

EXPLANATION OF 43RD BIBLEBOOK

JOHN 9 (A.D. 70-95)

INTRODUCTION

John 9:1-41 describes the appeal of Jesus Christ to the man born blind. “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “You have now seen him; in fact he is the one speaking to you”. He teaches that he has come to pronounce a verdict upon those who know that they do not see and upon those who think that they see.

OUTLINE

- (I) 9:1-7. Jesus heals the body of the man born blind.
- The relationship between sin and suffering (9:1-3).
 - The possible reactions to suffering.
 - The test of obedience (9:4-7).
- (II) 9:8-17. The Jewish religious leaders question the man born blind.**
- The neighbours and acquaintances questioned the man born blind (9:8-12).
 - The Pharisees sent a delegation for a formal inquiry (9:13-17).
 - The Pharisees could not solve their own theological absurdity.
 - Jesus and the man born blind had the right argument and the right conclusion.
- (III) 9:18-23. The Jewish religious leaders question his parents.**
- The religious leaders simply ignored the facts (9:18-21).
 - The religious leaders employed intimidation (fear)(9:22-23).
- (IV) 9:24-34. The Jewish religious leaders question the man born blind a second time.**
- The religious leaders twisted the facts (9:24-25).
 - The religious leaders blocked the conclusion (9:26-27).
 - The religious leaders began to abuse (9:28-33).
 - The religious leaders resorted to violence or misuse of authority when they lose (9:34).
- (V) 9:35-38. Jesus heals the soul of the man born blind.**
- (VI) 9:39-41. Jesus condemns persistent spiritual blindness.**
- People who acknowledge that they are blind will see again.
 - People who think that they can see will become blind.

EXPLANATION

(I) 9:1-7. Jesus heals the body of the man born blind.

a. The relationship between sin and suffering (9:1-3).

9:1. As he was walking (vppa) he saw (viaa) a man blind from birth.

9:2. And his disciples asked (viaa) him saying (vppa), “Rabbi, who committed a sin (viaa), this man or his parents so that he was born (vsap) blind? (i.e. whose sin is the cause of his blindness)

9:3. Jesus replied (viao), “Neither this man nor his parents committed a sin (viaa), but (this happened) in order that the works of God should be manifested (vsap) in him.

The causes of suffering. Among the Jews it was a theological question whether the man was born blind because of his own sin or because of his parent’s sin. If it was because of his own sin, how could he have sinned before he was born? And if it was because of his parent’s sin, it would be highly unjust.

The Bible teaches three possible causes for suffering:

- *Suffering can be traced to the sin of mankind’s first ancestor, Adam.* Adam was the representative of the whole human race and when the representative falls into sin, the whole human race falls together with him into sin¹. Since that fall all people are born with a sinful, corrupt moral and spiritual nature² and are guilty before God³. For example, the sin of Adam and Eve brought enmity of Satan, pain, thorns and thistles and finally death for man on the earth. All mankind *suffers in solidarity* with others, because of the sin of the first human beings. Both good and bad people also suffer in disasters like floods or droughts, earthquakes or epidemics.
- *Suffering can be traced to the sin of one’s parents.* God does not simply deal with individuals, but also with communities. God’s commandments are given to the whole community, to families as well as to individuals. God punishes the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him⁴. For example, king Uzziah’s downfall is partly due to his father’s half-heartedness⁵. And Israel was besieged, captured and exiled to Babylon due to the disobedience of their ancestors.
- *Suffering can be traced to one’s own personal sins.* “Everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes - his own teeth will be set on edge”⁶. In the final judgement each person will receive what is due him for the things

¹ Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 5:12-21; 8:20-23; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; Ephesians 2:3

² Job 14:4; Psalm 51:5

³ Romans 3:19-20

⁴ Exodus 20:5; cf. Jeremiah 31:29; Ezekiel 18:2

⁵ 2 Chronicles 25:2; 26:4,16

⁶ Jeremiah 31:30; Galatians 6:7-8

done while in the body, whether good or bad⁷. Because all people have sinned, all people suffer and all people will die⁸!

