
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read John 9.1-12. The events in this chapter occurred in the three months between the Festival of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication. Jesus was still in Jerusalem when he came across this blind fellow [9.1]. The disciples assumed that an act of sin caused the man to be born blind [9.2], reflecting a common belief in Judaism then. They assumed either the man had sinned somehow in the womb or his parents had sinned while pregnant with him. It is true that acts of sin can cause physical problems, but it is not true that our own acts of sin cause all our own suffering. The curse on the world and the corruption of our nature also cause physical defects. In this particular instance, Jesus made clear that the man's blindness from birth was not a result of individual acts of sin; rather, God allowed it [as a result of the curse and our corruption] so that God could reveal himself through it [9.3]. Jesus will heal the blind man to provide spiritual lessons, and the blind man will grow quickly in faith through this.

Reflect: 1 Peter tells us that all Christians suffer, it is not a sign of abandonment by God, in fact it is an opportunity to bring glory to God by being steadfast in our faith, walk, and testimony even while suffering. When you suffer, how do you react, with fear, anger at God, frustration, or what? Do people see your testimony for God through your suffering or only your complaints? How might you change your perspective knowing how God viewed this man's disability? How should this change how you view others with various disabilities or problems? Suggested reading for your own growth and improvement of your ability to minister to the needs of others: Waters and Zuck, editors: *Why O God? Suffering and Disability in the Bible and the Church*.

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 9.1-12 again. Jesus was the unique one "sent" by God. It was "day" while Jesus was here as the light of the world, so the disciples could help Jesus carry out his mission; but at Jesus' death, the darkness would come, which would leave them unable to minister until the Holy Spirit would come later [9.4-5]. Sometimes Jesus chose unique ways to heal, in this case, spitting onto the ground, creating mud with his saliva, smearing it onto the man's eyes, and then having the man go to wash in the Pool of Siloam [9.6-7]. Why the spit and mud? Maybe just as God created man out of dust, Jesus used dust to heal deficient eyes, to show his divine power; maybe the mud symbolized blindness, which when washed away left light, both physically and spiritually; maybe it was a statement about religious authority, since there was a cultural belief that while certain excretions like blood and saliva were unclean and polluting, in the hands of religious authority they could be transformed into an instrument of blessing [the blood of Jesus could spiritually cleanse, his saliva could heal]. In any case, Jesus's action would have shocked people. This is the same pool from which the High Priest got the water for the Temple water ceremony during the Festival of Tabernacles. It was located at the lower end of the City of David. John tells us that the pool's Hebrew name [שֶׁלֹחַ] translates to "sent" [9.7]: God the Father sent Christ and Christ sent the blind man to the pool, and now the blind man could see as a real life illustration that Jesus is the light of the world. This miracle is a sign: God the Father through his "sent one" [Christ] would give light to those in spiritual darkness.

Reflect: If Jesus could have healed the man simply by willing it to be so in his own mind, why do you think he went through the process of smearing mud on the man's eyes and then sending him to the pool called "sent"? Are there times when you sense God is asking you to do something which doesn't make sense to you, but which you know you should do? How can this scene from the life of Jesus help you react to those situations?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 9.13-34. A stunning miracle had occurred, so the people sought out their local "pastors" [the Pharisees taught in the local synagogues] for comment [9.13]. But it was the Sabbath [9.14] and the oral religious traditions prohibited healing on the Sabbath except to save a life. Jesus was known for going against these teachings, and many of the religious leaders rejected him as a prophet for not keeping their traditions, which they held were just as important as the written law [9.16]. The written law came through Moses, and the Pharisees considered themselves followers of Moses [9.28-29]. They were correct in thinking that the Mosaic Law was a key to interpreting the rest of the Old Testament, but they took the idea too far, not recognizing that God progressively revealed his Word over time and God sometimes changed his requirements for people in different time periods.

After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70, the Pharisees dominated Judaism, which now centered on the synagogues where the Pharisees taught, so their view that the oral traditions were just as important as the written law from Moses became the official view of Judaism going forward.

