

# The Gospel of John

Leon L. Combs, M.A., Ph.D.

## Chapter Nine

This chapter could stand alone but the events probably happened shortly after the Feast of the Tabernacles. It not only illustrated the power of Jesus over physical problems but also is representative of the spiritual awakening that occurs when one is born again and can then participate in the spiritual world with God. Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). The person healed in this event also plays a major role in the episode.

### John 9:1-3

*As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. (2) And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind? (3) Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*

This event did not just happen to occur but was planned before the foundation of the world to illustrate the power of God over creation. Jesus had healed blind persons on other occasions as told us in Matt 9:27-31; 12:22; 15:30; 21:14; Mark 8:22-26; and Mark 10:46-52. However this particular healing is very important because the man was born blind. It is not known how the disciples knew that the man was born blind. Their inquiry was not based upon compassion for the man but on a theological problem involving the source of problems in the world. But it was a general teaching that physical ailments are caused by some sin in either the person affected or his parents. This was also the case of Job's friends who blamed him for his problems. They could have based their query on a principle of the law (Exod 34:7; 20:5). It is not known how the disciples might think that an infant could somehow cause his congenital blindness but they wanted to place the blame somewhere because of sin. It is possible that they could blame his current situation on sins committed in a prior existence as is present in some rabbinical teachings. Of course sin is ultimately the reason for the fall of humanity but not individual sins. Jesus quickly corrected them and told them the reason for his blindness was so that He could demonstrate His power over even congenital blindness. This application has great spiritual applications for everyone is born spiritually blind and only by an act of God can anyone participate in the spiritual world of God.

### John 9:4-6

*"We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. (5) "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." (6) When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes,*

Here is another application of using the word "day" to mean something other than a 24-hour period of time. Jesus used the word here to refer to the time when He (the Light of the world) was physically here to do the works of the Father (John 1:9-14). He knew that He was going to physically die and those works would cease. The use of clay perhaps is indicative of a creative

work similar to the original creation of man by God. Certainly since the man was born blind this act was creative rather than remedial as it would have been in the case of a later blindness by some cause. The touch of Jesus to his eyes would have also been very calming to the man.

### **John 9:7-9**

*and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing. (8) Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" (9) Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one."*

The pool was located at the southern end of the city and would have been a considerable walk from where he was. The act of washing was not anything other than an act of obeying this man and Jesus had not told him that he would be healed. The use of His saliva is mentioned also in the healing of the deaf and dumb man (Mark 7:33) and the blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:23). We can only speculate at the discussions of people who saw him walking toward the pool with clay smeared over his eyes. It is also probable that someone was guiding him to the pool although a lifetime of walking blind in the area would have imprinted the area in his brain so that he may have been able to arrive at the pool alone. The pool is named Siloam that is translated "sent" as water is sent there from the spring of Gihon in the Kidron Valley. The man then returned to the group by sight. The blind man would have been a familiar person in the neighborhood as they had seen him all his life and would have been supporting him as a beggar in their neighborhood. Because this change was so astounding they questioned whether or not this man was really the one they had known as being blind all his life. The man had to give his testimony that he indeed was the one who had been a blind beggar all his life.

### **John 9:10-12**

*So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" (11) He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." (12) They said to him, "Where is He?" He \*said, "I do not know."*

They accepted that he was indeed the blind beggar but now they needed to know how he had his eyes opened. He did not know who Jesus was but he reported all that happened as his testimony. This also is what we can do as we can tell how Jesus opened our eyes so that we could see. The crowd apparently wanted to question Jesus as to how He had made the man see but none of them knew where He was.

### **John 9:13-15**

*They \*brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. (14) Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. (15) Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see."*

The healing had occurred on the Sabbath, which was a problem previously addressed regarding any work done on that day (chapter five). Whether the people brought the man before the

Pharisees because of a possible violation of the Sabbath or if they mainly wanted to see if the religious leaders could shed some “light” on this miracle is not known. The man repeated the procedure in an abbreviated fashion, particularly leaving out that Jesus told him to go to Siloam to wash. John does not mention the scribes, possibly because by the time this gospel was written the only scribes (experts in the law) present were those associated with the Pharisees. The Pharisees would not have objected to healing on the Sabbath but they objected to His telling the cripple to pick up his bed and now they could object to His kneading the clay and saliva into the material to put on the man’s eyes.

### **John 9:16-17**

*Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. (17) So they \*said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."*

Especially since the man had been blind since birth made this act of Jesus one of a great miracle so the people argued as to how a man who could perform such a miracle simultaneously be a sinner. The people who asked how He could perform such signs must have known about other miracles of Jesus since they used the plural form. Those who argued from the first principle would have said that since He did a form of work on the Sabbath He must be a sinner. Those who argued from established facts of a case would have said that since He performed a good work He must be from God. The Pharisees were then divided in their opinions and unable to make a joint conclusion regarding Him. They then tried to obtain more information from the man affected by the actions of Jesus. They simply asked him for his opinion of the man who opened his eyes. He simply said that He is a prophet. Prophets were agents of God and sometimes they did miracles such as Elisha (2 Kings 2:19-22; 4:18-44; 5:1-14). Jesus had indeed performed a miracle that they could all witness so He must have had a divine appointment to even heal on the Sabbath by whatever means He chose.

