

John – An In-Depth Study

[Part 12]

John 9:1-5 [NIV] *“As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no-one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’”*

This man must have been well known for the disciple knew all about him.

The disciples saw this as an opportunity to put to Jesus the problem that they had of connecting suffering with sin.

The basic assumption was that wherever there was suffering, somewhere there was sin. [**Exodus 20:5; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9**]

Jesus did **not** try to explain any connection between suffering and sin.

Jesus told His disciples this man’s healing would show what God can do, give sight of the truth to a darkened world, ignorant of the very purpose for human life.

John always looked on Jesus’ miracles as manifestations of God’s power and glory, not just the natural compassion and love that Jesus has for all humanity.

Jesus then tells His disciples and all His followers that we must do God’s work while there is still time to do it.

John 9:6-12 [NIV] *“Having said this, he spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ‘Go,’ he told him, ‘wash in the Pool of Siloam’ (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His neighbours and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, ‘Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?’ Some claimed that he was. Others said, ‘No, he only looks like him.’ But he himself insisted, ‘I am the man.’ ‘How then were your eyes opened?’ they demanded. He replied, ‘The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.’ ‘Where is this man?’ they asked him. ‘I don’t know,’ he said.”*

The use of spittle seems to us strange, repulsive and unhygienic, but in the ancient world it was quite common.

Spittle, especially of some distinguished person, was believed to possess certain curative qualities.

The fact is that Jesus took the methods and customs of His time and used them. He was a wise physician, seeking to gain the confidence of His patient.

It is **not** that Jesus believed in these things, but He kindled expectation by doing what the patient would expect a doctor to do.

Having been cured this man had difficulty in persuading the people that a real cure had been effected.

But this man stoutly maintained the miracle which Jesus had wrought.

John 9:13-16 [NIV] *“They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. ‘He put mud on my eyes,’ the man replied, ‘and I*

washed, and now I see.’ Some of the Pharisees said, ‘This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.’ But others asked, ‘How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?’ So they were divided.”

As it was the Sabbath day when Jesus healed this man, He was sure to invite trouble from the Jewish authorities.

To make clay Jesus had been guilty of working on the Sabbath.

To do anything to heal a person on the Sabbath was to break the Sabbath, unless it was to prevent death of the person involved.

It was by observation of these petty rules and details that the scribes and Pharisees sought to honour God.

To Jesus these added rules were irrelevant.

The Pharisees are typical of people in every generation who condemn anyone whose idea of religion is **not** identical to theirs.

So the Jewish authorities brought in this man healed by Jesus for interrogation.

When asked what he thought of Jesus, without hesitation he said that Jesus was a prophet.

In the Old Testament a prophet was often tested by the signs he could produce.

Moses [**Exodus 4:1-17**]. Elijah [**1 Kings 18:17-40**]

One thing is true of this man, he was a brave man.

He knew what the Pharisees thought of Jesus.

He knew that if it was revealed he was a follower of Jesus he would be excommunicated, but he made his statement and took his stand.

In this he was a great example for all of us as Christians.

John 9:17-34 [NIV] “Finally they turned again to the blind man, ‘What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.’ The man replied, ‘He is a prophet.’ The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents. ‘Is this your son?’ they asked. ‘Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?’ ‘We know he is our son,’ the parents answered, ‘and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.’ His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, ‘He is of age; ask him.’ A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. ‘Give glory to God,’ they said. ‘We know this man is a sinner.’ He replied, ‘Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!’ Then they asked him, ‘What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?’ He answered, ‘I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?’ Then they hurled insults at him and said, ‘You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.’ The man answered, ‘Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.’ To this they replied, ‘You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!’ And they threw him out.”

We have in this passage of scripture some vivid character drawings.

1) The blind man – He begins to be irritated by the persistence of the Pharisees. This man, like many other followers of Jesus Christ, could **not** give a theologically correct explanation of what he believed, but in spite of this he gave a clear witness of what Jesus had done for him to improve his life.

It is far better to love Jesus Christ for what He is than to love theories about Jesus Christ.

2) The man's parents – They were un-cooperative because of fear.