Reflect: Christ is the promised Jewish Messiah from God the Father. While he was on Earth, he instructed his disciples in how to interpret the Old Testament and to abandon the oral traditions of the Pharisees, which [though well-intentioned] were legalistic distractions from God's will. Jesus also gave certain disciples revelation to share in the New Testament and sent the Holy Spirit to inspire other New Testament writings. We base our faith and lifestyle on what we have in God's written revelation of the Bible. The past 2000 years of scholarly and pastoral study help us understand what God revealed, but we do not let traditions become equal to scripture. Every church has some man-made rules and traditions; think about as many as you can, and assess whether they are helpful in knowing Jesus and understanding the Bible, neutral, or legalistic distractions. Feel free to discuss this with elders!

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 9.13-34 again. Both groups of Pharisees had flaws in their arguments: one side wrongly held that Jesus had sinned for breaking their man-made rules; the other side wrongly held that miracles could prove he was not sinful [9.16]. The healed man still had not seen Jesus, but he believed Jesus must be a prophet from God, since he was able to heal [9.17]. This was a step of faith: first all he could testify to was Jesus' name, but now he believed in Jesus as a prophet; his interrogators remained blinded by their theological mist. The Pharisees decided to challenge the man's story, so they called in his parents [9.18-19]. His parents verified that the man was their son and was born blind [9.20], but they would not speculate on his healing, because they feared being thrown out of their synagogue [9.21-23]. The healed man was not afraid, and was willing to align himself with Jesus, even defend Jesus [9.25-33], though it would result in getting thrown out of the synagogue [9.34].

Reflect: Look at John 9.25. The man says, "one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see" [NASB]. This is our testimony right? Surely each of us has experienced some transformation, some miracle inside, because of Jesus. It is to this we testify when people ask us why we believe. And every one of us was born spiritually blind, deceived, lost in the darkness, but Jesus brought us to the light, gave us the truth, and now we see! Are you excited to have this testimony? Are you willing to share it even when you know it will bring you trouble? With whom among your friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, could you be more intentional about sharing it this week? Be prayerful...

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read John 9.35-41. This is the first time the healed man saw Jesus [9.35]. As he had been given physical sight, he had accepted the spiritual light, but he did not yet know much about it. Jesus found him again and would now bring him to decisive faith [9.35-38]. This is the only time in John that someone is said to "worship" Jesus [9.38]. John used the Greek word προσκυνέω [prah-skew-NEH-oh], which means to bow down in an attitude of submission and dependence. This man might not understand the fullness of Jesus' identity as Son of God and Messiah-savior, but he believes Jesus can reveal and redeem in God's name. Jesus did not come to judge the first time he was here, but he is the basis for judgment [9.39]: to shine his light and separate those who would respond in faith from those who would not. The light shines and some are made to see, while others turn away blinded by the light. Those who acknowledge their blindness and their need for a savior end up free from guilt for sin, but those who are satisfied with their religious insights based on man-made traditions reject the savior and thus retain their guilt. In v.39, Jesus is telling us that this is a real life illustration of the claims he recently made in John 8, that he is the Son of God and the light of the world. It illustrates that the light will conquer the darkness.

When Judah was still in the promised land, the prophet Isaiah predicted their exile into Babylon due to the failure of the Davidic Kings [kings who were descendants of David]. Then Isaiah predicted the return of the Jews from exile and freedom from foreign rule through the Ultimate Davidic King, known as the Servant of Yahweh, who would substitute for their sins. Through Isaiah, God declared that the Jews were blind to his truth, but that the Ultimate Davidic King would deliver them from this blindness and restore their relationship with God, while reversing the curse on the earth, and thus even the physically blind would see. 700 years after Isaiah wrote, Jesus healed a man born blind – a miracle never known before – identifying himself as this Ultimate Davidic King.

Reflect: What is your reaction to this sign from Jesus about who he is?