

OpenTheo

John 9



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg analyzes John 9 to discuss the theme of suffering and healing. He questions the assumptions that individuals may make about suffering and the fairness behind it, citing the example of Job's friends. Gregg suggests that it is important to not discount miracles and evidence in our beliefs, and emphasizes the need for humility and openness to learning about spiritual matters. The talk ends with an exploration of the idea that choosing darkness over light results in the loss of understanding and is ultimately a choice.

Transcript

Alright, we begin. We come to one of the most entertaining chapters of the Gospel of John tonight. John chapter 9. And what makes it entertaining is the main character.

Actually, in this chapter, unlike most, Jesus is not the main character. He certainly is the most important character, but he's not the one who is highlighted as much. It's a rare story in the Gospels where Jesus does a healing at the beginning, and then the rest of the chapter focuses on the man who was healed, and his interactions with people afterward.

And he's quite the character. He's the most colorful man in the Gospel of John, other than Jesus or any of the apostles, and he's quite likable. And for a guy who was born blind, he seemed to have a decent sense of humor.

Not that blind people shouldn't, but I mean, he's a disadvantaged person. A disabled person who's never seen the light of day might not be expected to be as cheerful. Not that this man is so cheerful.

Let's start again. Alright, so we begin at the beginning of John chapter 9. Now, as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from birth, and his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day.

The night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Now, this is what he said before he worked the healing.

Attention was drawn to this particular man by the disciples. Jesus often would approach somebody who was sick and pass by others who were sick, and how Jesus picked them is never made very clear, except we assume he was guided by the Holy Spirit, or he was doing what his father was showing him to do. But here, the disciples are the ones who called attention to this man, a beggar in Jerusalem who had been seen there for a long time.

As it turns out, there's quite a few people in the town who recognize him, even after he's healed. He apparently has been there a long time and is a main fixture there. But his case presented a philosophical conundrum, and that was, who's being punished here? Why should a man be born imperfect? Why would a baby be born imperfect? Babies seemingly are the most innocent parties, and the least deserving of being handicapped or disabled, or suffering in any way, and yet babies are often born with handicaps and diseases and so forth.

And this is one of the things that causes many people to object to the whole notion of there being a loving God. It is one of the main objections that atheists bring, is why do children die? Why do children suffer? It's one thing to say that adults have done bad things, and therefore they suffer, and one could argue, possibly, that the suffering that they receive is earned, but how could anyone say that a baby's suffering is earned, especially if he's born in that condition? Nonetheless, it is a given in most people's minds that suffering is a punishment for evil. Is it? Well, at one level, we could say that suffering is a result of sin, but that is certainly not the case in specific instances where suffering of an individual is a result of that person's sin.

We could say that if Adam and Eve had never sinned, suffering would not exist, there would not be toil and sickness and death, and so all sickness could be said to be the result of sin, but that's not the same thing as saying that individual cases of suffering correspond to individual sins. Yet, ancient people as well as modern people cannot really see how suffering could be justified if it isn't the direct result, a direct punishment of sin. And the suffering of a baby raises particular problems because one would think a baby cannot sin prior to birth, and yet the disciples weren't sure, because it is, of course, possible that the parents could sin and bring suffering on their child, but it doesn't seem fair.

It sometimes happens. As a matter of fact, there are children who are born blind because of their parents' sins, because of syphilis, which may be contracted. Possibly the child is conceived in an act of sin, and the neural disease is contracted, and the child's consequence is that he's blind.

That would be an instance of a parent sinning and the child being born blind. The

disciples probably didn't have sufficient medical understanding to connect those things, though. Believe it or not, we might think that anyone could connect those things just by observing the phenomenon, but in ancient times people didn't know about infection, didn't know about germs, didn't know about how disease was transmitted, and therefore they weren't thinking in terms, did the parents sin in such a way as to contract a sickness themselves, which was passed on to their child, but rather, did God afflict this child as a punishment for sins of the parents? Now, that's not a very acceptable possibility for the simple reason that the child is the one suffering for someone else's sins.

It's like what the Jews claimed to be the case in the Old Testament when they said, our fathers ate the sour grapes and we are the ones who have our teeth set on edge. And they were told in Ezekiel chapter 18, don't use that parable. It's not the case.

God is not punishing the children for the father's sins. It's not the fathers who ate the sour grapes and the children who are suffering by having the grimacing of the sourness, but the children themselves have eaten sour grapes and they're grimacing from their own behavior. And so it seemed unacceptable as a thesis that the parents sinned and God was punishing the baby, and yet it seemed almost necessary because the only other option they could think of was that the baby sinned, but how could that be? The baby wasn't even born before the blindness was there.

