

The Judgment of the Incarnation

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – the judgment inherent in the incarnation, as the Son of God gives sight to know him
2. aim – to cause us to truly see Christ as the fullness of the Son of God with our new eyes of faith
3. passage – John 9:35-39

b. outline

1. The Healing of the Blind Man
2. The Judgment of Blindness
3. The Judgment of Sight

c. opening

1. the **topical series** involving the incarnation of the Son of God (+7 since 2008)
 - a. the **Incarnation**: the entry of the fullness of Yahweh into the nature of a man; the divine nature entering into a cell in the womb of a virgin, born into the world as a child, growing up as a boy, and to becoming a man to do the will of God in creation
 - b. the **glory** = the fullness of God visible to the world (**John 1:14**); the **relevance** = God understanding fully the human experience; the **intimacy** = the personal nature of God coming into his world; the **humility** = the self-sacrificial, other-centered nature of God coming to us; the **wisdom** = God taking on our estate to satisfy his own requirements; the **trials** = the obedience of the Son of God in experiencing the trials of being human
 - c. **today**: a sermon that continues the subject of the incarnation by addressing another aspect of it
 1. the idea came to me when I thought of this phrase in prep for last week: “for judgment I have come into the world” – a phrase spoken by Jesus about his understanding of the Incarnation
 - a. the judge of **Jude 5** being Jesus – specifically, Jesus as the judge
 2. when I looked it up, I found it in the midst of **John 9** – and, I (later) saw a connection in the passage to some of the things Deb and I have experienced through this year (**a nudge?**)
2. the **thesis** of this topical sermon (as drawn from **John 9**):
 - a. **thesis: the entry of the Son of God into the world as a man is an act of judgment – a separation in the world of those who are given sight to see Jesus for who he truly is vs. those who are “given over” to their blindness, not seeing what is right before their eyes**
 1. it is a judgment *in the present* – over against the past-future aspect of **Jude 5** (**see below**)

I. The Healing of the Blind Man

Content

a. a summary of the events in John 9

1. **context is essential**: to understand **vv. 35ff**, we must **summarize** the chapter (**into 3 parts**)
 - a. took me three weeks in 2012 to preach the chapter – too much to exegete in one sermon now
 - b. the Fourth Gospel is a theological tome written to prove that Jesus is the Christ (**John 20:30f**)
“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
 1. throughout the Gospel, the miracles of Jesus are **signs**, pointing to his nature as the Son
 2. **John 9** is an entire chapter dedicated to a **single sign** (a most significant one)
2. **part #1**: the healing of the blind man by Jesus (**John 9:1-7**)
 - a. Jesus and his disciples pass by a man blind from birth (**how do they know this?**)
 - b. the disciples (out of their Jewish upbringing) ask Jesus a **theological question (paraphrased)**:
“since we know that all sickness, disease, deformity, and handicap are placed onto men by God due to their sin, what sin in this man (born blind) caused it: was it some prenatal sin on his part, or (possibly) the sin of his parents that was ‘passed on’ to him in some way?”
 1. **note**: remember this question – it is **central** to the story as it unfolds re: the Pharisees later
 - c. Jesus **corrects** the thinking of the disciples – the man was not born blind due to sin, but so that “the works of God” might be displayed in him
 1. **point**: Jesus **certainly knows** that deformity, etc. is the **indirect** result of sin (**i.e.** due to the Fall), but he corrects the **mistaken** notion that God **purposely causes** such things to “punish” people
 2. no, the man was born blind **for this particular moment in time** ... so that Jesus could do a mighty work in him (and not just giving him physical sight; **see below**)

