

“I Was Blind But Now I See – Seeing Jesus As He Really Is!”

John 9:1-7

Introduction: (Read John 9:1-7) In this passage Leon Morris, and many others, would say that have the record of the 6th of John’s “sign miracles” to which he alludes in his statement of purpose for his Gospel (cf. 20:30-31). In John’s Gospel these signs are chosen and included to accomplish both the purpose of evangelism and encouragement. Typically John follows these miracles with a discourse, and in this case a supporting dialogue, which gives some deeper meaning to the miracle (cf. 9:8-41).

John leads up to this sign and narrative with the narrative of 8:12-59. The connection between John 8:12-59 and 9:1-41 is seen in Jesus’ proclamation of 8:12 and His restatement in 9:5. In order to rightly understand and face what is taking place in this narrative – as well as the dialogue of 8:12-59 – we must look back at Jesus’ final declaration of the previous chapter – 8:56-59 “Before Abraham was ‘I Am.’” This is a declaration that Jesus, like the Father (and the Spirit) is fully God, the “Self-Existent One.” Jesus sets up this ultimate statement of identity by an initial ***I Am*** statement with predicate (8:12 – “I am the light of the world;” cf. John 1:4-5, 9) followed by two less obvious absolute ***I Am*** statements (8:24, 28). This passage John 9 is to be understood as an extension of the “I Am the Light of the World” (The ***I Am*** with predicate) declaration. In 9:5, after He answers the disciples’ question and before He heals the eyes of the man who was born blind and gives him his sight, Jesus declares, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Though the wording is slightly different, this statement carries the weight of 8:12 into this text in order to qualify the miracle and give continuity to the following narrative/discourse.

Remember as we look at this passage, this is the Sovereign Creator – the One who simply spoke into existence all that is. He Himself became man (Incarnation). This is the message of John (cf. 1:1-18) God came down – entered in ...etc. This is an event of such incredible implication – to include a serious disruption of all that is - God broke in!!! Don’t miss the power, magnitude, and yes, the necessary offense to fallen and rebellious humanity – to say nothing of the assault on the enemy’s domain which marks His coming. They/the Jews, as well as fallen humanity as a whole, opposed Him because to embrace Him would cost them everything!! It would cost them everything that they had worked so hard to gain and in which they find identity, fullness/value, purpose or meaning – everything!! Yet – it is in the counting of all things loss for the sake of knowing Jesus, that they would ***gain everything*** – “the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ...”

Going into this text - we know that when we see Jesus – when He speaks – when He does His works of power – ***we are seeing God – we are hearing the voice – we are being shown the heart of God – we are witnesses to God’s redemptive purpose and power.***

****We See the Great I Am Walking Among Us as a Man – cf. 8:56-59***

- In John 1:1-4, 14 we are introduced to the truth on display in the life of Jesus. John would have us know that He who is fully God, partakes fully and permanently of our humanity in Jesus. The fallen flesh in which this man born blind has suffered his entire life is the very flesh/humanity which the Son of God took to Himself – “And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling (“tabernacled”) among us. It has the basic meaning of to pitch a tent or encamp. It would most certainly evoke images of the Tabernacle in which God dwelt in the midst of His people.ⁱ D. A. Carson notes that this verb corresponds to the Hebrew for the Shekinah, the glory of God’s presence which settled on the Tabernacle.ⁱⁱ And so John would say, “We have perceived His glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” *The glory of God which once settled on the tent of meeting in the midst of the camp of Israel is now embodied in Jesus the God-man who walks among us in the Gospels!!*

- It is this “. . . glory of God in the face of Christ . . .” (2 Corinthians 4:6, NIV), as Paul would say, which John puts on display in the “signs” of Jesus and in their accompanying discourses. It is this glory which John explicates by means of the “I am” statements of Jesus. Ultimately, we will see that it is this glory that is revealed in the Jesus presence and power on display in this sign.

***The Disciples’ Question – A Question Which Resonates with Us All – 9:1-2 – Note:** There are really two questions to answer for our purposes.

- **The Question 1:** What is the relationship of suffering, illness, and death to sin – in general terms? Suffering of all kinds and death are the universal experience of mankind in every generation and culture. The Bible traces the origin of suffering and death to the fall of man as recorded in Genesis 3. The apostle Paul makes explicit that which, in Genesis 3, is implicit when he writes in Romans 5:12, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (NIV; cf. Genesis 3; also 1 Corinthians 15:20-28). The author of Hebrews declares death to be a certainty for all mankind in 9:27. From beginning to end the Bible presents a clear understanding of the cause and the universal nature of the struggle, pain, and death which characterize the human condition.

