

## JOHN chapter 9 – “spiritual blindness”

<sup>1</sup> Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup> I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?” <sup>9</sup> Some said, “This is he.” Others *said*, “He is like him.” He said, “I am *he*.”

<sup>10</sup> Therefore they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?” <sup>11</sup> He answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received sight.”

<sup>12</sup> Then they said to him, “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.” <sup>13</sup> They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” <sup>16</sup> Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.”

Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup> They said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

<sup>18</sup> But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. <sup>19</sup> And they asked them, saying, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”

<sup>20</sup> His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; <sup>21</sup> but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.”

<sup>22</sup> His parents said these *things* because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed *that* He *was* Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

<sup>24</sup> So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner *or not* I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

<sup>26</sup> Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear *it* again? Do you also want to become His disciples?"

<sup>28</sup> Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. <sup>29</sup> We know that God spoke to Moses; *as for this fellow*, we do not know where He is from."

<sup>30</sup> The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! <sup>31</sup> Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.

<sup>32</sup> Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind.

<sup>33</sup> If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" <sup>36</sup> He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" <sup>37</sup> And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you."

<sup>38</sup> Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him. <sup>39</sup> And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."

<sup>40</sup> Then *some* of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?"

<sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.

## Introduction

Before we enter John chapter 9 it would be good to summarize what we have learnt so far in John chapter 5-8.

There are three headings that will remind us what we have learnt in these chapters.

### 1. What we discovered about Jesus.?

Jesus is from God, He is equal to God, and He is the one who provides God's rescue. Jesus is radically different from what the Jews expected. He has been described as the Son of Man who has authority to

execute judgment. (ch.5)

He gives flesh and blood for people to drink spiritually speaking.(Ch.6) He is also described as the Christ, the Son of God and the eternal "I am".

## 2. How the Jews respond to this Rescuer?

The response of the Jewish people was hostile. Jesus exposed the true state of their hearts and that they were really children of the devil.

Although the Jews were rebels in need of rescuing, they rejected Jesus.

It emerged in these chapters that God's chosen people historically were unable to accept Jesus because they didn't belong to God.

John makes it clear in his writing that the Jews unbelief is a reflection of their sin and not a reflection of Jesus being false in His teaching.

## 3. How then will anyone "see"?

Throughout chapters 5-8 we find a number of answers to this question.

- a) People will "see" or recognize Jesus if they listen to Moses, and therefore to God. (5:46)
- b) People will "see" if they listen to the Father and learn from Him.(6:45)
- c) People will "see" if they choose to do God's will (7:17)
- d) People will "see" if they hold on to the words of Jesus.(8:31-32)

However even the Jews who said that they "believed" showed very little promise in these areas.

The question - how will anybody be able to see? is answered in chapter 9- 10.

In a nutshell the self-sufficient people who consider themselves healthy and reject the messiah will remain blind forever. However those who really believe Jesus as the Messiah, to them and only them will be given the ability of spiritual sight. They can see.

Before we come to the passage of John Chapter 9 we need some Old Testament background about blindness.

Blindness in the Old Testament is more than just a physical thing. It is used as a metaphor to illustrate total spiritual failure. It is a major theme in the book of Isaiah.

- a) Blindness is a sign of refusing to see and believe God.  
(Isaiah 29:9 and 42:18-25.)
- b) God in his judgment spiritually blinded those who rebelled (Is.6:9-10)
- c) The problem of spiritual blindness will be solved when the Messiah comes to rescue them. In other words, this is a specific ministry of Jesus ( Is. 29:18, 32:3, 35:5, 42:7 )

We now come to the text of John chapter 9.

We can divide it into three sections.

Firstly in v.1-7 we have the healing of the blind man.

Secondly in v. 8-38 we have the different responses to the healing.

Thirdly in verses 35-41, we have an interview between Jesus, the blind man and the Pharisees.

### 1. The healing of the blind man – v. 1-7.

This is the only person who we hear about in the gospels that was afflicted from his birth. He must have

been a well known character because the disciples knew all about him. When the disciples saw this blind man they used it as an opportunity to present Jesus with a problem.

The question they asked Jesus was “Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?”

For us this may sound a strange question but to the Jewish people at that time it was perfectly natural.

The Jews of that day believed that suffering of any sort was connected to sin. In fact they even believed that a person could sin while being in the womb. If a woman was worshipping at a pagan temple while she was pregnant, then the baby inside her was considered to be participating in the sin.

Jesus immediately rejects both of their possible ideas of why the man was born blind.

Jesus replied that neither this man nor his parents sinned in order to bring about the man’s blindness.

Jesus said that the man’s blindness happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

So what was the work of God that was displayed in His life?

Well we know from the prophet Isaiah that when the Messiah comes, He will open the eyes of the blind. (Is. 29:18,32:3,35:5,42:7)

(Isaiah 29: v. 18)

In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

Here is proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus as the “light of the world” gives sight to the spiritually blind.

We are all born with “spiritual blindness” and we need to come to Jesus, the Light of the world.

The blind man was the perfect illustration to point to people’s spiritual blindness.

It was wonderful that the man was physically healed and he could see for the first time in his life. However it is much more wonderful if we can see our sin and ask Jesus to heal us spiritually.

When I was a Pastor in London, the lady who ran the worship group was blind from birth. She wasn’t blind at birth, but due to problems in the first few days of her life, she went blind.

When she became a Christian she realized that God had saved her from seeing all the bad things in the world and that the first person that she was going to see was JESUS. What a wonderful way to look at blindness when you are a Christian.

