**“I WAS BLIND, NOW I SEE”**

As John Ch 8 concludes, Jesus exits the Temple quickly as the Pharisees pick up rocks to throw at Him. In their minds Jesus has just blasphemed by claiming to be the I AM, Yahweh, God of the O.T. They clearly understand Jesus’ claim! This begs the obvious question to the reader, to us, at this point: “Is Jesus God (as He claims to be in John Chs 5, 6, 7 and 8) or is He not?” A lot of people want to make Jesus out to be just a great moral teacher. But after you read the first 8 chapters of John and hear Jesus’ claims to be the One sent by God, the Messiah, you cannot arrive at that conclusion. Is Jesus telling the truth in all these verses that we have been reading and studying in John up to this point, or is Jesus a liar and a deceiver? Or like the Pharisees think is He a crazy, demon possessed man? Clearly the people of Jesus’ day are divided over Him. Some believe in Him, but most do not. By the way, you will find the same is true in our day. People continue to be divided over Jesus. And the Apostle John states for the record his purpose in writing the Gospel of John: “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” The Apostle John believes that Jesus IS who He claimed to be.

We Baptists affirm the deity of Jesus Christ in our faith and message. We base this on what the Bible, God’s word, says. That’s our benchmark. Those that do not believe Jesus is God, they have another benchmark. They reason from another source. Like the Pharisees, they have been spiritually blinded by Satan.

Listen to Jesus’ assessment of the Pharisees and their spiritual condition… READ John 5:37-42

That is quite an indictment of the Jewish religious leaders by our Lord! And Jesus never backtracks from this assessment of their spiritual condition. In fact He goes so far as to say that their father is the devil and that they are going to hell if they continue in their unbelief of Jesus. So what happens when unbelief, when hostile and angry unbelief comes face to face with an obvious miracle from God? When presented with overwhelming evidence that Jesus is from God, that He IS God, will they then believe? This is exactly what happens in John Ch 9. Here is a classic case of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object. A collision course between two diametrically opposed theological viewpoints.

READ John 9:1

We don’t know for sure how much time passes from the end of Ch 8 until this verse. One thing we will see in the next verse is that Jesus is now with His disciples whereas He was not with them, as far as we know, in Ch 8. So it could be that the events of John Ch 9 take place immediately as Jesus exits the Temple or it could be a few days or weeks or even months later. We don’t know for sure. All we know is that Jesus is still in Jerusalem.

READ John 9:2

This reveals the theological viewpoint of the Jews about sin, which the disciples, being Jews themselves, would have been influenced by. They think that disease, sickness and misfortune are a direct result of sin. Now while it is true that the result of sin entering the world was sickness and death, it does not mean that a specific illness, in this case the man’s blindness, was a result of a particular sin. This man had been blind from birth so it would not have been his sin that produced the blindness. So maybe, the disciples reason, it was caused by the sin of the man’s parents. This theology was taught by many of the Jewish rabbis and we see it in the Book of Job with Job’s so-called “friends.” If you will recall the conversa-tions that take place between Job and his companions, they accuse him of having sinned. “Job, it’s obvious that you’ve sinned and as a result God sent this calamity on you.” Eliphaz tells Job, “If it were me, I would go to God and repent.” So this is an erroneous theology that is deeply engrained in the Jewish mindset of Jesus’ day.

READ John 9:3

At this point Jesus obliterates their wrong theology. Jesus says it was not because of the man’s sins or the sins of his parents that he was born blind. The reason for his blind condition is so “that the works of God might be displayed in him.” So that God will be glorified. You see, Jesus knows what He is getting ready to do. He’s going to heal the man.

READ John 9:4-5

Back in Jn Ch 5 Jesus had said “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” (Jn 5:17) Now He’s including His disciples in the kingdom work: “We must work the works of Him who sent Me…” His reference to day and night, day means while we are still alive, night means death. Bottom line we work while we still can, time is running out. Make the most of the time you have. Make it count. Jesus repeats what He had said back in 8:12 about being the Light of the world. This was a reference to light in a spiritual sense, the light of God’s message of salvation. Now He will be applying this “light” in both a physical and spiritual context. Jesus is the light of the world. But do you realize that WE are also the light of the world? That’s what Jesus said in Matt 5 when teaching His followers: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 5:14-16) We are to shine the light of Jesus to the people around us.

Well the blind man doesn’t see Jesus. But Jesus sees the blind man and He goes to him.

READ John 9:6-7

Why did Jesus do it this way? He did it differently in Matt 9 with the 2 blind men. God doesn’t necessarily do things the same way every time. He does things His way and not necessarily the way we think that He should.

The man exercises his faith in Jesus by going to the Pool of Siloam and doing exactly as Jesus had instructed. [John comments that Siloam means “sent” to emphasize what Jesus had just said in v 4, that He was sent by God the Father].

