

When Darkness Meets The Light Of The World

John 9:1-41

Introduction: 1) Helen Adams Keller was born June 27, 1880 in N.W. Alabama. She was a normal healthy girl who could see and hear. However, when she was 19 months old she became seriously ill running a high fever. Probably stricken with scarlet fever or meningitis, she survived, but she was left both blind and deaf, cut off from the world around her. All that changed when a lady named Anne Sullivan walked into her life. Helen was six at the time. This lady would come to be known simply as “Teacher,” and Helen’s life would never be the same after meeting this lady. In her autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, Helen describes the way her life was changed by this remarkable lady:

Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore... and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbour was. “Light! give me light!” was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

I felt approaching footsteps. I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Some one took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to reveal all things to me, and, more than all things else, to love me. (p. 35)

2) A similar, but more awesome encounter, took place on the streets of Jerusalem near the temple almost 2,000 years ago. A man the Bible says “was blind from birth” (v.1) had a face to face, up close and personal confrontation with Him whose Name is love, with Him who is “the Light of the World” (8:12; 9:5; 12:36). Not only would his eyes be open, his soul would receive sight as well. Physically and spiritually blind, light would enter his eyes and light would engulf his soul.

3) The Feast of the Tabernacles had just concluded. Remembering God’s faithfulness as a pillar of fire during their wandering in the wilderness, 4 giant candelabras were lit that were so magnificent, all of Jerusalem could see them. It was on this occasion that Jesus stepped forth and made His 2nd of 7 great “I AM” saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (8:12). Now in ch. 9, as if to authenticate this incredible claim, He does something that had never been done before or since in recorded redemptive history: He healed a man blind from birth.

4) Sandwiched between the rejection of the Pharisees in ch. 8 and their continued rejection at the end of ch. 9, this event is something of a parable or picture of salvation, and it shows us how people respond when they meet Him who is the Light of the World.

Transition: Note the 3 major movements of this story. When we meet the Light of the World:

I. We will see the works of God. 9:1-12

- Jesus is passing by, having escaped an attempted stoning following His climatic declaration in John 8:58-59 (“Before Abraham was, I AM”).
- He meets a blind man (v.1), a blind beggar (v.8) who would station himself close to the temple eking out a meager existence depending on the mercy of others.
- Jesus sees him (v.1) and His disciples are moved not to help, but to talk. They wish to engage in a theological seminar concerning theodicy, the problem of pain, suffering and evil. They ask the first of a dozen questions that are recorded in this chapter.
- Buying into the common view of the day and misinterpreting text like Exodus 20:5; 34:7, and Deuteronomy 5:9, they seek to know the precise and particular source of this man’s situation. “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (v.2)
- Jesus takes advantage of their question to drive home 2 important truths of spiritual significance.

1) We must understand what really matters. 9:1-4

- Jesus’ response is quick and to the point. “Neither...that the works of God should be revealed in him.” Generally speaking the disciples were correct: sin and suffering are connected as a result of the historic Fall of Adam and Eve (Gen 3). However, moving from the general truth to a particular connection in each and every instance lacks biblical evidence and theological justification. Is it an unwarranted theological extrapolation.
- Jesus points the disciples and us beyond the faulty theological speculate to the sovereign plan and purposes of God. The man’s blindness was neither parental or personal. It was providential; not that God caused his blindness, but that God would use his blindness. Before time began God knew this man would be born blind and before time began God purposed to glorify Himself and reveal Himself in him.
- Four times Jesus uses the word “work.” The works of God will be revealed in this man (v. 3). I will work the works (v. 4) of Him (the Father) who sent me (preexistence of the Son).
- The night comes, His betrayal and crucifixion, when no one can work(v.4). His time is now short. The world is engulfed in darkness. What really matters?! I, we, must do the works of God while we can, while there is time.

Transition: We must understand what really matters.

2) We must understand who really matters. 9:5-12

- For a second time Jesus utters the bold declaration, “I am the light of the world” (cf 8:12). Now He takes steps to illustrate and prove the truth of this ascertainment by healing the man born blind. Theological debate gives way to divine tenderness!
- Verse 6 speaks of spittle, clay, anointing the eyes: this is high class medicine is it not?! Why He did this we do not know. A pattern of creation, an inducement to faith, a requirement of

obedience, a declaration of authority over what is unclean (cf. Lev. 15:8), the issue is not why! The issue is Who!

- Verse 7 Jesus tells him to go to “Siloam” meaning “sent” (v.4!) The significance of this is missed if we neglect the context of ch. 8. Go back and note what follows Jesus’ great declaration in 8:12. See 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42 and then 9:4,7. He who is the true “sent one” sends this man to the pool of Sent. The water will cleanse his eyes just as certainly as Jesus will cleanse his soul!
He obeys, even though Jesus did tell him the washing of his eyes would heal him. He goes, he washes, and he comes back seeing. The narrative is simple and straightforward. No fanfare, no elaborations. The man born blind had met the Light of the World and now he sees. What a miracle! This healing was not natural, medical or psychological. It was supernatural! What rejoicing there would be, you would think. However. . .
- Verses 8-13 contain the first of several dialogues in this chapter. Jesus disappears until v. 35! The people are amazed and confused, astonished and puzzled, curious and skeptical.
 - Is this really the born, blind beggar? (vs 8-9)
 - How were your eyes opened? (vs 10-11)
 - Where is He? (Jesus) (v 12) Where is He? Where is He? “I don’t know.” Oh, but he will in God’s time.

