

The Gospel of John

Christ Heals a Blind Man

John 9:1-41

Often the miracles of Christ are dealt with briefly with limited detail. Rarely is there any information given on the person who was healed or what happened after their encounter with Christ. John chapter 9 deals entirely with the healing of a blind man and the events afterward. In this we see the hatred of the Jews for Christ and the love of Christ for the helpless.

The Setting

- The exact timing of this event is not entirely clear:
 - It could be a continuation of chapter 8 following the Feast of Tabernacles
 - It could be connected to the Feast of Dedication in John 10:22
 - It does occur in Jerusalem.
- The key to this event is that it occurs on the Sabbath (vs. 14).
 - This is the seventh day of the week – Exodus 20:8-11
 - Observing the Sabbath was inseparable from Jewish identity – Exodus 31:13

The Story

- Christ encounters a blind man, and the disciples ask if his sin caused his condition – vs. 1-2
- Jesus denies this assumption and states it is to show the mighty works of God – vs. 3-5
- Christ anoints his eyes with mud and sends him to wash in the Pool of Siloam, after which the man is healed of his blindness – vs. 6-7
- This miracle causes a great stir in the community – vs. 8-9
- The man tells them his story (testimony) to the excited crowd – vs. 10-12
- The Pharisees take him for questioning, and he repeats his story – vs. 13-15
 - The only “wrongdoing” here is that this healing was performed on the Sabbath.
- The Pharisees are divided among varied opinions of Christ - vs. 16-17
- The parents of the healed man are called in order to corroborate his story – vs. 18-23
 - The Pharisees are trying to discredit the miracle because it is too obvious that Christ had performed it.
 - In vs. 22 the parents are afraid of being excommunicated from the synagogue, of which there are two types:

- *Niddui* – “a separation from civil society for the space of four cubits, and which held but thirty days, if the person repented; if he did not, it was continued to sixty days; and after that, in case of non-repentance, to ninety days” – Gill
- *Cherem* – “solemn exclusion forever from the worship of the synagogue, attended with awful maledictions and curses, and an exclusion from all contact with the people. This was called the curse [*anathema*], and so thoroughly excluded the person from all communion whatever with his countrymen, that they were not allowed to sell to him anything, even the necessities of life” – Barnes
- The lesser *niddui* seems more likely here, but as Christianity grew *cherem* became more common.
- The fact remains that the man was healed, regardless of *Who* healed him or *when* it was done – vs. 24-25
- The once-blind man grows impatient with his interrogation and snaps back at their questions – vs. 26-27
- The Pharisees hold to Moses but reject Christ – vs. 28-29
- The blind man responds that the empirical evidence proved he was healed and though he did not fully understand Who did it, He must have been from God - vs. 30-33
- The Pharisees cast the man out – vs. 34
 - It is unclear if this is simply out of their presence or is full excommunication.
- “But they only cast him into the arms of the loving Lord.” – Gaebelein – vs. 35-38
- Christ’s light is hope and healing to the blind who receive Him but judgment against those love their darkness more than His light – vs. 39
- The Pharisees are offended that they were accused of being spiritually blind while they considered themselves to be the holiest of men – vs. 40
- Their guilt lay in the fact that they could not humble themselves to confess their own blindness – vs. 41