



Lesson 14 – The Book of John – Chapter 9

January 15th, 2018 Jesus Heals A Man Born Blind

Timeline of Jesus' Ministry in the Book of John (Christ's Public Ministry Was Approximately 40 Months)

1. The first Passover (Jn. 2:12-13)
2. Feast of the Jews (Jn. 5:1)
3. The second Passover (Jn. 6:4) (Jesus did not attend)
4. The feast of the tabernacles (Jn.7:2)
5. The feast of dedication (Jn. 10:22)
6. The third Passover (Jn. 12:1)

(From: "The Gospel of John, John Phillips, 1989, published 2001)

With these well-established calendar dates, we can begin to assemble a timeline of the Lord's public ministry up to John chapter 9. (Some of the dating is approximate.) *(See Graham Scroggie, A Guide to the Gospels, London: Pickering and Inglis, 1948, 409-411.)*

1. **John 1:1 through John 2:12** - A period of about three months from the Lord's baptism (Jan A.D. 27) to the first Passover (Apr 11-18, A.D. 27)
 - a. Jn. 1:19-51 (Feb A.D. 27)
 - b. Jn. 2:1-12 (Mar A.D. 27)
2. **John 2:13 through John 4:42** – A period of about eight months from the first Passover (Apr A.D. 27) to Christ's departure for Galilee (Dec. A.D. 27)
 - a. Jn. 2:13- 3:21 (Apr A.D. 27)
 - b. Jn. 3:22 – 24 (May A.D. 27)
 - c. Jn. 3:25 – 36 (Aug A.D. 27)
 - d. Jn. 4:1-3 (Nov A.D. 27)
 - e. Jn. 4:4-42 (Dec A.D. 27)
3. **John 4:43 through John 5:47** – A period of about five months from Christ's arrival in Galilee (Dec A.D. 27) to his departure in (May A.D. 28)
 - a. Jn. 4:43-45 (Dec A.D. 27)
 - b. Jn. 4:46-54 (Jan A.D. 28)
 - c. Jn. 5:1-47 (May A.D. 28)
4. **John 6:1 through 6:71** – A period of about twelve months from (May A.D. 28) to the start of Christ's ministry in Northern Galilee (May A.D. 29)
 - a. Jn. 6:1-15 (Mar A.D. 29)
 - b. Jn. 6:16-71 (Apr A.D. 29)
5. **John 7:1 through John 8:59** – A period of about six months from Christ's Northern Galilee ministry (May A.D. 29) to His final departure from Galilee in (Oct A.D. 29)
 - a. Jn. 7:1-8:11 (Sept A.D. 29)
 - b. Jn. 8:12-59 (Oct A.D. 29)

So now we arrive at John Chapter 9, which details events occurring during the months of Oct and Nov A.D. 29. These events occur well into Christ's ministry on earth. In fact, almost three years into His ministry and only five to six months prior to His crucifixion.

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

John 9:1-12 (ESV) ¹ As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

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."

This case is difficult. The Apostle John seems to choose some of the Lord's harder cases for illustrations. This case is sign number seven in John's choice of signs. This man's physical condition was a result of a congenital disease, the only one mentioned in the gospels.

Theodicy - in its most common form, is an attempt to answer the question of why a good God permits the manifestation of evil.

The difficulty of this man's case spurs a debate among the disciples and they wanted to know: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The supposition made by the disciples was that all such disability was the result of sin.

The disciples may have been thinking of certain Old Testament passages in which God seems to promise punishment on children for the sins of their parents.

Exodus 20:5 (ESV) ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me...

Exodus 34:7 (ESV) ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

Numbers 14:18 (ESV) ¹⁸ The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.'

Deuteronomy 5:9 (ESV) ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

Such passages, however, must be understood in a cultural or societal sense. The point is that the corrupting effect of a wicked generation seeps into subsequent generations. The idea that a child would be punished for the sins of his parents is a concept foreign to Scripture.

Deuteronomy 24:16 (ESV) ¹⁶ *“Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin.*

2 Chronicles 25:4 (ESV) ⁴ *But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the Law, in the Book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, “Fathers shall not die because of their children, nor children die because of their fathers, but each one shall die for his own sin.”*

Jeremiah 31:29-30 (ESV) ²⁹ *In those days they shall no longer say: “‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.*

Ezekiel 18:20 (ESV) ²⁰ *The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.*

And in fact, Jesus’ reply, immediately exposes the error in the disciples’ thinking... *“It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him,”*.