From the above it is clear that the first cause is the ground for the next two causes and thus no-one can accuse God of being unjust⁹. The Jews exaggerated the importance of the last two causes. They believed that there must always be a definite relationship between one's suffering and one's sin. They tried to trace the cause of every possible kind of suffering, whether sickness, handicap or mishap, to a specific sin. For example, Job's friends traced his suffering to his alleged wickedness and merciless treatment of the oppressed¹⁰. The Jewish rabbis taught that it was possible for unborn children to sin. According to their tradition Esau tried to murder Jacob in the womb of Rebecca¹¹. Also in the days of Jesus the Jews clung to the belief that there was a definite personal cause for every suffering¹². This is also the view of Hinduism with their doctrine of karma-samsara.

The purpose of suffering. But *Jesus directs the thoughts of man, not to the cause of suffering, but to the purpose of suffering*. He excluded the last two causes for suffering and did not even mention the first cause. Jesus was not interested in the past, but in the future! Instead of looking to the past, he looked to the future. He did not speculate about the possible cause of man's suffering, but confidently proclaimed that *the goal or purpose of all events in life is to glorify God*¹³! However difficult this may be to accept, all afflictions and calamities have as their ultimate purpose the glorification of God in Christ! Thus, even the handicapped and the people who are persecuted or suffer have as ultimate goal in their life to live and to die to the glory of God¹⁴! "The work of God must be displayed in his life" (9:3)! The miraculous healing of his body (his eyes) would point to the miraculous healing of his soul!

b. The possible reactions to suffering.

There are four possible human reactions to suffering:

To react negatively. You can pick up stones¹⁵ to kill the alleged offender or cause of your problems (8:59). You can react negatively to the problem by removing the problem in a destructive manner. That was what the Jewish religious leaders did. And that is also what terrorists and authoritarian dictators do.

To philosophy. You can try to satisfy your curiosity by posing theological questions and discussing them until you hopefully find an answer (9:2). That was what the disciples did. They asked, "Why did this happen? How can this happen?"

To help. You can love the person suffering and help him (9:6-7). That is what Jesus did. He asked, "What can I do now?" For Jesus Christ *every problem was a challenge, an opportunity* to do God's work¹⁶ and a reason to bring glory to God¹⁷!

Jesus said, "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" (9:4-5). "As long as it is day" means as long as Jesus Christ and Christians are living in this world they must make use of every opportunity¹⁸. "Night is coming" refers to the day we die and cannot do this anymore! "Jesus is the light of the world" refers to his healing of the body and his healing of the soul! This is what Jesus is doing all the time (8:12) and this is what he wants Christians to do all the time¹⁹.

To believe and act (9:6-7). The act of spitting on the ground, making mud and rubbing it onto the eyes of the blind man has no symbolic significance. The mud has no healing substances in it, just as the water of the Jordan has no healing elements against leprosy in it²⁰. The command to go wash in the Pool of Siloam or to go and bathe in the River Jordan was a test of their faith and obedience. His faith in what Jesus said and did would not only lead to the healing of his body, but also to the healing of his soul (9:35-38).

c. The test of obedience (9:4-7).

9:4. We must (vipa) carry on (vnpn) the work of him who sent (vpaa) me while the daylight lasts (is)(vipa). Night is coming (vipn) when no one can (vipn) work (vnpn).

9:5. As long as I am (vspa) in the world I am continually (vipa) the light of the world.

⁷ Ecclesiastes 12:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10

⁸ Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 3:23

⁹ Romans 3:19-20

¹⁰ Job 4:7; 8:20; 11:6; 22:5-10

¹¹ Genesis 25:22-26; cf. Psalm 58:3

¹² Luke 13:1-5

¹³ cf. Romans 8:28; 11:36

¹⁴ Romans 11:36; 14:7-8

¹⁵ Or in modern times acquire a gun, even an assault rifle or invade a country with the most modern weapons

¹⁶ cf. Mark 2:1-6; Acts 10:38

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17,23; 1 Peter 4:11; cf. Matthew 6:13

¹⁸ Ephesians 5:16

¹⁹ Matthew 5:14-16; cf. John 14:12; Ephesians 2:10

²⁰ 2 Kings 5:10

9:6. Having said (vpaa) these things, he spat (viaa) on the ground, made (viaa) mud with the saliva and smeared (viaa) the mud on his eyes.

9:7. And said (viaa) to him. “Go (vmpa), wash (vmam)(imperatives) in the Pool of Siloam, which interpreted (vippp) means ‘Sent’ (vprp). So he went (viaa) and washed (viam), and came (back)(viaa) continually seeing (vppa).

