

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. EIGHT

SYMPTOMS OF UNBELIEF (Continued)

John 8

Introduction

I. UNBELIEF MAY TAKE MANY FORMS, AS WE HAVE SEEN IN JOHN 7

- A. But all doubting or investigating is not condemned by the Scriptures. The Bible definitely teaches that men are to seek evidence for believing. "By their fruits ye shall know them . . ." ". . . try every spirit . . ." ". . . prove all things, hold fast that which is good . . ." The Bereans searched the Scriptures to establish the validity of Paul's preaching. We do not follow Jesus because we have been deluded, deceived or duped. Our faith is founded on historical fact.
- B. Doubt is condemned, however, when it is born of a refusal to accept incontrovertible fact. Or, when unbelief is simply a carnal refusal to obey the truth when one has seen it—doubt then becomes damning.

II. LET US STUDY FURTHER THE SYMPTOMS OF UNBELIEF AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

- A. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God . . . so we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Heb. 3:12, 19
- B. Could it be that we may be guilty of any of these symptoms which will lead to our final expulsion from the streets of Heaven? Friend, some of these symptoms are evident even within the church of Christ today—among those who profess to follow Jesus we may find these symptoms of growing unbelief.

Discussion

I. PRIDE IN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE, 8:32-40

Pride in ancestral religion was an ever-abundant source of unbelief for the Jews. They could not believe that God would "nail" the exclusive Jewish heritage of Judaism to the cross and open the door for heathens to come into His favor. The Jews staked all his claims to Heaven upon his illustrious ancestry of Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets. God had separated them from all the heathen nations in a special way and they proposed to tell God that He could never give them up (remember Jonah). They enjoyed a unique religious standing because of their nationality. They continually pointed back to their ancestors and their accomplishments . . . they based their

salvation on their physical lineage and upon their national heritage. Many people today rest all their hopes concerning the here-after on Mother's religion or Father's religion. "The members of my family have been (———ists) since the Mayflower and that's good enough for me," they say. But Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Neither Mother's religion, nor the religion of the majority, nor your fiance's religion will save you—the revealed truth of God only brings salvation. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Some members of the Christian church are, in fact or in theory, resting all their hopes in the prestige and traditions of an Alexander Campbell or in an institutionalized church. The Scriptures state unequivocally that we dare not rest our hopes upon men and traditions of men. John the Baptist told the Jews, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Lk. 3:8).

II. ABUSE OF THE WORD OF GOD, 7:45-52; 8:37

Some of the Pharisees were infamous abusers of the Word of God. They had a certain mystical reverence for it but they revered their traditions above the pure Word (cf. Mark 7:6-13). They had no qualms about wresting the Scriptures and interpreting them to serve their own ends. They dishonored their aging parents refusing to supply their material needs by pronouncing their own possessions "Corban" (devoted to God). They gave perverted interpretations of the Law in order to welch on business deals. And here in our text Jesus accuses them of prohibiting the Word of God from having "free course" in their hearts (Jn. 8:37). They accused Jesus of blasphemy and condemned Him to death by a perversion of the law. They grossly perverted the intent of the Word of God when they refused to let Him heal a man on the Sabbath. Yet they would, in turn, violate the very letter of the law and rescue an expensive animal from a ditch on the Sabbath. Any time a person or a group of persons (whether the group be called a church or not) wrests the Scriptures to serve their own selfish ends, they are in a state of evil unbelief. Such an action "tries God" just as surely as the actions of the Israelites in the wilderness (cf. Heb. 3 & 4). Denominationalism is itself a perversion of the Bible. The Bible nowhere allows for men to construct and maintain the multitude of divisions and contrary doctrines taught in the name of Christ. Men and women who persist in perpetuating division by going beyond what is written in the Scriptures must come under the same condemnation as the Pharisees—abusers of God's Word!

III. NO LOVE FOR THE TRUTH, 8:45-46

Jesus accused the Pharisees of deliberately hating the truth! For the *very reason* that Jesus was telling them the truth, they would not believe Him. What a terrible accusation! He told them they were children of the devil, who stands in no relationship to anything that is true. When the devil speaks a lie, he speaks out of his very nature, for he is a liar and the father of liars. When the truth about the Pharisees became unpleasant, they sought for the pleasant thing, even if it had to be a lie in order to be pleasing. Such are those today who have "itching ears and heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts . . . and turn away from the truth and turn aside unto fables." Those who hate truth and have no love for righteousness will be deceived and believe a lie (cf. II Thess. 2:10-12). This is the crux of the matter with hundreds of people today—they have no love for the truth because they take pleasure in unrighteousness. They simply close their eyes and ears to the truth, because they have more pleasure in believing a lie! Such a state of heart makes fertile ground for the devil to plant his half-truths. The Jews wanted to believe a lie about the nature of their Messiah and thus the devil obliged them. So many men and women today do not want to face the reality of the temporal nature of this world—the reality of Hell—the reality of sin; these are symptoms of unbelief.

IV. INFLUENCED BY HEARSAY, 7:12, 40-43

The very fact that some of the multitude was led astray in their thinking by rumors and hearsay is evidence of their unbelief. Many people without courage and faith to think for themselves allow themselves to be swayed by the reports and rumors and opinions of others. These murmuring Jews had not come to their opinions of Jesus by personal investigation of His claims. They had heard the rulers pronounce judgment upon Him and they had not enough personal conviction or courage to make up their own minds. Uncommitted people are easily influenced and "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine." James describes this type of person who is "wishy-washy" and unstable (cf. James 1:6-7). Here one day, there the next—every new idea that comes along they become dupes for it because they haven't enough conviction of what is real truth. The church has a ministry to perform in establishing its members in the truth, which is as important as evangelism (cf. Eph. 4:13-14). The matter of belief is a matter of growing in knowledge of Jesus Christ; so is the matter of Christian unity; and so is the matter of progress and victory for Christ and the church.

