

Healing of the Man Born Blind

I taught a Bible study some years ago and remember a man who came to the first study. At first he seemed to be like everyone else who came to the study. He was friendly and talkative. He was an extrovert. During the study people asked questions and he did too. After a while, it became obvious that he was having trouble understanding what was being taught. Eventually, the study ended and then resumed the following week. The man was present again and he asked more questions. He had difficulty understanding basic truths and even the explanations. During the third study he had trouble again and this continued study after study. He was unique and the class was sympathetic. He claimed to be a Christian, but his inability to understand even the most basic truths of the Bible raised serious doubts that he was a Christian because 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 teaches that we need the Holy Spirit to understand the spiritual truths taught in the Bible. He had eyes that could read and ears to hear but he could not understand. We could say that he had eyes to see but he did not have spiritual eyes to see. Our study is about a man who was physically blind, yet had spiritual eyes that could see.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION. Our study in Luke 13:18-21 was about the parables of the mustard seed and leaven. A casual reader of the gospels would assume that the next section in Luke would start with Luke 13:22. But the next event in Christ's ministry occurs in the gospel of John and not in Luke, Mark, or Matthew. The gospel of Matthew is organized topically and the other three gospels are chronological. Yet each gospel includes some of the same events in Christ's life while others exclude certain details. Therefore, this study starts with John 9:1 since the other gospels ignore the details included in John's gospel (see the footnote for a detailed explanation).¹ Our



1. Thomas and Gundry state the following:

“Though some place the events of John 9:1-10:21 . . . on the same day as the events of John 8:31-59 . . . at the Feast of Tabernacles, it is better to see them as happening at the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22 . . .) for the following reasons:

1. The Jews would hardly have sought to stone Jesus (John 8:59) on the Sabbath (John 9:14 . . .)

2. Elapsed time is required after the attempted stoning (John 8:59) to allow antagonism to die down before another public encounter like that in John 9:1-

study is found in John 9:1-12.

MAN WHO WAS BORN BLIND. The opening verse of our study tells us that Jesus was walking by and saw a blind man.

Now as Jesus was passing by, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. John 9:1 (NASB)

This is a wonderful statement. It reveals the compassion of Jesus because He stopped to heal this blind man. He could have passed by the man, but He didn't. Since we are not told that the blind man asked Him to stop, it appears that Jesus decided to stop and

10:21.

3. “At that time” in John 10:22 . . . shows the events prior to 10:22 to be part of Jesus' attendance at the Feast of Dedication.

4. The subject of discussion in 9:1-10:21 (sheep has most affinity with 10:22-29.

5. The tone of 9:1-10:21

is markedly different from the turmoil and debate that dominated the Feast of Tabernacles. In the later section the Jewish listeners had become confirmed in their rejection, and Jesus turned His attention to those outside Israel (Thomas and Gundry. *A Harmony of the Gospels*. HarperSanFrancisco. 1991. p. 146).

heal the man.

This miracle only occurs in the gospel of John. In fact, the gospel of John only documents seven miracles that Jesus performed.² This is the sixth miracle in this gospel. Each of the miracles are exceptional and incredible. When is the last time that a faith healer or anyone else turned water into wine, multiplied food for more than five thousand people from just five loaves of bread and two fish, walked on water, commanded a storm to stop, healed a man born blind or raised a man who had been dead for multiple days? No one in history has performed such miracles, except Jesus Christ. Some individuals want us to believe that they are spirit-filled men who are like Jesus, but their claims will only be believed when they do the seven miracles recorded in the gospel of John. None of the apostles did these seven miracles.

In John 20:30-31, the apostle tells us why he selected these seven miracles,

Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God . . . John 20:30-31 (NASB)

There is no one like Jesus. That is the message of John's statement.

It appears that Jesus did not stop because the man asked Him to heal him. It appears that it was Jesus' decision to stop. It was an opportunity to show mercy, to teach an important truth and to demonstrate His deity (John 10:32-33). This will be an incredible miracle because the man was not partially blind due to cataracts. He was not having a focusing problems due to near-sightedness or far-sightedness. His blindness was not a recent event where maybe he was already recovering. The Holy Spirit tells us that the man was blind from birth. Jesus knew it and so did others in the community, including the disciples and religious leaders. This event that Jesus had planned was going to be a miracle!