Could a baby sin in the womb? There actually were some rabbis that had speculated about that very thing. In talking about the case of Jacob and Esau in the womb and how they were struggling with each other in the womb, some of the rabbis taught that Esau's sinful nature, his sinful tendencies, which later manifested in his lifetime, were already present with him in the womb and therefore he was already sinning in the womb. And so not all rabbis accepted this idea, but it was a notion that had been floated.

And the disciples weren't sure what to think. They weren't trained theologians, but they're trying to get an answer to this. Not just this case, of course.

It's not just this case they're wondering about. They're asking a general question about why are children born imperfect? Is it their fault? Is it their parents' fault? Whose fault is it? And in this respect, they were making the same assumptions about suffering that Job's friends made about suffering. If a man suffers, he must be guilty of something.

Suffering must be a punishment. But that's not always the case. You see, when people say God cannot be good and all-powerful and still allow there to be innocent people suffering, the assumption is that suffering isn't a good thing.

Now, of course, a person would get himself into trouble saying that suffering is a good thing. But we cannot argue in every case that suffering is wrong or is a bad thing. A surgery that is done on a patient with cancer may be a painful surgery.

But who's to say it's a bad thing? If a person has gangrene in their leg and to save their life their leg has to be sawn off, that's going to be a painful procedure. But who's to say it's a bad thing? It's a necessary thing. It's a good thing.

It's going to save a life. And therefore, we have to be not simplistic about suffering and thinking, well, suffering must be a bad thing. And therefore, if God allows it, He must justify it somehow.

Well, God doesn't have to do that. God knows the end from the beginning. He knows what can be accomplished through suffering.

He knows what needs to be done. And He may have any number of reasons for letting people suffer. One of them certainly may be that they've sinned and there are suffering consequences for their sins.

That does happen. That wasn't the case in this case, Jesus said. In this case, that's not what's happening.

Neither this man nor his parents sinned to bring this upon Him. So what other options are there? Well, there might be many options for all we know, but the one that Jesus had applied in this case is that it was so that the works of God could be seen in Him. Now, it sounds like He's saying this man was born, a baby was born blind, and lived to adulthood with this disability, suffering this handicap, for no better reason than that God's works could be seen in him.

That suffering was the price that this man was paying all his life so that God could get glory. And that's exactly right. That's exactly why Job suffered too.

It wasn't because Job did anything wrong. It was the price that he paid to have God glorified in his life. And that's what the suffering of Job was about.

It was about the glory of God. That's what everything is supposed to be about. God is not necessarily glorified in all things because not everybody accepts the conditions of glorifying God in their life, which require obedience and faithfulness and hardship and so forth.

But that's why suffering happens sometimes. Sometimes people suffer for no better reason than that God would be glorified. But what better reason could there be than that God would be glorified? That's what creation exists for.

That's why we were all born. That's why the world was created. That's what the heavens declare.

That's why there are stars out there. They're declaring the glory of God. And Paul said, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of

God.

The one concern the Christian has is that God should be glorified. And although non-Christians can't see the good sense in that, because they don't love God, because they're self-centered, man-centered, not God-centered, well, that's their problem. That's what has to change in order for them to get saved.

People have to become God-centered. Once you are God-centered, that means you care more about God's interests than about your own or than man's. And God, who made all things, has every right to make things as he wishes, if that will glorify him.

That's what Paul said in Romans 9. Does not the potter have power over the clay to make of one vessel a vessel to honor and another to dishonor? If that will glorify him, doesn't he have the right to make whatever he wants to? Now, on the other hand, we should not think that the Bible teaches that God is callous toward human suffering and that he has no sympathy or whatever, that he's just some kind of an egotist who just wants to be glorified and he doesn't care anything about people as long as he gets his glory. God is glorified when his goodness is manifested. In this case, his goodness was going to be manifested in the healing of this man.

And this man had been born in this condition and lived the years he lived in this condition for this day, for the day that he was going to be healed, that the works of God would be seen in him. And as a result, God would be glorified. Now, sometimes people are disabled and they don't get healed.

That does not mean that they are not in that condition for the glory of God. God can heal them for the glory of God or he can not heal them if he thinks he can be glorified in their illness. Johnny Erickson Tata was not born in the condition she's in but she came into that condition through an accident when she was 19 years old.

She's now nearly 60 years old and has been paralyzed from the neck down and at this point she's dying of cancer, as I understand it. I have not heard the details of that but I understand that she has terminal cancer now too. So, she's a person who has had some serious health crisis but she happens to be a person who has a Christian mindset and she glorifies God in it.