V. LOVING THE HONOR OF MEN MORE THAN GOD'S HONOR, 7:50-52

Nicodemus spoke up timidly once in defense of Jesus. But after the browbeating he received from his important and powerful colleagues, he is conveniently silent! In another place we are told that Nicodemus was a "secret" disciple of Jesus. We do not have the right to judge or pronounce sentence upon Nicodemus, but we do maintain that cowardice is a manifestation of unbelief (cf. Matt. 10:28). As trusting disciples of Christ we must take Him at His word to protect us in all circumstances. There are other illustrations of this symptom (cf. John 12:42; John 9). Shallow faith which withers under tribulation and persecution is the product of rocky soil. The unbelief which will not openly confess Christ will result in Christ's denial of the unbeliever before the Father at judgment (cf. Mt. 7:21-23). When faced with opportunities every day of life to profess Christ and salvation to a lost and dying world, HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP? Do you have the dread symptom of unbelief known as loving the honor of men more than the honor of God?

VI. MORAL CARNALITY, 8:12

By carnality we do not necessarily mean sensuality. Sometimes this word "carnal" is used to mean only an unregenerate way of thinking which may be true even of baptized believers (cf. I Cor. 3:1-2). When Jesus accused the Pharisees of judging "after the flesh," He did not mean they were sensual or immoral, but He was warning them that they were judging Him and the works of God by their earthly standards. They "strained the gnat and swallowed the camel . . ." They "left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith . . ." Men may be carnal and not immoral. The Pharisees were such men—generally on the outside they were strictly moral. Their carnality consisted in rejecting Jesus because He demanded sacrifice of self-righteousness—something they did not want to give up. So is every man carnal who desires to be justified before God by His good works alone. He is not eager to admit that he is still a long way from what God demands even in the Law. He will grasp at and hold to every denial of a perfect standard—this is why the Jews killed Jesus. Such men will gladly welcome unbelief because it removes from their sight the accusing high standard of Christ's teachings which pass judgment on their inability to keep the law of commandments.

Conclusion

- I. THESE, THEN, ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF UNBELIEF
 - A. Human nature has not changed in 2000 years, nor has the devil gone to sleep.
 - B. We are just as susceptible to every symptom of unbelief here as were the Pharisees.
- II. CHRIST IS ALWAYS THE BURNING ISSUE!
 - A. He has made claims to be the Son of God . . .
 - B. Here at the Feast of Tabernacles He said . . .
 1. ". . . except that ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."
 2. Unbelief takes a man into eternity with all the sentence of his sins upon his own person . . . where he will have to suffer the eternal punishment for them.
- III. CHRIST FACES YOU NOW WITH HIS CLAIMS
 - A. "If you have seen me you have seen the Father . . ."
 - B. "He that hath the Son hath the Father . . ."
 - C. "Believe in God, believe also in Me . . ."
 - D. Don't be deceived by Satan and trapped into the snare of unbelief.

EXAMINATION, CHAPTERS 7 and 8

True or False

1. Jesus may have purposely missed some Jewish feasts.
2. There is a contradiction in the Bible at John 7:8-10.
3. We are commanded by Jesus, in chapter 7, to judge.
4. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit was given to men while Jesus lived on earth.
5. The best manuscript evidence indicates that the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11) is not a part of John's gospel.
6. The Jews had never been in bondage to anyone.
7. Jesus challenged anyone to convict Him of sin.

Who Said This

1. "For no man doeth anything in secret, and himself seeketh to be known openly."
2. "Hath not the Scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"
3. "Never man so spake."
4. "But this multitude that knoweth not the law are accused."
5. "Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?"
6. "He that is of God heareth the words of God."

Supply the Scriptural Answers to These Questions

1. Q. "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you doeth the law? Why seek ye to kill me?"
A.
2. Q. "Why did ye not bring him?"
A.
3. Q. "Will he kill himself, that he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come?"
A.
4. Q. "If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?"
A.

Multiple Choice

1. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated:
 - a. Passing over of the death angel in the time of exodus
 - b. Rededication of the temple
 - c. Wandering in the wilderness
2. Jesus' brothers:
 - a. Saw His miracles and did not believe
 - b. Saw His miracles and believed
 - c. Believed in Him without seeing His miracles
3. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit:
 - a. Is to be kept
 - b. Is to become a source of life flowing from us to others
 - c. Is given only to a select few
4. The multitudes:
 - a. Were all in favor of Jesus
 - b. Were silent about Jesus
 - c. Were disagreeing among themselves about Jesus
5. To die in one's sins means:
 - a. To die while committing a particular sin
 - b. To die as a result of some terrible sin
 - c. To die, not having one's sins forgiven, and having to pay the penalty forever
6. To lift up the Son of man means:
 - a. To glorify Him by praise
 - b. To put Him upon the throne
 - c. To crucify Him

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

7. The Jews slandered Jesus by:
 - a. Calling Him a "Samaritan"
 - b. Calling Him a "liar"
 - c. Calling Him "prince of demons"
8. Abraham saw Jesus:
 - a. Before He (Abraham) was born
 - b. In a vision
 - c. By faith
9. The Jews could not understand Jesus because:
 - a. He spoke in a different language
 - b. They did not know what He was talking about
 - c. They could not tolerate His teaching
10. Jesus said that in order to be free:
 - a. We must have a democratic form of government
 - b. We must be free from all restraints of religion
 - c. We must abide in and obey His word
11. When the Jews said, "We were not born of fornication"; they probably meant:
 - a. Our physical parents were not adulterers
 - b. We were not born of fornication, but you were
 - c. We are not descendants of spiritual fornicators (idolators)

Match These Scriptures

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| 1. "If any man willeth to do his will," | a. "but judge righteous judgment." |
| 2. "But because I say the truth | b. from within him shall flow rivers of living water." |
| 3. "If a man keep my word | c. ye shall be free indeed." |
| 4. "Judge not according to appearance | d. ye shall die in your sins." |
| 5. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, | e. and the truth shall make you free." |
| 6. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, | f. he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." |
| 7. ". . . except ye believe that I am he, | g. he shall never see death." |

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

8. ". . . and ye shall know the truth
9. "If ye abide in my word,
10. "The world cannot hate you:
- h. ye believe me not."
i. then are ye truly my disciples."
j. but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil."

Essay Questions

1. Describe the Feast of Tabernacles. What was approximate time of feast? How was it observed? Who attended? Where observed?
2. Discuss the textual evidence for the omission of John 7:53—8:11.
3. Discuss the significance of John 7:38-39.
4. Discuss the true spiritual children of Abraham. Who are the true spiritual children of Abraham? What other New Testament Scriptures speak of Children of Abraham (spiritually)?