The Jewish authorities had one very powerful weapon, excommunication, shutting a person off from the congregation of God's people based on **Ezra 10:8**, they would also lose all their substance.

Jesus warned this could happen to His followers. [**Luke 6:22; John 16:2; John 12:42**]

3) The Pharisees – They did **not** believe at first the man had been blind, they thought it was faked between Jesus and the man.

They knew that false prophets could produce false miracles in order to lead people away after strange gods. [**Deuteronomy 13:1-5**]

They then tried to browbeat the man, by saying we who are in authority know this man is a sinner, give God the glory for your healing.

They then became angry for they could not meet the man's arguments were based on scripture. [**Psalms 66:18; Job 27:8-9; Psalms 34:15-16; Psalms 145:19; Proverbs 15:29**]

First the Pharisees responded with abuse, insults and finally threatened force.

We can often have differences with people, but the moment insults, abuses and threats enter into an argument, it ceases to be an argument and becomes a contest fuelled by bitterness and anger.

John 9:35-41 [NIV] *“Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ ‘Who is he, sir?’ the man asked. ‘Tell me so that I may believe in him.’ Jesus said, ‘You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.’ Then the man said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshipped him. Jesus said, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.’ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, ‘What? Are we blind too?’ Jesus said, ‘If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.’”*

Two important truths about Jesus are illustrated in this passage of scripture.

1) Jesus looked for this man – If any person's witness for Christ takes them away from their fellow human beings, it will bring them closer to Jesus Christ. Jesus is always true to a person who is true to Him.

2) Jesus revealed Himself to this man – Loyalty always brings revelation. It was to this man who had been true to Him that Jesus revealed Himself fully as the Son of Man. The natural response to this revelation is worship.

The more we come to know Jesus Christ the greater is our desire to worship Him.

The blind man had received physical and spiritual sight, the Pharisees had physical sight and thought they had spiritual sight, yet remained spiritually blind.

The judgement that Jesus was referring to was the inevitable effect of Jesus coming into the world, it brings people to a point of crisis.

If we, out of pride or stubbornness, refuse to accept Jesus as our Saviour, we will continue to be spiritually blind.

If we recognise how sin has truly blinded us from knowing the truth about Jesus, He will give us insight and understanding.

Note just one thing more about the account of this man's conversion to Christianity, for it is the natural progression we all make.

The man first called Jesus a man. [v11] A wonderful man but still a human being.

The man next called Jesus a prophet. [v17] A human being who lives near to God and brings a message from God.

The man finally calls Jesus the Son of God and as a result he worshipped Jesus.

The tremendous thing about Jesus is that the more we come to know Him the greater He becomes.

This will be true **not** only in time but also in eternity. [John 17:3]

John 10:1-6 [NIV] *“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognise a stranger's voice.” Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.”*

In Palestine at the time Jesus trod the earth as a human being, the life of a shepherd was very hard.

At night, sheep were often gathered into a sheep pen to protect them from thieves, weather or wild animals. The sheep pens were caves, sheds or open areas surrounded by walls made of stones or branches. The shepherd often slept in the pen, across the entrance to protect the sheep.

Just as a shepherd cares for his sheep, Jesus the Good Shepherd cares for His flock [those who follow Him.]

The prophet Ezekiel, in predicting the coming of the Messiah, calls Him a shepherd. [Ezekiel 34:23]

The teaching about the good shepherd is in contrast to the bad shepherding of the scribes and Pharisees.

The shepherd was the gate of the sheep pen, letting in the sheep and then protecting them.

Jesus is the gate to God's salvation for all Christians, He offers access and protection.

Some people resent that Jesus is the gate, the only way we have access to God the Father.

Jesus is the Son of God, why should we want any other approach to God?

Knowing individual sheep and calling them by name is characteristic of a good shepherd. No such personal relationship exists between strangers and the flock.

John 10:7-10 [NIV] *“Therefore Jesus said again, ‘I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

“All who came before me” – could **not** refer to Old Testament prophets, more likely the present Jewish leaders.

The Pharisees’ treatment of the man born blind illustrated well what alien shepherds of God’s flock they were.

