

Blindness: Literal and Spiritual

Lesson # 39: (Jn 9; Mt. 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26; Rev. 3:17-18; Acts 13:11; DA 463-475)

The central focus of our lesson today will be the healing of the man who was born blind (John 9). As with so many other miracles of Jesus, we will find in our study that the primary lesson of this miracle is not the restoration of physical eyesight. In actual fact, Jesus used this miracle as a springboard to teach profound lessons about the loss and recovery of spiritual eyesight. Let's jump right into our study by taking a look at the historical setting of the story.

The Historical Occasion

1. Where had Jesus been before He healed the man who was born blind from birth? "And early in the morning he came again into the _____, and all the people came unto him, and he sat down, and taught them." (Jn. 8:2)
2. What profound words had Jesus spoken while He was yet in the temple? "I am the _____ of the world: He that followeth me shall not walk in _____, but shall have the light of life." (Jn. 8:12)
3. What did the Jews attempt to do with Jesus immediately before He healed the blind man? "Then took they up _____ to cast at him, but Jesus _____ himself, and went out of the temple, going _____ the midst of them, and so passed by." (Jn. 8:59)
4. What words of Jesus particularly incensed the Jews who heard Him? "Verily, _____, I say unto you, 'Before _____ was, I am.'" (Jn. 8:58)
5. Where was Jesus when He healed the blind man? "And as Jesus _____ by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth." (Jn. 9:1)

Note: Acts 3:1 explains that people who were ill customarily waited at the entrance to the temple to beg for alms (see also, Jn. 9:8). This would seem to indicate that the blind man was at the entrance to the temple when Jesus healed him.

Origin and Reason for the Disease

1. What mistaken notion did the disciples have concerning the origin of this man's disease? "And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did _____, this man, or his _____, that he was born blind?" (Jn. 9:2)

Note: Ellen White remarks: "It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. . . . Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,--as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin." (DA 471)

2. According to Jesus, why was this man born blind? “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the _____ of God should be made _____ in him.” (Jn. 9:3)

Note: These words of Jesus leave us with the impression that the man was born blind specifically for this moment. That is to say, the Father had incorporated this event into the itinerary of Jesus before the blind man was even born!

3. What did Jesus mean by “day” and “night” in the expression, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”? (Jn. 9:4) “Letters have come to me asking me if I have any special light as to the time when _____ will close, and I answer that I have only this message to bear, that it is now time to work while the _____ lasts, for the _____ cometh in which no man can work” (Selected Messages, volume 1, p. 191)

Note: While it is day, probation’s door is still open. But when the night comes, probation has closed. In its immediate historical context, the “day” here refers to the ministry of Jesus, the “night when no man can work” is a reference to the closing of probation’s door for the Jewish nation.

4. How did the apostle Paul metaphorically employ the words “day” and “night”? “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that _____ should overtake you as a _____. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the _____, nor of darkness.” (I Thes. 5:4-5)

Note: Clearly, the apostle Paul uses the words “day” and “night” in the same sense as Jesus did. But whereas Jesus was speaking about the closing of probation’s door for the Jewish nation, Paul was speaking about the closing of the door for the world. This seems to indicate that the story of the blind man’s healing has a broader meaning than its immediate historical setting.

A Sabbath Conflict

1. In the Pharisees’ estimation, what sin did Jesus commit by healing the blind man? “This man is not of _____, because he keepeth not the _____ day.” (Jn. 9:16)
2. What did Jesus do on the Sabbath to exacerbate the anger of the Pharisees? “When he had thus spoken, he _____ on the ground, and made _____ of the spittle, and he _____ the eyes of the blind man with the clay.” (Jn. 9:6)

Note: Actually, Jesus broke several rabbinical rules which were believed to be violations of the Sabbath. Among those were: healing on the Sabbath, spitting on the Sabbath, making clay on the Sabbath, and telling the man to wash in the pool of Siloam on the Sabbath Jesus could have instantaneously healed this man but He chose a different approach. Was Jesus identifying himself as the Creator when He healed this man? When Jesus created man, he made him out of clay (Isa. 64:8) and now Jesus recreated a man’s eyesight by using clay as well..