CHAPTER NINE

If it were not so tragic, this ninth chapter would be comical. Here is a man blind from birth healed by the Nazarene and the Pharisees, rather than accept the evident fact that Jesus had healed him, chose to question the man's former blindness. Next, his parents, out of cowardice, "pass the buck" and will not take sides with their son. The really amusing section, however, is found in verses 24-34. In these verses the former blind man by common-sense reasoning makes the learned Pharisees look ridiculous. The beggar turns the tables on the Pharisees and he becomes the questioner instead of the questioned. The Pharisees, unable to withstand the man's testimony, can think of nothing but to attack the character of the beggar and use ecclesiastical force against him.

Chapter nine is simply a continued record of teachings and works of Jesus in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles. Whether this incident was on the same day and immediately after the discourse of chapter 8, or whether it was on another day afterward is of little significance. The important matter is the evidential power of the miracle and the teaching Jesus attached to it. The outline is continued:

- II. The Word Manifested to the Jews and their rejection of Him, 1:19—12:50
 - D. Public Ministry, Third Year
 2. Later Judean Ministry, 7:1—10:21, The Feast of Tabernacles
 - a. A Blind Man Healed, 9:1-12
 - b. He is Investigated by the Authorities, 9:13-23

- c. The Questioned One becomes Questioner, 9:24-34
- d. Blindness that is blindness indeed! 9:35-41

A BLIND MAN HEALED

Text 9:1-12

- 1 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth.
- 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?
- 3 Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.
- 4 We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work
- 5 When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.
- 6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay,
- 7 and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing.
- 8 The neighbors therefore, and they that saw him aforetime, that he was a beggar, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?
- 9 Others said, It is he: others said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am he.
- 10 They said therefore unto him, How then were thine eyes opened?
- 11 He answered, The man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to Siloam, and wash: so I went away and washed, and I received sight.
- 12 And they said unto him, Where is he? He saith, I know not.

Queries

- a. Why such a question from the disciples (v. 2)?
- b. Why put clay on the man's eyes?
- c. Is there any faith evidenced by the blind beggar?

Paraphrase

And as Jesus and His disciples were walking along He saw a man who was blind from his birth on. And His disciples asked Him saying, Teacher, did this man's sin or his parents' sin cause him to be blind? Jesus answered, It was not that this man or his parents sinned which caused his blindness. His blindness has happened to him within the providence of God in order that God's works of mercy and power might be made manifest in him. We, while our appointed time and

opportunities for working still remain, must make the most of our opportunities and do the works of the One who sent Me. The night-time of life comes to every man and then our opportunities to do God's work is over. I am the world's source of divine light and truth as long as I am in the world and so I must make the most of My opportunities here. Having said these things He spat upon the ground and made clay of the spittle and daubed the clay upon the blind man's eyes. Then Jesus said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (interpreted it means Sent). So he went away and washed and returned seeing! His neighbors and those who had seen him before and known him as a beggar were saying to one another, This is not the blind one who used to sit begging is he? Some said, Yes, this is the beggar; but others were saying, No, but he resembles that one. But the man himself said, Yes, I am that man. So they said to him, How were your eyes opened? He answered, The man who is called Jesus made clay and daubed my eyes with the clay and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash. I went and washed as he commanded and behold, I received my sight. They said to him, Where is this man? He replied, I do not know.

Summary

Jesus cures a man born blind. The disciples are concerned about the theological aspects of the man's blindness. Jesus uses the man's blindness to perform a miracle and testify to His deity and, further, to illustrate His teaching that He is the light of the world.

Comment

It would seem that the blind beggar was observed by Jesus and His disciples immediately upon their leaving the temple as recorded in John 8:59. The temple gates were appropriate places for the multitudes of aged and infirm of Jesus' day whose only means of existence was begging. People would be coming and going continually (and especially during annual festivals) to drop their shekels in the temple treasury. In fact, the Book of Acts tells of one beggar (Acts 3:3) who was carried and placed daily at the gate Beautiful in order to beg alms. This particular blind beggar must have been well-known for the disciples to have known him as one blind from birth. The time when Jesus and the disciples passed by and saw the beggar is not important. It could have been the day following Jesus' escape from

the temple (8:59). Jesus continued His later Judean ministry, in and around Jerusalem, for at least three months (from Tabernacles in September to Dedication in December). But it seems more in harmony with the context that this incident took place on the same day that "Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple."

We can understand the alternative explanation of the disciples when they attributed the man's blindness to parental sin, but why would they suggest that a man *born* blind might be blind as a result of his own sin? How could a man sin before he was born? First, the Jews unhesitatingly connected suffering with sin. Job's friends attributed his calamities to his hypocrisy (cf. Job 4:5-8). All of man's infirmities are attributable in the final analysis to sin—Adam's sin brought about physical disease and death (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; also Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:20-23). Furthermore, the sins of parents may be visited upon their children in physical calamities even to the fourth generation (cf. Ex. 20:5; 34:7; Num. 14-18; Deut. 5:9, 28:32; Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2). And it is also true that much of a man's suffering is brought by his own sin and dissipation.

Could it be that in their dilemma they were thinking that if his blindness were a punishment for his own sin, then God must have punished him before he sinned, since he had been blind from his birth—or, the only other alternative, to them, was that the innocent child was being punished for the guilty parents.

According to most commentators, the Jewish Rabbis exaggerated the theological implications of the relationship between sin and suffering all out of proportion to what God's revealed truth actually says. Jesus did not agree with some of their ideas (cf. Luke 13:2-5). Some of the Rabbis are said to have believed that infants still in the womb were able to commit prenatal sin. According to their interpretation of Genesis 25:22-26, Esau had tried to murder Jacob while still in the womb of their mother! Other scholars have traced out in a Judaism later than Jesus' time a Jewish belief in the pre-existence of souls and their ability to sin in such a pre-existent state. Perhaps some of the Rabbis contemporary with Jesus were even then teaching this doctrine.

Whether the disciples had been exposed to these Rabbinical theories or not, they were concerned with the blind man primarily in a theological sense. They were wanting Jesus to give His opinion on the subject.

