# **Jesus met a Man Born Blind**

John 9 #150

There was a man who lived in Jerusalem in Jesus’ day. All his life people knew him by his eyes. At first because He didn’t have any. Then because He got some like everybody else. He was given brand new eyes that actually saw things, by the hand of Jesus.

He was born blind. He never saw light or anything from his birth. He lived in total darkness. It was a lonely world. People hardly ever talked with him as a real person. They always talked about him – and always about the one thing He didn’t have – sight. He was more of an object than a person with feelings and hopes and dreams. So, they said things about him that trampled all over his feelings, talking about him as if He couldn’t hear them. He could hear all right. His hearing had to make up for his lack of sight. He tuned in to any sound that gave him information about his world. When they talked about him that information was not good.

“He is blind, from birth. When inside his mother’s womb God never made his eyes. He is defective. He is a sinner. His parents must be sinners too. That family is cursed. What have they been up to? His poor parents. He never left home. They are stuck with him. He is a dependant. He has ruined their desire for a bit of social dignity.”

Their religious leaders, who they called Pharisees, had strong views about sin and guilt and God’s curse on that family. They knew the Law of Moses especially where it said that God punishes children for the sin of their fathers to the third and fourth generation. That teaching tore that family apart. Who was the source of all their trouble? Was it his parents, or was it his grandparents?

This blind man used to sit and beg all day. When he heard footsteps and talking he would hold out his begging bowl. It was boring. Same thing every day. He had no hope of anything different. His neighbours all knew him well. He could feel his way around his little community. Everyone knew their place. His place was a low down dependant.

The word on the street was that Jesus had come to the big city. He was a very controversial figure. Some thought He was the long-awaited Messiah and came from God. The Pharisees hated Him because He was the talk of the town and not them.

On this day, it is the Sabbath and the Feast of Tabernacles. The city is busy. Our blind man hears the name of Jesus in every conversation. Then the crowd stops right by him. Someone is asking the question**. “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that He should be born blind?”**  The question is directed at Jesus and it concerns the source of this man’s blindness. Our blind man strains to hear the reply. Jesus answers**, “Neither. It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.”**

Our blind man is amazed. ‘This Jesus hasn’t heard local gossip. Doesn’t He know I’m supposed to be a sinner. A model to display how cursed and helpless someone can become who is messed up by sin? No. He talks about him being a model all right – but of the work of God displayed in me. What work?’ Rabbi Jesus continues**, “I must work the works of Him who sent me, as long as it is day; night is coming when no man can work.”**

Work eh! That is something our man has never done. Jesus better not do it either because it is the Sabbath and Pharisees get very upset if someone works on the Sabbath. In fact, they don’t work on the other days either. Rabbi Jesus is talking about doing “…the work of Him who sent me”. He is catching bits of this conversation and trying to fit the pieces together. The works of God displayed in me. The works of Him who sent me. At daytime**.** Jesuscontinues. **“While He is in** **the world, He is the light of the world.”** Light eh! That is no use to him. He can’t see light. What is light? Rabbi Jesus is light?

He is trying to make sense of what He is hearing when He hears someone spit on the ground. Next thing this hand rubs onto his eyes some damp clay. It feels gritty and it goes right into his shrivelled eye sockets. This would normally be an insult, but it is being done by Rabbi Jesus who has had this strange conversation about the work of God and being sent and being light. He speaks, **“Go wash in the Pool of Siloam.”**

There is something about that voice. It must be obeyed. The man gets up and there are plenty of curious onlookers wanting to lead him there. It is about a kilometre or so and they start walking.

The trip gives him time to think. Why Siloam? That’s a Jewish Pool for healing. That’s no use for him because he never had any eyes in the first place. They would need creating from nothing – not healing. God never made them in his mother’s womb. It would need the work of God the creator to make his eyes. Jesus just mentioned He does the work of God. And He has rubbed dirt into his eyes. The dust of the ground is what God used to create the first man and woman. He is trying to make sense of this. They arrive at Siloam. It means ‘sent’. He is sent here by Jesus, and He is under orders. He bends down, cups up some of its water and washes the mud off his eye sockets.

