

*John 9. Jesus claimed to be the light of the world and later healed a blind man. Physical light shot into the man's eyes, and spiritual light pierced his soul. God received glory, and though no one could deny the healing, many rejected the healer.*

“The emperor has no clothes!” Hans Christian Andersen tells the story of a king who loved his appearance. The king's dress was lavish until the day two swindlers came to town and deceived him into wearing nothing.

Pretending to be weavers, the two said they could spin the finest cloth, one so beautiful none unfit for office or unpardonably stupid would be able to see it. The king was captivated, and the two worked tirelessly to “produce” his new clothes.

Subjects inspected the progress, men came and went, and though no one saw anything on the looms, no one wanted to be thought unfit for office or stupid. Each pretended to see what wasn't there and praised the weavers to the king. Word spread, and the townsmen eagerly awaited their chance to see the new clothes as well.

When finished, the swindlers presented their so-called work. The king saw nothing, yet acted amazed and tried on the non-existent clothing. The court praised him, and the king started to parade his new clothes down the streets. The scheme continued until an innocent little child stated the obvious. The crowd slowly agreed, and the king knew he had been fooled. Nonetheless, he continued the parade through town as if he were the only one who could see his attire. The man was too proud to do otherwise.

John 9 introduces us to a poor blind man who also stated the obvious. He had been miraculously healed by the Lord and could finally see. The plain fact of the healing was undeniable, but the Pharisees rejected it as a work of the devil. They excommunicated him and continued on as if they were the ones with sight. Like the king in Andersen's tale, they were too proud to do otherwise.

### **HEALED BY THE LIGHT (JOHN 9:1-7)**

Jesus remained in Jerusalem after the Feast of Booths, and he walked by a man blind from birth. Never had this man seen the light of day. Always had he lived in a prison of darkness, and no one cared or thought that such a man mattered much to God.

The Law commanded care for the blind (Lev 19:14), and the Talmud said the blind weren't to be insulted or humiliated. The religious leaders of Jesus' day never would've harmed the disabled or mocked, but never would they have reached out in love. Why? Because these people were sinners. They were getting what they deserved.

Imagine for a second what happens when an entire society believes pain and suffering are the result of sin. The disabled and diseased are left without hope of being integrated into society. They're rejected and consigned to the miseries of begging each day to eek out an existence. God had said to care, but His people did little.

Blindness was no small problem throughout history. Many children became blind within a few days of birth due to infection. This may have been the case with this man in John's Gospel. Jesus' disciples wanted to understand more (John 9:1-2). *Who sinned?* Did this man sin within the womb? Did his parents sin? Someone must have sinned... whose sin caused God to do this?

The disciples saw only a question; Jesus saw a man and said nothing about sin. This man, his parents, and all who ever lived have sinned against God (Rom 3:23). Sin had nothing to do with this man's suffering. Divine punishment wasn't the reason, but divine blessing would be the result. Jesus said this man received this condition that one day he would display God's glory (John 9:3).

Jesus stopped His disciples from debating the beggar's condition. Did it really matter? It was more important they show compassion and care for the man. So, the Lord sent this man to wash in the pool of Siloam. He did, his sight was restored, and he rejoiced (John 9:4-7). No one had seen miracle like this, but there's more to come (John 9:38).

### **BLINDED BY THE LIGHT (JOHN 9:8-34)**

No one had ever been cured of blindness (John 9:32). In fact, of all the miracles recorded in Scripture, no prophet or apostle had ever restored sight to the blind. Only Jesus did this, and for that matter, no one has done it since. Restoring sight is a miracle associated with the messiah (Psa 146:8; Isa 29:18-19; Isa 35; Isa 42), and Jesus did this miracle more than any other.

# A Sight Unseen

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The Lord healed the blind to paint a picture of His identity. As light freed a man from his prison of physical darkness, so the Light has come to free men from their spiritual darkness. The leaders didn't care what it meant, but that it happened. The more they saw of Jesus the more they tried to discredit Him

So, when the man's neighbors saw him, many found it hard to believe he had somehow been cured: "Is this the same man?" It's understandable, isn't it? There's no cure for blindness, and it's doubtful they ever paid much attention to the man's face. *Surely, it's a hoax.* The Pharisees thought the same until they spoke with the man's parents (John 9:8-16). Suddenly none could deny the miracle, but none could make sense of it either.

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**"TRUTH NEVER LOST GROUND TO INQUIRY."**

~ WILLIAM PENN

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Harder than believing a blind man had received sight was believing God did it. *Healed on the Sabbath?!* It threw a wrench into everyone's theology. Was this healing a work? Did Jesus sin? The same charge was leveled against Him after healing a paraplegic, and what did Jesus say? That God never rests from doing good (John 5:17). He's always at work showing goodness to those who love Him and even to those who hate Him (Matt 5:45).

What troubles me is how everyone viewed the blind man. He wasn't anything more than a theological case study. The disciples quibbled over the causes of blindness, and the religious leaders interrogated him to understand healing on the day of rest. Not knowing or understanding the heart of God, no one rejoiced the blind could see. They debated, discredited the Healer, and disassociated the man from their assembly. Even his parents looked away (John 9:21).

*John 9:25—"One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.*

The Pharisees were educated and intimidating in numbers, but they couldn't get around the facts. This poor man's only friend that day was the truth, and though his foes were formidable they couldn't refute it. Their only recourse was an *ad hominin* attack. They were humiliated, so they excommunicated the man (John 9:34).

The blind man's story was so simple a child could understand, and yet, it revealed the foolishness of the greatest, most respected minds in Jerusalem. They couldn't accept what had happened or how it happened. A miracle had taken place, but those who could see saw nothing (1 Cor 1:18-24).

## **DRAWN TO THE LIGHT (JOHN 9:35-41)**

The miracle of new sight was bittersweet. Though the man could now see, he would remain an outcast. He challenged the Pharisees, and the Talmud forbade anyone to walk near the excommunicated. He had been publically rejected, and his lot in life would hardly improve.

Jesus knew what had happened and pursued the man (John 9:35). From healing physical sight to imparting spiritual light, the account builds to the moment when the two meet again. Jesus reveals His identity (John 4:26), and the man's heart must have melted as he fell in worship (John 9:36-38). That the messiah should care to notice and bless an unnamed beggar is humbling.

All the years of this man's pain and suffering led to the moment when he met Jesus. There was an purpose behind his blindness. God was using it that one day he would see the messiah and be saved. The Lord intended that the man who was once forgotten on the street corner would become a trophy of His grace and kindness. The story of how Jesus changed his life would be written in Scripture, and here it will remain to be told and retold forever.

To set a man free from the prison of physical darkness cost the Creator nothing. To set men free from the prison of their spiritual darkness would cost Him His life. Why did God do it? That He might show the riches of His grace and kindness (Eph 2:7). Like the blind man, believers are set free from darkness to become a living display of God's glory both now and forevermore.

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

— Charles Wesley —