Jesus was not primarily interested in wasting time in speculating on the theological question of the cause for the man's blindness. His time was precious and to be used primarily for bringing remedy to the results of sin and evil. Jesus does not contradict the teaching of the Scriptures when He says, "that the man is not blind as a result of his own sin nor the sin of his parents." The man is still subject to mortal infirmities because of Adam's sin. Neither did Jesus imply that the man or his parents were without sin. In light of our ignorance on the mystery of suffering and affliction we will do well to accept what God has revealed and not to speculate further. Jesus simply stated here that, within the providential scheme of God, this man's blindness was in order that the works of God might be made manifest through Him. As Hendriksen says, "All things—even afflictions and calamities—have as their ultimate purpose the glorification of God in Christ by means of the manifestation of His greatness." (Gospel of John, Vol. II, Wm. Hendriksen, pub. Baker, page 73.) This is the teaching of the Scriptures (cf. Rom. 8:28; II Cor. 4:17) and this is the ultimate lesson which Job learned (cf. Job 42:1-6).

To the disciples this man presented an opportunity for theological speculation which was time-wasting and unprofitable. To Jesus the man's extremity presented a challenge and an opportunity to manifest in Himself the glory of God and the authority of God. Giving sight to the blind was to be a sign that the Messiah had come (cf. Isa. 35:5, 29:18, 32:3ff, 42:7; Matt. 12:22; Lk. 4:18-19).

In verse 4 Jesus makes it plain that He has only a certain allotted time in which to manifest Himself as the Son of God. It seems that Jesus means His period of earthly life when He says "day" and by "the night cometh when no man can work," He means physical death, when He shall depart this earth. This harmonizes with the general idea that Jesus is trying to teach the disciples concerning the man's blindness. But the Lord's statement in verse 4 is true of all His followers. We all pass this way but once. We must make the most of our opportunities to carry out our divinely appointed commission to proclaim and live the word of Christ. When the time of our departure draws nigh, let us be ready to say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:6-8).

He has a special work to do while He is in the world. While He is here He is the light of the world in a special sense (cf. John 1:4-18). While He was here He was the "effulgence of his glory,

and the very image of his [God's] substance" (cf. Heb. 1:3). Jesus was Emmanuel (God with us). He came to walk among men and reveal unto them the Father (cf. John 14:7-11). He is, of course, still the Light of the World through the written testimony of His Word, the Bible, and through the reflected glory of the lives of His followers, in whom His Spirit abides.

Two reasons are generally offered for Christ's anointing the man's eyes with mud made of spittle: (1) To challenge the Pharasaic tradition of prohibiting application of medications on the Sabbath, and/or (2) to give the blind man some symbolic or expressive action in order that he might know the power to heal his blindness comes from Jesus. Perhaps the second explanation is the more to be desired. Jesus used this method at other times (cf. Mark 7:33, 8:23) and so did the prophets (cf. II Kings 4:29; Isa. 8:18) to show that the miraculous healing was communicated through them.

Why did Jesus send the blind man to the pool of Siloam? The pool of Siloam was just inside the southeast portion of the city wall and quite a distance from the temple—there were probably facilities much handier where the man might wash. We believe there were two reasons for such a command: (a) He sent the man there to test his faith. Faith must be tested and expressed. Actually, neither the mud nor the water had any medicinal qualities except as Jesus used them miraculously. The Scriptures are replete with such tests of faith by demanding obedience to an arbitrary command—both Old Testament and New Testament. Just one example will illustrate—Naaman the Syrian captain cured of leprosy by dipping himself seven times in the muddy Jordan river (cf. II Kings 5:10); (b) This pool probably had some symbolic, typical, or spiritual Messianic significance (cf. Isa. 8:6 and our comments on this pool in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles, John 7:38). John could be hinting of this spiritual significance when he adds the interpretation of the pool as "Sent."

The pool of Siloam has an interesting history. The water supply for Jerusalem was mainly from outside the city walls and always subject to being cut off by her enemies in event of siege. King Hezekiah, realizing that Sennacherib was about to invade Judah, in about 701 B.C., had workers tunnel through solid rock a conduit from the Virgin's Fountain (or Spring Gihon) into a pool inside the city (cf. II Chron. 32:2-8, 30; Isa. 22:9-11; II Kings 20:20). The engineers began their cutting from both ends and met in the middle and tunneled through solid rock with the very inadequate equipment of that

day for a distance of 583 yards. In 1880 a tablet was discovered by two boys, while wading, which had been cut into the stone in Hezekiah's reign to commemorate the completion of the tunnel. This inscription would have been there when the blind beggar went to wash the mud from his eyelids.

Jesus, wishing to remain hidden from those who would have stoned Him in the temple, quietly left the scene of the miraculous healing. The beggar, now able to drink in the world with his eyes, would go quickly home to tell his parents the exciting news. And there was excitement, indeed, as the neighbors couldn't believe their eyes. Some of them were unable to believe that this was their former blind neighbor until he, himself, said, "I am he." Naturally they are eager to hear how he received his sight. The man knew very little, actually, of what had transpired. He simply related clearly and concisely what he knew—the man called Jesus put clay on his eyes, told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam; he did so and received his sight. Someone no doubt told the blind man that it was the man called Jesus who commanded him—perhaps even Jesus told him His name. But, as we shall see later, the former blind man had not yet come to know Jesus as the Christ. The beggar's neighbors must have been cohorts with the Pharisees. Their desire to know where Jesus could be found is only natural and arises out of the excitement of His apparent miracle upon their neighbor.

Quiz

1. What teachings concerning sin and suffering might cause the disciples to ask their question in verse 2?
2. Why was the man born blind?
3. What does Jesus mean primarily in verse 4? Does it apply to everyone?
4. How was Jesus the "light of the world while He was in the world"?
5. Why did Jesus put clay on the man's eyes?
6. Why command the man to wash in the pool of Siloam?
7. Who built the conduit to the pool of Siloam? What archeological evidence is there to substantiate the antiquity of this pool?

THE BLIND MAN INVESTIGATED

Text 9:13-23

- 13 They bring to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.
- 14 Now it was the sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

15 Again therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he received his sight. And he said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and I see.

16 Some therefore of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, because he keepeth not the sabbath. But others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them.

17 They say therefore unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, in that he opened thine eyes? And he said, He is a prophet.