Then a remarkable thing happens. He feels a whole lot of activity where his eyes were meant to be. Then light, then shapes, bodies, walls, water, movement, colour. What his fingers and ears had taught him before – He can now see! The wonder of that moment is quite unexpected. He is seeing. Let him go! He doesn’t need help. He is not blind. He can see. As the crowd watch his transformation there is a moment of quietness, then they go wild with excitement. Some had expected this, others had doubted. They all press around him with questions. They all start walking back to his community. He is on a high. From being on the outside of community life He is suddenly at the centre.

He arrives back home and goes around his neighbours to see what they look like. They talk. Is it you? Yes, it’s me! It sounds like you, it looks like you, but you are supposed to be blind.
**“Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?”
“He’s the one”.** Some said.
**“No he isn’t. He just looks like him”.
“I am the man”.** Hetells them.
“**But he’s got the same clothes, same tone of voice, same face**.”
Some take him at face value, some are in denial and won’t believe what they are seeing.
**“How then were your eyes opened?”**
He tells them**, “The man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash’. So, I went away and washed, and I received sight.”**

All his neighbours agree with his report. They were all there, all eye-witnesses. They are the ones who told him it was Jesus who did it. What did He do with the mud? He anointed his eyes. That means “Chrio” in their language. This is the same word we use for Christ, the Messiah we are all looking forward to. He finds himself saying He put mud on his eyes. He put ‘chrio’, (Christ) on my eyes. As they question him, He put another piece of the puzzle together. He heard Him say He came from God and does the work of God. Could this Jesus be the Christ? Part of what He rubbed on his eyes was His saliva – part of Himself, plus the dust of the ground – same as God used to make their first parents. He got Christ on his eyes and He got sight. It’s Him all right. Their prophets told us that their Messiah would give sight to the blind.

Where is He? The facts are established but Jesus has disappeared. No one knows what to do with him, so they take him off to the Pharisees. They are the guardians of their communities and they are looking out for Messiah until He comes. They are educated, they know scripture. They run community meetings in the synagogues. They settle disputes according to the Law of God….. and their own laws which they have built up case by case. But they won’t have anything on eye making. It has never happened except at creation and in wombs. Once the Pharisees hear his case, He is thinking, they will run through their check list for Messiah and Jesus will get their support, then we all, with Pharisees out front, will follow Jesus their long-awaited Messiah.

He is in for a shock. He stands before a group of impressively robed, serious, distinguished, bearded gentlemen. They had treated him as an unfortunate, cursed sinner because He was blind. He is very glad to show them He can see now. But instead of celebrating with him they are looking very glum. They are not happy. They question him.
“How did you receive your sight?”
He tells them straight and as He goes through each fact his neighbours nod – backing up each point.
**“He applied clay to my eyes.”** Yes, nods
**“I washed”** Yes
**“and now I can see”** with a big smile Yes, wow.

Isn’t that amazing! Guess who this man must be? They are all thinking. The Pharisees stay still and stiff and mean. They are not thinking what we are thinking, and they are the ones who have always done the thinking for their community. No one else’s opinion has ever counted for anything. For a moment, all goes quiet.

**“This man is not from God because He does not keep the Sabbath,”** one says. Our man is thinking all Jesus did was spit and rub a bit of mud. That’s not much work. He wasn’t even there when He got his eyes, so what’s their problem?

Another speaks up, **“How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs**?” Division among the Pharisees in public. They do a mental search through their law book – nothing on eye re-creation. Something on Sabbath breaking, something on sight to the blind under ‘Messiah’. Can’t go there. That line of argument isn’t in their interests. Jesus has not consulted us.

This group of Pharisees are looking short of ideas right now. The people are only asking them to agree on what is becoming obvious to him and his community. A man who makes new eyes gets His power from God. He can’t be a common sinner. They are looking silly now and they do something funny, hilarious. They employ a witness, a consultant. One who is an ‘uneducated, cursed, sinner’. They ask the man who was cured. Funny. They are starting to make fools of themselves and his friends are loving it.