Transition: We must understand who really matters.

Transition: When darkness meets the Light of the World:

II. We will see the wickedness of man. 9:13-34

- What should have been the occasion of a great celebration now becomes the occasion for a grand inquisition, a tragic and evil interrogation. Three groups stand out in this section (The Pharisees, the blind man’s parents, and the man himself). Three movements drive the narrative. Three responses present themselves for our thoughtful and careful consideration. How do people respond to the light of the world?
 - 1) Some will condemn the light. 9:13-17
 - The neighbors of the healed man take him to the Pharisees. Sadly the reason is given in v 14: “it was a Sabbath when Jesus...opened his eyes.” This was not the first time Jesus had crossed the line of their “Sabbath blue laws.” In John 5 He had healed a lame man on the Sabbath. In Matt. 12:8 He declared Himself “Lord of the Sabbath.” Jesus had violated their man-made religious traditions by working on the Sabbath (making clay) and by healing on the Sabbath when it was not a life-or-death situation. This just will not do! This is unacceptable. Religious and ritual protocol has been violated, regardless of the greatness of the miracles.
 - The Pharisees repeatedly peppered the man with questions (“also asked [imperfect tense] him again...”), to which he provided the same simply answer to them as he had his neighbors in v. 11

- Division now develops among these religious leaders (v.16). Instead of rejoicing in the miracle some attack the miracle-worker. Others, however, cannot escape what has occurred. Perhaps they recalled the promise of the prophet Isaiah that one of the signs that the Messianic age had come is that the blind would see! Isaiah 42:6-7, the first of the great Servant Songs reads, “I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles; to open blind eyes.” Isaiah 35:5-6 adds, “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth on the wilderness, and streams in the desert.”
 - As for the blind man, all he can say to this remarkable event, at least at this point, “He is a prophet.” His sight grows stronger, but for those who condemn and reject the Light, their sight only grows weaker. He is seeing more clearly, but they see more dimly than ever.
- 2) Some will conceal the Light. 9:18-23
- The Pharisees’ (now called “the Jews”) interrogation with the man born blind has gone no where. If anything, things got worse. Rejecting his testimony (v. 18), they call his parents to the witness stand (v.19). Their testimony is cautious and hesitant. They will tell some of what they know (v.20) but not all of what they know (v.21). Why? The sad and unfortunate answer is found in v.22: fear: fear of the religious leaders and fear of excommunication.
 - As a result they turn their son over to the Pharisaical wolves saying, “He is of age: ask him” (v.23).
 - Fear is a paralyzing foe, an intimidating enemy. It can cause us to be silent when we know we should speak. It can cause us to lie about what we know to be true. It can cause us to turn our backs on those we love. It can even lead us to deny the Light we see with our eyes, know with our mind and feel in our heart.
 - Fear is a great thief. It robbed these parents of the joy of their own son’s miraculous healing. It can rob you of the precious gift of Jesus and salvation as well.
- 3) Some will confess the Light. 9:24-34
- The investigation of the miraculous healing also went nowhere with the reluctant parents. They call the blind back once again and give him a solemn charge: “Give God the glory!” Then they add, and do so by discrediting Jesus, “We know this man is a sinner,” they say, and you will glorify God by acknowledging the same.
 - With typical Johannine irony the man indeed gives God the glory, but not in the way the Pharisees were looking for or hoping. Verse 25 is one of those great verses in the Bible that speaks to us on so many levels, something I believe John clearly intended. There is a

physical aspect to be sure, but there is also a spiritual component every one of us who has personally met the Lord Jesus can identify with: “One thing I know...The man is willing to leave the question of Jesus’ character to the so called theological experts. His encounter with the Light of the World is the one thing he knows for sure: ‘though I was blind, now I see’.” This I cannot explain, but neither can it be denied. I see! I see! And He is the one who did this for me! Adrian Rogers has well said, “A Christian with a glowing testimony is worth a library full of arguments.”