- d. Jesus makes some mud, smears it on the man's eyes, and sends him away to wash – the man goes away and (when he washes the mud off) *his eyes are opened and he can see*
1. **note:** a sermon here about the Second Person using mud (*i.e.* dust) as he did in **Genesis 2?**
3. **part #2:** the controversy of the blind man by the Pharisees (**John 9:8-34**)
- a. **note:** none of this section involves Jesus *directly* – he is not present in any of the following ...
 - b. the neighbors (discovering he can see) have the same reaction as the disciples above: they need a *religious clarification* of what has happened (*i.e.* how can a man *under sin* be “relieved” of it?)
 - c. **in summary:** the Pharisees struggle with what has happened – they simply cannot understand or explain what Jesus has done *because their view of Jesus is that he is not one of them*
 1. “they” are the religious experts; “they” are the one’s who get to “interpret” and teach God
 - a. **e.g.** that physical deformity or handicap is how God *punishes* sin in people
 2. the *audacity* of the blind man (a man born in sin) to *assert* that Jesus was “a man from God” (by virtue of the miracle; **vv. 30ff**) *but wasn't one of them* is tantamount to *heresy*
 3. thus, they throw the “blind” man out of the synagogue in *judgment* (**excommunicate**)
4. **part #3:** the conversion of the “blind” man by Jesus (**John 9:35-39ff**)
- a. Jesus now *seeks out* the man (*i.e.* to *complete* the “works of God” in him; **see above**)
 - b. he asks the man: “do you believe in the Son of Man?”
 1. “Son of Man” – one of Jesus’ favorite titles for himself (**x86** in the Gospels) = a unique member of the human race; a “son” of humanity unique amongst all other “sons” of man
 2. specifically, a title designed to connect himself (as the *Divine One*) to the realm of humanity
 - a. **i.e.** the blind man had experienced **a divine action**: the healing of *dead eyes* – now, the man is being asked: do you believe in a *man* who possesses *divine prerogatives*?
 - b. **LOW:** the term “Son of Man” is Jesus’ way of speaking of himself as the God-man – God born into the human race, the incarnation of the divine nature into the human condition
 - c. the man asks: “who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”
 1. **note:** the blind man **has never physically seen Jesus** – his eyesight was restored away from Jesus – thus his question is logical: how will I **recognize** this God-man?
 - d. Jesus answers: “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you”
 1. **not:** “it’s me, right here” ... rather ...
 2. you have not seen me with *physical eyes*, but with eyes opened to the reality of who I am, and
 3. you have heard my voice, and my words have revealed the truth of what your “eyes” now see
 4. **LOW:** you have *seen me* with the spiritually-opened “eyes” of your heart, and my words of truth have given you the ability to confess what you can only know *by my divine power*
 - a. **i.e.** you have encountered God, and he has given you sight, both physical and spiritual
 - e. the man “worships” Jesus: he *prostrates* himself before his “Lord” (and God)
 1. like Thomas, he “sees” who Jesus truly is: the *kyrios* – Yahweh in human form, and *his actions* now betray *what he believes* (*i.e.* his worshipping is the *only reasonable response*)
- b. the key words of John 9**
1. the **central theological statement** in **v. 39**: “for judgment I came into this world ...”
 2. judgment (negative): the reality of *punishment* for wrongdoing; condemnation for *evildoers*
 - a. **e.g.** the Jesus who judged *in the past* (**Jude 5**) will also judge false teachers *in the future*
 3. judgment (positive): the *separation* by God of good from evil, the elect from the reprobate
 - a. **e.g.** the separation of the sheep and goats in **Matthew 25:31ff** – all judgment *begins* with the separation of individuals to where they belong; a separation of them *by virtue of their nature*
 - b. **the Incarnation is an act of God to judge the world by separating some from others ...**
 1. the very *presence* of the Son of God in his world “judges” people into categories ...

II. The Judgment of Blindness

Content

a. those who see but become blind

1. **question:** who are they that “see?” **answer:** those who *claim* to understand and know God, yet who’s vision of God is warped and twisted by tradition (or secularism or paganism or religion, etc.)
 - a. **humor:** in **v. 40**, the Pharisees (eavesdropping) understand Jesus *to be talking about them*
 - b. they claim to know God – they teach about God and his ways (note sin/deformity above)
 1. **e.g.** the Pharisees argued with the “blind” man that he had no right to “teach” them because he had no “standing” to do so (**see v. 34**) – he was not “trained”; his “experience” of being healed was not “sufficient” to educate *them* on the ways of God – their *traditions* were final

2. **LOW:** all of those (today) who write books about “God” or lecture the public about “God” or even ascend to pulpits to preach about “God” with only a twisted idea of who *God* really is
- c. **question:** how many people *this week* will celebrate Christmas and **have absolutely no idea of who it is they are celebrating** – or even *why* this particular birth is celebrated?
 1. three (3) generations of secular education wiping any special significance from this holiday
2. yet ... they “*become blind*” = claiming to know God, they do not even recognize him when he stands in front of them, doing the works and speaking the truth that only God can do
 - a. **the judgment of the Incarnation is when the very presence of God comes and stands before the reprobate heart and that heart cannot even see him – his very presence “gives them over” to their blindness and they become fools thinking they can “see”**

III. The Judgment of Sight

Content

a. those who do not see may see

1. **reality:** everyone in the world is *born blind* to the things of God (**see above**), and it takes a *special act of God* to “reverse” that blindness
 - a. this *particular* man (Jesus said) was *ordained* to blindness to display the “*works of God*” – just as the elect are predestined within God’s decree to receive the mercy of true sight
 - b. the blind man’s eyes were *regenerated* (**i.e.** made alive) – the heart of the elect man (through the proclamation of the Word) is *regenerated*, and is able to “see” Jesus for who he truly is
2. **note:** the blind man didn’t testify before the Pharisees of the nature of Jesus because he saw him *physically*, but because his *heart* was opened by the Spirit to “recognize” him
 - a. **i.e.** when Jesus sought him out and *spoke* to him, the man *knew* Jesus to be worthy of worship
 - b. **the judgment of the Incarnation is when the very presence of God comes and stands before the regenerated heart and that heart responds in true recognition – his very presence “gives” the elect man eyes to see God, to love him, and to worship the One sent to him**
 1. **i.e.** none of us have *physically seen* Jesus, but we *recognize* him nonetheless
3. **question:** Jesus restored the sight of many blind people during his public ministry – *did he ever strike anyone blind?* **answer:** yes, but only one – **Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:8-9; 17-19)**
 - a. a Pharisee, a blind guide of Israel, upon seeing the fullness of the glory of Christ Jesus in his risen state, was struck blind *in order that he might truly see Jesus* and worship him
 - b. **Christ has come to make God visible to us – we see him in our hearts with greater clarity than human eyes can ever see**
 1. and (one day) we will see him *face to face*, and our new hearts will truly recognize him
4. **so, celebrate Christmas with the new eyes of true faith – remember that this holiday is a celebration of the One who came to give us sight – to stand before us in all his glory and separate us from our blindness by doing the works of God in us**
 - a. and remember his words: “*blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (**Matthew 5:8**)