2. The first miracle in John is water turned into wine (John 2:1-11). The others are the healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54), the man beside the pool called Bethesda (John 5:1-17), the feeding of five thousand (John 6:1-14), the time that Jesus walked on water (John 6:15-25), healing of the blind man (John 9:1-12) and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-44). The final miracle, usually not counted in the list of seven, is the resurrection of Christ (John 20:1-18).

REASON THE MAN WAS BLIND. But why was the man born blind? You might be thinking that his mother had been on narcotics, drugs, or had been drinking too much alcohol. Maybe his father or mother had committed some great sin and this was God's judgment on the family, including the child. If that is what you are thinking, then you are not alone, for the disciples were wondering why he was blind too! You are in good company, as we say, but watch verse 2.

His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who committed the sin that caused him to be born blind, this man or his parents?" John 9:2 (NASB)

This is the seventh time that Jesus has been called rabbi in the gospel of John. The Greek word for "rabbi" just refers to an expert in interpreting the scriptures. This reveals that they considered Christ an expert in the scriptures and that is exactly what He was because He wrote them by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Their question is the one we would have asked and are asking, "Why was the man born blind?" Who is at fault? What is the cause and effect? We have learned that for every effect there is a cause. Something causes something else to happen. Why was he blind?

Jesus' answer may not be a surprise to some of us, but it was a surprise to the disciples, the Pharisees, and the crowd.

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." John 9:3 (NASB)

Sometimes we are sick due to our own personal sin. In John 5:14, Jesus warned a man to not sin so that he would not be sick again. Another such example was Miriam, the sister of Moses, who was afflicted with leprosy because she had sinned by challenging Moses' authority (Numbers 12:1-10). Many people do not understand that we sin when we are not in submission to governmental leaders (Romans 13:1-6), church leaders (Hebrews 13:17), or our parents (Ephesians 6:2-3), and as a result we can become sick. Paul's repentant attitude in Acts 23:1-5 after he criticized the high priest is an

important lesson that it is a sin to rebuke our national and religious leaders.

On other occasions, God may allow us to be sick to motivate us to not sin. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 gives us the example of the apostle Paul when he was afflicted by a demon. It appears from Galatians 4:13-15 that this demon may be the cause of what we believe was an eye problem.

The patriarch Job had boils on his body because God allowed Satan to afflict him (Job 2:1-9). The illness was a test of Job's faithfulness and love for God. God tells us two times in the first two chapters of Job that Job had not sinned. Have you ever criticized God because you were sick or because someone else was sick? If so, realize that God has many purposes for allowing us and others to be sick. There are a number of reasons we can become sick and the disciples assumed that the man's parents or the man himself had sinned in the womb resulting in the man being born blind.

Jesus' statement was simple and easy to understand. The man's blindness was not due to sin. Jesus used the Greek negative *oute* twice to teach them that the man's illness was not due to the man's sin or the sin of his parents. Jesus said, "No!" and "No!"

Then Jesus used the Greek word *alla* which is a strong Greek word that in English is translated as "but." It is a strong contrasting word. That is, Jesus said the man was sick not because of the man and not because of his parents **BUT** so that the works (*ergon*) of God could be revealed. That is, sometimes we are sick for the glory of God. What a privilege for this man that he could give honor to God this way.

Wow, have you ever thought of giving glory to God by how you respond to sickness? Jesus will repeat this message again in John 11:4 when He explains that Lazarus was allowed to die for the glory of God. In the case of this blind man, Jesus was going to heal the man and that was going to give God glory.

This should be a comfort to every Christian who worries

that every cold, attack of the flu virus or some other affliction is due to some sin that they have committed. It is sad that some Christians view God as being so lacking in mercy and compassion that they think He afflicts them for every minor and major sin. It is almost as though they believe God seeks to make us sick for every little sinful infraction. Job had a major catastrophe but it was not due to any sin that he had committed. He was going to have an encounter with God. He just had to wait forty chapters.

It is truly amazing that the disciples had such bad theology. Bad theology exists even in churches. Ever hear someone say that the Bible states, "God helps those who help themselves?" That reveals they have never read the Bible carefully. That is not from the Bible but from our secular society. Unfortunately, many in the church are biblically illiterate! They have a poor grasp of the Bible. A man once commented, "Let's

not quibble over doctrine, we just need Jesus." That was zeal without knowledge (Romans

10:2). We need to know the Bible. The disciples had bad theology! All sickness is not due to sin.

