

# GOD WITH US

## Part 8: JESUS

### Message 17 – The LIGHT of the WORLD

#### John 8 & 9

##### Introduction

In the midst of a debate with His opponents, recorded only in John's gospel, Jesus gave us His 2nd of seven "I am" statements.

***"I am the Light of the World. He who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).***

The Pharisees, whom He was arguing with, had a title for themselves: "*Guides to the blind; lights to those walking in darkness.*" (See Romans 2:19 where Paul uses this title for them.) But Jesus says that HE is the light of the world, not them. A heated argument erupted and that is captured in John Ch. 8. Jesus made some HUGE claims about Himself as that argument unfolded:

- His Father in heaven is standing with Him, not them (8:16,17).
- Unless they believe in Him, they will die in their sins (8:24).
- He speaks only what the Father told Him to speak (8:26,28).
- He always does the things that are pleasing to the Father (8:29).
- If they follow Him, they will be set free by the truth (8:31,32,).
- Only He as the Son can set them free (8:36).
- The Pharisees' real father is the lying, murdering devil (8:44).
- He honors the Father, and seeks glory for Him only (8:49,50).
- His Father is the One who glorifies Him (8:54).
- If anyone keeps His word, they will never see death (8:51).
- He existed before Abraham was even born (8:56-58).
- He says that He is the great I AM of the Old Testament (8:58).

At the end of chapter 8, they picked up stones to throw at Jesus (v.59). They accused Him of blasphemy - claiming to be God - because of the things He said. Most notably, in His last claim, that He was the great I AM of the Old Testament. When God appeared to Moses in the wilderness and commissioned him to go back to Egypt and tell the Jews that they would be set free from slavery, Moses asked God whom should he say sent him? God answered, "Say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14). The Jews in that day would not even say the name of God –

Yahweh (I AM). Jesus not only said it, He claimed that name for Himself. Thus, John 8 ends with them trying to kill Jesus for blasphemy.

Now it's one thing to make great claims; it's another thing to back up those claims. In chapter 8, Jesus claimed to be the "Light of the World." In chapter 9 He proved it, by doing a miracle bringing light to a man trapped in darkness since birth.

### **The encounter with the blind man: 9:1-5**

*As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of Him who sent Me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (9:1-5).*

He repeated the "light of the world" claim (from 8:12) because He was about to prove it in a dramatic way, in the case of this blind man. The Jews in Jesus day reasoned this way about physical infirmities: God wants everyone to be healthy and happy, so if someone is not healthy and happy it is because of sin. Not sin in general, but specific sin. Someone sinned, and the infirmity was the penalty. That's why the disciples asked Jesus: "*Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" (They even believed that a fetus could sin in the womb before birth. So, someone sinned, and this man's blindness was the punishment.)

#### **- False reasoning about infirmity: God must be punishing me.**

Jesus' reply is important. *It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in his life.* Jesus flatly denied the idea that every infirmity was a direct result of someone's sin. In its place, He suggested a new idea.

**Note: Understanding SIN.** "SIN" is a Greek term that means 'to miss the mark', failing to reach a goal or standard set by God (Romans 3:23). But, there is much more to it than that. SIN is a character bent, a moral or mental disease that clouds our perception of reality and cripples us from doing and being what God created us for" (Gospel of John, Life Change Series, NavPress, p. 107).

**- Jesus' correction: Infirmity presents an opportunity for God's work to be displayed in us.**

We can spend a lot of time trying to figure out what we did to deserve the problem we are struggling with: "WHY, God?" Or, we can look to God and ask Him a completely different question: "WHAT, God?" What does God want to teach me about Himself? Or, myself? And, what does God want to do in MY life that can (like Jesus), bring glory to the Father? That is the direction Jesus bids us to turn. Not toward trying to figure out the cause of the problem, which often has no satisfying answers, but toward the opportunity for God to use our problem to draw attention to Himself . . . in us. Has God allowed some infirmity (difficulty) in your life? Can you ask Him, by faith, WHAT He desires to do in and through you as a result of this infirmity?

**The healing of the blind man: 9:6,7**

*After saying this, He spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," He told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So, the man went and washed, and came home seeing (9:6,7).*

Jesus performed miracles in different ways, depending on the situation. Here, he told the blind man to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. Why there? Probably because it was near the Temple and Jesus wanted many people to know what happened to this man. He wanted to validate His "light of the world" claim. He sent the man to a public pool near the Temple where, along with other people, priests were drawing water for use in the daily Temple rituals. One way or another, the healing of this blind man quickly became known to many people.

**The controversy and conversation: 9: 8-34**

*His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some claimed that it was. Others said, "No, he only looks like the man." But he insisted, "I am the man" (9:8-9).*

This must have been frustrating for the blind man, who had just received this once-in-a-lifetime miracle. People didn't even believe it was him! But he kept on saying: "It's ME!"