18 The Jews therefore did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and had received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight,

19 and asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

20 His parents answered and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

21 but how he now seeth, we know not; or who opened his eyes, we know not; ask him; he is of age; he shall speak for himself.

22 These things said his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man should confess him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

Queries

- a. Why the disagreement among the Pharisees (v. 16)?
- b. Why did the Jews refuse to believe that the man had been healed until they questioned his parents?
- c. Were the man's parents really ignorant of who had opened their son's eyes?

Paraphrase

Then they conducted the former blind man to the Pharisees (and it should be remembered that it was on the sabbath day that Jesus made clay and opened the man's eyes). The man was being asked again, now by the Pharisees, how he had received his sight. So he said to them, He put clay on my eyes and I washed, and now I am seeing. Some of the Pharisees were saying, This fellow is no man sent from God, for he is not keeping the sabbath. Others were saying, How is a sinner-man able to do such great signs? And there was disagreement among them. Therefore they spoke again to the man, say-

ing, What do you say about him seeing that you have declared that he opened your eyes? The blind man replied, He is a prophet! However, the Jews would not believe the beggar that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the man's parents and questioned them, saying, Is this man your son, whom you are saying was born blind? How then is it that he now sees? The man's parents answered, We know that this is our son and we know that he was born blind. How he is now able to see, or who opened his eyes we do not know! Ask him; he is of age. He can speak for himself. His parents gave this answer because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jewish authorities had already agreed that anyone who acknowledged Jesus as the Christ should be excommunicated from the synagogue. And for this very reason his parents said, He is of age, ask him.

Summary

The Pharisees will not even believe that the man was formerly blind. His parents testify that he was born blind. But the man's parents will not testify as to who their son's Healer is, for fear of excommunication. One thing is certain to the Pharisees: Jesus of Nazareth cannot be a God-sent miracle worker for he violates their Sabbath traditions.

Comment

Who brought the former blind man before the Pharisees? We do not know. The best guess is that some of the helpers of the Pharisees were sent to find the beggar and bring him in for questioning. It is doubtful that any of the neighbors of the man would be so eager to involve him. The news of the miracle would certainly get back to the Pharisees rapidly for, as John says parenthetically, Jesus performed the miracle on the Sabbath! For Jesus to heal again on the Sabbath was like waving a red flag in the face of a herd of enraged bulls. (For a study of Jesus and controversy, see our Volume I, pages 214-217.)

This seems to have been a formal investigation by the Pharisees, called for the specific purpose of questioning the man and passing judgment upon the miracle and the miracle-worker. It was the duty of the religious leaders to investigate all such incidents. They were charged with investigating the claims and doctrines of all who professed a message from God (Matt. 23:2; John 1:19-24). For an excellent discussion of this matter see Hendriksen's commentary on this section. It was also the duty and responsibility of the Pharisees to

"judge righteous judgment." These men, however, had already passed judgment on the miracle-worker, Jesus, before they investigated the miracle. They had already made up their minds that Jesus was a blasphemer. This investigation could only be a mockery of truth.

The beggar answered the first question simply and precisely. It is interesting to note that the beggar used the present tense when he said, "I see." Instead of saying, "I was made to see," he says, "I am seeing." He wants to emphasize for the Pharisees that although they may never know *how* the miracle took place, they can be sure that it *did* take place!

The Pharisees, caring not one iota that a man had been delivered from the chains of darkness, are interested only in their sanctimonious Sabbath traditions. The real issue here, however, is not their Sabbath traditions, but finding some straw of an accusation with which to condemn Jesus of Nazareth and sentence Him to death.

Others of the Pharisees are less emotional. There stood the beggar—formerly blind from birth but now seeing. Their problem was: "How can a man that is an open sinner do such great signs?" The word used for sinner is *hamartolos*, used in most places as an intensifier (cf. Luke 7:37, 39; 13:2) and means an open sinner or flagrant sinner. Jesus claimed to work miracles greater than any other (cf. John 15:24) and the beggar claims this miracle to be extraordinary (v. 32). There may have been a division in their thinking here, but it is quickly resolved and in united action they both condemn Jesus and excommunicate the beggar (vs. 28, 29, 34).

For the moment, however, the judges cannot agree among themselves. They hope they have frightened the beggar by hauling him before their august court. If he is frightened enough, perhaps he will say exactly what they want him to say about Jesus—"He is a profaner of the Law." But the beggar is far from frightened. He is indeed a man of courage and conviction. He answers, "He is a prophet!" The Pharisees had already expressed their judgment of Jesus ("Sabbath breaker"), but with the bravery of conviction the beggar confessed Jesus to be a prophet. What a contrast! Men who had studied the Law and the Prophets all their lives could not see that Jesus was sent from God, while a man blind from birth—unable to have ever studied the Scriptures—can readily see that Jesus must be a prophet sent from God. The real contrast is between those who *would* not see and one who would see; it is a matter of wanting to see! The Pharisees were also wanting the beggar to commit himself to an opinion concerning Jesus that they might use it against him later. If they cannot harm Jesus, they will harm the man He healed. The hate of the Jewish

rulers for Jesus was so intense that they would go to any length to express it. Later they would seek to kill the resurrected Lazarus out of their hate for Jesus (cf. John 12:9-11).

Although the Pharisees had the testimony of the man himself and, perhaps, the testimony of those who brought the beggar to them, they refused to accept the fact that the man had been blind and had been miraculously given his sight. That should have been enough evidence. But let's give them the benefit of the doubt and judge their reaction after more evidence has been presented.

The parents of the beggar are called before the investigating committee. In answer to the question as to whether he is their son they answer affirmatively. In answer to the question concerning his congenital blindness, again the answer is, "Yes, he was born blind." Now the facts are incontrovertible. That a very notable miracle has been wrought is undeniable. Now if the Pharisees will not believe it is not a matter of insufficient evidence but of wilfull rejection of the truth!

The parents could have used some of the courage and conviction of their son. They were evidently not telling the truth when they said, ". . . who opened his eyes, we know not . . ." for verse 22 implies that they did know. But, as Hendriksen points out, before we criticize them too severely we must consider what we would have done in similar circumstances. To be excommunicated for the Jew was even more fearful than modern-day excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church. The excommunicated Jew was literally cut off from all social, religious, economic, or fraternal associations. His family counted him as dead (cf. John 12:42 and 16:2). The excommunicated Jew was to become to his countrymen as a heathen (cf. Matt. 18:17).