CHRIST DID THE WORKS OF THE FATHER. Then Jesus revealed the specific purpose for the man's blindness.

We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world. John 9:4-5 (NASB)

Jesus had already said in John 5:19-23 that He could do nothing by Himself. He did whatever the Father wanted Him to do. Since the Father raised people, Christ raised the dead (John 5:21). Just as the Father judged, Christ judged (John 5:22). Whatever work the Father had given to Christ, He was going to do it. The Father's teachings were His teachings (John 7:16). On this occasion Jesus taught the crowd that He came to do the works assigned to Him by the Father.

This is part of the mystery of the incarnation of Christ.

Bad theology says that all sickness is due to sin.

When He clothed Himself with flesh in order to appear as a man, He also submitted Himself to the Father as any human would to God in order to live life as we do. When He became a man, He also lived as we do. Consequently, He was able to become our merciful and faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:17). The mystery of the God-man is difficult to understand. Yet, scripture teaches that He became a man and lived like us; He obeyed and prayed as we would. Otherwise, He would not have been truly the God-man.

The blind man was part of the work that the Father had planned for Christ to do from the beginning of time. The crowd was about to experience divine light when Jesus healed the man. After Christ dies on the cross for the sins of the world later in the gospels, He will disappear and then the people will not continue seeing the miracles that He had been performing. Therefore, Jesus said that while He was with them, He was the light of the world.

Jesus had said that He was the light of the world earlier in John 8:12. His message is a serious one for us. While He was on planet earth He was the spiritual light of the world and His miracles, wonders, and signs proved it. He was God among us. When He left the world, the world was in darkness again. John 1:5 says that He was light in a dark world - an evil world.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
John 1:4-5 (NASB)

In John 3:19-21 Jesus warns us that the darkness or evil

hates the Light because their deeds are evil. The darkness only wants approval for their evil deeds. They want to enjoy their evil deeds.

THE BLIND MAN IS HEALED. Now watch the miracle that Jesus performed for the glory of God.

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. 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. John 9:6-7 (NASB)



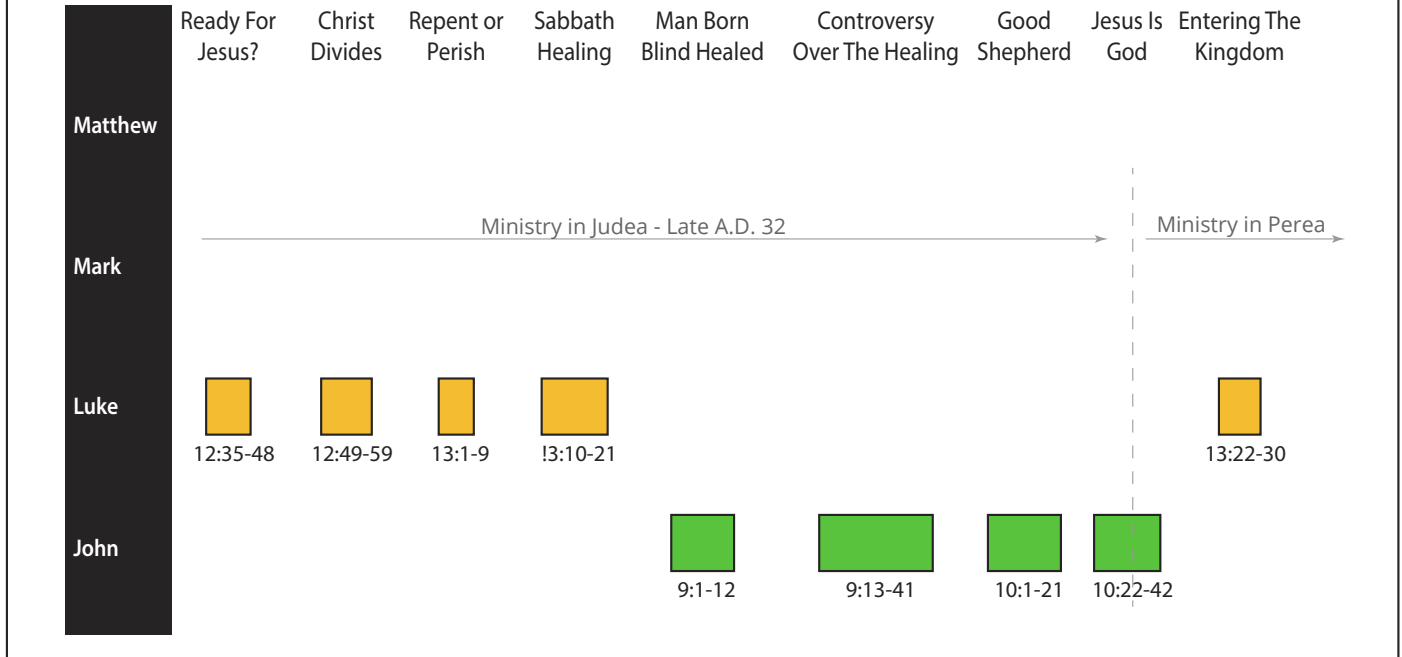
This miracle is not like any healing miracle that Jesus had performed before. Earlier we were told in Mark 7:33 that Jesus placed His saliva on a man who could not speak or hear. In Mark 8:23 Jesus healed another blind using His saliva. But on this occasion the healing was more involved.