In John 9:4, Jesus says, “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”

There is only a short time to do God’s work. Jesus says that *his day* is only as long as he is still on earth. For his disciples, their day is also only as long as they live on earth! With respect to every disciple of Jesus today, there is a divinely appointed time to do God’s work. God places every Christian only for a certain length of time on earth. That is the only time he gets to do God’s work on earth. Therefore, every Christian must make the most of the opportunities God has given to him²¹!

The work of God consists of active deeds of love. God constantly brings people on our path. We have a choice to react or respond in three ways. Some people are jealous of the people that God brings on their way and attempt to destroy them. They can never do anything constructive. They can only criticise, gossip, abuse or even persecute these people. This is what the Jewish religious leaders did to Jesus and the man born blind. Other people are curious about the people that God brings on their way and attempt only to know more about them. The disciples wanted to solve a theological question about whose sin was the cause of this blind man’s suffering. However, Jesus does not only want us to ask questions, but to perform deeds! Therefore, the work of God is to take constructive action and help the needy!

The pool of Siloam. While the public bath of Bethesda was located in the northwest of Jerusalem (5:2), the bath of Siloam was located in the southwest of Jerusalem. ‘Siloam’ in Hebrew ‘Siloach’ means ‘sent’ and refers to the water that is sent from the fountain of Gihon outside the city by means of a long tunnel through the rock bottom to the pool inside the city. ‘The gently flowing water of Siloach’ refers to the water of the fountain of Gihon which flowed from under the mountain on which the temple stood and symbolised the blessings that came forth from God’s house²². The man born blind was ‘sent’ to the pool called ‘Sent’ for the healing of his body, but he is ‘sent’ to Jesus Christ who is the One ‘sent’ by God (3:17; 34; 5:36-37; 6:57; 7:29; 8:18,26,29) for the healing of his soul.

The man went, washed and came home seeing. The word ‘to wash’²³ does not mean that he jumped into the pool and immersed himself into the water, but that he drew water with his hand and washed the mud from his eyes by pouring the water from above over or on his face²⁴.

(II) 9:8-17. The Jewish religious leaders question the man born blind.

a. The neighbours and acquaintances questioned the man born blind (9:8-12).

9:8. His neighbours, therefore, and those who had seen him before (vppa) when he was (viia) a beggar²⁵, were saying (viia). “Is (vipa) not this the one who used to sit (vppn) and beg (vppa)?”

9:9. Some were saying (viia). “This is (vipa) the one.” Others were saying (viia). “No, but he is (vipa) like him (i.e. he resembles him)”. He was saying (viia) “I am (vipa) (the one).”

9:10. They said (viia) to him, “How then were your eyes opened (viap)?”

9:11. He replied (viao), “The man called (vppp) Jesus made (viaa) mud and smeared (viaa) (it on) my eyes, and said (viaa) to me, “Go (vmpa) to Siloam and wash (vmam)(imperatives).” So I went (vpaa) and washed (vpam) and see again (viaa).”

9:12. They said (viaa) to him, “Where is (vipa) that man?” He said (vipa), “I do not know (by relationship, reflection or intuition)(vira).”

People who had known the man born blind were divided about whether he was whom he said he was. Then they wanted to know how he came to see again. Finally they wanted to know where Jesus was. He did not know. Jesus had a good reason not to show himself to the crowd.

b. The Pharisees sent a delegation for a formal inquiry (9:13-17).

9:13. They brought (vipa) the man who had once been blind to the Pharisees.

9:14. Now the day on which Jesus made (viaa) mud and had opened (viaa) his eyes was (viia) a Sabbath.

9:15. Therefore also the Pharisees were asking (viia) him again how he had received sight (viaa). So he said (viaa) to them, “He put (viaa) mud on my eyes and I washed (viam) and (now) I see (vipa).”

9:16. Some of the Pharisees were saying (viia), “This man is (vipa) not from God, for he does not keep (vipa) the Sabbath.” But others were saying (viaa), “How can (vipn) a man, a sinner, do (vnpa) such miraculous signs?” So there arose (was)(viia) a division among them.

9:17. Then they again said (vipa) to the blind man, “What do you say (vipa) about him, seeing that he opened (viaa) your eyes? And he said (viaa), “He is (vipa) a prophet.”

