

6th sign John 9:1-7 - Healing the man born blind

Signs

Semeion say-mi'-on from Semaino see-mah'-ee -no - to signify a legal term used in evidence or a scientific term used in a proof.

6th sign John 9:1-7 - Healing the man born blind

Healing the Man Born Blind

1As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

3Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4"We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 5"While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."

6When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, 7and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent) So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.

8Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?"

9Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." 10So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?"

11He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight."

12They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

Controversy over the Man

13They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. 14Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

16Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath " But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. 17So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."

18The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, 19and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?"

20His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself."

22His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. 23For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

24So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner."

25He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

26So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

27He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?"

28They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29"We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from."

30The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. 31"We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. 32"Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33"If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."

34They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.

Jesus Affirms His Deity

35Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

36He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"

37Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you."

38And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.

39And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."

40Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?"

41Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

Jesus' encounter with a man who was born blind, and the question put to him by the disciples concerning the man's blindness helps us face the question that all of us have asked at one time or another, either about ourselves or someone else: Why does God permit such suffering to occur?

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." (John 9:1-3)

Judaism taught that sin, hurt, injury, and handicap are all linked together; that human hurt is the result of human sin.

Does Jesus deny that? - no

It is helpful to note right from the beginning that he recognizes there is such a link. However, it is not the one that many people think, as he will make clear. But the fact that he does not deny the link will answer many questions.

We do not live in a world where we can always expect perfection. God does not try to operate the world in such a way that everything works out beautifully. We are a fallen species that lives in a fallen world. From Genesis to Revelation, the Scriptures declare that we live in a broken world, a fragmented world, a world which is not what it once was and is not what it shall be. For the present we are afflicted with hurts and damage and injuries and difficulties and hardships. That is part of life today, and it is all a result of the introduction of the principle of human evil, of sin, into human life.

The Scriptures confirm that everybody is affected by this principle of human evil. Many of us think we have escaped it because we were not born with evident handicaps. But everyone has handicaps.

But Jesus makes clear that suffering is not always directly traceable to personal sin. Sometimes it is! There are texts in Scripture that clearly indicate that people are hurting and suffering and physically deprived and deprived because of their own evil ways.

Look at prison, broken marriages and hurt children. There is much suffering because of sin.

But in the case of this man that is not true. Many people think it is rather strange that the disciples would even think that, since the man was "born blind," as the text declares. How could his blindness be caused by his sin when he was born in this condition, before he ever had an opportunity to sin?

In that time Jewish rabbinical teaching taught that it is possible for an embryo to sin. This may be what lies behind their question. But Jesus declares, "No, it is not that; nor is it the parents' sin." As we well know today, babies are born with herpes or with AIDS or drug dependence because of their parents' sins. Sadly, babies are born blind because of the drug use of their mother. But, in this case, Jesus specifically says it is not because of sin that the man in question was born blind.

Jesus said he was born blind, "That the works of God might be made manifest in him," is Jesus' response. That gives a positive reason for the man's affliction. It is not a disaster, but an opportunity for certain things to be manifested in his life and in the lives of people who came into contact with him, that would otherwise never be brought out.

There are many examples of this. The handicapped -- oftentimes those who are handicapped from birth -- frequently develop inner qualities of peace and joy and strength that otherwise normal people do not have. One example is Fanny Crosby, the lady who wrote "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!" She was blind from her earliest babyhood as a result of an accident.

After encountering the man, Jesus said that God's hour to help has struck for this man who was born blind.

"We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:4-5)

Those words indicate at least three things:

1 - As our Lord's eyes fell on the blind man, he received in his heart a signal from the Father that it was time to act on his behalf.

In Chapter 5, Jesus said that this is how he knew what to do, and when to do it. He was given an inner vision of the Father at work: "My Father is working still, and I am working," (John 5:17).

2 - When Jesus "saw" what the Father did, he would do the same thing. He immediately feels a sense of urgency. "When the Father chooses to work then it is time for me to work. And I must do it now. The night is coming, when I can no longer work." With a sense of urgency he moves to do what is needed.

3 - Further, he has a clear understanding of what that is: "I was sent into the world to be the light of the world. Thus to give light is my function, and here is a man in darkness."

Immediately follows the account of the physical miracle of the opening of this man's eyes.

As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. (John 9:6-7)

John wastes no words in describing this miracle. He puts it as briefly as possible: "He went and washed and came back seeing."

The reaction to the sign:

The blind man follows a progression where he sees Jesus as a man, then a healer, then a prophet, then one sent from God and finally as his Lord.

- 1 - He encounters resistance.
- 2 - He overcomes obstacles to his faith.
- 3 - He gains insight about Jesus.
- 4- He has a Spiritual awakening.

The Jews experience confusion, than resistance, get embroiled in controversy and finally express condemnation.

1 - First, the man comes to his neighbors. He cannot find the Lord when he returns so he goes home, and his neighbors react.