Being healed is not the only way you can glorify God through your sickness. You can glorify God without being healed. Perhaps even more so sometimes.

In the Jesus Movement, I remember at Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa there was a man who was at the meetings every night of the week. He had some kind of disability, probably, I don't know, multiple sclerosis or something, a real severe case. I'm not sure he was quite not in control of his muscles or his speech.

I really don't know what his condition was but he was in a wheelchair of course and

couldn't stand up and his arms were gimped and twisted and he could make noise but he couldn't make intelligible words. But somebody had written for him on the back of his wheelchair. It says, I praise God, do you? And he did praise God.

During the singing you could hear him making a loud noise and smiling and just praising God. That made an impact on people. That would not be the same impact it would have made if he was a healthy man praising God.

And you just never know what God intends to do. God intended to glorify himself by healing this man and he glorified himself by healing many other people. But he also has intended to glorify himself in all circumstances including sufferings.

Job was to glorify God in his sufferings not by being healed. Eventually Job was relieved of his sufferings but that's not the point at which he glorified God. It was before that time.

It's when the sufferings came upon him he said, the Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. He gave glory to God in the midst of his suffering.

That's what he's remembered for. When it says in James, you have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord that the Lord is very gracious and of tender mercy. The patience of Job is talking about when he was suffering not when he was relieved.

You may glorify God in your death, in your sickness, in your prosperity, in your being rescued from harm. In any circumstance a person can glorify God. And we can say that whatever conditions prevail against our wishes as simply the natural state into which we were born.

The reason for it, whatever they were, whether we're in good health or bad. Whether we are gifted or inept. Whether we're sick or well.

Whatever our circumstances. We can say that all things that God has brought out he brought intending that he should be glorified in it. And potentially able to be glorified in it.

And that was the case here. Now some people believe that people all should be healed and that God can only be glorified in people's sickness by healing them. That simply isn't what the Bible teaches.

It certainly was going to be the case in this instance. And God is the one who knows when it should be and when something else is more desirable. But Jesus said, this man was born in this condition so that the works of God could be seen in him.

And if someone says, well, how dare God make this man suffer for all these years just so

God could heal him. Frankly, how dare he? He has the right to do whatever he wants to do. But when you think about it, this man being healed could not have been healed if he had not been blind.

And if he had not been blind, all the years he spent blind, I bet they were soon forgotten except as something that he rejoiced in after this, after being healed. Now some people are not healed in their lifetime, but will be in the resurrection. And no matter how much suffering we go through in this life, when it's all over and it's just a memory of something that we endured and something we were delivered out of eventually, if only through death and resurrection, it'll be something that we will be glad we went through.

And so this man, I'll bet, after he was healed, he liked being the guy, the only guy, who had that story. What a story it was. And how much glory he brought to God.

And I wouldn't be surprised if he looked back on the years he was blind and thought, you know, that wasn't all that bad now that it's over. Trials don't seem bad once they're over. Have you ever noticed that? And so in the end, you glorify God for what He has done.

You don't have to wait until the end. You can glorify Him in it too. You don't have to wait.

Now, the works of God were going to be revealed in this man. And in this case, the works of God means healing him. And Jesus said, I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day.

The night is coming when no one can work. As long as I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world. Now, when he talks about day and night here, and this is not the only place where he does, what is he referring to? We have him speaking similarly over in John chapter 11 when he's going to be, when he tells the disciples he wants to go down and wake up Lazarus who's died.

And in John 11, 8, the disciples said to him, Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone you. And are you going there again? And Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him.

What are these statements? What do they mean about the day and the night? When he says we need to work while it is daytime, what he's saying is, he's using an analogy of natural work and natural day. That in those days, they didn't have cheap lighting. After the sun went down, they were pretty much, had very little they could do except go to bed and wait for the sun to come up.

I mean, they had oil lamps and candles, but they were expensive to burn. Oil was not cheap. So they wouldn't just keep the midnight oil burning unless they had to, and they usually didn't have to.

They'd usually go to bed when it got dark. They could work while it was day, and they couldn't do much else, especially since most of their work was outdoor work. They didn't have floodlights and things like that so they could work out in the fields after dark.

When the sun went down, the work day was done by necessity. The opportunity had passed. And everybody knew when they were out in the field working that there was a limited period of time before the sun would go down.

The day time represents opportunity. Night time is the end of that opportunity. And therefore, what Jesus is saying, he says, I must do the works of my Father while it is day time.

Are there not 12 hours in the day? That means there's only 12 hours in the day. After that, the time is up. You have to use the hours well.

