

Jesus Christ brought an unexpected “judgment” into the world: as he upends the values and reputations of anti-gospel people, the blind gain insight and the seeing are blinded (spiritually speaking). Enemies of the gospel who claim to clearly see Jesus remain in their guilt, but gospel believers find forgiveness.

Introduction – I found a curious list of America’s top fears for the year 2017.

Background – Scene 1: On a Sabbath day Jesus healed a man born blind, starting a fierce religious debate about himself. Scene 2: The Pharisees began to investigate the healing hoping to discredit Jesus or the healing, but they grow more frustrated in turn as first the man then Jesus reveal their spiritual blindness. Scene 2 concludes in tragi-comedy as the buffoonish religious leaders cast out the sharp-witted man born blind, then Jesus finds the outcast to complete the spiritual aspect of his healing.

I. Jesus Divides

A. Three rounds of questions (vv. 24-33)

1. Can a sinner heal a man born blind? (vv. 24-25). “Give glory to God” is a way to put the man born blind under legal oath before the religious authorities (Josh 7:19). The “truth” they want the man to confess is that the man Jesus is a sinner. The “man” born blind is being run out of the synagogue because he refused to tell the official lie. The blind man knew that his life had been changed—touched by the finger of God. The “man” Jesus who worked the healing is being slandered as a sinner because the leaders refuse to reevaluate their unjust Sabbath rules that prohibit doing good on a Sabbath. Jesus is dividing light from darkness.

2. Should you become a disciple of the man who opened the eyes of a man born blind? (vv. 26-27). This time around the question leads to a cynical and humorous reply. The Pharisees as a group normally valued fair cross-examination of witnesses. But in this instance they disregard their legal ethics. When the man recognizes he sits in a kangaroo court, he flashes a little wit with a sarcastic query. “Why do you ask? Do you want to become his disciples too?” Ha!

3. How should we judge the origin of a man whom God hears and endows with miraculous healing power? (vv. 28-33). Keep in mind Bible commentators agree there are *no recorded instances* in the OT or extra-biblical sources of any man born blind who receives sight. Forsaking reasonable discussion, the Pharisees insult and curse the man born blind and the man who healed him. As they see it, those who follow Jesus reject Moses, the law, and Judaism as a whole. Such is the harsh judgment of the religious leaders, revealing the wide divide between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. The irony is that the leaders were actually failing as disciples of Moses. How? Abraham and Moses were Christians (!) who would have instantly recognized Jesus as the Messiah, and thereby would have worshiped him. The Lord delights in opening the eyes of the blind (Pss 119:99; 146:8; Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7).

B. The cast out outcast (v. 34)

Instead of evaluating his testimony even-handedly, they mock him with verbal attacks as one who is insolent and ignorant. Accusing him of being steeped in sin from his birth, they cast him out. The man will now be ostracized because anyone who deals with such a man will face the settled opposition of the religious leaders—who have shown themselves to be false shepherds (Jn 10).

II. Jesus Finds

A. Do you believe in the Son of Man? (vv. 35-37)

The Lord takes the initiative to look for him in order to present him with a challenge to faith (Jn 5:14; cf. Mk 8:31). Notice the man had already been obedient to Jesus, given incontrovertible testimony for Jesus, and suffered for Jesus. Yet the man still needed to answer whether he believes in Jesus! What are miraculous signs meant to do? Compel you to put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as the one who pulls you out of the darkness of your sin into his kingdom of marvelous light (Jn 20:30-31).

B. Spiritual blindness is cured when you worship Jesus as Lord (v. 38)

The man born blind confesses, “Lord, I believe!” And then he worshiped Jesus right then and there. This is a shocking development because Jewish people usually resented the idea of bowing before another human being. Yet with that Jewish taboo firmly in mind, this man throws caution to the wind and bows before Jesus as the Son of Man. When a person has been spiritually enlightened from a state of blindness, when confronted with the presence of the Lord, he will instinctively worship God on the spot. The man’s faith moved from a general confidence in the mission of Jesus as prophetic healer, to a joyful and worshipful embrace of Jesus as the Messiah (Son of Man).

III. Jesus Reveals

A. The seeing and the blind (v. 39)

In one sense Jesus had not come to judge (Jn 3:17; 12:47), but in another sense he divides people, which always brings a certain kind of judgment. If you reject Jesus you will end up spiritually blind and revealed as one who rejects the light. Though many did not grasp it at the time, the last judgment was not precipitated when Jesus came 2000 years ago (Jn 3:17; 12:47). Jesus’ mission was to bear judgment on the cross for the sins of many. And to bring judgment to bear by revealing who comes into the light and who kicks against it. During his first coming Jesus confronted people with the unavoidable obligation to side for or against him (Mt 12:30; Lk 11:23). Thank God that as long as Christ’s second coming delays, we live during the age of gospel proclamation and redemption when the spiritually blind are still made to see, and those dead in sin are raised to new life (Eph 2:4-5).

B. The guilty and the forgiven (vv. 40-41)

How ludicrous that anyone would consider Pharisees spiritually blind! Jesus could have replied that, yes, they are blind. But instead he turned a phrase, essentially saying, “You’re not so blind to be guiltless and have a legitimate excuse. You know the Bible and therefore you’re guilty before the law because it gives you enough spiritual knowledge about me to be responsible for your rejection of me.” Willful blindness carries real guilt because it robs God of the glory due to him through Christ. So what is the cure for willful, unrepentant blindness? The only work God requires of us to receive spiritual sight is to admit our blindness and ask Jesus for his light. But for those who think they can see just fine, then according to the Bible there is more hope for a fool, a tax collector, or a prostitute (Prov 26:12; Lk 18:10-14; Mt 21:28-32).

Conclusion – If you’re still considering whether to believe in Jesus and become a disciple, what tips does John 9 offer? Turn to the one who helped the blind man. If you’re weighing the question right now, it proves he has already helped you. He’s given you enough light to turn to him. For Christians who claim to see, what is the main lesson John 9 teaches us? Admit you would have no spiritual insight without the light of Christ shining into your mind enabling you to believe. As long as you trust in Christ to lead you out of darkness and into his light, you will never again have to be afraid of God’s judgment. Because as Jesus continues to do his work of dividing, finding, and revealing, his judgment will not be a condemning judgment, but a saving judgment.