

Lent III: John 9:1-41: The Healing of the Blind Man

1. Jesus had been at the Temple since Jn. 7:14. The providence of God is quite apparent here. It is all by plan. In chapter 8 Jesus had told the Pharisees that He is the Light of the world. Again and again He offered Himself to them as Savior. But they rejected Him. And so He arranged to meet and heal this blind man on the Sabbath day to heal him, to further him in his faith, to prove that He is the Son of God, to confront the Jews with their obduracy which grew ever deeper. Even the involvement of Siloam, a type of Christ from Is. 8:6, has meaning here. The symbolism is deliberate, not a later embellishment by John the evangelist. God sent His Son for a dual judgment, vs. 39. He is the great Siloam, the One sent from God.
2. An outline of the entire chapter:
 - 1-12: The healing of the man born blind
 - a) Jesus meets this man, 1-5, by deliberate plan
 - b) The act of healing, 6-7
 - c) The effect on his neighbors and acquaintances, 8-12
 - 13-34: Jesus' adversaries and the healed man
 - a) Because of their presupposition that masonry-work was prohibited on the Sabbath, the adversaries (called Pharisees in vs. 13 and Jews in vs. 18) deny Jesus' divinity, argue among themselves, deny that the man had been born blind and received his sight, grill his parents, put the man under oath, revile the man, claim a fictitious Moses as teacher, are lectured by the man, vilify him, and throw him out.
 - b) On the other hand, the healed man consents to be brought to Jesus' adversaries, states the facts of the healing, is called a second time, testifies to the facts again, grows impatient, intimates (ironically) that they want to become Jesus' disciples, is amazed that they don't see the significance of the miracle, by a carefully thought out syllogism (32-33) shows them how ridiculous they are, but renounces nothing.
3. Vs. 1: *παράγω*, very likely at the Temple. Cf. Acts 3:2.
Vs. 2: *ἵνα* is plainly resultative. That they asked Jesus, shows that they believed in His omniscience. Evidently this individual case must have been a topic of conversation. Cf. vs. 34. People believed that this man was born blind because of a specific sin. The disciples believed it too. They merely ask: "Who was responsible?"
Vs. 3: Of course, all imperfection results from sin. But Jesus is saying: "Don't look backward, but forward." The disciples thought as at Lk. 13:24, but Jesus was thinking as at Jn. 11:4. *ἀλλά* "quite to the contrary". This *ἵνα* denotes purpose. On *τὰ ἔργα* Bengel remarks: "When one work of God is known, all are known. From His works shine forth the power, the glory, the grace of God." Jesus came to save man, not to punish him.
Vss. 4-5: 4b is an axiom, understood by all. Work must be done while there is opportunity. 4a is specific about Jesus and His disciples. Jesus and His disciples do saving work. It must be done while there is opportunity. In vs. 5 *ὅταν* means "so long as". The first *κόσμος* means "among men" and the second, an objective genitive, means "sinful men". Jesus is stressing His mission and its urgency. He does not say that after His ascension He was no longer the Light of the world. He is about to prove that He is the Savior. By the way, the blind man evidently heard what Jesus said.
Vss. 6-7: In vs. 6 Jesus acts. He did what He did to impress on the man that He was the source of healing. In vs. 7 Jesus commands: "Go, wash yourself." It was some distance from the Temple to the pool, which is there to this day. Siloam is clearly a reference to Is. 8:6. The little pool of Siloam was mightier than the Euphrates River. It was a type of Christ, as John

explains in parenthesis. Christ was the One Sent. οὖν is responsive. That he went and washed himself (his face) shows that he believed. He returned "seeing". Evidently he went home, as is apparent in the next verse.