²¹ Ephesians 5:16

²² Isaiah 8:6; Ezekiel 47:1

²³ G: niptó

²⁴ cf. Matthew 6:17; Mark 7:3

²⁵ G: prosaités

His neighbours and acquaintances took the man born blind to the Pharisees. The Pharisees often sent an official delegation for a formal inquiry in cases where someone claimed that he was the Messiah or where the people regarded someone as the Messiah or where a miracle was performed that was allegedly performed by the Messiah. The Pharisees had however already made a formal decision to excommunicate anyone from the Jewish synagogue who acknowledged that Jesus Christ was the Messiah (9:22). The synagogue was the Jewish religious building and centre of the Jewish worship. Their inquiry was however simply for the show, which can be seen in the type of questions they asked (9:10) and the careful answers the people gave (9:21-22).

It is not explained why the people brought the man born blind to the Pharisees. But it is indicated that the day on which Jesus made mud and healed the man born blind was a Sabbath. The Pharisees regarded the mixing and application of mud as 'work' and as a gross violation of the Sabbath. The man born blind gave the same facts to the Pharisees. When questioned what he believed about Jesus, he openly declared Jesus to be a prophet (9:17), as a unique worker of miracles (9:32) and as a man coming from God (9:33). Therefore the Pharisees regarded the man born blind as a disciple of Jesus (9:28). He became a candidate for excommunication from the Jewish synagogue and would consequently be banned from the Jewish community! Such things still happen today.

c. The Pharisees could not solve their own theological absurdity.

The people probably brought the man born blind to the Pharisees not to punish his violation of the Sabbath, but in order to solve another religious absurdity of the Pharisees. The Pharisees had publicly announced that they regarded Jesus Christ as an imposter or deceiver (7:47). And the Pharisees had already decided to ban people that confess Jesus as the Messiah from the Jewish synagogue (9:22). The theological absurdity was: how could a sinful person as Jesus then perform a miracle?

In order to believe in the miracle of Jesus, the Pharisees would have to take four steps:

- They would have to believe (accept) that the man born blind was indeed healed of his blindness and that a miracle had taken place.
- They would have to believe (accept) that it was Jesus who had healed the man born blind.
- They would have to believe (accept) that Jesus did this miracle with God's power and love.
- And they would have to believe (accept) that Jesus had indeed come from God (that he was the Messiah)!

The Pharisees had not even taken the first step. They never took the third and fourth step!

The theological premises, arguments and conclusions of the Jewish religious teachers.

- *Jesus did not come from God.* Some Pharisees were of the opinion that Jesus could not possibly come from God, because he violated the Sabbath. They argued as follows:

All people who come from God keep the Sabbath.

Jesus does not keep the Sabbath.

Conclusion: Jesus did not come from God.

But if just one of their arguments failed, their conclusion also failed! Their first argument was wrong, because it was not based on the teaching of the Bible concerning the Sabbath²⁶. It was based on the 39 Sabbath laws which the religious leaders had devised themselves²⁷! The Bible says nothing about those 39 laws!

- *Jesus did come from God.* Other Pharisees then questioned how Jesus as a sinner (a violator of the Sabbath) could perform a miracle. They argued as follows:

Only people that come from God can perform a miracle.

Jesus had performed a miracle. He had made a blind man see again.

Conclusion: Jesus came from God. He is not a sinner.

But also their first argument is wrong, because it is possible for an unbeliever to perform a miracle²⁸.

So the Jewish religious leaders and teachers were divided amongst themselves.

d. Jesus and the man born blind had the right argument and the right conclusion.

Because the Pharisees could not solve their theological absurdity, they asked the man born blind what he thought about Jesus Christ. He said that Jesus Christ was a prophet. Thus, Jesus Christ comes from God! The Pharisees had tried to disprove this by saying that Jesus was a violator of the Sabbath and could not come from God. The man born blind argued as follows:

All people that come from God can perform a miracle and thereby reveal God's work (cf. 9:3).

In order to do God's work Jesus performed a miracle. He healed the man born blind.

Conclusion: Jesus came from God. Jesus is not a sinner.

²⁶ Mark 3:4

²⁷ cf. Mark 7:5-8

²⁸ Matthew 7:22

(III) 9:18-23. The Jewish religious leaders question his parents.

a. The religious leaders simply ignored the facts (9:18-21).

9:18. The Jews did not believe (viaa) concerning him that he had been (viia) blind and had gained his sight (viaa) until they had summoned (viaa) the parents of the man who gained his sight (vpaa).

9:19. And they asked (viaa) them saying (vppa), “Is (vipa) this your son, who you say (vipa) that he was born (viap) blind? How is it that he now sees (vipa)?”