- **Question 2:** What is the relationship of suffering, illness, and death to sin – in personal terms (cf. 9:2)? Despite the clear statement of the Bible regarding the root of the human condition a theological tension, often resulting in a faith crisis, occurs when the Christian attempts to reconcile the harsh and pressing reality of suffering, pain and death in the community of faith with the equally unambiguous biblical truth of the goodness and love of God. The questions which plague the human heart regarding the love of God in the face of such pain, sorrow, and loss resonate within the Christian community (cf. John 11:1-6, 21-22, 32, 35-37).

- So is the specific question of the disciples and the similar struggle today legitimate? Yes – on several levels and for several reasons.

1. The history of Israel is filled with examples – clarified in the prophets – of God punishing sin in tangible ways which often leads to corporate or personal suffering and death.
2. The N.T. also has many examples and warnings of judgement for sin/rebellion in tangible ways (Warning passages in Hebrews; 1 Corinthians 11:17-32).
3. The Bible is clear that there is ultimate judgement for sin for all who reject God's offer of salvation in the Lord Jesus (cf. Romans 1:18ff which seems to speak of the ongoing experience of judgement in anticipation of final judgment).
4. Several of the healing miracles of Jesus are accompanied by declarations of forgiveness or admonitions to "sin no more" etc. (Matthew 9:1-7).
5. In addition, personal experience and observations show us that there are significant and often predictable cause and effect relationships between behavior/attitudes and suffering, pain and death.

Transition: So why does Jesus answer as He does? Why is He not more specific? Jesus' answer is one of profound gospel depth and one that applies in every context in the life of a Christians.

**Jesus' Answer That is not an Answer* – In place of an answer to the disciples question, Jesus declares an eternal Kingdom purpose for this man's broken body (his blindness), rather than a temporal and specific cause – 9:4; also John 11:4, 38-40. The *glory* God, in the works of God, is to be seen in this man's life.

1. **Power - *The Power of God to Redeem and Restore in the Cross of Jesus*** - Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, the one who as the agent in creation created in love, came profoundly among us to atone for sin, to destroy the curse and the suffering, decay and death it brings (Big picture redemption and restoration).

a. The power that is explicit in this miracle is the power to heal disease, affliction, physical limitation and to make those who are broken whole – to include the power to raise the dead. This can easily be applied to the pain and scars from the experience of life's harshness etc.

b. The power to heal disease is clearly tied to the power demonstrated at the cross – power to atone for sin and to heal the divide between fallen humanity and God – the power of redemption and new life/new creation. Everything that took place in the miracle of John 9 was part of the Incarnation and anticipated the work of the cross.

This man will experience the ultimate failing of his body one day. However, to know that these miracles of healing and deliverance – even the raising of the dead – are done in anticipation of ultimate healing gives them power to encourage beyond any temporary fix.

Note: This is seen glory of God *in the face of Jesus* – in His immanence – He is the God who came/entered in and is committed to being among us – lovingly, personally, powerfully immanent.

2. Presence/Immanence – *The God Who is Present Loving, Tender and Personal Care for Individual’s in Their Suffering and Death (from Sin) in the Cross* –

a. A truth of the Incarnation (cf. John 1:14, 18 – “The word became flesh and made His dwelling among us...;” 11:33-37, 38-40; **Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 5:1-10...**).

Perhaps this is the context for understanding Jesus’ statement made in 9:4-5 – Doing the work of the Father while it was still daytime; as long as I’m in the world I Am the light of the world.

b. A truth of the exaltation. This is absolutely no less true – right here and right now - even though Jesus has been exalted to glory and is seated at the Father’s right hand – simultaneous presence (cf. John 14:15ff; 15:8-11; 17:1-26; Acts 2:29-38; Romans 8:1-39; Ephesians 2:6-7; Colossians 3:1-4; Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 7:25; 10:11-25 etc.)