Vss. 8-12: In vs. 8 those close to the man attest that he had been a beggar, implying that he had been blind. Οὐχ introduces a question calling for "yes". Vs. 9 gives us three opinions: a) He is; b) He only looks like him; c) I'm the one. On the word ὁμοιος Bengel remarks: "Human reason invents and supposes anything, sooner than it will believe a miracle has been wrought. Cf. vs. 18 and Acts 2:13." Note the Πῶς in 10 and the Ποῦ in 12. They just can't believe it. In vs. 11 the man simply states the facts, what he knows. He calls Him "the man called Jesus". He sticks to what he knows. In 12 he says "I don't know." Jesus had purposely left the man on his own. More on this later.

Vss. 13-34: Note how often πῶς (15, 19, 21, 26), τί (17, 26), τίς (21) occur in denial of Jesus. Progressively the man is abandoned by everyone and thrown out.

Vs. 13: The Pharisees were the religious authorities and act as inquisitors.

Vs. 14: Jesus deliberately healed him on the Sabbath to make them look at their own perverted religion.

Vs. 15: καὶ means "also" because he had already been asked in vs. 10. He answers with a second rehearsal of the facts.

Vs. 16: Note antithesis of παρὰ θεοῦ and ἀμαρτωλῶς. Bengel: "Either the former, or else the latter, exactly applies as the description of every man." Some said "He's an outcast because He breaks the Sabbath." Others were reluctant to accept this because the evidence of the miracle was plain, as Jesus had said in vs. 3. Jesus' enemies knew. No doubt about it. But these ἄλλοι lost out later on. Both admit that He had performed a miracle. The only question was: "Is He from God or a sinner?" This caused a σχῆμα. They "solved" this in 18 by implying that all was a hoax.

Vs. 17: Now it's τί: "What is your opinion about your healer?" The answer shows that this man's faith is growing.

Vss. 18-19: They desperately try to discount the miracle as a hoax. They want his parents' support. First they put the man on trial, now the parents. Note another πῶς.

Vss. 20-21: Note the two ὅτι in 20. They know two things. Note the πῶς and the τίς in 21. Now they are lying. They abandon their son: "We don't know." In 21b they speak of anything but pride in his maturity. They're practically saying: "He's in trouble. Let him speak for himself." αὐτὸς is emphatic.

Vss. 22-23 are parenthetical. These vss. explain the fear of the parents. These vss. imply two things: a) It was well-known that Jesus was the Messiah; b) The parents knew it too. Confession of this was forbidden. It was threatened with excommunication, all loss of religious and social contact. "The Jews" were the "great" authorities. διὰ τοῦτο, 23, for reasons of fear the parents abandoned their son.

Vss. 24-25: ἐφώνησαν is implicit in vs. 15. It occurs of the parents in 18. And again (ἐκ δευτέρου of the son, 24. It denotes their absolute authority over the people. They say "Give glory to God." He had already done so, time and again by simply stating the facts. (By the way, each time the man uses a form of οἶδα, he is truthful (12, 25 twice, 30)). In 20 his parents use it honestly but in 21, twice dishonestly. The Jewish authorities use it thrice to concur with them that Jesus is a Sabbath-breaker, a sinner, an outcast. Note emphatic ἡμεῖς. οὗτος is derogatory. In 25 the man won't go along with them. (By the way, when they call Jesus "a sinner" they're practically admitting the miracle because His "sin" consisted in

"working" on the Sabbath.) The man sticks to the facts.

Vs. 26: Two more questions of doubt (τί and πῶς).