You have to use the opportunities well. He's saying that we have to do the things that we are supposed to do while the opportunity still exists, while it is, as it were, still day time. Because the night comes, which ends the opportunity to do anything.

Now for many of us, that night time is when we die. And therefore, the day time is our lifetime. And the night is our death.

And that was so with Jesus also. Jesus said, while I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world. But I'm leaving.

And that will be the end of the day. That will be the end of his day to do any work on the earth, personally. Of course, he continued doing his work through the disciples in the book of Acts and has done so ever since.

But the point is, he had a mission to accomplish in his lifetime. His lifetime was going to be ending. And he needed to use the daylight hours, so to speak.

He needed to use the opportunity that he had before the night would come. The night comes for every man at some point in which he can do no more work. And so he needs to seize the day.

He needs to seize the opportunity. He needs to make hay while the sun shines, in other words, so that he does not waste an opportunity that is limited. And day time is a limited period of time, is what he's saying.

So he says, I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no one can work. Everybody has his night that comes and ends his opportunity.

As long as I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world. Now, he is the light of the world while he's in the world. Well, is there any light in the world after he's gone? Well, yes.

He said to his disciples, you are the light of the world. And Paul said that we shine as lights in the dark world. We Christians do.

And as Christians have often pointed out, preachers have often pointed out, that Jesus is like the sun in the sky. He is the light of the world in the day time. When the sun is shining, it's day time.

When Jesus was here and the world could see him, it's like when the sun is visible to the world. But the sun eventually goes down. Night time comes.

The sun is no longer visible to the world. Jesus was going to go away and they would see him no more, he said. But the light of the world continues to shine on the world through the moon, of course.

When the sun goes out of sight, the moon is present to reflect the sun's light to the world. The moon doesn't have any light of its own. Unlike the sun, it's not a burning orb.

It's just a piece of rock. But as long as it's positioned in the heavenly places where it can still see the sun itself, it can reflect back the light of the sun to the earth. And it becomes the light of the world while the sun is absent.

And so, the church is like the moon. We don't have any light of our own, but we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. We see Jesus, the writer of Hebrews says.

The world doesn't see him anymore, but we see him. And as we behold him, we glow. We are changed from glory to glory.

We shine his light to the world, and therefore we are the light of the world in the night time. The day is coming again when he will appear. And the Bible speaks about Jesus' second coming as a dawning of another day.

Peter says, until the day dawns and the day star rises in your hearts. We have to, he said, pay heed to the scriptures as a light that shines in a dark place. The second coming of Christ is referred to as the day of the Lord.

When Jesus comes back, it's daytime again. But, in a sense, every man has his own daytime and his own night time. The night comes when no man can work.

And Jesus was going to have his limits too on his time. His time was running out at this point. And so he said, I need to do the works of my father while I can.

When he had said these things, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva. And he anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay. And he said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is translated scent.

The word Siloam means scent. So he went and washed and came back seeing. He didn't

see Jesus.

Because Jesus put mud in his eyes and sent him on an errand to wash his eyes out. And as a result, when he came seeing, Jesus was no longer around. And he didn't know where Jesus was.

He had never actually laid eyes on Jesus at this point. But he did see things for the first time. And Jesus effected this healing using spit.

And it's not the only time. There's another time in the Gospels when Jesus used spit to open a blind man's eyes. And once he used spit to open a dumb man's mouth.

Jesus used spit on more than one occasion. But this is the only occasion where he actually mixed it with dirt, made a mud poultice, as it were, and put it in the man's eyes and told him to wash it off. Why did he do this? I don't suppose anyone knows.

You know, Jesus healed a lot of blind people, but he never seemed to do it the same way twice. And I think Jesus is trying to teach a lesson because people are so much wanting to learn techniques and methods of doing things. People do it all the time.

You know, they find out that somebody did a certain thing and their town had a breakthrough. And there was a revival there. Well, we need to do that thing too and make it happen.

Or somebody was at a meeting where a revival hit and the people had a certain kind of reaction, a certain kind of phenomenon occurred. They fell down. They laughed or something.

And people say, well, that's what we need to happen in our church. We need to have people fall down and laugh too. And we try to institutionalize things that should be really spiritual things.

They become institutionalized and fleshly. And if Jesus had always healed the same way, his disciples who are watching and learning might have thought, oh, okay, we know how this is done. You do this, you do this, a little eye of newt, a little wing of bat, you know.

This little technique gets the job done. But Jesus didn't depend on techniques. And he didn't want to teach his disciples to do so either.

He may have done things that were strange just to be doing something different this time so that it wasn't the same. So that no one could say, well, I think I figured out how he does it. You just have to do it this, because I saw him do this.

