



Rev A

Adult Education Lesson 19

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Joh. 9:1-41

The meaning of the story of the man born blind

Collect

(Job. 9:1,2) And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

For, the Pharisees taught that a man's sinful life could result in physical infirmity for his progeny for four generations (cf. Ex. 20:5).

(Job 9:3-5) Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

In other words: the sinfulness of the parents are not the cause of this man's blindness, nor the sinfulness of the man. Jesus was *not* implying that these people were sinless, He was implying that this man's [congenital] blindness was unrelated to sin; it was God's will that he should be born blind, and later it would provide this opportunity for Jesus to demonstrate God's glory.

The Pharisees teaching

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

The man in the story had no demon, no disease that caused his blindness. He was born blind. Other healers and prophets had been able to cure blindness, but Jesus would bring sight to one *born blind*, something never before achieved, and a demonstration that there was something different about Him, that the power of God was available to Him on demand.

Now it is apparent that no-one but Jesus, the blind man, and we readers witness the actual miracle, and we by faith only. The Pharisees have only anecdotal evidence that there even was a miracle.



Glen Miller



5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

... When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. glory = invisible presence

Much of this tract is commentary - don't take it as Gospel. It is here to encourage meditation and study. Use your gift of discernment, to find the truth.

Blindness

At first, the blind man thinks, perhaps, that Jesus is just a healer and a prophet. He obeyed Jesus and washed in the "pool of Siloa", and sees, but he does not "see" that it is God who is responsible for his healing. The *man born blind* is now living proof of God's invisible presence. He shows himself to the Pharisees, who always look for *signs* of God's invisible presence. And he carries a message from Jesus, the implication of which is that the Pharisees, even when given an unmistakable sign that God is here amongst them, do not recognize Him. The man born blind says:

30 ... Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

Look at me!, he shouts. I am a sinner and you say that God does not hear my prayers, but here a *man* has cured my congenital blindness. Who but God could have done this? Is this man not then from God?

The Pharisees could see that the man was sighted, but thought that he was lying about his blindness, even though his parents vouched for him being born blind. Now, they should have known who the man was since the blind man had been begging just outside the temple gate often. But the Pharisees had been "blind" to his presence. Jesus, going out of the Temple in the midst of them (Pharisees), saw him immediately.

The pool of Siloa (or, Siloam = Sent) is perhaps a reference to a water tunnel, which brings water from the Virgin's pool to Siloam in Jerusalem, and a metaphor for the living waters brought by Jesus who was sent by God the Father.

Or it could be from a reference to (Isaiah 8:6) *Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;* A symbol of Jehovah's nourishment and support of his people.

(A New Commentary on Holy Scripture - Gore etc. Macmillan pub.)

In any event, it refers to Jesus.

(Joh. 8:59 - 9:1)... Jesus ... went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by ... and as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth.

References

Their admonition to the man to give God the praise (which means “tell the truth” verse 24 and cf. Jos. 7:19), is Johannine irony.

The Jews were also blind from birth, for was not *their father the devil!* (John 8:44) *Ye are of your father the devil, . . .*

The Pharisees’ hearts were hardened from unbelief, and they were prevented from accepting God’s grace and being “cured”.

At this point in the story, the blind man does not yet know that Jesus is of God, but after he has been rejected by the Pharisees, Jesus comes looking for him, and offers him the **grace of understanding**, which the man accepts. He recognizes Jesus as God, and he worships Him. It is an irony that the man blind from birth is the first person allowed by Jesus to “see” Him as God, and to worship Him.

Then Jesus teaches us in Joh 9:39 - 41

And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

You see, the glory of God had become hidden behind a backdrop of frenetic religiosity. Jesus, as the light of the world, came to make God’s invisible presence, visible (so that they which see not, might see), to bring God to the forefront, to refocus man on God and His will, to remind the chosen people why they had been chosen, and what they were supposed to be doing in the world. And He came to evaluate man’s response to this news, to compare one with another, (“judge”).

References

Any one who could see the effects of this miracle but not the activity of God behind it, was judged by Jesus to be blind, and with continued unbelief was condemned to a life of blindness (*they which see might be made blind*).

Now let us return to verse 6.

6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

I think that Jesus did not need clay to give the man his sight. Jesus’s spittle was “holy water”. The clay was used perhaps to illustrate the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who did not see that their own eyes were similarly “clay-covered” and that they should also wash in the “pool of Siloa” in order to “see”. Alas, Jesus knew they would not understand the meaning of the clay. The Pharisees “saw” no God - only a man doing work on the Sabbath.

What did you see? Do you have clay over your eyes? Did you see this only as “another” healing story with Jesus once again confronting the Pharisees?

But perhaps you now “see” with the help of the light of Jesus, what He meant when He said

“For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.”

Num. 15:36

Augustine said: The great physician had arrived to bring sight to the blind, but they would not admit they were blind! “The Doctors of Law, the teachers of law, crucified the Author of the law.”

The Views expressed here are strictly those of the author and probably disagree with what you have previously thought. Read other commentaries - meditate on the original KJV.

Now look at this lesson from Jesus in Mt. 13

*“the Lord replied to the disciples, when they asked Him, “Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?”—“Because it is given unto you to know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven; but to them I speak in parables, **that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not hear, understanding they may not understand; in order that the prophecy of Isaiah regarding them may be fulfilled, saying, Make the heart of this people gross and make their ears dull, and blind their eyes. But blessed are your eyes, which see the things that ye see; and your ears, which hear what ye do hear.”** Matt. xiii. 11–16; Isa. vi. 10.*

Now Thomas Aquinas in his “Summa” wrote:

For one and the same **God [that blesses others] inflicts blindness upon those who do not believe**, but who set Him at naught; ... /but/ to those who believe in Him and follow Him, He grants a fuller and greater illumination of mind.

So there you have it - “clear as clay” eh?

Thomas - Summa

So what must you do?

Believe that God is responsible for life, the world, and everything good that you know. Observe the commandments of Jesus and teach others to do the same.

Do you see blind friends and neighbors? Then wash their eyes in the holy water of Jesus’s words, and remove the “clay”. If they are Jewish, then read Romans 11 and 12 (see my commentary).

Show them through your behavior what it means to observe his commands, and encourage them to spend time with you. Correct their misunderstandings and praise them when they get it right.

Start today with this story, and teach your neighbor about “blindness”.

Amori Christi et Ecclesiae— Glen C. Miller OSV

blessed (Greek: makarios).

The day of judgment.