The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." (John 9:8-9)

There is some reluctance to believe that this has actually happened. Some say, "I'm not sure. It may be him, but he looks different." But the man said, "I am the man." (He seems quite definite about it.)

2 - The account continues:

They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." [This is his simple testimony.] They said to him "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. (John 9:10-13)

Notice that all the man has no thoughts concerning Jesus. All he knows is his name, "the man called Jesus." He has heard his name, but he knows nothing more about him. That is where he begins.

3 - Then immediately a new difficulty arises.

Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." (John 9:14-15)

There is a simple directness in this man. He never complicates anything.

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them. (John 9:16)

Another resistance is developing. At the leading of the Father, Jesus has once again deliberately run afoul of the regulations of the Jewish leaders concerning the Sabbath. In their eyes he had broken the Sabbath in three separate ways:

1 - First, he spat on the ground and made mud. The rabbis held that it was all right to spit on a rock on the Sabbath day because that would not make mud, but spitting on the dirt violated the Sabbath because that made mud -- and making mud is work, and work is forbidden on the Sabbath day! That is how ridiculous their regulations became.

2 - Second, the rabbis said it was forbidden to heal on the Sabbath day. They specifically said, "If you find somebody with a broken leg you can keep it from getting worse, but you cannot make it any better."

3 - The third thing Jesus did was to use spit. There is a specific instruction in the rabbinical literature that spit could not be used because spit is medicine. The use of medicine was forbidden on the Sabbath day because that too is a form of work.

So with these infinitely narrow, petty regulations they had surrounded the Sabbath day with such difficulty that one could hardly breathe without breaking the law. This was their excuse to reject Jesus. Some said, "How can he be from God? He doesn't keep the rules." Others were a little more cautious. "Look at the signs," they said. "These are wonderful things he does. God seems to endorse what he is doing." Thus there was division and doubt.

Now we see the effect this had on the man, who was listening to them:

So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." (John 9:17)

Now he has grown spiritually. He still regards Jesus as a man, but he sees him as God's man, a gifted man, a man with insight and understanding, a great man. All the resistance to accepting this remarkable miracle has deepened his insight and understanding.

Then the man's parents become involved.

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." (John 9:18-21)

His parents were not ready to go very far in helping him. They admitted he was their son, they confirmed that he had been born blind, but they would not go any further.

The account goes on to tell us why.

His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue [excommunicated]. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age, ask him." (John 9:22-23)

That indicates they did know who opened his eyes, but they lied and refused to say because they were afraid.

The resistance grows even more intense.

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give God the praise; (That is an official oath they are putting him under. That is like the oath taken in a court of law, "I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.")

"Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." (John 9:24)

That was their preconceived conclusion. But the man refuses to become involved in a theological argument.

He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." (John 9:25)

That is one of the greatest models of how to bear a witness as a believer.

Many people are afraid to say anything about the Lord because they think they will be dragged into a theological argument that will be over their heads. But witness is simply doing what this man did -- saying what Jesus did for you, that is all. "Once I was blind, now I can see" -- that is what a witness is.

"I am the world's greatest authority on what happened to me."

Someone said, "A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with only an argument." When we stand on our experience no one can deny what the Lord has done in our life. Each of us is a positive, powerful witness for Christ. This man teaches us great things in that regard.

They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his disciples?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know (we are the theological doctors here, the experts) that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." (John 9:26-29)

That admission was a fatal mistake. At last they had to admit there was something they did not know. The man seizes on it.

The man answered, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him." (John 9:30-31)

He has got them now. With this simple, logical argument he has pinned them to the wall. He continues:

Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." (John 9:32-33)

Observe how the (once blind) man has grown. Now Jesus is seen as "from God" -- he is the one sent from God. The man's insight has grown tremendously.

So they become very angry:

They answered him, "You were born in utter sin," (John 9:34a)

That is a reference to his blindness. That marked him in their eyes as being a sinner, already cursed of God.

"You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. (John 9:34b)

They voted him out, excommunicated him from the synagogue. Perhaps for a brief period, perhaps permanently, or maybe they just told him to "get out of our sight!"

Look at the man's powerful and beautiful argument: "How can you miss the point so terribly? You are facing the greatest miracle, perhaps, this country has ever seen: 'From the beginning of time nobody has ever heard of a man whose eyes were blind from birth being opened.' This has never happened in all the history of this nation, now it has happened and yet you argue about whether it is valid because you do not know where Jesus came from.

Now, the man's perception of Jesus is that he is the channel of God. He is not only a prophet, but he is the one whom God has sent -- the Messiah. Now he has come to the place where he is ready to see him, and recognize him, because he knows who he is.

Spiritually, he has reached his Pool of Siloam. Immediately we read:

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you." He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshipped him. (John 9:35-38)

Notice that he did not have to find Jesus. Jesus found him.

Then John gives us the Lord's closing comment:

Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." (John 9:39)