

## TELLING THE STORY 21 – THE MAN BORN BLIND

John 9:1-38

### THE PLACE

The words, **but Jesus hid Himself**, could refer to a supernatural means of escape. The NIV's **slipping away** (lit. "He went out") implies ordinary means (cf. 5:13; 10:39; 12:36). Once again His time had not yet come (cf. 2:4; 7:6,8,30; 8:20).<sup>1</sup>

The chapter heading does us know favors, rather to understand the context read as though there is none: ... **slipping away from the temple grounds. As He went along he saw ...** this places the scene in Jerusalem.

### THE PATIENT

**A blind man from birth** ... one who was afflicted with congenital blindness. Basically he was without hope and helpless. The disciples must have thought that all suffering was the result of sin, *who sinned this man or his parents (verse 1)?*

**A beggar**, most likely the only way he could provide for his needs (see verse 8).

### THE PHYSICIAN

**Jesus ... He saw**, (not the mere act of seeing but the actual perceptions of an object).<sup>2</sup> How often they go unnoticed or are outright avoided but Jesus took note of him.

**Jesus** used this situation to teach his disciples some valuable lessons: 1. Suffering is not always caused by sin but often has a divine purpose (vs. 3). 2. There is a limit on the time we have to do God's work (vs. 4). 3. *We must do the work of Him who sent us* (vs. 4b). 4. Jesus once again revealed that He was *the light of the world* (8:12, 9:5). He who taught this truth now illustrates it.

### THE PROCEDURE

Jesus used varied His methods in healing the blind. For the man born blind is was clay made with spittle (9:1-38). In Capernaum He touched the eyes of two blind men (Matt. 9:27-31), at the pool of Bethesda He put spit on the eyes of a blind man to restore his sight (Mark 8:22-26). This puts the focus on the message and messenger. Jesus is the light of the world. He is the only hope for people walking in spiritual darkness.

### THE PROTAGONISTS

**Backdrop:** Sabbath day healings – this is not the only time Jesus was challenged about Sabbath day activity. The Pharisees were so upset that the disciples had plucked and eaten some corn on the Sabbath they confronted Jesus saying, *Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day (Matthew 12:5)!* Later that same day Jesus healing a man's withered hand infuriated them so much that *they went out and held a council against him, how they might destroy him (12:14).*

Dr. Luke describes how the Pharisees *watched Him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him (Luke 6:7).* See also, Luke 13:14; John 5:10, 16; 7:21-24;)

According to the Pharisee's it was illegal to work on the Sabbath; and by making the clay, applying the clay, and healing the man, Jesus had performed three unlawful "works."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bible Knowledge Commentary/Old Testament Copyright © 1983, 2000 Cook Communications Ministries

<sup>2</sup> The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament © 1992 by AMG International

The Pharisees should have been praising God for a miracle; instead, they sought evidence to prosecute Jesus' – Warren Wiersbe

### **Reactions:**

Confusion in the ranks: "Is this the man we knew?" Is this the one who was born blind? *Some claimed he was, others said, no* (vs. 9, NIV)

#### Division in the camp:

It was clear to some, for they said; *this man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath* (vs. 16a, NIV)!

However, other's said, *how can a sinner do such miraculous signs* (vs. 16, NIV)?

Fear in the Home: *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue* (vs. 22).

The healed man responds: Note the simplicity and straightforwardness of his answers. To the confused:

*I am the man* (vs. 9).

*I went and washed, then I could see* (vs.11)

To the Pharisees:

*He put mud on my eyes and I washed, and now I see* (vs. 15).

*He is a prophet* (vs. 17)

*Now we know that God heareth not sinners.* (vs. 31) The word "heareth" in this place is to be understood as referring to such cases. God will not hear-that is, answer.<sup>4</sup> See James 5: 16-18.

See also 9:25, 27, 30 -33, the profoundness of the responses of one who did not know Jesus is in sharp contrast with that of the Pharisees who claimed to know God.

## Questions

### Seeing What's There

1. *Who* would you say this chapter is most about?
2. From what you see in this chapter, how would you describe the personality of the blind man?
3. From the evidence you see in this chapter, what would you say the Pharisees considered to be the most important things in life?
4. Suppose you were one of the Pharisees in this chapter who were questioning the man who claimed to be healed by Jesus. Looking only at the evidence presented in verses 13-34, how would you summarize the *facts* in this case?
5. In verse 39, who are the blind people Jesus speaks of, and who are those who see?

---

<sup>3</sup> The Bible Exposition Commentary, Copyright © 1989 by Chariot Victor Publishing

<sup>4</sup> Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006

6. What are the most important *choices* made in this chapter, and how would you analyze each one?
7. EYE FOR DETAIL— From what you recall seeing in this chapter, try answering the following question without looking at your Bible: What method did Jesus use to give sight to the blind man? (See verses 6-7)

### CAPTURE THE ESSENCE

1. Discuss how much you agree or disagree with what the formerly blind man said about God in verse 31-33.
2. When the man in verse 38 said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe"... *what* exactly would you say he believed?
3. Immediately after the events of this chapter, if you talked with the man who was once blind and asked him to define the word *faith*, how do you think he would have answered?
4. In this chapter, which of these character qualities in Jesus comes through most strongly to you: His compassion, His power, or His wisdom?
5. If you had only this chapter in Scripture to refer to, how would you use it to help show someone that Jesus is truly *God*?

### FOR LIFE TODAY

1. Look at Jesus' words about day and night in verse 4. In the sense Jesus used, would you say the times in which we live represent the *day*, or the *night*?
2. Look at the statement of purpose which Jesus gives about Himself in verse 39. How would you say it relates to *your* purpose in life?
3. How free are you from spiritual blindness? Think carefully again about what Jesus says in the last three verses of this chapter. Then imagine Him evaluating your spiritual sight on a scale of one to ten, in which ten equals perfect spiritual vision, and one equals complete spiritual blindness. What score do you think He would probably assign to you? <sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> The Complete Bible Discussion Guide: New Testament, © 1992 by Questar Publishers, Inc