

JESUS CHRIST: THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

9 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. ²His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? ³Jesus answered, Neither this man nor his parents sinned; [he was born blind] so that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴We must do the works of him who sent me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. ⁵While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. ⁶After having said this, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva; then he anointed [the blind man's] eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which means, Sent). So he went and washed, and came [home] with his sight.

⁸The neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging, asked, Is not this the man who used to sit and beg? ⁹Some said, [Yes,] it is he. Others said, No, but he looks like him. He said, I am [that man]. ¹⁰Therefore they said to him, How then were your eyes opened? ¹¹He answered, The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and I received sight. ¹²Then they asked him, Where is he? He said, I do not know.

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind ¹⁴Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵The Pharisees also asked him how he received his sight. And he said to them, He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and [now] I see. ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, because he does not observe the Sabbath. But others said, How can a man who is a sinner do such signs? So there was division among them. ¹⁷They turned again to the blind man and asked, What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes? [The man] replied, He is a prophet. ¹⁸Therefore the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they summoned his parents ¹⁹and asked them, Is this your son, whom you say was born blind? How is it that he now sees? ²⁰His parents answered, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind. ²¹But we do not know how he is now able to see; nor do we know who opened his eyes. He is an adult, ask him; he can speak for himself. ²²His parents said this because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had already decided that if any one should confess [Jesus] to be the Christ, he should be expelled from the synagogue. ²³Therefore his parents said, He is an adult; ask him. ²⁴So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and said to him, Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner. ²⁵He answered, I do not know whether or not he is a sinner. One thing I do know: I was blind, [but] now I can see. ²⁶Then they asked him, What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? ²⁷He answered them, I already told you, but you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples? ²⁸They reviled him and said, You are his disciple; but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God spoke to Moses; but we do not know from where this man comes. ³⁰The man replied, This is remarkable! You do not know from where he comes and [yet] he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners; but if anyone worships God and does his will, [God] listens to him. ³²Since the world began no one has ever heard of anyone opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. ³⁴They responded to him by saying, You were totally born in sins, and would you teach us? And they threw him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he asked, Do you believe in the Son of God? ³⁶He replied, Who is he, Sir? [Tell me,] so that I may believe in him. ³⁷Jesus said to him, You have seen him and he is the one who is speaking to you. ³⁸Then [the man] said, Lord, I believe. And he worshiped him.

³⁹Jesus said, I came into this world for the purpose of judgment, so that those who do not see may see; and those who see may become blind. ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, We are not blind, too, are we? ⁴¹Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now you say that you see; [therefore], your sin remains. (Jn. 9:1-41)

Introduction

Some time ago a local newspaper carried the story about a couple that followed the sun. They bought a trailer and journeyed across America down to Mexico, because they wanted to experience the thrill of seeing a total eclipse of the sun in the Mexican desert.

What an experience that was for them: one moment they stood on the blazing sand of the desert with the broiling sun beating down on them, the next moment they experienced a refreshing coolness as the moon totally eclipsed the sun and cast its dark shadow upon the desert floor. And then the thrill of seeing the darkness being rolled away as the sun once more illuminated the harsh beauty of the desert landscape.

Accompanying the article was a picture of some of the local children who had also gathered to experience this rare event. All of them were wearing sunglasses and makeshift shields to protect their eyes from the blinding rays of the sun in its eclipse. On the one hand, it was awe-inspiring to see the sun once more enlightening the desert landscape; but on the other hand, those brilliant rays of the sun were blinding to the human eye.

Jesus tells us that, as the Light of the world, the same is also true of Him: *“Jesus said, I came into this world for the purpose of judgment, so that those who do not see may see; and those who see may become blind”* (Jn. 9:39.)

As we study the 9th chapter of the Gospel of John, we are confronted with our need to be enlightened by the Lord Jesus Christ, but we are also reminded of our natural inclination to shut out His brilliant light. Because Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, an encounter with Him can be either an enlightening experience, or a blinding experience. By the grace of God, may it prove to be an enlightening experience for each of us.