3. **Thought Question:** Why do you think Jesus did not heal this man outright but rather told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam? Would the man have been healed if he had not obeyed the command of Jesus?
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Note: The Sabbath healings of Jesus were never, as far as we know, life and death cases. If the lives of those He healed had been in danger, the rabbis would not have quarreled with Him because rabbinical law allowed healing on the Sabbath in emergency cases. The question then remains: If Jesus could have waited until the Sabbath was over to perform His works of healing, why did He insist on performing them on the Sabbath? The answer is that Jesus wished to underline the importance of genuine Sabbath observance in contrast to the counterfeit sabbath which was based on rabbinical tradition.

4. Did Jesus ever break the Sabbath as He was accused by the Pharisees? “Wherefore it is _____ to do well on the Sabbath days.” (Mt. 12:12)

Note: Some religious leaders today claim that Jesus exercised His messianic authority and broke the Sabbath. If this were true, then the Pharisees were right!! Jesus did not employ His messianic authority to break the Sabbath but rather to define its proper observance. Only the Lord of the Sabbath (Mk. 2:27) is authorized to explain how to properly observe it.

5. When some Pharisees affirmed that Jesus could not be of God because He broke the Sabbath, what did others reply? “How can a man that is a sinner do such _____? And there was _____ among them.” (Jn. 9:16)

Note: The crass hypocrisy of the Pharisees can be clearly seen in the fact that they sought to kill Jesus on the Sabbath (Mk. 3:6) while Jesus brought healing. The greatest conflicts of Jesus with the religious leaders of His day had to do with the proper manner of Sabbath observance. In the days of Christ the religious leaders kept the right day but it was a counterfeit Sabbath because it was loaded down with the traditions of men.. At the end of time the greatest conflicts of God’s people with the world’s religious leaders will likewise involve Sabbath observance. But whereas the Pharisees kept the Sabbath in the wrong way, the religious world at the end will keep the wrong day!

Seeking Excuses to Disbelieve

1. When the Pharisees asked this man who had healed him, what did he reply? “He put clay upon mine _____, and I _____, and do see.” (Jn. 9:15)
2. What did the blind man reply when the Pharisees asked him what he thought about Jesus? “What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a _____.” (Jn. 9:17)
3. When the Pharisees refused to believe that this man had been born blind, to whom did they turn for corroboration? “They called the _____ of him that had received his sight. And they

asked them, saying, Is this your _____, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now _____?” (Jn. 9:18-19)

4. How did the parents reply to the Pharisees’ question? “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind. But by what _____ he now seeth, we know not; or who hath _____ his eyes, we know not; he is of _____, ask him, he shall speak for himself.” (Jn. 9:20-21)
 5. What highhanded methods did the Pharisees employ with those who confessed their faith in Jesus? “These words spake his parents, because they _____ the Jews, for the Jews had agreed _____, that if any man did _____ that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.” (Jn. 9:22)
 6. How did the religious leaders seek to bias this man against Jesus? “Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the _____: We know that this man is a _____.” (Jn. 9:24)
 7. How did the blind man reply to the accusations of the Pharisees against Jesus? “Whether he be a _____ or no, I know not: _____ thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” (Jn. 9:25)
 8. When the Pharisees asked this man again how he had been healed, what comeback did the man give which incensed the Pharisees? “I have told you _____, and ye did not _____: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his _____?” (Jn. 9:27)
- Note:** Remarkably, this man claimed to be Christ’s disciple even though he had not yet met him!
9. Whose disciples did the Pharisees claim to be? “Thou art his disciple; but we are _____ disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this _____, we know not from whence he is.” (Jn. 9:28-29)
 10. Were the Pharisees truly Moses’ disciples? “Do not think that I will _____ you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even _____, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have _____ me for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his _____, how shall ye believe my words?” (Jn. 5:45-47)
 11. What powerful Bible study did this man give the Pharisees? “Why herein is a _____ thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God _____ not sinners; but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his _____, him he heareth. Since the _____ began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.” (Jn. 9:30-32)

Note: The statement of the blind man was literally true. In the Old Testament the opening of the eyes of the blind is reserved for the messianic age. When Jesus opened up the eyes of this blind

man, the Pharisees should have seen in Jesus the fulfillment of these messianic prophecies (see Isaiah 35:5; Lk. 4:18)

12. What did the Pharisees do with this man? “They answered and said unto him, ‘Thou wast altogether born in _____, and dost thou _____ us?’ And they cast him out.” (Jn. 9:34)

Note: In today’s language we would say that the Pharisees excommunicated this man. The Pharisees could not match his logic so they strong-armed him out of the synagogue.