The parents, fearing these terrible consequences, determined before facing the Pharisees that they would never confess Jesus as the Messiah. It should also be clear that the Pharisees did not call this investigation to determine the *truth*. They had already agreed among themselves and made a public declaration that anyone openly confessing Jesus as the Messiah would be excommunicated. This inquiry was made in hopes that they might get some evidence to make what they had already determined to do—kill Jesus—appear less evil.

There is a very expressive phrase in the Greek rendering of verse 23. The English "Therefore" of v. 23 is a translation of the Greek, *dia touto*, which would best be translated "Because of this," or "For

this very reason . . ." There was no doubt in John's mind that the parents' reluctance to confess Jesus as the one who had healed their son was for the very reason that they feared excommunication.

Quiz

1. Is this investigation by the Pharisees a seeking after the truth? Why?
2. Why ask the beggar his opinion of Jesus?
3. Why did the Jews not believe that the beggar had formerly been blind?
4. After the answers of the parents, what must the Pharisees admit?
5. What was involved in being put out of the synagogue?
6. What was the real reason for the refusal of the parents to tell who had healed their son?

THE QUESTIONED BECOMES QUESTIONER

Text 9:24-34

24 So they called a second time the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner.

25 He therefore answered, Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

26 They said therefore unto him, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

27 He answered them, I told you even now, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? would ye also become his disciples?

28 And they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are disciples of Moses.

29 We know that God hath spoken unto Moses: but as for this man, we know not whence he is.

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he opened mine eyes.

31 We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth.

32 Since the world began it was never heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.

33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

Queries

- a. What do the Pharisees mean by saying, "Give glory to God"?
- b. What is meant by, "God heareth not sinners"?
- c. Why did the Pharisees say the beggar was "altogether born in sin"?

Paraphrase

So for the second time the Pharisees called the man that had been blind, and adjured him, Give glory to God; we know that this particular man is an open sinner. The beggar replied, Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know; one thing I do know—I was blind and now I can see! So they said to him, What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? Deliberately the man answered them, I have told you already and you would not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become his disciples, do you? They reviled him vociferously, sneering, You are that one's disciple; we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow we do not know where he has come from. The man replied, Well this is astonishing, that you say you do not know where he comes from and yet he has opened my eyes. We Jews know that God does not hear wilfull sinners, but if a man is a worshipper of God and seeks to do His will, to such a man God listens. Now, since the world began it was never heard that a man opened the eyes of a man born blind. It follows then that if this man were not from God, he would never be able to do anything like this—They interrupted vehemently, You were absolutely conceived and begotten in sin; and are you now presuming to teach us? And they cast him out!

Summary

The poor beggar is not awed by the presence of the Pharisees. He is a man with a good and honest heart upon which the truth has fallen and is slowly bringing forth fruit. The beggar is more amazed at the wilfull blindness of the Pharisees than anything else. By his sincere, innocent and capable logic he becomes the questioner and exposes the stiff-necked unreasonableness of the Pharisees. He is summarily excommunicated for his troubles.

Comment

The adjuration, "Give glory to God," could be either the administration of an oath or simply a statement that the man should give Jehovah the glory for His healing rather than Jesus whom they "know" to be a sinner. The commentators are disagreed. We prefer to think that this tribunal was attempting to intimidate their precocious opponent by the adjuration of an oath. There were many different formulae used to express the judicial oath among the Jews (cf. I Sam. 14:39, 44, 19:6; 20:3, 20:23; II Sam. 11:11, 14:19, 15:21; Matt. 5:34, 23:16, 26:63). This particular phrase is used in Joshua 7:19 when Achan was adjured to "Give glory to God," and tell the truth as to his guilt. The Pharisees, having been thus far confounded and put on the defensive, bring to bear all the ecclesiastical and judicial authority they possess. They must regain the offensive. This naive and common beggar has, in his sincere adherence to the facts, shown the Pharisees for what they really are—bigoted, ambiguous and dishonest. The rulers have already pronounced Jesus an open sinner, yet this beggar dares to call Him a prophet. To protect their proud position and to find an occasion for condemning Jesus to death, they threaten this man with an oath.

The arrogant, "we know" on the part of the Pharisees is not new. They were certain that they alone possessed knowledge. They were the intelligentsia and all others were ignorant (cf. John 7:14, 45-52). The rebuke of Job to his three friends, "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you," would be fitting for the Pharisees.

But the man was not awed—he would not be intimidated. The beggar had been presented irrefutable evidence that this Jesus was more than a mere man. His evidence is empirical—the highest type of evidence—that which appeals to the senses of man. Such evidence is so overwhelmingly factual he must stand in opposition to Pharisaiic opinion regardless of the consequences. Furthermore, the very nature of the evidence makes only "this *one* thing" outweigh all the force of Pharisaiic authority and prestige.

Now, having been bested in cross-examination and having their bigotry exposed, *the only way* they can think of to carry out their nefarious bluff is to repeat their question concerning the "how" of the alleged miracle. Perhaps they are hoping to trip the beggar into a contradiction in his account.

The beggar's bravery is exciting to behold! In view of the power residing in this tribunal of Pharisees the man's courage is challenging. It is no less than amazing that his ironic answer in verse 27 did not incite the ire of the Pharisees more than it did! Only their all-consuming concentration on killing Jesus saved the beggar from probable bodily harm at this moment. The apostle Paul was later struck in the mouth for alleged impertinence in the same type of situation (Acts 23:2). He has told them over and over again from his own personal experience—they have heard plainly enough, but refuse to accept the truth which is necessarily implied if they do acknowledge the miracle. The man's exasperation with these opinionated, self-righteous dogmatists is understandable. What man is able to retain his patience with those who deliberately and continually refuse to admit that which is undeniable.

Maliciously they turn upon the beggar with vile imprecations. The man has humiliated, outwitted and exposed these judges of Israel. He has further completely turned the tables in this investigation—the prosecutors have become the prosecuted! The only recourse imaginable to these Pharisees arises out of the very nature of their hearts—to revile the man.

