

GOSPEL OF JOHN

Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

Spiritually Blind! – Part 2

Do the miracles of Jesus matter? The answer is a resounding YES! The miracles of Jesus Christ are an essential part of His story and an essential part of the Christian faith. It was common knowledge, in Jesus' day that He was a miracle worker. Critics of Jesus were compelled to concede that He did perform miracles. Yet, they denied that God was the source of His power. The question was never, 'Did Jesus perform miracles?' That fact was taken for granted. The debate was always over whose authority and with what power Jesus performed these miracles.

Stephen J. Cole on Bible.org writes, "We sometimes hear, 'If I could just see a miracle, I'd believe in Jesus!'" But these Pharisees saw all types of miracles and yet hardened their hearts against Jesus. New Testament scholar, Paul Barnett, adds, "The miracles of Jesus were always within the bounds of nature and not 'contrary' to nature's patterns, that is, freakish or bizarre..."

The Apostle John built his gospel around seven miracles or signs (some would count the number as being eight if you include the miracle of the great catch of fish after His resurrection – **John 21**). Of course, there is an additional miracle that stands apart from all the rest which is Jesus' resurrection from the dead!

Our study picks up with what happened immediately after the blind man has been healed. It is not surprising that everyone wanted to know how a blind man could suddenly see.

Read John 9:8-13 (ESV) ⁸ *The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?"* ⁹ *Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man."* ¹⁰ *So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"* ¹¹ *He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight."* ¹² *They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."* ¹³ *They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.*

The neighbors' reaction at first to the miracle was a normal one. And, they wanted to know what happened. The man told the simple truth. He named the name of Jesus! He really did not know who Jesus was yet. He was blind when Jesus had touched his eyes. When a person is physically blind, it is very obvious to that person and to those around them. But, spiritual blindness is another matter. Those who are spiritually blind often don't realize that they are walking in darkness. The blind man healed by Jesus is a picture of one who is gradually being touched by the power of the Holy Spirit and at first they don't know who has touched them. But, over a period of time, the Lord will reveal the truth of Jesus to them as we will read later in the passage. The man knew Jesus' name and he had heard the voice of Jesus and was obedient to His instructions.

And wouldn't you know it? Jesus healed him on the Sabbath of all days!

Read John 9:14-16 (ESV) ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.

Jesus used saliva to make mud by mixing it with dirt. Mixing saliva and dirt was regarded as kneading. The LORD had designated the Sabbath as a day of rest but the Pharisees had added a lot of their regulations to it. The act of kneading (such as kneading dough) was regarded as one of the 39 forms of work that violated the Sabbath. Applying an unusual salve was regarded as healing. Applying the mixture was considered anointing. Normal anointing such as one might do on weekdays was allowable on the Sabbath, but anointing with special substances not normally used was forbidden because that constituted a healing activity that was not allowed.

They had been warned about those who performed miraculous signs in **Deuteronomy 13:1-3**. This was a warning that applied to a person who performed miracles while claiming to be a prophet and then led the people away from God. Some of the Pharisees interpreted Jesus’ actions as a violation of this warning. However, Jesus was not leading the people away from God. He was pointing everyone to Him. The arguers complained that He had performed a miracle, but he also broke the Sabbath law and they quickly concluded that He must be a sinner and not from God. *But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?”*

For this second group the nature of Jesus’ miracles, especially the healing of a man born blind, made them wonder how one who did such things could be described as a sinner.

Read John 9:17-23 (ESV) ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” ¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰ His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹ But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” ²² (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³ Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

The blind man concluded that Jesus was a prophet which was a good answer since some of the Old Testament prophets, such as Moses, Elijah, and Elisha had performed miracles. The Jewish people looked on their prophets as men of God who could do wonderful things by the power of God.

But the religious leaders did not want Jesus designated as a prophet. The next step for them was to discredit the miracle. They suggested that Jesus had plotted the whole thing and was really deceiving the people. Possibly, Jesus was a ‘con’ who ‘switched’ beggars so that the sighted man was not the man who had been known as the blind beggar. Since the newly sighted man was no help to their cause they began to zero in on the parents.