9:20. Then his parents answered (viao) and said (viaa), “We know (by relation)²⁹ (vira) that he is (vipa) our son and that he was born (viap) blind.

9:21. But how he now sees (vipa) we do not know³⁰ (vira), or who opened (viaa) his eyes, we do not know³¹ (vira). Ask (vmaa)(imperative) him; he has (vipa) come to maturity (i.e. he is of age)³²; he will speak (vifa) concerning himself.

The Jews here are still the religious leaders and teachers; especially the Pharisees. They did not believe that the man born blind had received his sight until they had called his parents. Does the word ‘until’ mean that the Pharisees later believed that the blind man had been healed? The Pharisees tried to destroy this conclusion by disproving the second argument: Jesus had performed a miracle and had made a blind man see again. They argued that he was not born blind. But the parents confirmed that the man born blind was their son and that he had indeed been born blind. These two witnesses destroyed the argument of the religious leaders. This forced the Pharisees to take the first step and acknowledge that a miracle had been performed: a man born blind had been made to see again.

But the religious leaders and teachers did not believe in what they did not want to believe in, namely that it was Jesus Christ who had performed this miracle! They tried to get the man born blind to give glory to God and say that it was God and not Jesus that had healed his blindness (9:24). John 9:26 does not necessarily imply that they believed that Jesus had performed the miracle. They asked the parents how Jesus had allegedly performed the miracle. But the parents answered that they did not know.

b. The religious leaders employed intimidation (fear)(9:22-23).

9:22. He parents said (viao) these things because they were afraid of (viin) the Jews, for already the Jews had agreed (vilm) that if anyone should confess (vsaa) that he (Jesus) was the Messiah (the Christ), he would be expelled (excommunicated) from the synagogue (vsad).

9:23. It was for that reason that his parents said (viaa), “He is (vipa) of age; ask (vmaa)(imperative) him.”

Verse 22 implies that the parents knew who had performed the miracle, but out of fear for the intimidation of the religious leaders that they would be expelled from the Jewish synagogue and the Jewish community they answered that they did not know. The fear for the Jewish religious leaders is an often recurring theme in the Gospel of John (3:2; 7:13; 9:22). The Jewish religious leaders had already made a decision in the Sanhedrin (the highest Jewish religious council) that every follower of Jesus Christ that acknowledged Jesus Christ as the Messiah would be expelled or banned from the synagogue (12:42; 16:2). *This implies expulsion from the Jewish social and economic life! The other Jews would shun them socially and boycott them economically! Thus the Pharisees used threats and fear to intimidate people so that the people would not dare to oppose them.* This is still happening today. That is why Jesus says, “Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man”³³. The mighty Jewish religious leaders could not force any information out of his parents.

(IV) 9:24-34. The Jewish religious leaders question him a second time.

a. The religious leaders twisted the facts (9:24-25).

9:24. They summoned (viaa) the man who had been (viia) blind a second time and said (viaa) to him, “Give (vmaa) (imperative) glory to God. We know (by reflection)³⁴ (vira) that this man (Jesus) is (vipa) a sinner.”

9:25. So he replied (viao), “Whether he is (vipa) a sinner, I don’t know (by relation or reflection)(vira). One thing I do know (by reflection)(vira), that though I was (vppa) blind, I now see (vipa)!”

The Pharisees knew that a miracle had been performed, but they used every possible argument to prove that it was NOT JESUS CHRIST who had performed the miracle. Jesus Christ had to be excluded from this miracle. So they tried to put pressure on the man born blind to state that it was GOD who had performed the miracle. The Pharisees were of course not referring to the God who had revealed himself in the prophets of the Old Testament and finally in Jesus Christ. They were not referring to ‘the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’³⁵. They were referring to *the ‘God’ of the Jewish religion (Judaism)*. In order to save face the religious leaders put pressure on the man born blind to say that it was the God of the Jews who had performed the miracle and not Jesus Christ! With disdain they said, “Do not give this fellow

²⁹ G: oida

³⁰ G: oida

³¹ G: oida

³² G: élikia

³³ Luke 6:22

³⁴ G: oida

³⁵ Ephesians 1:3

(Jesus) glory, because we know that he is a sinner and a sinner cannot perform a miracle. Give glory to the Jewish God.”

The Pharisees argued as follows:

Only people that come from God can perform a miracle (open the eyes of the blind).