There is not always a direct link between suffering and personal sin. When Job’s would-be counselors rested their case for his suffering on this wrong assumption, they caused him needless misery (cf. **Job 13:1-13; 16:1-4**) and ultimately received a rebuke from God (**Job 42:7**).

Christ tells us in the book of Luke that it should not be assumed that pain and suffering are a direct result of sin in the lives of those experiencing it.

Luke 13:1-5 (ESV) ¹ *There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”*

The Lord uses these two incidents to warn that pain and misfortune are not necessarily attributable directly to sin in the lives of those who experience it. Instead, the bigger concern is not physical death (we all have a date with this), but a spiritual death if we fail to repent and trust in Him.

The Problem of Physical Evil

Genesis 2:16–17 (NASB) God warned Adam, *“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die”*.

When they disobeyed, God said to Eve, *“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children”* (**Genesis 3:16**).

To Adam he added, *Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat from it”; Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.* (**Genesis 3:17–19 NASB**)

Paul also tells us in (**Romans 8:20–22 NASB**) *The creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.*

Sickness is a universal effect of the fall, as a result of which sin, death, and decay exist in this imperfect world. It afflicts all human beings, periodically reminding each of us that we “*are but dust*” (**Ps. 103:14**), and that one day “*to dust (we) shall return*” (**Gen. 3:19**).

The truth was that like Job, the blind man’s affliction was used so that the works of God might be displayed in him. The great biblical scholar F. F. Bruce notes,



F.F. Bruce
1910 - 1990

“This does not mean that God deliberately caused the child to be born blind in order that, after many years, his glory should be displayed in the removal of the blindness; to think so would again be an aspersion on the character of God. It does mean that God overruled the disaster of the child’s blindness so that, when the child grew to manhood, he might, by recovering his sight, see the glory of God in the face of Christ, and others, seeing this work of God, might turn to the true Light of the World.” (The Gospel of John [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 209)

With this in mind, we need to understand that Christ does not say that no human disabilities are the result of sin. Miriam, for example, was stricken with leprosy for rebelling against Moses’ authority (**Num. 12:10**). Jesus also warned the man He had healed at the pool of Bethesda 18 months prior, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you” (**John 5:14**). He just says that such was not the case in this man’s life. But, that God would use this man’s condition to serve a higher purpose.

Having addressed their misunderstanding, Jesus affirms that the priority is to do God’s work, saying to the disciples, “*We must work the works of Him who sent Me.*” Their focus was backward, on analyzing how the blind man came to be in his condition; the Lord’s concern was forward, on putting God’s power on display for the man’s benefit and the witnesses around him.

The phrase “*while it is day*” conveys a sense of urgency. It refers to the brief time (only a few months remained until the crucifixion) that Jesus would still be physically present with the disciples. After that, He said, “*Night is coming when no one can work*”—which is a reference to His being taken away from the disciples in death. They would then be overtaken by the darkness (cf. 12:35) and unable to work until the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost once again empowered them to minister.

Unbelief Investigates a Miracle

Continuing...John 9: 13-23 (ESV) ¹³ *They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.* 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.* 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.”*

Application John 9:16 This difference of opinion among the Pharisees is likely a reflection of the two popular rabbinic schools of the day. The followers of Shammai would argue from established principles: “A man who breaks the

Sabbath is a sinner." The followers of Hillel would argue from evident facts: "A man who performs obvious good works is not a sinner."

Application John 9:19-23 With the frowns of the religious establishment in view, the parents allowed their joy at their son's healing to be swallowed up by their fear of the reprisals they could expect if they gave verbal credit to Christ. What a poor reflection of character. Regardless, they stand in company with many others who have compromised their testimonies for Christ through the fear of the consequences.

Continuing...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."*

Application John 9:24 The phrase "Give glory to God" is a solemn charge to tell the whole truth, as in **Joshua 7:19**... Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me."

The word for "sinner" here is one that means to miss the mark, one who fails to keep the prescribed law. In the New Testament the word is always used in a moral sense. It is used of one who by omission or commission, in thought, word, or deed, is guilty of sin. "We know that this man is a sinner," they said. The word for "know" is the same one used by the man's parents. "We know that this is our son" (9:20). Used by the Pharisees here, it is an arrogant claim to absolute knowledge. Essentially saying..."It makes no difference what you say; we know that this man is a sinner."

Application John 9:25 In spite of the biased grilling of the Pharisees, the blind man gives a bold testimony for Christ: "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." (9:25). He refuses to focus on the question of whether or not Jesus was a sinner. We can be fairly sure of what his views were...no man who was not of God could have done for him what this man had done. To him the question of whether or not Jesus was a sinner was beside the point. Here was one thing he knew: "Once I was blind," but, "now I see." That testimony has been echoed by millions through the centuries. New Christians, who are often not qualified to debate theological issues, can always say of their new vision of Christ as Savior: "Once I was blind, now I see." It's hard to refute a testimony like that.