The parents answered the first two questions easily enough but that third question was a problem which involved hidden dangers for them. The blind man had told everyone else how he was healed. Undoubtedly, he

had also told his parents. However, they feared the Jews and did not want to be put out of the ‘temple family’. There were different levels of excommunication, but being excommunicated at any level was a serious penalty. Eventually it would have meant being cut off socially from your neighbors, who would also be kicked out of the synagogue if they associated with you or helped you in any way. You couldn’t buy or sell, because if your neighbors engaged in business with you, they would get into trouble. You couldn’t escape by moving to the next town, because the rabbis there would enforce the Sanhedrin’s ban. For a poor family, being excommunicated would result in social and financial devastation. A Jewish boy comes of age at 13 years and is able to legally give testimony. Therefore, that was the parents’ ‘easy way out’ – ask him!

Read John 9:24-25 (ESV) ²⁴ *So for the 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 answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”*

Next, the Pharisees’ demand the man to give glory to God as a way of commanding the man to tell the truth. Joshua used the same expression when he dealt with Achan in **Joshua 7:19-20**. But, the newly-sighted man chose to give God the glory by remaining faithful concerning the truth of what Jesus had done. I love the man’s answer: *“Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”* He had met Yahweh-Rapha the LORD Our Healer as recorded in **Exodus 15:26** Still trying to manipulate their point, the Pharisees ‘go after’ the man again.

Read John 9:26-29 (ESV) ²⁶ *They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”* ²⁷ *He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?”* ²⁸ *And they reviled him, saying, “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 comes from.”*

By now the man was getting tired of their interrogations. In today’s language, he might have said, “I have told you once – I told you twice and you’re still asking.” He got bold and said: *Do you also want to become his disciples?* And, they did not like his boldness. They wanted it known that they were anchored to Moses. Ha! What would Moses have really thought of them? Moses was a friend of God and he certainly would have been a friend of Jesus.

Read John 9:30-34 (ESV) ³⁰ *The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.”* ³¹ *We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.* ³² *Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.* ³³ *If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”* ³⁴ *They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.*

Maybe because he had been born blind, the beggar had listened more intently to words that were read in the temple than those who could physically see. The Pharisees had taught that God does not work miracles in cooperation with sinners. These Pharisees were more spiritually blind than the beggar ever had been. They could not see Jesus for who He was because they did not WANT to see Jesus. The plain truth is – you see what

you want to see and you do what you want to do.

Read John 9:35-38 (ESV) ³⁵ *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”* ³⁶ *He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”* ³⁷ *Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.”* ³⁸ *He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.*

The Lord seeks out those who are seeking Him. Since receiving his sight, the man born blind had been taken to the Pharisees by his neighbors, left to answer for himself by his parents, been interrogated, insulted and thrown out of the temple. Through it all, his appreciation of Jesus grew. At first he referred to him as ‘the man called Jesus’ then he said he was ‘a prophet’ and most recently he argued that he must be a godly person who did God’s will. After all this, the man was *found* by Jesus.

Jesus ministered to the man’s physical needs first. Often as a church family we must do the same – before we can reach the lost for Christ, we must minister to physical needs. When Jesus found the man, the man did not recognize Jesus because he had not received physical light until after he left Jesus. Jesus knew that the man was now ready to receive spiritual light.

Jesus described Himself as the *Son of Man* – a title He used for Himself more than any other. I believe Jesus described Himself this way because He wants us to understand that He did have a physical body – like ours and that He understands our troubles and He cares. He knows our weaknesses, our longings, our desires because Jesus was truly one of us. But, at the same time, He was unlike us because he is also the sinless perfect *Son of God* – the Light of the world! That is who Jesus is!

Read John 9:39-41 (ESV) ³⁹ *Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”* ⁴⁰ *Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?”* ⁴¹ *Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.*

Once again we see the contrast of the two choices – belief and unbelief in Jesus. The one born blind knew very little and yet through his faith he recognized Jesus while the Jews who ‘knew a lot’ remained in spiritual darkness. McGee comments, “The heathen are lost. They are in darkness. Yet the Lord puts each man through a series of steps. If there is any man...who wants to know about Jesus, the Lord will get the gospel to him. The man who sits in the church pew and hears the preaching of the Word of God and the giving out of the gospel is in the presence of the Light. That Light reveals his blindness... If you know the facts about Jesus Christ... but you will not believe, then, my friend, you are spiritually blind and there is nothing else to offer you.”

The significance of who Jesus is can be found in the fact that the man who received his sight was born blind. In the beginning when God made man in His own image, He formed man out of the dust of the ground. Centuries later when God sent His Son to earth, Jesus had the power to take a bit of dust and correct a birth defect. If Jesus can do that for the blind man – just imagine what He can do for you!