I've got to do it this way, and then it'll work. There's no technique that works. It's the working of God.

He said, these are my father's works. I have to do the works of my father, of him who sent me. It's the father working through Jesus.

It's not the father working through techniques and methods. And I think when the church institutionalizes things that were originally spiritual things, then it's not a positive thing. I believe, for example, that the Pentecostal revival in the early 1900s, in California originally, was a spontaneous revival where people were filled with the Spirit and in most cases, I guess, they spoke in tongues.

And it started a movement. And what they do, they institutionalize speaking in tongues and said, okay, this is what has to happen when you get filled with the Spirit. You have to speak in tongues.

Well, that's not stated anywhere in Scripture, but that's what they decided. It's what the Holy Spirit did. We're going to keep grinding out that same result.

And if people get filled with the Spirit and don't speak with tongues, we're going to have to teach them how to speak in tongues. Repeat after me. You know, it happens.

They prime the pump, you know. And, you know, if people are known to fall down at times when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and then we want that to happen with us, and if they don't fall down, we make them go down. You have people behind them to catch them.

If they're not going down, that person gets on his hands and knees, behind their knees, and you push them over. Not literally that bad. Not that obvious, but that does happen.

People decide that when the Spirit moves, this thing is supposed to happen, and they learn the technique to get some kind of a revival or whatever. Same thing with healing. Same thing with deliverance.

People write books about how to do deliverance, how to cast demons out of people. I don't know if I told you guys, I tell people when I talk about spiritual warfare that when I first encountered a demon-possessed person for the first time, I didn't know a thing about it. I mean, I knew the Gospels, I knew the Bible, but I'd never known anybody who'd cast a demon out of someone.

I'd certainly never done it, never thought about it. And I wasn't sure what to do, but I just kind of prayed and asked God to give me wisdom and lead me and so forth. And I did all kinds of different things that I could think of that seemed like the Bible might suggest this or that or other things.

There's no methods in the Bible given. But I had the person renounce things, I had them forgive people, I had them say Jesus is Lord. I did all kinds of things.

I prayed for them. I commanded demons to go out of my door, all kinds of things. Finally, the demons came out.

And once that happened, I was encouraged, wow, casting demons out of people, that's kind of cool. I like to cast demons out of people. It's great to see them delivered like that.

The woman had been totally weird and she suddenly became normal and it was cool. I thought, well, next time I run into a demon-possessed person, I'm going to be more prepared. So I went out and bought some books on it.

I learned the rules and the techniques and the methods. So the next time I found a demon-possessed person, I knew what to do. But it didn't work.

And the next time after that, it didn't work either. And I found that when I, on occasion, would encounter people who were demon-possessed, I got worse results after studying how to do it than I got when I never knew how to do it. I just asked God to lead me.

And what I came to realize is, I'm kind of trusting in the techniques I've learned from books instead of trusting in God. I didn't know any techniques, I had to trust God. I just had to hope God would lead me.

And He apparently did. And so Jesus is that way in training His disciples. He doesn't really allow them to learn a method.

He does it different each time. Once He spit in a person's eyes, once He spit on his hands and put them in a man's mouth, once He just put His fingers in the person's eyes. On this occasion, He puts a mud pulse in the eyes.

Is there meaning to it? Is there symbolism in it? Maybe. But there might not be. It might be He's just trying to think of something different to do so He's not doing the same thing.

I don't know. Of course, some have suggested that since God made man from the dust of the earth, Jesus using the dust and putting it in His eyes was like doing a repair job on His own creation, using the same materials. And that's a possibility, but I don't know.

It's possible that Jesus did it this way so that the man, by the time his sight would come to him, had been sent somewhere else and wouldn't actually see Jesus and wouldn't know Him until later on when Jesus revealed Himself to him. But why that would be necessary is not entirely clear either. So there are things about the whys of this strange action on Jesus' part that we may never know.

We can come up with theories, but none of them would really... we'd have no confidence that our theory was the correct one. But the man did what Jesus said. He washed the mud out of his eyes, and he came away seeing.

And therefore, it says in verse 8, the neighbors and those who previously had seen that

he was blind said, Is not this he who sat and begged? Some said, It is he. Others said, He is like him. In other words, he resembles him.

But he answered for them and settled the question. I am he. Therefore they said to him, Well, how were your eyes opened? And he answered and said, A man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.

So I went and washed and I received sight. Very simple explanation, no frills, no elaboration, just the facts. He just tells his testimony of what he knew, nothing more.

He didn't even know who Jesus was. He just knew he was a man named Jesus. He must have heard the disciples speaking to Jesus by name and saying, Oh, I guess his name is Jesus, whoever that guy is.