***“How then were your eyes opened?” they asked. He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.” “Where is this man?” they asked him. “I don’t know,” he said (9:10-12).***

There was a LOT of confusion amongst the people; thus, they decided the best way to settle the controversy was to bring the healed man to the religious leaders of that day, the Pharisees, so that they could investigate and determine the truth of the matter. Remember, Jesus had been in a huge debate with the Pharisees in the previous chapter. Chapter 8 ended with the Pharisees wanting to stone Jesus for blasphemy. What happened was *exactly* what Jesus wanted to happen: ***An undeniable miracle done to a man standing right in front of the Pharisees; proving His claim to be the Light of the World.*** Little did the people know that they were walking into a courtroom full of Pharisees that had already made up their minds concerning the Jesus.

Often, Jesus shows us so undeniably that He is at work in our life, or in someone close to us. Like the blind man, we can take a step back and pause to consider what He must be trying to show us. However, like the Pharisees, if we have a pre-determined view that there is no way what is happening can be of God, then we lose the moment to see with eyes of faith, as this blind man did.

Jesus wants to shine His light into our darkness. What do you need His light to shine on? Ask Him to give you an openness to what He is doing. Even without a specific answer, you can take God’s truth and apply it to your situation. Romans 8:28,29 teaches that God works all things together for our good, so that in the end, we might be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. No matter what, the Bible teaches that the glory of Jesus shining through our person and life, is worth whatever situation we are walking in.

***They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. Therefore, the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.” Therefore, some of the Pharisees were saying, “This man is not from God, because He***

***does not keep the Sabbath.” But others were saying, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And there was a division among them (9:13-16).***

Many times, throughout Jesus’ public ministry He performed miraculous signs on the Sabbath day. This was the day of ‘no work’, but rather rest, worship and delight. For Jesus, it was pure delight to set captives free and point them to true belief and worship of the Father. The miracles should have been eye-opening wonders for all who saw them. But, the extreme blindness of the religious leaders, due to their pride and protection of their position, caused them to focus on their legalistic laws, rather than the fact that Someone mighty was among them.

The Pharisees turned to the once “blind man” and asked him for his opinion concerning how Jesus could be from God. (This is ironic, because the Pharisees called themselves “guides for the blind.” Now they are asking the once-blind man to guide them!)

***Then they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” The man replied, “He is a prophet.” They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents (9:17,18).***

His answer (that Jesus was a prophet) was completely ignored. They had pre-judged Jesus. He was already guilty in their minds.

*The word “prejudice” means “to decide in advance.” Once we have decided something in advance, everything after that is simply manipulating the evidence (even sub-consciously), so that our prejudgment is confirmed. It still happens today. Even when the evidence is overwhelming for the existence of God, or the historical reality of Jesus, or the fact of the resurrection . . . people often look for a way NOT to believe. It’s a prejudice against Jesus.*

***The deeper question is:*** What is the REAL motive behind us choosing to NOT believe, even when the evidence is there? Often it is not an intellectual reason. Rather, it is an emotional or moral or relational reason. Admitting that Jesus is Who He claimed to be might require some change- it could cost us something, which could be far-reaching: relationships in our family, our financial security, a relationship that we know is not God’s best for us... So, we use an intellectual reason or ‘law’ to give ourselves a reason to choose not to believe. The term in this context is **‘to remain blind’**.

The Pharisees called in his parents to see if he really was their son.

*“Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?” “We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.” His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him” (9:19-23).*

We call this “witness intimidation.” The parents didn’t want to get kicked out of the synagogue for their answer, so they withheld the truth. (But they were O.K. if *their son* would be kicked out of the synagogue for his answer!) The Pharisees were forced to call for the healed man again. This time, they command him to give them the answer they want to hear:

*A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. “Give glory to God by telling the truth,” they said. “We know this man is a sinner” (9:24).*

They are pleading with him to align his opinion about Jesus with their own. *We KNOW this Jesus is a sinner. Give glory to God and agree with us!*

What did these Pharisees have to lose? Why were they clinging to their prejudice and opinion about Jesus being ‘A SINNER?’ Who would have guessed the REAL reason, without it being recorded later by John? **John 11:47,48** gives us THE REAL REASON: **“Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”** Their real reason was **FEAR**. Fear of the Romans taking away their position of authority. Wow. They were determined above all else NOT TO LOSE.

Scripture warns about the ‘callousing’ effect of unbelief or lack of surrender. When we close our hearts off to God’s truth, afraid of the consequences of relinquishing control, He allows our hearts to become more blind to further revelations of the truth. Be very careful about rejecting or dismissing truth. The cost can be more far-reaching than feared, with negative consequences.

But this healed man would not yield to their pressure to change his view of Jesus.

***He replied, “Whether He is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” Then they asked him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” He answered, “I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become His disciples too?” (9:25-27).***

The formerly blind man said, ***“I told you already and you did not listen.”*** Here is a good example of the fact that they actually DID listen and heard him just fine. However, they CHOSE NOT to accept his testimony, for the reason stated above - FEAR.

***Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where He comes from” (9:28,29).***

Put yourself in the shoes of this man. You’re standing before a very angry group of powerful religious leaders. They have just reviled you. They are threatening to ruin the rest of your life by basically banning you from the community. Most of us would cut our losses and walk out before they killed us. Not this man. He gives one of the greatest lines in the whole Bible right here:

***The man answered and said to them, “Well, that is remarkable. You do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes” (9:30).***

What courage! He calls the Pharisees out. *There’s a ‘heaven-sent’ miracle-worker in town and you don’t know where He’s from?* Then he gave them a final theological lecture:

***“We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing” (9:31-33).***

It seems the above rebuke goes back to 9:24. The Pharisees were calling Jesus a SINNER. Here, the blind man is ‘teaching’ that God does NOT listen or answer the prayer of a ‘sinner’ as they claimed Jesus to be, but rather God responds to the godly person who does His will. Obviously, this Jesus has proved He is godly

and does the will of God. So, he taught, *“I wouldn’t be able to SEE both physically or spiritually, if He was not from God!”*

We can picture the Pharisees are standing there listening, and they suddenly realize that *they are being schooled by a guy that was a blind beggar a few hours earlier.* And they don’t like it.

***To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out (9:34).***

*I think this man will receive some great rewards in heaven, because he stood up to the powerful authorities and spoke the truth, regardless of the consequences: 1) being accused with contempt about being steeped in sin at birth; 2) being told-off for daring to lecture his superiors; 3) he was thrown out of the synagogue (as his parents feared for themselves). His bold testimony was recorded in John Ch.9 for the rest of time! I wonder how many millions of people have been strengthened by this man’s courage in the face of intimidation? To speak the truth, no matter who you are standing in front of.*

### **Jesus’ conversation with the healed man: 9:35-41**

The story ends showing Jesus’ care for this outcast of a man. He had been outcast for being born blind. Now that he can see, he is an outcast for telling the truth about his healing.

***Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when He found him, He said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “Who is He, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in Him.” Jesus said, “You have now seen Him; in fact, He is the one speaking with you.” Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped Him (9:35-38).***

The whole sequence began with people accusing Jesus of blasphemy, and it ends with someone worshipping Jesus. Worship, in the Bible, is always reserved for GOD. Blasphemy or worship. Those are really the only options when it comes to the claims of Jesus. You can call Him a liar or lunatic, or you can worship Him as LORD.

Jesus gave this summary to the whole sequence of events (and herein lies the great lesson):

***Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the***

*blind will see and those who see will become blind.” Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?” Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your sin remains” (9:39-41).*

**The blind guy walks away seeing.**

**The blind guides walk away blind.**

It seems so backwards! By realizing that we are BLIND and in darkness spiritually, we are ready to experience the miracle of being *“transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His Beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13)*. We SEE!

By holding strongly to the belief that we SEE (we think we have all the spiritual insights we need, and we don't need a miracle of *forgiveness and salvation*), Jesus says that we choose to remain in our own sin and darkness. We are BLIND!

It's a constant theme in Scripture. Humility and brokenness bring salvation. Pride and prejudice block it.

*“Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light” (John 12:36).*

*“I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness” (John 12:46).*

*“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).*

- We can only be saved when we admit our need for a Savior.
- We can only receive our sight when we admit we are blind.
- We can only have our sins removed when we admit we have sins that need to be removed.

*Light of the World: In John 8 and 9 Jesus claimed that HE was the light of the world. Yet, He also said to His followers, “You are the light of the world” (Matt.5:14-16). The healed blind man became an immediate witness to the works of God in his own life. Jesus commands all of us who know Him to let His light shine through us. How are you letting the light of Jesus shine through you in your world? How are people seeing the love of Jesus through you? Is there some way that you can commit to being a brighter light this week, in your sphere of influence?*

## Additional Thought about “Walking in the Light”

What does it mean to “walk in the light” of Christ? First, it means that we place our faith in Jesus as our Savior and we become “children of light.” But then, “walking in the light” is a daily process as we learn to listen to Jesus and order our footsteps after Him. Most often, Jesus gives us just enough light for the step we are on. (A good devotional is: *Just Enough Light for the Step I’m On*, by Stormie Omartian.) He does not shine His light so far out that we can clearly see the future. He invites us to trust Him day by day, walking in the light of His Word and the light of His Spirit’s promptings. This is why it is so important to be spending daily time in God’s Word and in Prayer. This is how He speaks to us and leads us in His path of light. *“Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105).*

### Discussion Questions

1. What were some of the things that caused you to resist the claims of Christ before you became a follower of Jesus? (For example, see box on p.1,046.)
2. Sometimes even as believers we resist surrendering to Christ’s LORDSHIP in our life. He wants to shine His LIGHT on areas of needed awareness and growth. So, we justify with good reasons why we don’t need to. Either way, we ALL are blind to our ‘blind spots’! It takes humility to ask someone to speak the truth to us. It takes courage to speak the truth in LOVE to someone else. The result is that we are transformed in the LIGHT OF HIS TRUTH and mature in Christ when we are receptive. (Ephesians 4:15). How does this apply to you?
3. The healed blind man experienced negative consequences for his courage to stand up for truth (see box on p.1,049). How have you experienced the same? Or, how does his example encourage you to stand up for your faith?
4. Is there anything, today, that is keeping you from placing your faith in Jesus as your Savior and Lord?