

John 9:1 – 41

¹ As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?’ ³ Jesus answered, ‘It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’ ⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, ⁷ and said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing. ⁸ Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, ‘Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?’ ⁹ Others were saying, ‘This is he,’ still others were saying, ‘No, but he is like him.’ He kept saying, ‘I am the one.’ ¹⁰ So they were saying to him, ‘How then were your eyes opened?’ ¹¹ He answered, ‘The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash’; so I went away and washed, and I received sight.’ ¹² They said to him, ‘Where is he?’ He said, ‘I do not know.’ ¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, ‘He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see.’ ¹⁶ Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, ‘This man is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath.’ But others were saying, ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?’ And there was a division among them. ¹⁷ So they said to the blind man again, ‘What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?’ And he said, ‘He is a prophet.’ ¹⁸ The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, ¹⁹ and questioned them, saying, ‘Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?’ ²⁰ his parents answered them and said, ‘We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹ but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.’ ²² his parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. ²³ For this reason his parents said, ‘He is of age; ask him.’ ²⁴ So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, ‘Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner.’ ²⁵ He then answered, ‘Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.’ ²⁶ So they said to him, ‘What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?’ ²⁷ He answered them, ‘I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become his disciples too, do you?’ ²⁸ They reviled him and said, ‘You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he is from.’ ³⁰ The man answered and said to them, ‘Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he hears him. ³² Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.’ ³⁴ They answered him, ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?’ So they put him out. ³⁵ Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ ³⁶ He answered, ‘Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?’ ³⁷ Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen him, and he is the one who is talking with you.’ ³⁸ And he said, ‘Lord, I believe.’

And he worshiped him. ³⁹ And Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.' ⁴⁰ Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things and said to him, 'We are not blind too, are we?' ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

Lame Man (John 5)	Blind Man (John 9)
Jewish festival (5:1)	Jewish festival, Tabernacles (Sukkot) (7:1 – 10:21)
Physical illness (5:5)	Physical illness (9:1)
Length of illness (5:5)	Length of illness (9:1 – 3)
Water – Pool of Bethesda (5:2)	Water – Pool of Siloam (9:7)
Healing initiated by Jesus (5:6)	Healing initiated by Jesus (9:6)
Jesus' knowledge of ailment (5:6)	Jesus' knowledge of ailment (9:3)
Jesus did not touch him directly (5:8)	Jesus did not touch him directly (9:7)
Instant healing (5:9)	Instant healing (9:7)
On the Sabbath (5:10)	On the Sabbath (9:14)
Interrogation by Jewish leaders (5:10)	Interrogation by Jewish leaders (9:15)
Second search by Jesus (5:14)	Second search by Jesus (9:35)
Man loves the praise of people (5:15)	Man loves the affirmation of God (9:33)
Man not given consequences from Jewish leaders (5:15)	Man put out of the synagogue (9:22, 34)
Persecution of Jesus (5:16)	Worship of Jesus (9:38)
Next to the sheep gate (5:2)	Jesus says he is the gate for the sheep (10:1 – 9)