Continuing...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."*

Application John 9:27 At this point, it's obvious the man has grown weary of the attempts of manipulation. The sarcasm in his words are comically evident! He knew his questioners had no intention of becoming disciples of Jesus. It's apparent he is advancing in his understanding of Jesus. Learning fast, he could see he had to take sides. Loyalty or denial was being forced on him by the religious establishment. His gratitude eliminated any possibility of denial.

Application John 9:28 The word reviled means "railed at." They had passed beyond the point of rebuke. Now, they begin to abuse him. To rail or revile is the answer of those who have been defeated in debate. They cannot support their position, so they resort to abuse.

Continuing...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.

Application John 9:31-33 This blind man knew the Scriptures. He was quoting to these religious leaders the word of God: **(Proverbs 15:29)** "The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous"; **(Isaiah 1:15)** "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood"; **(Micah 3:1-2,4)** "Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob... Who hate the good, and love the evil;... Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them"; **(Psalm 34:15)** "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry"; **(Psalm 66:18)** "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me".

It was salt in the wounds of his enemies to hear this man proclaiming such truths, such sanctified common sense.

Finally we note his assurance (9:32-33). He cites his solitary case **(9:32)**: "Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind." Their Scriptures recorded no such miracle. Memory, experience, all history, had no such miracle to display - that someone was healed of congenital blindness. His was a solitary case, a tribute to the nature of the one who had healed him.

This leads him to a solid conclusion **(9:33)**: "If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." He was now quite sure who Jesus was. As in the case of the woman at the well, we see a man growing in the knowledge of God. All the might of the Sanhedrin could not quiet him. The arguments of the Pharisees could not shake him. This man was at the least, a prophet (9:17). He was not a sinner as the Jewish authorities claimed. He was a man of God, a man God heard, a man who worshiped God, a man "from God."

Application John 9:34 The inspired logic of the healed man is followed by the infuriated loathing of the Hebrew masters (9:34). We note their charge to him... "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?"

They were enraged because they were being defeated in their argument by this unlearned man. Here was a man, singularly marked as a sinner from birth by his disability, presuming to teach them, the Pharisees. What impertinence. They were the custodians of the law, the cultured and educated elite. He was an absolute nobody. How dare he teach them!

We note, too, where they cast him (9:34c). In their rage "they cast him out." They excommunicated him from the synagogue, cut him off from the religious life of the nation, made him a pariah, a spiritual leper, to be avoided by one and all who did not want to share his fate. What that would mean to the man socially as well as spiritually can be appreciated only by those brought up in a tight religious community from earliest days, used to the comfort of religion, the compassion of the faithful, and the sense of community, of belonging, that such an association brings.

Excommunication meant that no one would employ him. His family would disown him. He could have no part in the religious services of the synagogue or in the ritual worship of the temple. Anyone caught helping him would be exposing himself to a similar fate.

Here is recorded the first overt break between Jesus' followers and the Jewish religious establishment. The blind man is the first person known to have been put out of the synagogue because of loyalty to Christ.

Continuing...John 9:35- 41 (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. 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.

Application John 9:35-41 Jesus finds him, cast out by a dead religious system. The Lord now presents himself before this man in order to give him a further revelation of himself. He now presents himself before him as the one in whom, now and forever, he should believe. Once Christ clearly states who he is, the man shows no hesitation in his belief. Not only has he gained physical sight of the world around him, he now clearly sees and accepts the only Savior capable of offering him eternal life.

“For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” Behind those words lay the contrast between the man born blind who now could see (and not just physically) and the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees and the nation of Israel. The Lord’s presence in the world was a great divide (9:39), separating believer from unbeliever, true from false, the seeing from the blind.

Some Pharisees standing by instantly react to Jesus’ statement in verse 39. Christ then exposes the fact that they were laboring under a great delusion. If their eyes had been truly opened, they would have been prostrate in the dust before him, following the example of the man born blind.

The blindness of the nation of Israel toward Christ, epitomized by these Pharisees, was real. It led them to murder their messiah. It has persisted for nearly two thousand years. It led the apostle Paul, who once had been of their number, to say, "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25).

In John 9 it was not so much that organized religion excommunicated a man in touch with Jesus. Rather, Jesus excommunicated organized religion out of touch with him.