OK, so here we have an obvious miracle. Incredibly a man who has been blind from birth, who has never before been able to see, can now see! So what is the reaction to this amazing event? Well first we see the reaction of the people who knew the man before he was healed…

READ John 9:8-12

First, notice that they can’t believe that this is the same man. Maybe it’s a different guy who just bears a resemblance to the blind man. But the man insists, “No, I AM the man!”

Second, OK so you’re the same guy and your sight was given to you. “How did this happen? Tell us!” So the man tells the people what he knows. He knows who it was – Jesus. He knows what Jesus did. He knows what Jesus told him to do. He knows what he did. And he knows what happened. Short and sweet the man tells the people all he knows. “I don’t know how He did it. I don’t know why He did it. All I know is that He did it.” The man gives his personal testimony.

Third they ask, “Where is He?” The man gives an honest answer, “I don’t know.” Look, we can only tell people what we know. Anything else we might say is pure speculation.

So the people who knew this guy before, when he was a blind beggar know for sure now that he was, in fact, cured of his blindness by Jesus. And they are undoubtedly amazed by this whole thing.

READ John 9:13-16

The people bring the man to the Pharisees. They know how the Pharisees feel about Jesus and specifically about Him healing on the Sabbath (which v 14 tells is what happened in this case). John 5:16 says, “And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.” Then later we see that they wanted to kill Jesus because of this. So the people have some obvious questions about Jesus that they need their religious leaders to sort out. Let me lay out their struggle like this:

On the one hand (1) premise: all people from God keep the Sabbath

(2) premise: Jesus does not keep the Sabbath

(3) conclusion: Jesus is not from God

On the other hand (1) premise: only people from God can open the eyes of a man born blind

(2) premise: Jesus opened the eyes of a blind man

(3) conclusion: Jesus is from God

So the people are seeking some clarification from their religious leaders. Is Jesus from God or not? “We’re confused. Help us out.”

Have you ever met somebody and when you first meet them you’re not too impressed by them. They seem just ordinary and unremarkable. Then as you get to know them you really begin to like them quite a bit? Well that’s how I am about the man born blind in our story here. The more we go through John Ch 9, the more and more I like him.

READ John 9:17

So the Pharisees find themselves in a predicament. They don’t want to appear as fools. They want to save face with the people. So they begin to interrogate the man born blind perhaps hoping to find some holes in his story. The way it stands right now Jesus is looking pretty good. I mean He had by all accounts just healed a man who had been blind from birth!

The man’s response, given what little knowledge he had, was a pretty good one – “He is a prophet.” When you read the O.T. you find that it was common for God’s messengers, His prophets to perform signs as proof they were from God – Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and Joseph and Daniel (ability to interpret dreams). “So maybe He’s a prophet.” The obvious implication is that he thinks Jesus is from God.

So, faced with this evidence that certainly seems to indicate Jesus is from God they can either believe – “We were wrong about Jesus. He IS from God.” Or they can continue in their unbelief. Which is exactly what they choose to do.

READ John 9:18

They refuse to believe the testimony of the man or his neighbors, the people who knew him before. They refuse to believe that this man really was healed. They decide they need more proof. Remember what I said earlier in our study – unbelief never has enough proof. So they call in the man’s parents.

READ John 9:19

Just think how silly this is. They won’t believe the testimony of those who were eyewitnesses to this miracle so they ask two individuals who weren’t even there, “How then does he now see.” How are they supposed to know?

READ John 9:20-21

This is the only answer they can give. They know this is their son. They know he was blind from birth and they know he can now see. They don’t know how or who it was that healed him.

READ John 9:22

Then John adds this commentary to let us know why the parents might be hesitant to give any credit to Jesus. At some point the Jewish religious leaders had issued an edict that anybody who said the Jesus was the Messiah would be excommunicated from the Temple. For a Jew this would be huge. All their religious and social life was geared around the Temple and the various synagogues. They wanted to squelch this once and for all. By the way the same thing goes on in Islam and other religions. Family members who are converted to Christianity are ostracized and kicked out by families. God’s truth is always a threat to the lies of Satan.

READ John 9:23

“Go ask him!” So the Pharisees will bring the man back in for a second round of questioning. Here’s the bottom line – they refuse to believe that Jesus actually restored this man’s sight. So they are going to try and discredit the man. And we’ll pick it up there next week.

As I prepared this lesson I was struck by the parallels between what happened to this man physically and what happens to us spiritually in the work of regeneration. God initiates it. He comes to us in our helpless, hopeless, blind condition. He touches us. He tells us what we need to do in order to be healed, to be saved. We obey. We step out in faith. The result is that we who were once spiritually blind can now see. Amazing grace! “I once was lost but now am found; was blind but now I see.”

Let’s sing the first 2 verses of that great hymn.