

John 9: Healing the Man Born Blind

*Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.
Water will gush forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert.*

Isaiah 35:5-6

BACKGROUND

- ❖ After Christ's death, there grew a conflict which culminated in the Jewish expulsion, in 90 AD, of Jewish Christians from synagogues. It is possible that John, writing near the end of the first century, specifically uses this anecdote to address the pertinent issue of Jewish/Christian relations.
- ❖ Jesus kneads the clay with his spittle to make mud, anoints an eye, and specifically uses spittle, all of which were traditionally considered to be breaking the Sabbath.
- ❖ The pool of Siloam was used for water of purification in the ceremonies and processions of the harvest celebration of Tabernacles. *Light* was also a key symbol in this celebration
- ❖ "Chapter 9 served as a reading [in the early Church] preparing converts for Baptism... In particular, when the practice of three... examinations before Baptism developed (at least from the 3rd century on...), John 9 was read on the day of the great scrutiny. From what we can reconstruct of the ceremony..., when the catechumens passed their examination and were judged worthy of Baptism, lessons from the OT concerning cleansing water were read to them. Then came the solemn opening of the Gospel book and the reading of John 9, with the confession of the blind man, 'I do believe, Lord,' serving as the climax." ¹

QUESTIONS

1. How does the blind man's identification of Jesus progress through this passage?
2. Were the Pharisees united in their opinion of Jesus? How did John know what the Pharisees said?
3. What are the arguments the Pharisees made for and against Jesus? (See Deut 13:1-5 ².)
4. What do the following represent in this passage:
 - ❖ light
 - ❖ darkness
 - ❖ blindness
 - ❖ sight

How does this explain verse 39? Why did the blind man see, both spiritually and physically? Were the Pharisees initially blind or sighted?

¹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible Vol. 29: The Gospel According to John* (Doubleday: Garden City, NY), 1966.

² For passages related to judging miracle workers, see Deut 13:1-5, Isa 42:6-7, Luke 7:20-23, Matt 7:21-23, Luke 6:44.

5. What does Jesus mean by John 9:4?
 - a. That he should heal him (the blind man) even though it was the Sabbath.
 - b. That he should heal him during daylight, so he would have something to see when healed.
 - c. That he should heal him while he had time, before his death.
 - d. That he should heal him before the Pharisees' spiritual blindness was complete.
 - e. All of the above
 - f. (a) and (c) but not (d).
 - g. None of the above.
 - h. (e) and (g).
6. Read Mark 4:26-29, the parable of the growing seed. What, if anything, does this parable tell us about sharing the Gospel? Have you found this to be a valid principle? How does this parable shed light on this passage from John?
7. Have there been times when *your* physical health has reflected your spiritual health? When is it valid or helpful to ask whether a physical condition might be the result of a mental or spiritual one?
8. Whose sin caused the beggar's blindness?