They could hardly think of any malediction more vile than to say, "You are that one's disciple!" They would not even so much as speak the name of Jesus. He was judged by the rulers and teachers of Israel as a blasphemer—a servant of Satan. Jesus was also pronounced a heretic—advocating (according to the Jews) destruction of the Law of Moses. The rulers had decided that Jesus must be destroyed (because of envy) and regardless of His truth and righteousness, anyone defending Him was also no better than a heretic.

As for themselves, the Pharisees boasted, "we are the disciples of Moses." But Moses would never claim them! For Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt . . ." Moses, through what he wrote, condemned these pseudo-disciples. Moses wrote of the great Prophet that was to be raised up from among them (cf. Deut. 18:15-19) and Jesus was that Prophet (cf. John 5:45-47; Luke 24:44; Acts 3:21-24). The warning of John the Baptist three years previous still applies (cf. Matt. 3:9), for God is not only able to raise up from stones children unto Abraham, but unto Moses as well.

Again the presumptuous, "we know." Yes, they knew that God had spoken to Moses, but they lacked the essential thing—*what* God

had really spoken to Moses. But here is the marvel—just as the blind man saw it—they “knew” so much about Moses which they had to accept on the testimony of the written record, yet they would not accept the first-hand testimony of this miracle which witnessed to Jesus! It simply astounded the guileless and straightforward beggar that men would so deliberately blind themselves to truth. This former blind man has a heart of the “good and honest” type, for to him Jesus’ origin is evident—He is from God!

Their esteemed Moses, great as he was, had never performed any such miracle as this—opening the eyes of one congenitally blind. In fact, it had never been heard of in all the annals of history until the beggar’s day and age. None of the prophets had done such a miracle.

As Hendriksen points out, the beggar is an excellent logician. His syllogism here is perfect:

Major Premise: God hears and answers and works through only those who worship Him and abide in His will and are sent from Him.

Minor Premise: This man Jesus performed an unheard of and astounding miracle—greater even than any Moses had wrought.

Conclusion: This man Jesus is just as definitely sent from God as was Moses. He cannot possibly be an open and flagrant sinner as the Pharisees accuse Him.

Not only does the beggar use logic to prove his point, but he evidently had in mind many of the Scriptures which the Pharisees should have remembered concerning God’s relationship to the wicked. God does not hear nor answer the prayers of the willfull and blatant sinner 15:29; Isa. 1:15, 59:2; Jer. 11:11, 14:12; Ezek. 8:18; Mic. 3:4; (cf. I Sam. 8:18; Job 27:9, 35:12; Psā. 18:41, 66:18; Prov. 1:28, Zech. 7:13; John 8:21; Acts 10:35).

This verse (31) has been abused. Some have taken it from its context and used it as a proof-text to declare that any person not affiliated with the Christian church cannot expect to have their prayers heard by God. It is very plain from Acts 10:35 that God hears the sincere and honest prayers of those who have not yet “been obedient to that form of doctrine.” In fact, in Cornelius’ case, God heard the prayer of one who had not yet even heard of the gospel of Christ! This, of course, may even be true of men and women today who have not yet heard the gospel, but are earnestly praying and seeking God’s will—God may hear and answer their prayers.

On the other hand, God will not listen nor will He answer the prayers of men and women who regard iniquity in their heart. Wilfull

sinner—persistent disobeyers—will not be heard, regardless of their outward affiliations with whatever religious group to which they may belong (cf. all the Major and Minor Prophets). To be heard of God we must hear Him—to receive of His bounty, we must be obedient and full of faith.

Note the beggar's growing faith and knowledge of Jesus. First, "the man that is called Jesus . . ." (v. 11); next, "he is a prophet . . ." (v. 17); next, ". . . from God . . ." (v. 33); and last, ". . . Lord, I believe . . ." (v. 38).

Here is a miracle that is a miracle indeed—and the Pharisees cannot deny the veracity of its accomplishment. They themselves can readily see that the man has his sight. Both the neighbors and the man's parents testified under fear of banishment that the man had been born blind. The man himself testified under oath that Jesus of Nazareth had performed a miracle. The Pharisees could not disprove it.

The only way they could think to maintain their self-begotten prestige was to attack the character of the beggar and to excommunicate him from the synagogue. They inferred what Jesus had denied (cf. v. 2)—that the beggar's blindness was an indication of his and his parents' wanton sinfulness. How dare he presume to teach the scholars of the Scriptures anything! This is normal procedure for the rulers of the Jews—if they cannot disprove the miracles attesting to Christ's message, they will threaten the messengers or do them bodily harm (cf. Acts 4:16-21).

Quiz

1. What two reasons are given for the Pharisees saying, "Give glory to God"?
2. What is the highest type of evidence to attest to a fact?
3. Why is the beggar's bravery so exciting?
4. Why was their boast to be the disciples of Moses absurd?
5. Why did the beggar "marvel"?
6. What two ways did the beggar prove Jesus to be from God?
7. Does God ever hear the prayers of non-Christians? How do you know?

BLINDNESS INDEED!

Text 9:35-41

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

36 He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

39 And Jesus said, For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind.

40 Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and said unto him, Are we also blind?

41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth.

Queries

- a. How did the beggar "worship" Jesus?
- b. Why would Jesus come to make some blind?
- c. How would being blind help the Pharisees to be without sin?

Paraphrase

Jesus heard that the rulers had cast the beggar out and had excommunicated him; so Jesus went searching for the man and, having found him, said to him, Do you believe in the Son of man — the Messiah? The beggar answered, saying, Who is he, Sir, Tell me in order that I may believe in him? Jesus answered and said, You have seen Him, in fact, He is talking to you right now. The beggar cried, Lord, I believe! and he fell down before Jesus and worshipped Him. And Jesus said, I came into this world and my coming has necessarily brought judgment, for my doctrine brings spiritual sight to those who recognize their spiritual blindness and my teaching, by its very nature, blinds those who are certain they have all spiritual sight. Some of the Pharisees who were near, hearing what He said, replied, We are not blind also, are we? Jesus answered them, If you would admit your spiritual blindness and believe on Me you would have your sins forgiven, but you are persisting in trusting your own self-righteousness when you say "we see—we know," therefore your sin remains unforgiven and you remain blind.

Summary

Jesus finds the beggar who has been cut off from the Israel that is passing away and makes him a member of the new Israel that is coming. He gives the man who has already exhibited a spark of faith an opportunity to come to full faith in Him as the Messiah. The man, because of his faith, receives a great blessing. The Pharisees, because of their unbelief, become even more hardened.