Some guy named Jesus did this thing. And look, this is the result. Then they said to him, Where is he? He said, I don't know.

So they brought him, who formerly was blind, to the Pharisees. Now, why to them? Why not to a doctor? Why not to a medical school? To study this weird case of a man recovering from blindness when he was born blind. Well, the reason they took him to the Pharisees, I believe, was because there was a religious issue that was involved here.

It was not just a medical issue. And we find out what that issue was in verse 14. Now, it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

So this is the same offense that Jesus had done in chapter 5, which they had never really quite gotten over in Jerusalem yet. They were still perturbed that Jesus had healed the man at the Pool of Bethesda in chapter 5. And Jesus had done that on the Sabbath. And they were still not quite happy about the idea that a man could do a healing on the Sabbath.

Even if it was possible that a man could heal on the Sabbath, in some cases, in that case, Jesus had told the man to take up his bed and walk, and carrying a bed was not okay on the Sabbath. That was bearing a burden. On this occasion, it was going to be controversial, partly because Jesus healed, but also partly because the method he used, making mud, was technically needing.

There was a, one of the tractates that the Pharisees had come up with, or the rabbis had come up with, about work that could not be done on the Sabbath, was kneading, like kneading dough. To work it, to knead dough or clay or anything else like that, that was considered work. Obviously, Jesus was making clay.

It must have been a very tiny quantity, but at the same time, it was the action that mattered. It was a violation of the Sabbath, or at least that was what was assumed. The people were going to consult the Pharisees about this and find out, was there some

violation done? So, the Pharisees actually conduct this as a serious investigation.

They inquire of him what happened, to see if there's been a wrong done. They decide that there has been, but they can't really deal with the fact that there was a miracle worked, because it's hard for them to understand how Jesus could be a Sabbath breaker, and thus in their eyes a sinner. And yet, God working through him, such a stupendous miracle is this.

And so, they're confused, and they're doing all they can to find some way to explain the phenomenon and retain the view that they hold that Jesus is in the wrong. And so, they first investigate the man himself. They inquire and let him testify.

When they get nothing out of him that helps them, they call in his parents for more witnesses. And then they bring him back in and cross-examine him a second time, because they're really struggling. They're not going to let this drop.

There's something has been done they think is wrong. Obviously, it has all the marks of being a work of God, but they're just not willing to believe that a work of God could be done on the Sabbath by a man who would thus be breaking the Sabbath in their eyes. It says, now the Pharisees also asked him again how he received his sight.

He had told the crowd, or the people in the street, but he now had to repeat the story for the Pharisees. He said to them, He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see. Now, it's possible that he gave a more lengthy explanation than this, but John is summarizing it because we already know the story and no sense in going through it over and over again in detail.

Therefore, some of the Pharisees said, this man is not from God, meaning Jesus, he's not from God because he does not keep the Sabbath. Others said, how can a man who is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them. Now, there had been earlier in chapters 7 and 8 a division among the people in the streets.

Now, there is a division among the Pharisees about Jesus. There were two camps. One of them was somewhat more strict than the other, and one of them held to making judgments based on first principles.

These would be the ones who would say, a man must be doing the wrong thing if he's breaking the Sabbath. The others would judge things by the results, and they'd be like the ones who'd say, well, wait, somebody got healed here. How could that not be of God? And so these were the two different opinions.

There was a division among them. Some said, well, I don't see how we can discount that God has done something here. And the others would say, but wait a minute, we're purists about the Sabbath, and it can't be God.

But they couldn't ignore a miracle that occurred. So they were really kind of at their wit's end. And they said to the blind man again, what do you say about him? Because he opened your eyes.

That is, not that they were going to take his opinion as the final word, obviously, but they couldn't decide among themselves what they thought of him. So they thought, well, let's ask him. He's the one who had the experience.

And the man said, he's a prophet, which might simply mean he's a man of God, because the term man of God and prophet were used interchangeably in the Old Testament. And it may be that he's simply saying, you know, well, somebody that God sent, obviously with divine powers. The prophets in the Old Testament didn't all work miracles, but some of them did.

Elijah and Elisha did. In fact, Elisha had told the Syrian Naaman to go and wash himself in the river to be cleansed of leprosy. That was maybe a little similar to Jesus telling his men to go wash his eyes out to be cured of blindness.

He may have felt like he was sort of another Elisha or some kind of a prophet. All he could say was he wasn't just a decent guy. He did a work that could only be attributed to God, and therefore he had to, in some special sense, be a man of God.

