

Seeing is Believing

John 9

The seven “I am” statements in the Gospel of John go well with episodes that we read about. In 8:12, Jesus says, “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*” Then in chapter 9, he gives a man born blind the ability to see. **Read 9:1-7.**

The real lesson, however, is on *spiritual sight* and *spiritual blindness*. There are three groups of people who had trouble “seeing” the full implications of the miracle.

I. The Neighbors : Skeptics – 9:8-12

- a. They could not seem to come to terms with this.
 - i. Could it really be him? Or is he a look-alike?
 - ii. Then how were your eyes opened?
 - iii. Where is the one who did this?
- b. Notice that they take the man to the Pharisees (v. 13). That wouldn’t help much!
- c. Many people today are like the neighbors.
 - i. Curious but skeptical.
 - ii. Then, if they search for answers, they go to all the wrong places.
 - iii. What separates a curiosity seeker from one who finds the truth about Jesus?

II. The Pharisees: Religiously Blind

- a. Their minds were made up. So they rejected Jesus, His words, and His claims in the face of irrefutable evidence.
- b. Their inquisition was an attack rather than an honest inquiry.
 - i. Interrogation #1 – **9:13-17**
 1. Perhaps the making of mud with such simple ingredients as dirt and saliva was construed as kneading, one of 39 classes of “work” forbidden on the Sabbath in the Mishna.
 2. The Babylonian Talmud has a tractate which discusses how far it is permissible to anoint sore eyes on the Sabbath.
 3. Their near-sightedness over Pharisaic tradition did not enable them to see the obvious!
 - ii. Investigation of the parents (see below, 9:18-23)
 - iii. Interrogation #2 – **9:24-34**
 1. “Give glory to God” – cf. Joshua’s statement to Achan (Josh. 7:19). I.e., “own up and tell the truth!”
 2. The man may not have been able to speak eloquently on their level, but he knew one thing, and they could not refute it.

3. The Pharisees' angry response suggests they realized they were getting the worst of the argument, so they get rid of the man.
- c. What do these Pharisees have in common with those who are religiously blind today?

III. The Parents: Cowards – 9:18-23

- a. They limited their testimony so as not to get into trouble with the authorities.
- b. The motive was fear. They did not want to be expelled from the synagogue. Cf. John 12:42-43.
- c. Do you know people like these parents? So far as we know, did the parents ever come to terms with Jesus?

IV. The Blind Man: a Lonely Believer – 9:35-41

- a. Would you know Jesus if you “saw” Him? This is evidently the first time the man laid his eyes on Jesus.
- b. Why did this man become a believer? Because he “saw” the truth of Jesus. It was more than physical sight – cf. vv. 31-33.
- c. Notice how this contrasts with the blindness of the Pharisees – vv. 39-41.

It has been said that the Gospel of John contains a representative sample of all types of people in how they respond to Jesus. This is part of the power of the 4th Gospel.

In a manner of speaking, *you* are in this story. Who best represents YOU?

- The skeptical neighbors, full of idle curiosity?
- The Pharisees, deeply religious but blind to the truth?
- The parents, afraid to confront the truth for fear of the consequences? Or...
- The blind man who now saw... and believed?

Seeing is believing!