- His answer launches the Pharisees into a series of questions he has already answered (v.26-27). With a wisdom and innocence that is startling, the man begins to engage them in conversation that puts him, a poor blind beggar, in the position of teacher and instructor of the well trained and schooled theologians of Jerusalem.
 - I am His disciple. Do you want to be one too? (v. 27)
The sarcasm or irony of the statement is too evident to miss!
Response: We know and follow Moses. Who is this fellow? (v.28-29) A nobody from nowhere as far as we are concerned.
 - This is amazing (v. 30). He can open blind eyes and you don’t know his origin, the source of His power. Why even I, a poor, uneducated blind man knows this. (He is the one who truly sees!) God honors those who worship Him and do His will (v.31). What this man has done has never been done before (v.32). If He were not from God, He could do nothing like this! (v.33). The evil one does not go around giving sight to the blind! The evidence is overwhelming: He can open blind eyes, He is worthy to be followed, He is not a sinner, He does God’s will, God hears His prayers, it has never been like this before, this man is from God!
 - The man’s logic is irrefutable! His argument is flawless and undeniable. Faced with evidence that cannot be denied and embarrassed by this uneducated nobody, the Pharisees do what evil men often do. They attack the man (the *ad hominen* argument) not the argument, slander his character, and run him out on a rail, fulfilling the fears of his parents (v. 22). They no longer deny the reality of the miracle, but add to their faculty logic their faculty theology inferring it was his sin that brought him into this world blind. This is a low blow and a cheap shot in any context. What should have been a great day for all, has disintegrated into a day of shame and sorrow.

Transition: However, the day is not over just yet. Note thirdly that when darkness meets the Light of the World:

III. We will see the wonder of salvation. 9:35-41

- When you got saved it was not because you went looking for God, but that He came looking for you. The initiative was His. He first loved you. He is the true and wonderful seeker! John Chrysostom said it beautifully: “The Jews cast him out of the temple, and the Lord of the temple found him (Hughes, 258).

1) Light received will result in greater light. 9:35-39

- John MacArthur notes 4 characteristics of spiritual sight: it 1) requires divine initiative, 2) responds in faith, 3) recognizes Jesus as the Christ and 4) results in worship (p. 412).
- Jesus heard about the mistreatment of this man by the religious leaders and so He seeks him out and tracks him down. The Pharisees shut him out but Jesus sought him out. Finding him He puts before him the question of the ages, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” Like the question Jesus put before the disciples at Caesarea Philippi, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matt. 16:13), he is asking the man do you believe God will send a Savior and when He comes will you put your faith and trust in Him? Here is divine initiative.
- The man’s response reveals a heart divinely prepared and ready to believe. Who is He Lord (meaning here “sir”), that I may believe. Here is the response in faith.
- Jesus now sheds His light on his soul: “you have both seen Him and it is He who is talking to you.” Jesus knew who He was and now this man knows too! Here is recognition of Jesus as Savior.
- Verse 38 records the only appropriate response to such wonderful truth. “Lord (meaning now “Master.”), I believe! (confession) and he worshiped Him” (adoration). The spiritual journey of this man is remarkable and inspiring: A man (vs. 11) → a prophet (vs. 17) → sent from God (vs. 33) → Son of Man (vs. 35) Lord and God (vs. 38). What a journey to conversion and salvation. What a tragic contrast with those who reject the light. Proverbs 4:18-19 says, “the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”

Transition: Yes, light received will result in great light. But . . .

2) Light rejected will result in greater blindness. 9:39-41

- There is a consistent and abiding spiritual principle we must not neglect: Revelation brings responsibility. The more you know the greater is your accountability. Respond to what you receive and God will give you more. Reject what you receive and you will lose even that. Jesus said in Luke 8:18, “Therefore taken heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks that he has will be taken from him.
- John MacArthur also notes 4 characteristics of spiritual blindness that appear in this text: it 1) receives judgment (vs. 39); 2) refuses to admit its

blindness (vs. 39-40); 3) rejects spiritual sight (vs. 41a) and 4) results in doom (vs. 41b) (p. 415).

- Jesus said in John 3:17 that God did not send His Son into the world to condemn but to save. However, in saving those who believe He cannot help but judge and condemn those who refuse to see the Light. If you know that you are spiritually blind without Christ the way to sight is available. If you deny that you are spiritually blind, then there is no cure or hope. You will only grow more blind with each passing day.
- The Pharisees evidently were eavesdropping on Jesus' conversation with the man born blind. Incredulous and offended at the words of Jesus, words they clearly understood to be aimed at them, they ask with intensity "Are we ourselves also blind?" Literally, the text reads "Not also we blind are we?" (v. 40) Amazing is it not? The chapter begins with the blind and ends with the blind. Oh but the latter is so much worse than the former.
- Jesus concludes the matter noting the hopeless estate of those who deny their sin and need of a Savior (v. 41). Proverbs 26:12 is a wise reminder, "Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him."

Conclusion: In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 Paul writes, "But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." No one will ever be argued into the kingdom of God. God must open their eyes. God must give sight to their soul so that they see that they need a Savior. Blind eyes need more than light. Blind eyes also need sight. Jesus is the Light of the World. Do you believe it? Do you see it? Charles Spurgeon was so right, "It is not our littleness that hinders Christ but our bigness. It is not our weakness that hinders Christ but our strength. It is not our darkness that hinders Christ; it is our supposed light that holds back his hand. (*Metro. Tab. Pulpit*, Vol. 30, p. 489).