And at this point, he knew nothing else about Jesus, but he deduced he's got to be a prophet of God. Prophets are the only people we know of who do this kind of thing. But the Jews did not believe concerning him that he had been blind and received his sight until they called the parents of him who had received his sight.

Now, they were not going to accept his story. Why? Because if in fact he was born blind and now could see, and they could verify the second of these, they could see that he could see, they knew he could see. But if in fact he was born blind, there had to be a miracle.

A miracle of a unique sort, as the man himself pointed out later. Now, blindness being healed was not something that had never been reported in Israel before, even before Jesus' time. The apocryphal book of Tobit has a story about Tobit being healed of blindness, but he was not born blind.

And it was generally considered that a person born blind was incurable. And therefore, to confirm that this man was born blind was necessary because they hoped it was not true. If they could not confirm that he was born blind, or they could disprove that story, then they wouldn't have to deal with this anymore.

They could just say it's not that big a deal. But they called in his parents, and they asked them, saying, Is this your son who you say was born blind? How then does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born

blind. But by what means he now sees, we do not know.

Or who opened his eyes, we do not know. He is of age. Ask him.

He will speak for himself. Now, they spoke as witnesses in court really should. They told what they knew, and they didn't testify what they didn't know.

They recognized, that's our son, we can say that. We also were there when he was born. We know he was born blind.

We can testify to those two things. The other parts we can't testify to. We weren't there to see them.

But their emphatic ignorance about how he was healed and who healed him was motivated, we're told, by fear. Because they apparently had heard, at least the report, that Jesus had done this. Whether they had heard it from their son by this time, or whether they heard it in the street, because people were buzzing about it, we don't know.

But they knew it was about Jesus, because John tells us, in verse 22, his parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that Jesus was Christ, he'd be put out of the synagogue. Therefore, they said, he is of age. Ask him.

So they knew, at least that the report was that Jesus had done this, but they didn't want to mention the name of Jesus in a favorable light. It could lead to them getting into trouble with the religious authorities. So they just said, hey, we don't know, let him speak for himself.

In a sense, they were putting him on the hot seat and letting him take the heat for telling the story. But again, they couldn't do much else. They couldn't testify to anything they hadn't seen.

But they did confirm what the Pharisees hoped could not be confirmed, namely that he was born blind. Now, both parts of the story were confirmed. One, that he was born blind.

Two, that he clearly could see now. Therefore, the most reasonable deduction any unbiased person would have reached was a miracle has been performed. But many times people are not unbiased.

And this is true at all times. Not only with these religious leaders, sometimes with atheists and with other people who want to doubt religion altogether. If a miracle is done, they do anything they can to deny that a miracle has happened.

And in most cases, they can come up with interesting stories that satisfy them. Because

they just don't want to see what's clearly before their eyes. In many cases, for example, the story of the resurrection of Jesus.

If you look at all the facts, the only really reasonable suggestion is that he rose from the dead. We've got the issue of the empty tomb. We've got the issue of many people claiming to have seen him, some of them in groups, seeing him after he rose from the dead.

The only reasonable way to take that is a miracle occurred. The tomb was in fact empty because Jesus came out alive. It was also witnessed that he had died and his side had been pierced and blood and water came out, his heart was pierced.

He was not alive when they buried him, but he was alive three days later. That can be pretty much demonstrated from any normal use of evidences. But skeptics don't want to allow the normal use of evidence.

They want to bring unusual skepticism. And so they want to come up with any kind of excuse for the tomb being empty, including that the disciples stole the body, the most popular view, or that they even mistook the wrong tomb and they came to the wrong tomb. They didn't know where he was really buried and they came to an empty tomb that had never been used and thought that was Jesus' tomb.

And as far as seeing Jesus, they were just hallucinating. But of course anyone knows when you cross-examine these stories that they don't make any sense. We won't go into the reasons right now, that's a side issue.

But the point is, when you look at all the facts that are brought to support the idea that Jesus rose from the dead, they are convincing, except to people who refuse to believe in miracles. But the refusal to believe in miracles is not exactly an open-minded approach. Sometimes, if we just want to be open to all the facts, the conclusion must be that something supernatural happened.

It's when people have decided in advance that supernatural things can't happen that they have to resort to crazy alternative explanations of evidence that points very clearly in one direction. These people had a very strong incentive to deny that a miracle had happened. And so they first tried to prove that the man had not been blind.

However, all the witnesses that would know confirmed that he had been. He said so, his parents said so. Who would know better than they? It's also obvious that he was seeing.

So the most reasonable conclusion is a miracle was done by Jesus. But the implication of that is something the Pharisees did not want to confess to. Just like atheists today don't want to confess to the implications of Jesus being risen from the dead.