On other occasions He would just speak a word and someone would be healed. But this time He spits on the ground and makes clay. Then He anointed the man's eyes with clay. The Greek word that is translated as "anoint" is *epichrio*. The word actually means "to rub" or "to smear." That is, Jesus used His fingers and smeared mud on the man's eyes. Then the man was told to wash his eyes.

Why did Jesus use this method to heal the man? Jesus does not explain. A. T. Robertson speculates that Jesus did this because,

The kneading of the clay and spittle added another offense against

Life and Heart of Jesus



the Sabbath rules of the rabbis.³

A. T. Robertson is correct that the Mishnah does prohibit kneading.⁴ Calvin believes that Jesus intentionally healed on the Sabbath to spark a controversy.⁵ Then because the man needed to remove the sticky clay-like mud, Jesus told him to go to the Pool of Siloam. It would have been an ideal place to wash his eyes and face since the pool was nearby.

The Greek word for Siloam is a transliteration of the Hebrew word “sent” (Isaiah 8:6) and therefore means “sent.” That is why the apostle John tells us that the Greek word for “Siloam” means “sent.” F. F. Bruce reports,

The pool of Siloam, southwest of Ophel (the city of David) near the junction of the Tyropoeon Valley and the Valley of Hinnom, received the water which carried, or “sent,” through a channel

from the spring of Gihon (latter called the Virgin’s Fountain) in the Kidron Valley. It is called the “Pool of Shelah” in Neh. 3:15, and is to be identified probably with the “lower pool” or “old pool” (Isa. 22:9, 11), today’s Birket el-Hamra, lying a little way to the southwest of what is now known as the Pool of Siloam.⁶

In the Old Testament, Siloam is also referred to as “Shelah” (Nehemiah 3:5) or “Shiloah” (Isaiah 22:9). Before 2004 it was generally believed that we knew the location of the Pool of Siloam, but in 2004 another pool was found. This new pool, located in the southwest corner of the city wall, receives water from the older pool. These pools were to receive water sent from the Gihon spring (2 Kings 20:20) with the purpose of providing water for the city. The water was used during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:37-39).

Figuratively speaking, the pool represented God’s blessing on the nation of Israel. It reminds us that Christ was sent by the Father to teach, heal and save us from our sins. Also notice that even though Christ had sent the blind man to the

3. A. T. Robertson. Word Picture of the New Testament. Baker Book House. Vol. V. 1932. p. 162.

4. Mishnah Sabbath 7:2.

5. John Calvin. Harmony of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John 1-11. Baker Book House. 1996. p. 374.

6. F. F. Bruce. The Gospel & Epistles of John. Eerdmans Publishing. 1983. p. 210.

pool, the man had to act in faith. Jesus told him what he had to do, but the man would have never been healed if he had refused to go to the pool. There are some people who want God to do everything for them. Jesus could have healed the man with a word but He didn't. On this occasion the man would have to demonstrate faith. We are told the man went, washed and came back seeing. He not only had physical sight but now he had new spiritual sight about Jesus Christ.

BLIND MAN WAS NOT RECOGNIZED. One would think that those who had known the blind man would have been thrilled that he could see now. But we are told that the people could not believe he had been healed or did not believe he was the same individual.

