

The Miracles of Jesus

Miracle # 24

"Jesus Heals A Man Born Blind"

(John 9:1-41)

John gives us the only account of this miracle. In fact the entire ninth chapter is devoted to the telling of this miracle story. It not only relates the miracle, but also relates the reactions to the miracle and the Lord's own words about the significance of the miracle.

This miracle is unique in that it was not just the restoration of **lost** sight, it was a **creative** act, bring into being something that had not previously existed. Although the Gospel relates many other occasions on which Jesus heals the blind, this is the only occasion on which it is specifically stated that he healed someone blind from birth (the text tells this fact six times).

The Background of the Miracle (vv. 1-5)

"Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. (2) And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

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

On a Sabbath, during a visit to Jerusalem to observe the celebration of the Feast of the Tabernacles – which commemorated the wilderness journey of Israel under Moses– Jesus and his disciples came across a man blind from birth.

The disciples turned to Jesus and asked the **reason** for this man's blindness. The disciples displaying the beliefs of that day, were sure that one of two reasons accounted for this man's blindness, either this man had sinned or his parent had.

It would seem that the fact that this man's blind began at birth would have excluded from consideration that it was this man's sin that had caused his blindness.

One of the strange ideas that existed at the time was that some Jews of the time believed in "pre-existence of the soul" which is the belief that all souls has already existed in the Garden of Eden before the creation of the world. This implied that somehow this man could have sinned in a former state

before he came into this world blind. [William Barclay. And He Had Compassion: The Miracles of Jesus. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1975) p. 178]

The question of whether the sins of this man's parents had caused his blindness reflected a misunderstanding of **Exodus 34:7**, which says that the sins of the father will extend to the 3rd and 4th generations. That is that sin so deeply corrupts our relationships that several generations of a family will be affected by serious sin.

In answering the question Jesus said that neither this man nor parent's sin had caused the blindness but that the **glory** of God could be revealed through him. This does not imply that neither this man nor his parents are sinless but rather that their sin is not the cause of his blindness.

Jesus did not say that sickness and disease are never the consequences of sin. But it is a great mistake to think at all of mankind's sickness and illnesses are due to sin.

Jesus is not saying that this man was made to go through his entire life to this point blind in order that God heal him so that "the works of God" could be made manifest.

Rather he was saying that this man's blindness was something that God used, through which his "works" are manifest.

"Tragedies (such as illnesses and accidents) give God the opportunity to reveal himself in unique ways. It was a tragedy that robbed Joni Erickson Tada of her ability to move. But through Joni, the Lord has encouraged thousands and he continues to display his glory.

We cannot choose how God will glorify himself in us. But we can seek to glorify him whatever our situation." [Larry Richards. Every Miracle of the Bible. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) p. 223]

The Elements of the Miracle. (vv. 6-7)

"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. (7) 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."

In the view of our world the action of covering someone's eyes with spittle and mud would be **more likely to make a seeing man blind than to make a blind man see**. But the primary purpose of the placement of the spittle and clay on the man's eyes was to evoke hope and **expectation** in him. Another reason for the application of the moist clay may have been to convince those that saw the miracle that **source** of the healing was not so much in the use of means (clay and spittle) but in the Jesus who was the Healer.

Some commentators have pointed that the method used by Jesus to heal this man are identical to the original **creation** of man from the earth.

Jesus took clay and mixed with spittle to heal this man's eyes just as he had taken clay and formed man from the dust of the earth.

One notable factor in this miracle is the fact that he never **requested** a cure, nor was he brought by others to Jesus to be healed.

The Effect of the Miracle (vv. 8-41)

The Effect on the Man (v. 7)

"So he went and washed, and came back seeing."

The blind man did as Jesus commanded and he was healed immediately and completely. What we have here is really a **double** miracle. Neurologists tells us that it was not only necessary to fix his optic condition but it was also necessary to give this man's mind the ability to process the information that was coming through his eyes.