I. As a Potential Disciple, Look to Jesus for Enlightenment

At the time of the miracle, the poor blind beggar was not yet a disciple of Jesus; at this point he did not know who Jesus really was. At first, he merely speaks about

“the man called Jesus” (vs. 11.) When he is interviewed by the Pharisees and asked to give his opinion of Jesus, he declares, *“He is a prophet”* (vs. 17.) Still later he correctly draws the conclusion that Jesus must be *“a man from God,”* or else He could not work such a miracle (vs. 31-33.)

Although he still does not know Jesus’ true identity, he is willing to look to Jesus for enlightenment:

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he asked, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”³⁶ He replied, “Who is he, Sir? [Tell me,] so that I may believe in him.”³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have seen him and he is the one who is speaking to you.” (Jn. 9:35-37)

When this poor blind beggar was enlightened, he responded to the light by worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God: *“Then [the man] said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshiped him”* (vs. 38.)

If you find yourself in the position of being a potential disciple, you should imitate this poor blind beggar: look to Jesus for enlightenment, and then respond to Him in faith. Consider the example of Lee Strobel, the Chicago newspaperman mentioned in an earlier lesson:

At the age of 28 ... Lee was happily married to Leslie, his high school sweetheart, and his journalistic career was soaring. But he and Leslie never talked about God.

“We were successful, socially climbing, striving young people in an exciting profession in a major market,” Lee recalls. “Faith was a non-issue with us. It just never came up.”

All that changed when a woman in their condo complex befriended Leslie and talked to her about Christ. Leslie began attending church and committed her life to the Lord in late 1979.

Lee ... determined to use his legal and journalistic training to investigate Christianity. *I make my living checking things out*, he told himself, *so that’s what I’ll do with this.*

For nearly two years, he read books, and the four Gospels, while asking questions and frequently attending services at Leslie’s church. “I was convinced,” he says, “that if I could look at historical evidence concerning Christ, I would probably be able to find out He was a nice guy and a wonderful, charismatic person, but certainly not God.”

The deeper he delved, the more it took on the characteristics of a mystery to be solved. When he encountered a fact or an historical claim, he applied the

legal test for evidence. "I looked at the question of eye-witnesses," Lee says. "I examined archaeology, early non-Christian historians, and the fulfillment of prophecy. As a journalist, I found it fascinating, and every new bit of evidence was like a piece in a jigsaw puzzle. It was the biggest story I'd ever been on, and I'd done some big stories."

Finally the jigsaw puzzle began to emerge as a portrait of Jesus Christ. "Based on what I had learned and what I had seen," Lee states, "I felt I had no other choice but to bow to Him as my Forgiver, my Leader, and my Friend." (*POWER*, 6/23/91, pp. 2-ff.)

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II. As a Disciple, Look to Jesus for Ever Greater Enlightenment

As Jesus and His disciples left the temple, Jesus took notice of a poor blind beggar, sitting in the street, begging for alms. Apparently he was a well-known figure, for some of the disciples are able to identify him as a man who was born blind (vs. 2.)

When Jesus takes notice of this poor blind beggar, the disciples take the opportunity to ask, "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?*" The disciples seek to attribute the cause of this man's physical malady to someone's **personal** act of sin: either the beggar's own sin or an act of sin committed by his parents. In some cases physical suffering **is** the consequence of some specific act of sin or an habitual practice of sin. Upon healing the man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years, Jesus warns him: "*Look, you are healed; stop sinning, or something worse will happen to you*" (Jn. 5:14.) But such was not the case with this blind beggar.

Jesus replies to His disciples' question by stating, "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned; [he was born blind] so that the works of God might be displayed in him*" (vs. 3.) That is to say, God ordained that this man should be born blind so that at this particular time "*the works* (plural) *of God*" might be displayed in his life. This man becomes the recipient of physical sight as Christ graciously ministers healing to his eyes. This man becomes a living parable of our need to receive spiritual sight and enlightenment from the LORD.