This man (Jesus) is not from God, because he is a sinner.

Conclusion: Jesus could not and did not perform the miracle (open the eyes of the man born blind).

Thus the Pharisees *twisted the facts in order to discredit Jesus.*

But the man born blind answered, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see” (9:25). The words of the Pharisees ‘we know’³⁶ (9:24) is based only on their opinion! But the words of the man born blind ‘I know’³⁷ (9:25) is based on facts! The word ‘to know’ refers to a personal and intimate knowledge of what he experienced. His personal experience was that he had been born blind and now he could see. *Facts are stubborn things. You cannot get away from facts. You cannot get around facts!*

b. The religious leaders blocked the conclusion (9:26-27).

9:26. Then they said (viaa) to him, “What did he do (viaa) to you? How did he open (viaa) your eyes?”

9:27. He answered (viao) them, “I already told (viaa) you and you did not listen (viaa). Why do you wish (vipa) to hear (vnpa) it again? Surely you do not also wish (vipa) to become (vnad) his disciples, (do you)?”

When the Pharisees were no longer able to deny that it was JESUS CHRIST who had performed the miracle, they did what most losers do: *they block the continuation of the discussion; they repeat questions endlessly in order to catch him in making an inconsistent statement; they stretch the discussion so it never ends and they oppose every conclusion.* They again asked the man born blind how Jesus had opened his eyes. But he saw through their method of stalling the discussion and answered, “I have told you already and you did not listen.” The simple beggar reproved the important and highly respected religious leaders. He heckled them with irony. “Do you want to become his disciples too?” This infuriated the Pharisees.

c. The religious leaders began to abuse (9:28-33).

9:28. And they reviled (viaa) and said (viaa), “You are (vipa) this fellow’s disciple³⁸, but we are (vipa) disciples of Moses!

9:29. We know (by reflection)³⁹ (vira) that God has spoken (vira) to Moses, but as for this fellow (Jesus), we do not know (by reflection)(vira) where he is (vipa) from.”

9:30. The man answered (viao) and said (viaa) to them, “The remarkable thing in this is (vipa) that you do not know (by reflection)(vira) where he is (comes)(vipa) from, and yet he opened (viaa) my eyes.”

9:31 We know (by reflection)⁴⁰ (vira) that God does not listen (vipa) to sinners, but if anyone is (vspa) God-fearing and does (vspa) his will, to him he listens (vipa).

9:32. From eternity it was never heard of (viap aorist tense) that anyone opened (viaa) the eyes of a man born (vprp) blind.

9:33. If this man were (viaa) not from God, he could (viin) do (vnpa) nothing.

The proud Pharisees refused to admit defeat, but instead resorted to abuse. With disdain they kept calling Jesus ‘this fellow’ and ‘a sinner’. They regarded being ‘a disciple of Jesus Christ’ as the highest insult. And with self-complacency they regarded themselves as disciples of Moses. They did not realise that Moses would condemn them (5:45-46)! They said that they knew that Moses spoke with God’s authority, but that they did not know where Jesus even came from. Although Jesus had often said that he came from God, the Jews rejected his claim and continued to harden their hearts.

The man born blind then employed the same logical method of arguing to defeat the Pharisees. He argued as follows:

Only people who come from God (that are godly and do God’s will)(9:31) are heard by God.

He (Jesus) was heard by God so that he performed a miracle and opened my eyes. Such a thing was never heard of before!

Conclusion: He (Jesus) definitely came from God.

He defeated the religious leaders with their own way of arguing and even perfected their method so that they were not able to counter in any way⁴¹. The Pharisees had already acknowledged that a miracle had taken place, but kept refusing to acknowledge that it was Jesus Christ who had performed that miracle. They wanted the man born blind to say that it was not Jesus Christ, but their (Jewish) God who had performed the miracle. But God does not listen to the prayers of sinners. He only hears the requests of godly people who do his will⁴². Moreover, miracles in answer to prayer and with

³⁶ G: oida

³⁷ G: oida

³⁸ G: mathétés

³⁹ G: oida

⁴⁰ G: oida

⁴¹ cf. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

⁴² 1 Samuel 8:18; Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 1:28; 15:29; Isaiah 1:15; 59:2; Jeremiah 14:12; Ezekiel 8:18; Micah 3:4; Zechariah 7:13; John 8:21; Acts 10:35; 1 Peter 3:12

the purpose to manifest God's work and glorify God are indeed proof of the truth (10:37-38; 20:30-31)⁴³! Therefore the man born blind no longer says, "I do not know whether Jesus is a sinner or not" (9:25), but "I am very sure that Jesus is not a sinner, because God heard his prayer in an absolute complete way."

d. The religious leaders resorted to violence or misuse of authority when they lose (9:34).