**“What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?”**

So, they finally see the obvious. He can see and it is Jesus who opened his eyes.  **“He is a prophet,”** the mansaid**.** He is thinking maybe like Elijah or Elisha who did miracles. Surely, they will give Jesus prophet status at the very least.

No. They go back into their trenches of doubt and unbelief.

Some say, **“He wasn’t born blind,”**
Others suggest, **“Ask his parents,”**.

They call over his Mom and Dad from the crowd and put them on their witness stand.
**“Is this your son? You say that He was born blind. How is it then that He can now see?.” T**hey are still talking about him like He is an object and not a person.
His poor parents. They have suffered so much because of their son. Ever since He was born blind doubts about their own sinfulness have hung over them, and kept them from being respected in their community, under a shadow of doubt from the Pharisees.

Now public opinion is moving away from the Pharisees. So, they put on a show of investigating the truth – from his parents. They interrogate them aggressively under a veiled threat to remove them from the Synagogue. Bullies! Cowards! It is too tough for Mum and Dad. They feel intimidated. They answer the plain questions but avoid the controversial ones.
**“We know this is our son and that He was born blind, and that He now sees but we don’t know by what means and we don’t know who opened his eyes”.** **“He is of age; ask him, He will speak for himself.”**

Doubts arise in the mind of the cured man. ‘Are these Pharisees really wanting to know the truth?’ No. They control the political centre of their community from the synagogue. They want to keep their power. They have held it for centuries. Now, today, a travelling young Rabbi has arrived, performed a miracle only God can do, and the local gossip is all about Jesus. Who is He? Is He Messiah? They don’t want to believe this because it might threaten their power in their community. So, they resort to tactics which might discredit Jesus. They set up the appearance of an investigation but bully and intimidate the witnesses. The pressure is on. But the cured man just wants to know the truth. Who is Jesus? He is piecing the evidence together himself. He doesn’t bow to the Pharisees’ pressure. Rather, he feels a strength coming into his heart just like the change that happened to his eyes.

**“Give God the glory! they begin. We know this man is a sinner.”**

They are giving an interpretation before establishing the facts. Bad legal practice. He answers them. **“Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.”**As He speaks more strength comes into him. His whole community is looking on amazed that He is not intimidated. But they forget that He was not trained to fear the sight of elaborately dressed, long bearded, gentlemen. He never saw them before. Rather, his whole world is shaped by this remarkable event – the creation of his eyes – at his age!

They are taken aback by his unexpected boldness and ask an objective straight forward question about facts this time.
**“What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?”**
The man detects they have made progress in their investigation. I am the man. I was born blind. I now see. Jesus did it, and now they are asking what did He do? His courage is growing to a point where He rebukes them.

**“I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?”**

The man is beginning to recognize what their agenda is. They do not want to believe in Jesus. And the more they make excuses the harder they get. They are heading to a point in their ‘investigation’ that leads to only one logical conclusion. Jesus is Messiah. But at each step of denial their hypocrisy goes on display and their hearts become more hardened.

Our man hits them with the conclusions the facts are pointing to. Jesus is Messiah. Then he takes another step of boldness and hits them with sarcasm.
**“You too want to become His disciples?”**
They revert to bullying. They have nothing left to support their position, so they get personal.
**“You are this man’s disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.”**

The man sees their obvious blindness and becomes more bold.
**“Why, this is a marvellous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes.”** He gives them an invitation from God to become Jesus’ disciples along with himself. But they have a lot to lose; their authority in their community. But at this point they can, if they choose, change their minds and believe in Jesus like the healed man. They have a lot in their favour. They know scripture. From it they know signs of Messiah. They know how to interpret signs. They are at a crossroads. Roles are being reversed. He is interrogating them. He is the sign of Messiah if they would only see. Now it is they who are blind. They are refusing to see. They reach a climax. They make their choice. He makes his last appeal to them.
**“Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.”**

Our healed man goes right back to the creation, when eyes were first made by God. He appeals to them from their own scriptures which they know so well. Has there been a single case of eye-making since creation itself? The more ancient the text the more authority it has. They quoted Moses. He quotes the original creation by God Himself. Both back then and just now, an eye making event occurs again. This can be none other than…………………an act of …………………………God.