By means of ministering physical healing to this blind man the Lord Jesus enlightens His disciples and the crowd to an essential spiritual truth. The man was born blind; he has been blind from birth (vs. 1-2.) This man's physical condition of blindness serves to illustrate our spiritual condition: by nature we are in a condition of spiritual blindness and darkness, we need to be delivered from the power of darkness. In commissioning Paul to be His apostle, the Lord

Jesus declares that He is sending Paul to preach the gospel in order to *“open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me”* (Acts 26:18.)

In performing this miracle of granting sight, Jesus smears the man’s eyes with mud and instructs him to wash in the pool of Siloam in order that he may receive his sight (vs. 6-7)—thus this man had to grope his way through the crowd, testifying, “I am blind. My eyes are unclean. I must wash so that I may see!” The manner in which Jesus administers the healing is meant to graphically portray our spiritual condition: we are spiritually blind and in darkness because of the uncleanness of our hearts; our spiritual blindness and our dwelling in spiritual darkness has a moral cause, namely, our sinfulness and rebellion against God. The Apostle Paul describes mankind’s spiritual condition as that of *“being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart”* (Eph. 4:18.)

Jesus performs this miracle on the Sabbath day (vs. 14) in order to dramatically convey the message that the observance of religious practices is inadequate to remove spiritual blindness and produce spiritual wholeness; what is required is the cleansing, enlightening, and saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus instructs those who trusted in their religious observances that what is needed is the cleansing of the inside of the man—the cleansing of the heart:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You wash the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶You blind Pharisee, first wash the inside of the cup and of the dish, and then the outside will be clean also. (Matt. 23:25-26)

... out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimony, slander. ²⁰These are the things that defile the man. (Matt. 15:19-20a)

Through the prophet Ezekiel, the LORD gave the promise that He would perform His work of saving grace in the hearts and lives of His people:

I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit in you and cause you to walk in my statutes; and you shall keep mine ordinances and do them. (Ezek. 36:25-27)

Just as the disciples received enlightenment and deeper understanding from the Lord Jesus with regard to the reason and purpose for the poor beggar’s malady, so, too, we as disciples can look to Jesus for further enlightenment. By way of

example, consider the case of the Apostle Paul, who received understanding from the LORD with regard to the suffering he encountered in his life:

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given to me a stake in my flesh, a messenger from Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the LORD to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Cor. 12:7-9)

Why did this godly man, the Apostle Paul, have to suffer such torments from the devil? It was ordained by God for his own good, as a means of counterbalancing the glorious revelations he received, and thereby preventing him from developing a spiritual pride that would have been detrimental to his soul and render him useless in his work for the LORD (2 Cor. 12:7.) Why did Christ not immediately remove this torment when His faithful servant so earnestly pleaded with Him to do so? Christ permitted the trial to continue so that Paul would be compelled to depend entirely upon Christ's grace and power, a grace and power that operates most perfectly in circumstances of human weakness (2 Cor. 12:9a.)

As a disciple, you can look to the Lord Jesus for further enlightenment, bearing in mind with confidence that the full measure of enlightenment will be revealed when Christ shines forth in all of His glory at the time of His final revelation in glory: *"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know partially; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known"* (1 Cor. 13:12.) But in the present the LORD will provide whatever degree of enlightenment is necessary for our spiritual well-being and service. The LORD makes to us this promise: *"Call to me and I will answer you and show you great and unsearchable things you do not know"* (Jer. 33:3.) The Lord Jesus has bestowed upon us the Holy Spirit, the One who is *"the Spirit of truth"* who *"shall guide you into all the truth"* (Jn. 16:13.)

III. As a Sinner, Resist the Temptation to Shut Your Eyes to Jesus

Whereas the disciples and the blind beggar were enlightened by the Lord Jesus, there were others who intentionally shut their eyes to His light—they insisted upon remaining in the dark.

After some initial confusion on the part of the crowd, the blind beggar is brought to the Pharisees. There appears to be a concern that this incident of healing, which took place on the Sabbath, be reported to the religious authorities (vs. 14.)