9:34. They answered (viao) and said (viaa) to him, "You were born (viap) steeped (completely)⁴⁴ in sin (i.e. you had committed the biggest thinkable sin and this even before you were born!), and you are lecturing (vipa) us? (How dare you)! And they *once for all* threw (viaa) him out (i.e. expelled or excommunicated him from the synagogue and participating in the Jewish society).

The Pharisees hated to lose an argument and it was even worse when such highly respected religious leaders were lectured by an ordinary beggar! When the Pharisees could not devise any other argument against Jesus Christ, they directed their attack against the man born blind. They refused to continue speaking about the miracle or about Jesus who had performed the miracle. So they led the conversation away from the subject (the theological argument why the man was born blind) and abused the man born blind. They accused him without any proof of being steeped in sin and that his blindness had been God's punishment for the sins which he had committed even before he was born (cf. 9:1-3)!

And so the Jewish religious leaders cast him out of the synagogue and out of the Jewish community. When the Jewish religious leaders are defeated, they punish the ordinary people with the worst thinkable religious, social and economic measures. They even kill their own people without fear of being brought to trial! Today such religious leaders can be found in a growing number of countries in the world⁴⁵.

(V) 9:35-38. Jesus heals the soul of the man born blind.

9:35. Jesus heard (viaa) that they had thrown (viaa) him out (i.e. had expelled him from the synagogue), and having found (vpaa) him, he said (viaa), "Do you believe (vipa) in the Son of Man?"

9:36. He answered (viao) and said (viaa), "And who is (vipa) he, Lord, so that I may believe (vsaa) in him?"

9:37. Jesus said (viaa) to him, "You have not only⁴⁶ seen (vira) him, but he is (vipa) also⁴⁷ the one speaking (vppa) to you."

9:38. He said (viaa), "I believe (vipa), Lord." And he worshipped (viaa) him.

While the Pharisees rejected and avoided the man born blind, Jesus sought him and found him (cf. 5:14)! Jesus was not only interested in his *physical* healing, but also in his *social* and *spiritual* healing. Jesus was concerned with *the whole man*! Jesus not only came to save *souls*, but to heal *bodies*, to restore broken *relationships*, to forgive sins, to reconcile people with God the Father, to help the needy and to encourage and speak for the oppressed. *While the Pharisees were only concerned with their own power, position of authority and honour, Jesus Christ was concerned with the welfare of other people and the whole man.*

'To believe' means to believe in Jesus Christ and his completed work of salvation and to entrust yourself, your body and your soul, to him for this life and forever. The man asked who the Son of Man was. *Jesus answered, "He is the One you have seen (and that image will never leave you; it will constantly remain before your eyes)(the perfect tense)!" "And he is the One who is now speaking to you (and will continue to speak to you)(the present continuous tense)!" The man born blind answered, "Lord, I believe (and will continue to believe)(present continuous tense)" and he knelt in worship before Jesus (cf. 4:20-24; 12:20). Also in other parts of the Gospel, Jesus is worshipped by his disciples and by other people. He never objected or corrected people. He therefore affirmed that he is divine, the Son of God, equal with God the Father and equally worthy of honour and worship (5:23)!*

(VI) 9:39-41. Jesus condemns persistent spiritual blindness.

9:39. And Jesus said (viaa), "For judgement I came (viaa) into this world, in order that those who do not see (vppa) may see (vspa), and that those who see (vppa) may become (vsad) blind.

9:40. Some of the Pharisees being (vppa) with him, heard (viaa) these things, and they said (viaa) to him, "Surely we too are (vipa) not blind. (are we)?"

9:41. Jesus said (viaa) to them, "If you were (viia) blind, you would not have (viia) sin (i.e. you would not be guilty of sin). But now that you (as hypocritical liars) are saying (vipa), "We see (vipa)", your sin remains (vipa)."

a. People who acknowledge that they are blind will see again.

