful I know not. One thing I know, that, being blind before, now I see. v.25 His answer is simple and beautiful. Firstly, he could not confirm what they had unqualifiedly insisted on. Second, he could confirm - and would not be persuaded to deny what he knew - that he was blind before, and now saw. This was the elephant in the room, and he was pointing to it! The truth sets you free. It was the Pharisees that were jumping through hoops to deny the evidence. Note: once a person comes to know the Lord, they will positively reject the assertion they He was sinful, or even that He could have sinned. But the process of learning Christ is gradual, and we do well - like this man - to only state what we positively know to be true.

The Jews use *Repetitive Questioning* to Probe for more Evidence (vv.26-27)

26 And they said to him again, What did he do to thee? how opened he thine eyes? v.26 Unbelief is dogged and restless. They repeat the same questions as in v.15, hoping that in hearing his response, they might find some other evidence or support for their ambitions.

27 He answered them, I told you already and ye did not hear: why do ye desire to hear again? do ye also wish to become his disciples? v.27 Rather than buckle under the relentless pressure, instead the courage of faith is manifested! Mr. Kelly remarks on this man’s courage by responding to their questions of “what” and “how” with a much deeper “why”. He knew that if the Pharisees had genuine faith, they would have believed his earlier testimony. Here a worthless beggar is calling the elite among the Jews out on the carpet for their inconsistency!

The Jews leverage Religious Elitism to Disparage Christ's Person (vv.28-33)

28 They railed at him, and said, Thou art his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. v.28 They now have lost their temper, and begin rail against (or, insult) the formerly blind man. They claimed to be Moses disciples, but Moses wrote prophetically of Christ, whom they were rejecting! And not only Moses, but all the Old Testament scriptures spoke of Him. The Rabbis knew from the scriptures that only Jehovah could open the eyes of the blind (Psa. 146:8). How often men will leverage “big names” in Christendom to justify a false position.

29 We know that God spoke to Moses; but *as to this man*, we know not whence he is. v.29 They identify themselves with Moses whom God had recognized, but if they had lived in Moses day they would have murmured against him like their stiff-necked forefathers! Yet they talk down about the Lord, doubting about His origin. This wasn't ignorance... it was the scorn of unbelief. They took the agnostic position about Jesus. The agnostic position is a slap in the face to God.

30 The man answered and said to them, Now in this is a wonderful thing, that “ye” do not know whence he is, and he has opened mine eyes. v.30 It is a striking incongruity that men can see the evidence before them, and still not believe. The truth is, they knew that Jesus was from God, but didn't want to admit it.

31 But we know that God does not hear sinners; but if any one be God-fearing and do his will, him he hears. **32** Since time was, it has not been heard that any one opened the eyes of one born blind. **33** If this *man* were not of God he would be able to do nothing. vv.31-33 The formerly blind man proceeds to lay out a very logical argument concluding that Jesus was sent from God. I wonder if perhaps he had often heard the Rabbis in the temple presenting these very same arguments. His premise is a scriptural one; “them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Sam. 2:30). God would not invest a sinner with miraculous powers, but has in the past given special powers to “men of God” such as Elijah. Now this man Jesus had just done a miracle that was beyond the abilities of any Old Testament miracle-worker; opening the eyes of one born blind. In fact, we never read of any blind eyes being opened in the Old Testament; that power was reserved for the Son of David (Isa. 35:5). This would be impossible... unless Jesus was of God.

The Formerly Blind Man Condemned and Excommunicated (v.34)

34 They answered and said to him, Thou hast been wholly born in sins, and thou teachest us? And they cast him out. v.34 Their anger now rises to a feverish pitch. In their spiteful reply “thou hast been wholly born in sins” they reveal that the natural man is blind to his own spiritual condition. They thought that his being born blind meant that he was a worst specimen of mankind than themselves. What ignorance! The refused to be taught (what they knew to be true) from one whom they despised. The word “cast out” is really the same as “excommunicated”. This one was shut out from the whole system of Judaism. But it is not a bad thing to be outside the camp if you are outside with Jesus (Heb. 13:13)!

A Remnant Brought to Know Christ, the Nation Blinded (9:35-41)

He Gains a Personal Belief and Relationship With Jesus (vv.35-38)

vv.35-38 This man’s rejection by the leaders of Israel is exchanged for sweetness of fellowship with the rejected Christ. Mr. Kelly remarked that in casting the man out, the Jews unwittingly cast him into the arms of the Lord.

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, he said to him, Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God? v.35 It says that Jesus “heard they had cast him out”. Having borne the sorrow and carried the grief, He could perfectly sympathize with the rejected remnant. In the beginning of the chapter the blind man’s eyes were opened, and he began to learn things about the Lord, but a far greater work was needed. He needed a personal knowledge of the Lord in His eternal identity as the Son of God. The earlier event is a picture of new birth; but this answers to salvation.

36 He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? **37** And Jesus said to him, Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he. **38** And he said, I believe, Lord: and he did him homage. vv.36-38 The question put to him in v.35 was an

abstract one, leading the man to ask for the Son as an object; where is He that I might believe? At the Lord's answer, the final puzzle piece slides into place. When we recognize that the man Christ Jesus is the Eternal Son of God, and we believe on Him... we are saved. When that happens, the soul comes to rest on the full expression of God in the Person of the Son. We have three things in his confession:

1. "I Believe" - His faith rose up to receive the testimony of God.
2. "Lord" - He confessed Jesus as Lord of his life.
3. "He did Him homage" - He had the glory of the Person of Christ before his soul, and it made him a worshiper.

The Lord's Purpose in Coming Into the World (v.39)

39 And Jesus said, For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not may see, and they which see may become blind. v.39 A great reversal was taking place; a "judgment" that was consequent upon Jesus coming into the world.

- Those that were born blind (the poor, the Gentiles) would have their eyes opened in a spiritual sense. The man in John 9 is a type of this remnant.
- Those that were born seeing (the Jews) would be blinded for rejecting the Son (Rom. 11:7; Acts 28:25-27)

There are only two categories that a person can be in: those that see, and those that do not see.

The Proud Nation Blinded (vv.40-41)

40 And *some* of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and they said to him, Are we blind also? **41** Jesus said to them, If ye were blind ye would not have sin; but now ye say, We see, your sin remains. vv.40-41 Some of the Pharisees scoffed at the Lord's words, being fully "confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, etc." (Rom. 2:19). The Lord says that if they had genuinely acknowledged their true moral condition of blindness, that would have been evidence that they had found forgiveness of sins. But because they were blind but said that they could see... there was no evidence of a broken will, and therefore no forgiveness, and so their sin remained.

Footnotes

1. *He must needs work, but He must needs work while it is day. The day is the time of the presence of the light. But while Christ was in the world He was its Light. The night is His absence. We are not of the night, but of the day; but as being dead to the estate of Christ's absence, and believing in the light, having the light of life. The night is far spent, the day is at hand, says the apostle. This, however, had its direct application to the Jews, with whom He was concerned in Person, yet so as that therein, as the apostle ever carefully by the Spirit presents Him, as we have seen, He was the Light of the world. - Darby, J.N. The Gospel of John. Notes and Comments, Volume 6.*