### **John 9:18-23**

*The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, (19) and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how 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 opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." (22) His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. (23) For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."*

The Jews are apparently the same group of Pharisees mentioned previously and they did not judge the result closed because of the witness of one person. They then wanted to obtain some corroborating witnesses of this event. If this man who now could obviously see was also the same man who was blind from birth then the case would weigh in favor of Jesus being a prophet. Thus they asked the parents if this is their son who was born blind. The parents could not explain

what had happened but they could say that this person is their son and that he was born blind. They had no understanding of how he was changed into a seeing person or who was the person responsible for the change. They told the inquirers to ask their son for he was of legal age to respond to their questions. A person had to be at least thirteen to be a witness in court and he was older than the minimum required age. The parents were very careful in their wording to not say anything about Jesus for rumors of His identity as perhaps the promised Messiah were rampant in the city. Anyone confessing Him to be the Messiah would have been excommunicated by the Pharisees from worship in the synagogue. Their response was not a violation of the law for they did not have any personal knowledge of the identity of Jesus.

### **John 9:24-27**

*So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." (25) He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." (26) So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" (27) He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?"*

The Pharisees were still trying to condemn Jesus so they called the formerly blind man before them for another series of questions. There could be no doubt that he had been born blind and there could be no doubt that he could now see. But what caused the change? The cause had to have been a miracle for no such transformation had been known before. But what was the source of the miracle? The evidence seemed to also point only to Jesus as the source of the miracle. However this work was done on the Sabbath, which would make Him a sinner rather than a prophet. They indeed had a severe theological problem. The man said that he had no way of knowing that Jesus was a sinner for he was not an expert on such matters. All that he could say was what each person who has been born again should be quick to say. The basic truth is that I was blind but now I can see.

They then pushed the matter further by asking him how Jesus opened his eyes. The man apparently became impatient at the Pharisees asking the same questions over and over so he concluded that they were not listening to his answers. He then displayed an ironic reply to them that would have offended them deeply as he probably already knew. He replied that their continued inquiry indicated they wanted to become disciples of Jesus. This reply from an apparently illiterate man really infuriated them.

### **John 9:28-33**

*They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. (29) "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." (30) The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. (31) "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. (32) "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. (33) "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."*

They accused the man of being a disciple of Jesus whereas they stated they were disciples of Moses who had been the standard for their religion for centuries. They considered Jesus a person of no known origin and education and therefore a person of no authority over them. They considered the oral law taught in the rabbinical schools to have come from Moses who received it on Mount Sinai with the written law. The man then replied with an astounding sound argument to which they would have no reply. He thought that it was amazing that the Pharisees did not know where Jesus was from but He opened his eyes. He then gave a logical explanation of the importance of Jesus in the sight of God. He stated a considerable understanding of theology himself. God does not hear sinners (Psa 66:18; Prov 28:9; Isa 1:15) so how could Jesus have done such an amazing miracle if He was under the condemnation of God as a sinner? However if someone fears God and does His will then God hears Him. Since this act is unprecedented in history it must be an answer to prayer so Jesus must be heard by God. Therefore the man concludes that the person who healed him but be from God.

### **John 9:34-36**

*They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out. (35) Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (36) He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"*

They had no answer to his statements so they acted emotionally and illogically. Their reply indicates that they reverted to previous understandings of physical problems having an origin in either his sins or his parent's sins. They also regarded him as ignorant and uneducated whereas they were highly educated and so could not be taught by such a person as he obviously was. Stating that they "put him out" indicates excommunication that would also mean that he would be unemployable. This was the result that his parents feared would be their fate if they offended the Pharisees. Jesus showed His continued concern for the man as he hunted him after hearing what the Pharisees had done to him. He found him and asked him to give a commitment to Him. Both the Son of God and the Son of Man were used of Jesus in expressions of His deity (John 3:13; 5:27; 6:27; Matt 26:63-64). The man shows a great willingness to make such a belief if Jesus would tell him who that person is.

### **John 9:37-41**

*Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." (38) And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. (39) And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." (40) Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" (41) Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.*

Remember that the man had not seen Jesus before but he probably recognized His voice. Jesus told him that He was the Son of Man and the man immediately worshipped Him. We see the progression of thought of the man as he said that He was called Jesus (v. 11), He is a prophet (v. 17) and then He is from God (v. 17). We see that the man's understanding of Jesus evolved as he knew more about Him. Jesus then told him that His purpose in the world was to reveal true vision of spiritual matters. There is no discrepancy between His statement of judgment here and

previously that He did not come to judge the world (John 3:178; 12:47). He is not saying here that He has come to execute judgment but rather to clearly show who can see and who is blind regarding eternal truths. If the Pharisees had been willing to admit their blindness then they could be given vision but in stating that their understanding is the only truth they will admit they have condemned themselves to eternal darkness. Self-deception is a terrible state and probably many people in the visible church are in such a state of blindness. Such a result was clearly stated by Jesus as recorded by Matthew:

Matt 7:21-23 NASB "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. (22) "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (23) "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'