The Effect On His Neighbors (vv. 8-12)

"Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" (9) Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he." (10) Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" (11) 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." (12) Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

The locals who were use to seeing this man sit and beg for a living were astonished that he obviously could now see and they asked him how this had happened. He told them about the "man called Jesus" and how he had cured him.

According to Jewish law when someone was cured of a disease they were to have the cure certified by the local religious authorities. The neighbors now take the man to the Pharisees that they might examine him. This immediately posed the Pharisees with a problem, how could they certify this man as being cured and continue to **reject** the one who had cured him.

The Effect On the Religious Leadership (vv. 13-34)

His First Cross-examination by the Pharisees (vv. 13-17)

"They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. (14) Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. (15) 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." (16) 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. (17) They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

The miracle caused a debate among the religious leadership. Some argued that a person would work on the **Sabbath** could not possibly be from God. To the Pharisees the legalistic keeping of the Sabbath was more important to them than the stunning miracle that had just happened.

Others objected and said, "**How can one who is able to do these things not from God.**" But they refused to believe that this man was really blind until they had questioned this man's parents.

The Cross-examination of the man's Parents (vv. 18-23).

"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. (19) And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then 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 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." (22) 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. (23) Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

Although the parents confirmed that this man was their **son**, and that he had been born **blind** they denied knowing how this had come about. They sought to remove them-selves from the spotlight and thus the wrath of the Pharisees by telling them that their son was old enough to answer for himself.

His Second Cross-examination
(vv. 24-34)

"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." (25) 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." (26) Then they said to him again, "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? Do you also want to become His disciples?" (28) Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. (29) We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from."

There is a striking revelation of the opposition against Christ shown by the Jewish religious leadership in the contrast between the "**we know**" of the Pharisees and the "**I know**" of the former blind man.

What the Pharisee's Claimed to Know

- We know this man is a **sinner** (v 24)
- We know that God spoke through **Moses** (v. 29)
- We know do **not** know where this man **came from** (v. 29)

Under the glare of their hostile probing this man asks them, perhaps with more than a bit of irony, "**Do also you want to become His disciples?**" (v. 28). They angrily replied that they followed the Law of Moses.

The man continues his response to the Pharisees in verses thirty through thirty-four. "**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! (31) Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. (32) Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. (33) If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." (34) They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out."**

The former blind man was moved more by **amazement** that these powerful religious leaders did not know where Jesus was from than he was by **fear** of what they could do to him. He marveled at the way the Pharisees seemed to ignore the evidence before their very eyes. In the case of the Pharisees their very devotion to God, displaced as it was, became their greatest obstacle to seeing who God really was.

What this man claims to know on the basis of this miracle

- **I know** that I use to **blind** and now I see (v. 25)
The man said that whether Jesus was a sinner or not he could not tell: but he only knew that he had been blind and now he was not.
- **I know** that God does not hear **sinners** (v. 31)
- **I know** that God does hear those who **worship** him and do his will (v. 31)
- I know (implied) if this man were not from **God** he could do nothing (v. 33)

The blind man did not even know who Jesus was but he stood for the truth. He may have been blind; but even he could see what was going on here – his gratitude was too great for denial. As it was

Jesus who gave him his sight no one is going to make him take sides against Jesus.

When it says they "cast him out" it means that they excommunicated him from worship in the temple. ***But nothing they could take away from him could begin to compare with what he had been given by Christ!***

Jesus has a conversation with the Man

(vv. 35-38) "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?" (36) He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" (37) And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." (38) Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him."

When Jesus heard that blind man had been thrown out by the Pharisees, he found him and revealed to him who he was. The man now expressed faith that Jesus is the **son** of God.

The blind man had progressively realized who Jesus was as he said;

- a man called **Jesus** (v. 11)
- a **prophet** (v. 17)
- **Lord** (v. 38)

The Significance of the Miracle (vv. 39-41)

"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." (40) Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?"

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

The miracle is an acted out parable in which the truth that Jesus has been teaching about his being "the light of the world" (8:12) is applied both physically and spiritually. The Lord himself applies this miracle by explaining the difference between the blind and the sighted. He suggests that sin is more likely to cause **spiritual** blindness than physical blindness.