The Man Encounters Jesus

1. When the blind man first saw Jesus, what remark did he make to show that he had grown in his understanding of Jesus’ self-identity? “Dost thou _____ on the Son of God? And he said, Lord I believe. And he _____ him.” (Jn. 9:38)

Note: The blind man had grown in his understanding of Jesus. At first he thought that Jesus was a prophet, but by the end of the story he was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God.

2. What cryptic statement did Jesus make after the blind man confessed Him? “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which _____ might not see, and that they which see might be made _____.” (Jn. 9:39)
3. When Jesus spoke the words of John 9:39, what did the Pharisees perceive? “And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, ‘Are _____ blind also?’ Jesus said unto them, ‘If ye were blind, ye should have no _____; but now ye say, We _____, therefore your sin remaineth.’” (Jn. 9:40-41)

Willful Blindness

1. Reflect on John 9:39 in the light of Mt. 13:13-15; Mk. 4:12; 8:18; Lk. 8:10; Isa. 6:10. Thought Question: What did Jesus mean by these statements? _____

2. According to the Bible, is there a link between physical and spiritual eyesight? “The eyes of your _____ being enlightened; that ye may _____ what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the _____ of his inheritance in the saints.” (Eph. 1:18)

Note: In the Bible, physical eyesight is used as a metaphor to describe those who have spiritual discernment.

3. What did David ask of the Lord? “Open thou mine _____, that I may _____ wondrous things out of thy law.” (Ps. 119:18)

Note: The Pharisees thought they knew much about the law. Yet because they failed to see Jesus in the law, their rigorous casuistry became a farce. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal the limitless depths of His spiritual law.

4. What did God do to Israel when they apostatized from Him? “For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep _____, and hath closed your _____: the prophets and your rulers, the _____ hath he covered.” (Isa. 29:10)

Note: It is no coincidence that Biblical prophets were called **seers**. When Israel apostatized from God, He withdrew the prophetic voice and she stumbled around in darkness

5. What great commission did God give Saul of Tarsus upon his conversion? “To open their [the Gentiles’] _____, and to turn them from darkness to _____, and from the power of _____ unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” (Acts 26:18)

6. According to the apostle Paul, is God responsible for His peoples’ hardness of heart? “Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not _____; and seeing ye shall see, and not _____. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have _____ closed; lest they should _____ with their eyes, and _____ with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” (Acts 28:26, 27)

7. **Thought Question:** Does God bring calamities upon people and harden their hearts and close their eyes? (**Hint:** Study II Thes. 2:9-13; II Chron. 18:18-22; Job 1:11-12; 42:11) _____

8. What did Jesus say about the Pharisees? “Woe unto you, ye _____ guides. . . . Ye fools and _____. . . . Thou _____ Pharisee. . . .” (Mt. 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26)

9. What counsel did Jesus give His disciples in view of the blindness of the Pharisees? “Let them _____: they be blind leaders of the _____. And if the blind _____ the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” (Matt. 15:14)

10. What did Jesus say about those who hate their brothers? “But he that hateth his brother is in _____, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not _____ he goeth, because that darkness hath _____ his eyes.” (I Jn. 2:11)

11. Is there any chance that the Laodicean church could commit the same mistake as the Pharisees? “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with _____, and have need of nothing; and _____ not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and _____, and naked.” (Rev. 3:17)

12. Study the story of the men on the road to Emmaus. What is it that opens peoples' spiritually blind eyes? "But their eyes were _____ that they should not know him. . . . And their eyes were _____, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." (Lk. 23:16, 31)