Jesus "came for judgement of this world" (9:39) does not contradict John 3:17. In John 3:17 the word is contrasted with salvation and therefore means condemnation or doom. In John 9:39 it has reference to the verdict or decision of a judge that separates believers from unbelievers. Jesus Christ did not come to this world to call people who think that they are 'righteous'. He came to call people who know very well that they are sinners. He came to call them to repent, that is, to

⁴³ Acts 2:22; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4

⁴⁴ G: holos

⁴⁵ cf. Revelation 12:15-17

⁴⁶ G: kai

⁴⁷ G: kai

change their thinking (beliefs, convictions) and change (transform) their lives⁴⁸. *Many in Israel would stumble over Jesus Christ, fall and be destroyed, because they refuse to believe in Jesus Christ.* But many others will stand on Jesus and be built up, because they believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ will be the sign against whom people will speak⁴⁹. Those who reject him will be punished, but those who welcome him and receive him will be rewarded (1:11-12). No one in this world, who comes into contact with Jesus Christ, can remain neutral. Everyone must choose. And those who do not want to choose have already chosen⁵⁰.

Jesus compared the submission of the man born blind with the enmity and hardness of the Jewish religious leaders. The man born blind realised not only his physical blindness, but also his spiritual and moral blindness. Jesus consequently healed not only his body, but also his soul. He was saved from his sins. He was completely forgiven. He could not only see the physical reality, but also the moral and spiritual reality.

b. People who think that they can see will become blind.

But the Pharisees, who could see the physical reality, were blind to the moral and spiritual reality. Jesus consequently struck them with permanent moral and spiritual hardness and blindness. *Every person who continues to harden his heart against Jesus Christ and his words finally comes to a point where he no longer can hear and see the moral and spiritual reality. He will come to the point of no return, where he will not be able to repent anymore (7:34)*⁵¹.

Some Pharisees overheard the words of Jesus and once more interpreted them literally. With arrogance and contempt they claimed that they were not (physically) blind. Jesus answered that if people realised and acknowledged their spiritual and moral blindness, their ignorance, unholiness and unrighteousness, and longed for salvation, Jesus Christ would not condemn them. But if people think that they see (spiritually and morally) and say that they do not need the spiritual and moral healing of Jesus Christ, they will remain spiritually and morally blind and guilty before God. They will suffer the consequences of their own sins.

APPLICATIONS

- 9:3. Know that suffering does not only have a cause, but may also have a purpose! The suffering of the man born blind had a purpose! His healing would bring people to know and accept Jesus Christ! However difficult this may be to accept, all afflictions and calamities have as their ultimate purpose the glorification of God in Christ!
- 9:4. Realise that God has only given to you this life, whether short or long, to do the work of God. You will never again get a chance to do on this earth what God wants you to do. Plan your life around the purpose God has for your life.
- 9:4. Realise that the work of God is to take constructive action and help the needy!
- 9:16. Always ask yourself, "On what does the other person base his argument? On the Bible or on his own legalistic interpretations?" Many arguments seem logic, but are wrong, because they are based on the wrong premises.
- 9:23. Realise that some religious leaders and teachers will try to force you to accept their point of view by threatening to throw you out of the religious community and the society. Never give in to religious or social pressure.
- 9:24-25. Realise that some religious leaders and teachers will twist the facts in order to win their argument. Always stick to the facts.
- 9:25. Be single-minded and know in what way Jesus Christ has changed your life.
- 9:39. Acknowledge your spiritual blindness and you will receive salvation.

QUESTIONS

- 9:1-3. What is the relationship between sin and suffering?
- 9:1-3. What are possible reactions to difficulties and suffering?
- 9:4-7. What are the works of God which Christians must do while it is still day?
- 9:13-17. What was the argument of the Jewish religious leaders about why the man was born blind?
- 9:18-23. How do the Jewish religious leaders employ intimidation?
- 9:24-34. What do the Jewish religious leaders do when they begin to lose the argument?
- 9:35-38. How Jesus Christ approaches people?
- 9:35-38. How does Jesus heal the soul of the man born blind?
- 9:39-41. What is the verdict of Jesus on those who acknowledge their blindness and on those who pretend to see?

⁴⁸ Luke 5:31-32

⁴⁹ Luke 2:34

⁵⁰ cf. Matthew 10:33

⁵¹ cf. Genesis 6:3; Proverbs 1:24-28; Isaiah 6:9-10; Amos 8:11-12; Matthew 13:11-15; 15:13-14; Acts 28:26-27; Hebrews 3:12; 6:4-8; 10:26-29; 12:17)