When Jesus ascended to the Father His present care didn’t cease. He remains profoundly present in His love and care for us individually – Gerrit Scott Dawson encouraged us;

“Jesus has not forgotten us. He has taken our humanity with him. That is the guarantee of his return. Jesus has not dropped us. He holds in himself our very nature. By staying in skin, he as the one who is still man offers his perfect obedience *as a man* in our name and on our behalf. Jesus has not discarded this flesh which we love, this world which we love. The eternal Son of God has woven the stuff of creation forever into his being. He cares about this world. He cares about the sparrows and about you and me. ***He cares enough to cleave to us for all time.*** There is no other religious conception like this on the face of the earth. Flesh in heaven. Spirit and flesh are united. The ancient breach has been healed. In Christ, we can be connected to God the Father... Yes, this body of mine is failing, and people I love are fading.”¹

****Jesus Places the Healing Work, Which He is about to Perform, in the Context of His Redemptive Purposes*** – 9:4-5 - Before Jesus heals He instructs/admonishes His disciples to be urgent in the work of the gospel, in the most unexpected way

1. 9:4 – The necessity of doing the works of God while it is day – for the night is coming.

2. 9:5 – “***As long as***” Jesus is in the world He is the light of the world (Note the emphasis in the word order - ὅταν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ᾶ, ***φῶς*** εἰμι τοῦ κόσμου. BNT – ***the light*** is emphatic in its placement whereas in the statement of 8:12 the emphasis is on describing an aspect of the

¹ Dawson, “Jesus Ascended: The Meaning of Christ’s Continuing Incarnation,” pg. 189

Incarnate God, the Self-Existent, in relationship to His creatures). What follows is the Gospel light of the glory of God in the “face of Jesus.”

The Man Came to That Place and That Moment Blind and Begging and He Left Seeing and Full – 9:6-7 – **Note:** It is so easy to look at these dialogues solely through the lens of theology – Redemption, Incarnation etc. It is important to see the foundational theology revealed in these passages. That is a large part of John’s purpose for including them in his Gospel. However, these are not antiseptic moments, which take place in the context of a theological laboratory where we are protected from the messy and hard realities by lab coats and masks and goggles and we interact with things in objective statements of truth. Once Jesus is finished with His work is finished His work and we with our discussion we/He can strip off the lab coats stained by the unseemly struggle and leave the messy world behind.

This took place in the context of the harsh and messy places where we, as fallen people, live in a rebellious and broken world – life laid bare! We live life in that frighteningly real and messy place where pain, struggle, heartache, death and loss are common experiences. It is that place into which Jesus came. We must never allow the life of Jesus, His teaching and His ministry to be separated from the raw humanity on display in times like these.

- **Imagine How He “Saw His World** - This was a blind man who lived in a world that looked past him. He was not able to provide for himself even the basic necessities to live, let alone advance to a place of respectability within his culture. He was reduced to begging and depending upon the good will of the very people who barely tolerated him – who viewed him as a sinner or the child of sin. He had no expectation of company or fellowship or true affirmation, let alone of healing and restoration – he had no hope as he “looked” to the future. He did not know who it was that walked up on him in that moment. He only hoped to return home with the necessities to get him to the next day in a life of endless begging.

- When Jesus walked up on that man He faced the cultural prejudices revealed in the man’s status and later in the Pharisees’ treatment of him – as seen in the question of His disciples. In His response He didn’t really answer their question (a question beneath their question). He declared that this man’s condition/state would ultimately serve to “manifest the works of God in him” or to glorify God (cf. 9:3).

- **Imagine What He Experienced When Jesus Healed Him** - Jesus healed the man – He came blind, begging and without hope. He met Jesus blind, in need, bereft of hope and reduced to begging. Leon Morris, in his commentary on John quotes F. F. Bruce;

“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.’”²

² Morris, “The Gospel According to John,” pg. 425

- He Could Not Have Imagined What It Would Be Like To See - He went away seeing, filled and with a future (life everlasting – “joy unspeakable and full of glory”). He who was invisible and cultural irrelevant became one who manifest the works of God – the glory of God in Jesus was on display in this man. He bore witness to the cultural and religious elite – He became the stage upon which God showed forth His majesty to the very people who presumed to speak His truth – the courtroom where the Pharisees were put on trial before God...

- Imagine What We Will See When We Enter His Presence - The message is clear. Jesus came for the blind and the beggar (cf. 9:39-41).

ⁱBeasley-Murray, *John*, 14; also Keener, *John, Volume 1*, 408; Ridderbos, *John*, 50-51.

ⁱⁱCarson, *John*, 127-128.