There had also been revolutionaries and insurrectionists who claimed to be messianic leaders, such as the Zealots.

In contrast to the thief who takes life and substance from a person, Jesus gives an abundant life now and eternal life that begins now also. [1 John 5:11]

Life with Jesus Christ lifts our lives to a higher plane because of His overflowing forgiveness, love and guidance.

John 10:11-15 [NIV] *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.”*

This contrast between Jesus the good shepherd and the hired hand centres around the personal interest and care of the sheep.

Too often shepherds of God’s sheep have been only interested in the income they can make out of the sheep, rather than the personal sacrifice they should be making for the sheep.

The good shepherd owns the sheep and is committed to them.

Jesus is **not** just doing a job, He is committed to love us and even laid down His life for us.

False teachers and false shepherds do **not** have this commitment.

A real shepherd was born to his task, he grew into the calling of being a shepherd, the sheep became his friends and companions and it became second nature to him to think of the sheep before he thought of himself.

The false shepherd came to do a job as a means of making money. He was in the job simply and solely for the pay he could get out of it, no sense of responsibility or calling. [Zechariah 11:4-17]

A portrait of the false shepherds of Israel is given by God’s prophet in **Ezekiel 34:1-10**.

Jesus gives His disciples warning that wolves would attack them as God’s true shepherds. [Matthew 10:16]

Paul warns also of wolves attacking the flock over whom they were shepherds. [Acts 20:29]

The flock in this parable is the true church of God, who will suffer from a double danger, liable to be attacked from the outside by those who hate Jesus Christ and what He stands for and teaches.

Also under attack from within by the leadership of shepherds who see their calling to the ministry as a career and not a means of service.

If the shepherd is faithless and a hireling, then the foes from outside the flock can penetrate the flock and destroy it.

The church's first essential is a leadership which is based on the example of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

John 10:16 [NIV] *"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."*

The "other sheep" is referring to Gentiles, all non-Jews.

Jesus came to save Gentiles as well as Jews, His own people by hereditary and choice.

This is an insight into Jesus' worldwide mission, to die for all of humanity. [**John 3:16**]

The Greek draws attention to this being a divine necessity.

The unity of the flocks arises from the unifying factor of the Shepherd.

At first sight, it might seem that the New Testament speaks with two voices on this subject.

1) A limited ministry –

Jesus said **not** to go to Samaritans only to the Jews. [**Matthew 10:5-6**]

Jesus told Syro-Phoenician woman He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. [**Matthew 15:24**]

2) A universal ministry –

Jesus Himself stayed and taught in Samaria. [**John 4:40**]

Jesus declared that descent from Abraham was **no** guarantee of entry into the Kingdom [created family] of God. [**John 8:39**]

It was a Roman centurion that Jesus commended as having more faith than any Israelite. [**Matthew 8:10**]

It was a Samaritan leper who alone returned to give thanks. [**Luke 17:19**]

It was a Samaritan traveller who showed kindness that all people should copy. [**Luke 10:37**]

Jesus said that many from all parts of the world would find a place in the Kingdom [created family] of God. [**Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:28**]

The command was given by Christ to preach the gospel message to all the world. [**Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:5**]

Jesus was a light to the world **not** just Jews. [**John 8:12**]

The explanation is in reality very simple –

God is limiting Himself to working through human beings to fulfil His ultimate plan to have all humans to come to repentance. [2 Peter 3:9]

Such a decision to use human beings means that God uses what I call "family planning" to eventually have all who will enter His created family.

The firstborn will then be qualified to teach and be examples to all who will follow. [**Revelation 20:6; Revelation 20:11-13**]

The firstborn from each generation will be resurrected at Christ's return, to teach and be examples to all who remain alive after the tribulation. [**1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17**]

This enlarged created family will be used by God as priests/teachers. [**Revelation 1:4-6; Revelation 5:9-10**], for all who have never known Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

All these people will be resurrected back to physical life to have the Christian Bible opened up to them for the first time, introducing Jesus Christ as their Saviour. [**Revelation 20:11-13**]