As they interview this poor beggar, the Pharisees do not initially question the fact that he has miraculously received his sight, they are interested in learning **how** his sight was restored (vs. 15-18.) Notice that it is only after the beggar identifies Jesus as a prophet that the Pharisees question and seek to deny the

fact that a miracle of healing has, indeed, taken place (vs. 17-18.) The Pharisees only question the fact of the miracle when the conclusion to be drawn from the miracle, (namely, that Jesus is at the very least a prophet,) becomes displeasing and unacceptable to them.

The Pharisees now insist upon interviewing the poor beggar's parents (vs. 18-23.) The parents dare not deny the basic facts: this is their son, he was born blind, he has received his sight. But they become very reluctant to commit themselves beyond this point, choosing to defer to their son and have him supply the answers to the Pharisees' questions (vs. 20-21.) The reason for their hesitancy was their fear of the religious leaders (vs. 22.) Here is prejudice against Jesus: the religious leaders have already agreed that they will not allow Jesus to be identified as the Messiah. Here is pressure being brought to bear in an effort to silence anyone from professing Jesus to be the Messiah.

The Pharisees now proceed to hold a second interview with the beggar himself (vs. 24-34.) They seek to intimidate the beggar into recanting his earlier assessment of Jesus—namely, that Jesus is a prophet (vs. 24.) First, they seek to do so by means of a thinly veiled threat. They say to the man, *"Give glory to God."* Their words were intended to bring to mind Joshua's interrogation of Achan when the man stood guilty of criminal activity and consequently stood in jeopardy of judgment: *"Joshua said to Achan, 'My son, give glory to Jehovah, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done, do not hide it from me'"* (Josh. 7:19.) Second, they seek to intimidate the poor beggar into recanting by professing to have authoritative knowledge: the Pharisees declare, "We **know** that this man, Jesus, is a sinner!"

Now the religious leaders insist upon having the facts of the case reviewed again—no doubt hoping to find some flaw or inconsistency that would allow them to dismiss this whole disturbing incident and discredit the beggar's witness concerning Jesus (vs. 26.) Finding themselves unable to refute the facts, the Pharisees now resort to reviling the witness: subjecting the beggar to verbal abuse by calling him a disciple of Jesus, while they claim for themselves the distinction of being disciples of Moses (vs. 28.)

They find themselves unable to refute the beggar's argument: Scripture tells us God only hears the righteous. What happened to me was clearly an act of God. Therefore, this man, Jesus, must be of God. Therefore, they seek to discredit the beggar's credentials as a witness. In their minds the fact that he was born blind identifies him as being an extraordinary sinner; therefore, they do not have to deal with what he has to say—as a sinner, he is disqualified from giving reputable testimony.

The Pharisees exhibit a resistance to Christ and rejection of Him—here was an intentional shutting of the eyes to the Light.

In verse 39 is recorded our Lord's own divine commentary on His ministry. He begins by declaring, *"I came into this world for the purpose of judgment."* Christ's coming into the world, shining forth as the Light of the world, has the inevitable effect of bringing about a judgment; that is to say, a verdict, a decision. When becoming exposed to the Light, one must either be for Him or against Him, one must either accept Him or reject Him, one must either live in the light or flee from the light. Then Jesus goes on to explain that the reason for His illuminating presence is *"so that those who do not see may see."* The man born blind is delivered from his state of physical and spiritual blindness into a state of conversion and discipleship—he sees the Light and believes in the Light:

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he asked, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"³⁶ He replied, "Who is he, Sir? [Tell me,] so that I may believe in him."³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen him and he is the one who is speaking to you."³⁸ Then [the man] said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. (Jn. 9:35-38)

But Jesus also explains that another reason for His illuminating presence is so that *"those who see may become blind."* The Pharisees are removed from their state of spiritual perception—as disciples of Moses and students of the Scripture they possessed some degree of spiritual understanding—into a state of spiritual blindness, becoming both unwilling and, consequently, unable to recognize Jesus as being the Messiah of whom Moses spoke and to whom the Scriptures witness.

As a sinner, resist the temptation to shut your eyes to the light of the Lord Jesus Christ; allow Him to enlighten you and increasingly bring you into the glorious light of His life.