Questions

1. In John 8:13, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of not having any witnesses. Implicitly, they are asking for another witness. In John 9, Jesus gives them a witness! The restoration of sight for the man in John 9 also connects thematically with Jesus' claim to be the light of the world. Thus, these two chapters are very connected to each other, and are reflections on each other.
2. Did God cause the blindness? No. There are various ways of understanding v.1 – 3 and the relationship between the man's blindness and the purposes of God. I don't think that Jesus means, 'God caused the blindness.' But rather, 'God will redeem this man.'
3. What is 'the works of God' here?
 - a. Notice, it's plural: works! Not just one work. I count three.
 - b. The first work of God is the healing of physical blindness in the man
 - c. The second work of God is the healing of spiritual blindness in the man.
 - d. The third work of God is the proclamation of the man about Jesus, who now believes in Jesus.
 - e. God's work is to bring about a new humanity. The healing of physical problems is a reflection of Jesus' healing of our spiritual problem. The healing of a physical problem in others reflects Jesus' healing of human nature in himself.
 - f. To participate in the 'work of God' involves believing in Jesus, allowing him to heal and transform you, and proclaiming what is happening within you because it's his desire to do that in everyone. See the connection between John 9:3 and 6:29. Throughout the Gospel of John, believing is organically linked to proclaiming/testifying, and the weight or emphasis falls on the proclaiming/testifying part. Recall John 1:19 - 51, where the chain of witnesses goes from God to John the Baptist to the two disciples to the next two disciples, and the dynamic is that someone speaks, the hearer listens, then goes to see Jesus, and then testifies. In John 4, the Samaritan woman is also someone who testifies immediately after meeting Jesus. The same pattern is picked up in John 20, when Peter and John go to the tomb but John fails to tell Mary that he believes Jesus rose from the dead; Mary then sees two angels who tell her what Peter and John should have told her; Jesus then comes and meets Mary herself; Mary testifies to the disciples but they fail to believe; Jesus comes and meets with them himself; they testify to Thomas who wasn't there, but Thomas fails to believe; so Jesus comes and meets with him personally, and then he testifies. In each case, Jesus himself discloses himself to them, so that the chain of witnesses actually continues on. Hence, believing flows into speaking, or being missional.
4. The 'night' is probably referring to Jesus' death. See also John 11:9 for a suggestion.
5. The blind man is Jewish, and not a foreigner. I know it's confusing since 'the Jews' oppose Jesus and interrogate the formerly blind man. But the phrase 'the Jews' in John's Gospel refers to the Jewish leadership (Sadducees, temple priests, Pharisees) specifically in Jerusalem, from 1:19 onward. 'The Jews' tends to mean in particular those Jewish leaders who are opposed to Jesus. John seems to do this as a kind of shorthand. Also, as more evidence that the blind man was a Jew also, see 9:22, 34: 'they put him out' [of the synagogue]. The consequences of believing in Jesus and professing Jesus are to be cut off from key aspects of Jewish national life.
6. Regarding the language the healed man uses, notice how he gets bolder and more insightful as he witnesses? As the conversation with the Jewish leaders goes on, this dude becomes a poster child of witnessing to Jesus. He stays on the spiritual/theological issues for a long time, and presses back on the Jewish leaders!! This is totally unlike the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda (the other pool, John 5), who shifts the blame to Jesus as soon as he could, starting the wheels of opposition to Jesus that eventually leads to Jesus' death. The blind man at this pool is the positive version of the lame man.
7. Also, does the clay (9:11) remind you of something from the Old Testament? The clay by which God created Adam.
8. Regarding 'believe in the Son of Man' (9:41), the title 'Son of Man' was brought up by Jesus in 1:51, in the context of being the bridge between heaven and earth, which itself seems to tie to the fact that God's Spirit rested on him (1:32-33), marking him out as a new kind of humanity. Besides that, the 'Son of Man' was a title used of the Messiah in Daniel 7:13 - 14, which Jesus seemed to use because he tied it to his ascension. So the content of belief, what it is we are believing about Jesus, must be at least a combination of these things: 'Messiah' goes from meaning 'Jewish military leader who defeats the Romans and becomes king of Israel' to 'Jewish suffering king who defeats evil and sin and death and Satan, humanity's true enemies'. It is totally fair to tie in Hebrews 11:6, but it's important to work as much as possible within the

Gospel of John because it is the literary unit in question. Hebrews 11:6 has its own context and point to make.

9. Regarding the Pharisees being 'blind' - this is an important issue. Their presupposition that God does not hear sinners in 9:31 can be radically qualified, if not discarded altogether as being inaccurate. And their rejection of the witness that they themselves asked for in 8:13 is self-incriminating. Furthermore, Jesus' claim to be the 'light of the world' comes from the menorah candlelight in the Temple; this is Jesus' claim to replace the Temple as the dwelling place of God. His healing of the blind man is also something that would have only really happened at the Temple, but now it is happening by the power of Jesus. Jesus is giving the Jewish leaders sufficient evidence that he is the new dwelling place of God. But because they claim to see spiritual truth, and don't, they are guilty of sin.