Our man has moved rapidly in his maturity. He began by stating the facts; then he moved to interpreting the facts and now he is giving a legal defence of Jesus with confidence and assertiveness. The Pharisees have moved too. They began with stubborn unbelief. Then they moved to bullying. Then, as they are backed into a corner and publicly shown up by one they called a sinner, they move to an outburst of anger. of their Synagogue humiliated, exposed, offended and unmasked – them not the man. All they have is judgements and laws and everyone can see.

The cured man finds himself alone now, surprised at their stubbornness, and surprised at his own boldness. He is still thrilled by the wonder of seeing with real eyes. A sweet relief comes over him as he leaves behind a lifetime of religious condemnation. Then a man approaches him. Like a shepherd finding a lost sheep He asks a question about the very issue on his mind.

**“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”**
What a question. Does he believe in Messiah who will come from heaven in authority, sent by God and who will identify Himself with human beings? You bet He does. What has happened to him can be none other than the work of God. But who is the man who healed me?
Jesus speaks, **“You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.”**

At these words, the same creation event which happened in his eyes now also happens in his Spirit. His spiritual eyes are created and He sees his Messiah in person.

In a moment of revelation, all his questions are answered. **“Lord, I believe**!” And He worships Him. Deep in his spirit is a ‘welcome home’ from God Himself. He is redeemed.

All his lights turn on. He sees Jesus with his physical eyes, and He sees Messiah from God with spiritual eyes. They are the same person.

Some Pharisees were with Jesus also. They ask Jesus, “**Are we blind also?**”
Jesus said to them, **“If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see’. Therefore your sin remains.”**

He can see, they are blind.
He believes Jesus is Messiah. They don’t believe.
His sin is gone. Their sin remains.

Jesus reveals Himself as the one and only basis for judgement. The final great Day of Judgement will come later. Jesus will be the Judge then. Right here He gives us a foretaste of how it will be on that Day. Those who believe Him as he has just done – leaving his old life of sin and believing in Jesus his Saviour - will be welcomed home as he has just been.
Those who do not believe Him, as the Pharisees have now done, are blind to their sin. If they continue to reject Jesus as their Saviour, they will remain in their sin and be judged guilty.

Meanwhile both have just been given their very best opportunity to believe. It doesn’t get better. He decided to believe. They decide not to. Each of them will leave this moment in time, and each one will meet again on the Great and, for many, terrible Day of Final Judgement. Jesus will be seated on a throne. The choices we made will be revealed. Some will be condemned in their sins. But our man who was cured of two kinds of blindness that day will be welcomed home with no sin, into the Light of God.

 **Man born blind** “Get real” questions

1.
(a) What was the physical defect of the man?
(b) How did the Pharisees explain his condition?
(c) What two things did Jesus rub into his eyes?
(d)
(e) Where did the man wash his eyes?
(f) What does ‘’anointed” mean?
(g) What tactics did the Pharisees use in their investigation?
(h) What identity of Jesus was being investigated?
(i) How did Jesus describe the Pharisees?
(j) What role will Jesus have on the Final Day?

Blind blindness dust Christ Siloam

Intimidation Judge Messiah saliva sin

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|  | **Questions of the story** | **Personal questions** |
| 2. | What disability did the man have?  | What disability do you have? |
| 3. | How did people in the community treat him?  | How do people treat you? |
| 4. | What wrong assumptions did people make about him and his parents?  | What wrong assumptions do people make about you? |
| 5. | How did Jesus view this man? | How does Jesus view you? |
| 6. | What did this eye-making seem to indicate about Jesus? | What do you think about Jesus? |
| 7. | What power did the Pharisees hold in his community? | Who holds power in your community? |
| 8. | Why did the Pharisees not want to believe in Jesus as Messiah? | What is holding you back from believing in Jesus? |
| 9. | How did He respond when He saw Jesus as his Messiah? | How would you respond to Jesus? |
| 10. | What did He believe Jesus could do for him?  | What do you believe Jesus can do for you? |