Vss. 27-29: He grows impatient with their foolishness but also bolder. They become more vehement and obdurate. He had told them in vss. 15, 17 and 25, again and again and again. καὶ means "but". ἠκούσατε: the hearing of unbelievers in deafness and the sight of unbelievers is blindness. They had the evidence of ear and eye, but rejected it. μὴ introduces a question expecting "no" as answer. καὶ is "also", implying that he too wanted to be Jesus' disciple. ὑμεῖς is emphatic. This question is irony, exposing their hypocrisy. By the way, they were putting him on trial. Now he begins to put them on trial. He is not afraid. The first καὶ in 28 means "at that", the second is "namely". The reviling came out in the speaking. λοιδορέω means to treat with disdain. By the way, he does not "revile" in return. Cf. I Cor. 4:12 and I Pet. 2:23. He testifies. His faith is protecting him. Σὺ and ἡμεῖς are emphatic. ἐκεῖνου is derogatory. By the way, like modern Jews, they even refuse to use His name. Cf. vs. 22. The healed man was a disciple of both Jesus and Moses. These Jews were disciples of neither. Moses, at all times, wrote of Christ, Jn. 5:46, either Gospel to save, cf. Gen. 3:15; Gen. 12:3, or Law to lead to Christ, Gal. 3:24. In vs. 29 ἡμεῖς is again emphatic, implying that the healed man is an ignorant sinner. "To Moses God spoke". He sure did. But what about? Christ, whom they derogatorily deny in 29b. τοῦτον is derogatory "this fella". They didn't know because they rejected Moses who spoke always of Christ.

Vss. 30-33: Now the man preaches them a sermon. "The amazing thing" is their ignorance. They, of all men, the leaders. He puts their great learning to shame. Fahling: "Even to the untrained mind of the former blind beggar this willful ignorance in the face of the undeniable miracle was altogether inconceivable. What astounding ignorance!" καὶ in 30 means "despite the fact that." He sticks to what he had experienced and gave testimony of. That should have convinced them of Jesus' origin. Vs. 31 is a general statement. οἴδομεν "we" meaning "everybody". ἀμαρτωλῶν is in contrast to θεοσεβῆς. Both denote a relationship to God, unbelieving as opposed to believing, unreconciled as opposed to reconciled. θεοσεβῆς occurs only here in NT. ἀλλά after a negative means "quite to the contrary." From here on we have a present general condition. Add "ever" to protasis, "always" to apodosis. καὶ means "and as a result." The godly man constantly does God's will. God does for him what he asks. Had the blind man heard Jesus pray before the miracle? We know not, nor do we need to know. Vs. 32 is axiomatic, but is becoming particular. ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος "never ever". Never throughout history. τις means "any mere man". γεγεννημένου "congenitally". Vs. 33 is a contrary to fact condition with ἄν omitted. He is implying that Jesus is from God. Note how the faith of the man grows: 17, 25, 31, 32, 33. Note double negative οὐκ-οὐδέν "absolutely nothing". Nothing which God-pleasing men do because God sent them. Note that ποιεῖν is present tense "constantly doing".

Vs. 34: ἐν ἀμαρτίαις, evidently they mean that the man was born blind because of specific guilt or sin. The blindness has been removed and yet they say emphatic σὺ and ὅλος, "in your entirety". καὶ "and yet". Note emphatic σὺ again. διδάσκεις like our "lecture", used derogatorily. The last καὶ is "and so". Note ἐξ twice, once in the verb, once in the adverb. They drove him out of wherever they were. They had no use for him.

Vss. 35-39:

Step by step this man had been abandoned or rejected by men, by neighbors and acquaintances (8), by parents (23), by the Jewish authorities (34). Step by step he

