

Bi132 The Gospels I

Lesson Bi132-33 Jesus and Blindness

Sometimes people unintentionally teach their children to believe that a lie is the truth. In Jesus' day rabbis taught the Jews that all death and human suffering was caused by sin. They even believed that a child could sin in the womb, or that a disabled child was being punished because of the sin of their parents. Jesus plainly contradicted such beliefs in the following lesson.

As Jesus walked along in Jerusalem, he saw a man blind from birth. Begging was one of the few ways a blind person could support himself. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that caused him to be 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, you and I 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."

After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. He told him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. It was located just outside the walls of the city and was fed by a spring. So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. Those people who had seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to beg?"

Others said, "No, he only looks like him."

But he insisted, "I am the man." They questioned him about how his eyes had been opened. 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."

Some men brought the former blind man to the Pharisees because the day Jesus healed the man's eyes was a Sabbath. The Pharisees asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked how a sinner could perform such signs. So they were divided. Then they asked the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man told them he believed Jesus to be a prophet. But they still did not acknowledge that the man had been blind.

They sent for the man's parents. "Is this your son you claim was born blind?" they asked.

"We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. But how he can now see we don't know. He is of age; ask him." His parents were afraid of the Jewish leaders. They had already decided that anyone believing Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue, with serious consequences.

A second time they summoned the former blind man. “Give glory to God by telling the truth. We know this Jesus is a sinner.” They said this, despite the fact that some of the Pharisees had earlier acknowledged that a sinner could not perform such signs.

The man 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 again how his eyes were opened. He answered, “I already told you, but you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?”

Angrily they said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, we don’t even know where this fellow comes from.”

The man answered, “Now that is remarkable! We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Never in history has a person born blind been healed. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

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

Jesus heard 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.

Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who think they see will become blind.” Jesus’ coming divided people, and this always brings a type of judgment. Those who reject his gift end up ‘blind.’

Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?” They found it incredible that anyone would consider them spiritually blind.

Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains (John 9:1-41). Their actions were evidence of their blindness.

This story started with a question from the disciples about the cause of physical blindness. Jesus told them that connecting blindness to sin was wrong. Jesus healed the man so that God would receive glory and people would know he was the Messiah. After the man received his sight, he was interrogated by the religious leaders. They said it was impossible for Jesus to be from God, because he broke their Sabbath traditions. Deserted by his parents, the man had to defend the actions of Jesus before the Pharisees. He correctly understood why they did not like Jesus. He began the conversation about their spiritual blindness, “You don’t know

where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.” Note that because the leaders didn’t know where Jesus came from, they assumed he couldn’t be from God. Finally, finding his insightful conclusions to be troubling, they threw the healed man out of the synagogue.

When he met Jesus, no doubt recognizing his voice, he accepted him as the Messiah. Later Jesus finished the conversation on spiritual blindness with some of the Pharisees. He told them they were spiritually guilty before God, because they claimed to see, yet refused to believe in him as the Messiah.

This was not the only time Jesus healed a person of blindness. One time in Bethsaida, people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked him if he could see anything. The man looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.” Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly (Mark 8:22-26).

This story is unique in Jesus’ ministry, because he touched this man two times to bring total healing. This double touch may not be about the man’s own lack of faith. It may be a lesson for the disciples concerning their lack of faith and failure to learn the lessons of faith Jesus taught. Giving sight to the blind was an indication that Christ was doing what God had promised that Messiah would do. He used a variety of methods, tailoring them to the situation.

On another occasion two blind men followed Jesus, calling out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” Using this title shows they believed he was Messiah.

When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said they did have faith, and addressed him as ‘Lord.’ Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done for you,” and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly to not speak about this, but they spread the news about him all over that region (Matt 9:27-29).

One of the unique acts of the Messiah foretold by Isaiah would be the opening of blind eyes. The responses of the people to healings by Jesus were predictable. The people healed went out and told everyone they could find about their Messiah’s arrival, although Jesus often asked them not to do so early in his ministry. The response of most Pharisees was rejection. They focused on the source of the Jesus’ power. They had already decided that source was Satan and that it could not possibly be from God. The Lord’s response to this charge was, “Every divided kingdom, city and even household will not stand, when it is divided. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided. But if by the Spirit of God I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Matt 12:26). The truth he was saying was that the kingdom of God **was** in their midst!

What do you think is the most powerful approach to convince someone about a cause? People believe and follow a message that works. When someone shares their personal story it can be very powerful. The man born blind was so affected by meeting Jesus that not even the religious leaders’ threats could change his mind. Every follower of Jesus should have a similar

and convincing testimony. Wherever believers go, they should tell people about the wonderful things that Jesus has done for them.

These stories are **important** because they show us that even the 12 brought with them teachings from their youth that had to be unlearned. The man blind from birth was also unschooled, yet he had enough spiritual sight to understand that only one sent from God could perform such a healing. The lesson demonstrates the power and effectiveness of sharing the testimony of what Jesus has done in our lives with others.

The **main truths** of this lesson are first, we must guard against spiritual blind spots and false teaching that does not agree with God's Word. Secondly, we must realize that the power of our personal testimony can make us effective witnesses to the truth about Jesus.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What did Jesus say was the reason that this man was born blind?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If your answer was that this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him, you are correct.
2. What was the one thing the former blind man was sure about when he spoke to the Pharisees?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you answered the former blind man said, "One thing I know. I was blind but now I see," you are correct.
3. What did Jesus tell some Pharisees was the ultimate reason that he came into the world?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told the Pharisees, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the main story so you can tell it from memory. After you tell the story to someone ask, "What enabled the former blind men to speak so strongly for Jesus in front of the Pharisees?" The answer: this man had an experience of the power of God through Jesus. His continuing testimony to the religious leaders was, "I was blind, but now I can see." Because of this experience, he was convinced of who Jesus really was.