Comment

The Greek word *heurisko* (find) may mean "to find, with previous search." This is the word used of Jesus' "finding" the beggar after he was cast out. The Good Shepherd does not find his precious lambs by accident—He searches for them until He does find them and takes them under His loving protection. Jesus intends to offer the beggar that which is far superior to what he has lost in being excommunicated. He is being offered the opportunity to believe in the One in whom all the law and the prophets is fulfilled!

The American Standard Version has translated the latter half of verse 35: ". . . the Son of God?" while the Nestle Greek text has ". . . *ton huion tou anthrōpou*" (the Son of man). The most ancient manuscripts (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Bezae) have "the Son of man." The latest great Codex on John, Bodmer II (P66), confirms the reading, "the Son of man" and the Revised Standard Version has this reading also.

The term "Son of man" is used by Jesus (exclusively by Him) in the Gospels at least eighty times—thirteen of which are found in the Fourth Gospel (cf. 1:51, 3:13, 3:14, 5:27, 6:27, 6:53, 6:62, 8:28, 9:35, 12:23, 12:34 (twice), 13:31). It was clearly a Messianic term and the people understood it as such (cf. 12:34). The prophet Daniel foretold of the Messiah, using the term "son of man," and Revelation 1:13 and 14:14 use the same term. Therefore, when the beggar heard the term "Son of man," he anticipated beholding the Messiah of Israel.

We can almost hear the eagerness in the man's reply . . . "Just tell me who he is, sir, in order that I may believe on him." We have translated the word *kurie* (Lord) in verse 36 to read "sir." The word *kurie* may be translated either "sir" or "lord" and is so translated (cf. John 4:11, 15, 19, 49; 5:7; 12:21; 20:15, where it has been translated in both the KJV and the ASV as "sir." The beggar has not yet had it revealed to him just who Jesus is, but in verse 38 he knows Jesus as the Messiah and the same word, *kurie*, may be translated "Lord."

Only a very few times did the Lord reveal Himself so plainly as the Messiah. Most of the time He allowed the people to form their own conclusions and make their own statements as to His Messiahship. One other time that we recall, He said, "I that speak unto thee am he . . ." (John 4:26).

The Greek word *aphiemi* used for the word "said" in verse 38 is the same word used of Jesus when He "uttered a loud voice" (Mark 15:37) upon the cross. The word, according to Vine's Expository Dictionary is "used of uttering a cry." How the man must have been

startled to find that he stood in the presence of and had been healed by the very Messiah for whom the Jews had waited century upon century. The man uttered a cry, "Lord, I believe . . ." and probably fell upon his knees before Jesus as he worshipped Him. Notice, Jesus never refused the worship of men as did the apostles (Acts 10:26, 14:15), for Jesus deserved man's adoration! According to Vine's Expository Dictionary, page 235, "The Note to John 9:38 in the American Standard Version in this connection is most unsound; it implies that Christ was a creature." While the word *proskuneo* (used here for the beggar's worship toward Jesus) may also be used when one man does reverence or obeisance toward another man, it is "most unsound" to imply, as does the footnote in the ASV, that Jesus is a creature.

In verse 39 Jesus makes a claim that, at first glance, seems contradictory of John 3:17 and 12:47 where He claims that He did not come to judge. However, after careful study, they are found to complement one another rather than contradict (see our comments on John 3:17, Vol. I, pages 112-113). He came to convict men of their sins and to proclaim the one way of salvation. His coming resulted in two reactions by men—some refused to come to the light lest their works be shown for what they really are; others gladly came to the light (cf. our comments on John 3:19-20, Vol. I, pages 114-115). He came to declare the truth and man's reaction one way or another results in man's being judged—worthy or unworthy. The prophet Isaiah was commissioned to go and preach to Judah purposely to dull the understanding of those who would not understand, to close the ears of those who would not hear, and to close the eyes of those who would not see (cf. Isa. 6:9-10). Jesus quoted this same passage to explain that He taught in parables to bring about judgment upon those who refused to understand Him (cf. Matt. 13:10-15). And so the man who deliberately rejects or disobeys the doctrines of Christ necessarily judges himself. Christ's teachings, by their very nature of demanding faith and obedience and by their absolute finality, cannot be rejected without judgment. No man, once confronted with the Gospel of Christ, can remain neutral. Jesus demands a choice—either for or against Him (cf. Matt. 12:30).

Some of the Pharisees who were standing near, began to "get the message." They knew from their past experiences with Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles that He must be talking of them and their blindness.

Jesus furnished the Pharisees and all the world for all ages a truism which needs to be remembered. No man is so blind as one who will not see! If the Pharisees had realized their blindness and had been pure in heart they would have sought the Light which would have led them to Jesus, the true Light, which lighteth every man (cf. John 1:9). The man who knows his own ignorance and blindness, but who desires to know more, is the man whose vision can be increased and his knowledge enlarged. But the Pharisees boasted of their vision—"we know," again and again. They did not seek the Light for they did not think they needed the Light—they already possessed all the Light there was. Therefore, because they would not recognize their own spiritual destitution, they rejected the only source of grace and forgiveness. What a lesson this is for all of us today! May we never arrive at the place where we reject God's Word in favor of our own opinion or knowledge. Let us never be so presumptuous as to think that we, as a group or as individuals, can never be taught from God's Word because we know it all.

Quiz

1. Did Jesus find the beggar by accident? Explain.
2. What did Jesus call Himself in verse 35? What did the title imply?
3. Does John 9:39 contradict John 3:17? Explain.
4. In what way were the Pharisees remaining in their sins?

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. NINE

LIGHT FOR THE BLIND

John 9:1-41

Introduction

I. JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES SEE THE BLIND BEGGAR SITTING, PERHAPS, AT THE TEMPLE GATE

- A. Can you sympathize with the blind man? He was born blind. He had never seen the lovelight in the eyes of his father or mother. He had never seen the green fields, the majestic mountains, the winding Jordan river. The brilliance of the sun by day had never shone upon his eyes, nor had he ever witnessed the dark blue sky at night sprinkled with twinkling stars. Yet, as we shall see, he saw more than all the others about him who had their eyesight.