I guess it is the same for deaf people. The first voice they hear is the voice of Jesus.

## 2. Different responses to the healing of the man born blind – v. 8-38.

There are 4 interviews or discussions that take place in v. 8-38.

### a) Firstly we have an interview with the blind man’s neighbors.

Giving sight to the blind was only something that God could do; therefore it was important that the identity of the person was revealed.

The man proved to his neighbors that he was the same man who was born blind but now he could see. He told them the story of how Jesus told him to put mud on his eyes and then go and wash in the pool Siloam and then he would see.

It is important that we understand that at this stage that the man who was healed only described Jesus as

“the man they call Jesus”. We will discover later in v.38 that he acknowledges Jesus as the Son of God and believed.

b) The second interview is with the blind man and the Pharisees. (v. 13-17)

We discover that the man was healed on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees were divided about who Jesus was. Some of them thought that Jesus was a sinner because He healed on the Sabbath and others acknowledged that he must be from God otherwise he couldn't do such miracles.

They both turned to the blind man who had been healed and asked for his opinion. He replied that Jesus is a “prophet”.

The blind man, now healed has moved his position from, “the man they call Jesus” to Jesus being a “prophet”. He is beginning to see a little clearer spiritually speaking. However the Jews still didn't believe.

c) The third interview was between the parents and the Jewish leaders

(v. 18-23)

The Jewish leaders sent for the parents of the man born blind. They confirmed that he was indeed born blind. However they were afraid of the Jewish leaders and of being put out of the synagogue so they would not commit themselves to give an opinion on the identity of Jesus .They passed on this responsibility to their son. Despite all the evidence the Jewish leaders were still hostile towards Jesus, they had made up their minds and in spite of the evidence they grew more hostile towards Jesus and now towards the man born blind.

It reminds me of all these very intelligent people who believe all the historical evidence of all sorts of history in the past, but refuse to believe the evidence recorded in the Bible which has more documentary evidence than anything in history for New Testament times.

The way in which history is authenticated will depend upon the number of original writings that can be found for that period. We have 500 original Greek manuscripts for the life of Jesus. We only have 20 copies of a book that records history from 59 B.C. to A.D. 17. Therefore the New Testament is the most accurate historical record that we have for this period in history.

However people are determined not to believe in spite of the evidence.

The human heart has not changed, but Jesus can change the human heart if we will believe in Him.

d) The fourth interview was the second interview between the man born blind and the Pharisees.

(v. 24-34)

In this final interview the man born blind decided to stand up for Jesus and challenge the Jewish leaders. He did this on the basis of what had happened to him and on the basis of what little he knew about God, through listening in the Temple. He couldn't read but must have picked up a lot of information from others.

Sadly the Pharisees were “False Shepherds” looking after their own interests. However the man born blind had more spiritual insight than all these intelligent people who professed to know God and support Moses.

The answer for the Pharisees was to throw the man out of the synagogue and accuse him of being steeped in sin at birth.

3.An interview between Jesus, the man born blind and the Pharisees.

( v. 35-41 )

In this final interview we see why the Pharisees remain blind and why the man born blind is set free to both

believe and also to be a disciple of Jesus.

Jesus now appears on the scene, having left the man born blind to look after himself for a few days. When Jesus speaks to the man and reveals that He is in fact the Son of Man, (another name for Son of God), the man believes.

Not only did he believe but He worshipped Jesus.

The man has been thoroughly tested about his understanding of who Jesus is and what He has done for him.

Jesus says in v. 39 that He has come into the world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.

Jesus explains what He means in v. 41. Jesus says that those people who think that they have no sins and don't need a savior or rescuer will remain in their sin. However those who admit their guilt and trust in Jesus as their own personal Savior will be set free and see Jesus for who He really is.

They will receive "Spiritual Sight". The Pharisees didn't believe and remained blind.

The Light of the world brings a rescue and fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 42.

### Application

So what was the application to the first readers of John's Gospel and how can we apply this chapter to our lives today at O.I.C.?

In v.39-41 Jesus is clear in how he intends his miracle (sign) and interviews to be interpreted.

1. The miracle of giving sight to the man born blind is clear evidence that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah prophesied through Isaiah.
2. The work of Jesus as "Light of the world" is both to give sight to the blind and to blind those people who reject the light of the world, but think that they have spiritual sight.
3. The people of that day were shocked to discover that God's Historical people have rejected His Son and become hostile to those who believe in Jesus as God's Son.
4. The only qualification required for sight to be given is recognition of blindness.
5. For those who think they can see there is no hope.

### Application to us now.

If we are a Christian now we should understand fully that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah who was prophesied in the Old Testament. God has no other rescue plan for mankind, it is only Jesus.

We need also to understand that as the "Light of the world" Jesus has a two fold ministry. He opens the eyes of the blind, and blinds the eyes of those who are hostile to Him.

Jesus will open the eyes of the blind, even when people are hostile towards Christianity.

We must not be surprised that people are hostile to people who believe in Jesus. Christians today are the most persecuted people on this earth.

The Religion of Islam persecutes and kills Christians all over the world today. However some Muslims are becoming Christians and Jesus is giving them spiritual sight. Sadly some are being killed for their faith in Jesus.

Let us be encouraged today that Jesus knows the hearts of all people and he is able to save those who believe in Him, whatever their faith, religion or race. This means He is able to save you today, if you will come to him and acknowledge your blindness.

If you don't know Jesus today, please come to Him and He will give you spiritual light and bring you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Amen.