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?" Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." John 9:8-9 (NASB)

Some of the people were even his neighbors. Others had simply seen him earlier and now wondered if this was the same person. When we are told that the man was a beggar, a better word for describing the man is one who asked for charity or money since the Greek word translated as beggar is *prosaïtes* which means "one who asks for charity." That is, why we are told that he would sit and beg. He was a beggar who asked for money regularly.

Some people believed he was the same man, but not everyone did even though he told them that he was the man who had been blind. Why was there so much disagreement about this man? The answer is that they knew he was once blind but now he could see. They could not believe it. What does this reveal about the human ability to understand what is true? The answer is that the spiritually blind do not see and understand. Earlier Jesus had said this,

But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. Matthew 13:16-17 (NASB)

This same problem exists today. The spiritually blind lead the spiritually blind. Even spiritually blind leaders have followers because the followers are spiritually blind. It demonstrates there are crowds who follow. Later we will discover that Jesus describes the Pharisees as blind guides.

Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit. Matthew 15:14 (NASB)

Today there are many spiritually blind guides who have a great following.

So these spiritually blind people could not believe that God would heal this man because they believed his blindness was due to sin. They did not understand that God is compassionate and asks us to cast all of our care upon Him (1 Peter 5:7). Jesus told the people His burden was light. He was contrasting His yoke or burden in comparison to the mammoth list of rules required by the Pharisees to go to heaven. His burden was light.

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Matt. 11:30 (NASB)

God will heal. If we are disciplined due to some sin, repentance brings peace with God and blessings. That was missing in the teaching of the Pharisees. The Pharisees taught that the man was blind because of his sin and that his blindness was a sign that the sin must have been great. That is what we will discover in the next study (John 9:34). They did not understand that God is a loving and forgiving God who wants a relationship with us (Psalm 103:8).

To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness . . . Daniel 9:9 (NASB)

The Pharisees were not compassionate and loving. It is instructive how one's theology affects one's behavior.

UNBELIEF THAT A MIRACLE OCCURRED. Even though the man told them that he was the man who had been blind, most would not believe him. This is how unbelief reacts. It questions and challenges in an attempt to prove itself cor-

rect. That is exactly what these people did. Watch the questions that they asked him.

So they were saying to him, “How then were your eyes opened?” 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.” They said to him, “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.” John 9:10-12 (NASB)

This is truly incredible! Some people knew the man had been blind, but their testimony was rejected by the unbelievers. They could not believe that a man who was blind from birth could see. So, they asked the “scientific question.” How did this happen? Today, people do the same thing. “Oh, God did not heal you. It was the medical team that performed that successful high risk operation.” In Jesus’ time there were no other logical medical explanations.

The man, who could now see, answered them by giving them the name of the physician. His name was Jesus. He was the Great Physician, the One who made his eyes. Then he described the procedure. Jesus made clay, anointed his eyes and told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. The man believed Jesus and did as he was commanded, and now he could see. But that was not enough for these doubters who were looking for proof that the man was a liar.

Therefore, they started to tear his explanation apart. This is classic politics. They had more “scientific questions.” You demand that your opponent is withholding information and then when they give you the information, you ask more questions and make more demands. They were challenging his explanation. In essence they asked, “Oh, is Jesus real? Where

is He?” The man replied, “I do not know!” He answered truthfully. But this was not acceptable. Surely, he was lying!

How do they respond? The next verse tells us that they brought the man to the Pharisees. The actual purpose is for questioning or interrogation.

They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. John 9:13 (NASB)

What happens next will be described in our next study.

CONCLUSION. This passage is full of parallels to our salvation. First, notice that Jesus selected this man, the man did not select Jesus. Now if you struggle with that thought, read Jesus’ words in John 6:65, 44 and 37. There Jesus tells us that the Father decides who comes to Christ. He selects and draws us by the Holy Spirit.

Second, Jesus announced that He was the Light of the World. That is, He is the Savior of the World. Third, we must believe Him or we will never be healed from our sins. The blind man had to believe Christ and go to the Pool of Siloam. To reword this correctly, we will never be forgiven our sins without believing in Christ. The man demonstrated that He truly believed in Christ when He obeyed Him. That is the proof of true belief. Do you believe Jesus died for your sins? Do not be like the crowd that looked for reasons to reject. Jesus is our God who died so our sins could be forgiven. The only question that remains is do you believe you are a sinner and want Him to forgive you? If so, tell Him! If you make the decision to accept His forgiveness and to embrace Him as your Savior and Lord, we would love to hear from you and be able to help.