grew in his convictions. Jesus had purposely absented Himself, but not really. His Word sustained the man, under trial, and thus he grew spiritually. Thus Jesus often does to us for our good. This man withstood every onslaught from unbelievers. Note the humanity of Jesus indicated by ἤκουσεν and εὐρῶν. He sought him out, now for the second time. Jesus came to this man, not vice versa. Note emphatic Σὺ. Just maybe θεοῦ (cf. KJV and NKJV) is correct. The others have "Son of man". Ylvisaker, Fahling, Kretzmann, Lenski prefer "Son of God". In 36 κύριε could very well mean "sir". Before ἵνα supply "tell me". ἵνα denotes purpose. Note correlative Καὶ in 37, "not only" "but also". Not only had Jesus caused the man to see and to see Him in particular, but He's also the very One talking to him. It reminds us of Jn. 4:26. In vs. 38 κύριε now means "Lord". Jesus now draws this believer to Himself personally. It does not mean that he had not been believing. He was strengthened. Bengel remarks: "The worship follows spontaneously the recognition of His Divinity. Jesus nowhere required this worship of anyone. It was the spirit of faith that instructed believers to render it." Ylvisaker: "In the Prophet he saw the Son of God, and in the form of the servant he beheld the glory of the Lord." Kretzmann: "The question of Jesus whether he believed in the Son of God, was intended to work this faith in the man's heart, for such is the nature of the Word of God at all times. The healed man was a believing Israelite; his faith was placed in the coming Messiah. . . . When he was therefore assured of the identity, he gladly confessed his faith." He did what the Jews forbade, vs. 22. What Jesus told the disciples in vss. 3-5 came true. The word κύριος occurs only here in John. It does not negate Jn. 3:17. Ylvisaker: "Here He speaks of the results or of the effect of His revelation in the world. The effect is twofold, depending upon the attitude of men to this revelation in Jesus: on the one hand, they who do not see, but recognize their blindness, shall receive their sight. . . . On the other hand, they who see, who imagine that they see, and who are arrogant in their wisdom (Rom. 2:20), who have taken away the key of knowledge (Lk. 11:52) and fancy that they need no light---they shall be made blind, they shall be given to a greater blindness, so that they may not come to the light. . . . He makes the blind seeing, the seeing blind, puts to death those that are living, and restores the dead to life (Brenz)."

Vss. 40-41:

In vs. 13 we read of Pharisees. At 18 it's the Jews. Here in 40 it's the Pharisees again. The Jews had cast this man out, drove him out. Whether vs. 40 means that some came back or that Pharisees were still with Him, we don't know. At any rate, they heard what He had said in vs. 39. They say: "We too aren't blind, are we?" expecting Him to say "no". Jesus counters with a contrary to fact condition. We quote Stoeckhardt on vs. 41: "In the first half of the verse He indicates the natural spiritual blindness, the congenital inability to recognize the truth. This original blindness Jesus can and wants to remove. He gives men the Spirit and Light so that they acknowledge the truth, recognize the Son. And so they have no more sin. Also the spiritual blindness of natural sin is sin, but a sin which Jesus removes. In the second half of the verse Jesus indicates the seeing as such people, like the Pharisees, who imagine that they can see, they know all and therefore reject Christ and His Light, Christ's Word and Spirit. Such the Lord finally abandons in their blindness to their obdurate spirit and removes from them Light, Spirit and grace. And so they remain forever in their blindness, in their sins and die and are lost in their sins."

4. Note that in all four Gospels denial of divinity of Jesus and the charge of breaking the Sabbath always go together. This is the spirit of unbelief. But believers neither denied His divinity nor accused Him

of breaking the Sabbath.

5. F.C., S.D., Art. XI, Election, 78, Tappert, page 629: "The reason why all who hear the Word do not come to faith and therefore receive the greater damnation is not that God did not want them to be saved. It is their own fault because they heard the Word of God not to learn but only to despise, blaspheme, and ridicule it, and they resisted the Holy Spirit who wanted to work within them, as was the case with the Pharisees and their party at the time of Christ. Jn. 9:16,41."
6. The word ἀμαρτωλός, in the Gospel of John, is found only in this chapter: vss. 16, 24, 25, and 31.
7. Some interesting syllogisms:
 - a) The Pharisees in vs. 16:
It is illegal to work on the Sabbath,
This man has done what God would not do,
Therefore, he is not from God.
 - b) The healed man in vss. 32-33:
No mere man can heal a blind man,
This man healed a blind man,
Therefore, he is no mere man.
 - c) Jesus in vs. 41:
Blind people have no sin,
You maintain that you can see,
Therefore, you have sin.