So they come up with any kind of harebrained alternative, which has to twist the

evidence. And that's what these people were trying to do. They were trying to look for some way to deny one aspect or another of the evidence so that they didn't have to reach the obvious conclusion.

So, verse 24, they called the man who was blind and said to him, Give God the glory, we know that this man is a sinner. Now, give God the glory is a phrase that really means tell the truth. It really means confess what you're holding back.

In Joshua chapter 7 and verse 19, when Achan was selected by the lot or by the urban Thummim as the one who had done something wrong and had brought disaster upon Israel. Joshua said to him, give God the glory, which meant confess, own up to what you did. And it's the same expression here.

So they said, own up to something, like you're holding something back. There are other factors in this story that you're not telling us. Is this like an elaborate hoax you and your parents are foisting on us? We can't just take at face value what you're saying.

So, we want you to tell the truth now. And they said, we know this man is a sinner. So, anything you say that points a different direction than that is not acceptable.

We know Jesus is a sinner because, of course, he broke the Sabbath and breaking the Sabbath is a sin and therefore that's a given. It's a given that Jesus is a sinner and therefore it's a given that God would not use such a sinful man to work miracles and so forth. So, something isn't lining up here, they're saying.

So, let's finally come out with it and tell us what the truth is about this. That's what they're trying to get the man to do. And he answered and said, well, whether he's a sinner or not, I don't know.

Now, they said, we know that Jesus is a sinner. He says, well, I don't know that. I know some things, but I don't know that.

And I'm not sure how you know that. You know, that's sort of a presumption you guys are making that Jesus is a sinner. I'm not willing to go there with you.

He may be or may not be. I don't really know that much about him. I don't know if he's a sinner or not, but I know this one thing.

I was blind and now I see the same two facts that have been on the table from the beginning. I was a blind man. I'm not a blind man now.

Now, you can deal with that however you want to. If you can fit that into your thesis that Jesus is a sinner, go for it. But it doesn't sound like your thesis works with the facts.

And the man obviously was not a man who knew a lot about Jesus. He didn't have a sophisticated Christology. He had not worked out his theological propositions about the

deity of Christ or the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ.

And he couldn't really give you a theological explanation of who Jesus was or how Jesus worked or what he was about. All he knew was what he knew. And you know what? It really got to them.

And a lot of times people are afraid to witness. I got a phone call on the air just yesterday, I guess, from a lady who said that she really wants to witness but she's afraid that she won't be able to answer everyone's hard questions. Their objections.

I told her, you know, I don't know if anyone can answer all the objections that are out there. I don't know how you can keep up with them all. It seems like book after book are just pouring off the printing presses.

Anti-Christian books making this claim and that claim against Jesus. Whether it's the Da Vinci Code thesis that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that he wasn't a deity. Or whether it's the Zeitgeist video thesis that Jesus never even existed and that the stories of Jesus are just a patchwork of details from pagan myths that were borrowed by the Christians.

Or whether it's some other theory, certainly the Dawkins theory that there's no God. I mean, it seems like continually we're being bombarded with arguments from people who claim to know something. Now it's interesting that if all these people who claim to know something were right, they can't all be right because if one of them is right then it cancels out the other one.

The idea that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and is the Jesus of the Gnostic Gospels obviously doesn't work if Jesus never existed and was just a myth you know, concocted after the nature of Horus and Mithras and so forth. If one of these attacks is correct, the other is wrong. Which means that all these attacks come if they all cancel each other out.

Maybe one of them could be right, but if it is, all the others are wrong. Of course, maybe the Gospels themselves are right and all the others are wrong. All the objections are wrong, but who can keep up with all that stuff? Well, a few people can, professional apologists who've got nothing else to do but read and respond to those attacks, but the average Christian doesn't.

I just said, you know, you can't really keep up with all that. There's a good chance you will hear some objections that you don't know the answers to. Like this man here, he didn't know the answer.

He was testifying what Jesus had done for him and they said, well, Jesus is a sinner, we know he's a sinner. Oh, well, can't answer you about that. I don't know him well enough.

I don't know enough of the facts. I can't really give you a theological explanation of whether Jesus is sinless or a sinner or what, who he is. I can only tell you what happened to me.

And you can deal with that however you want to. And that's what every Christian can do if they are a real Christian. They can say, I can't answer all those objections because frankly I've never looked into that subject.

I don't know everything. But I'll tell you one thing I do know. I know that I was this way, but now I'm this other way.

And it's because I'm at Jesus. And so, at least in my experience, Jesus is real. Now, if you also have the ability to argue philosophically, more power to you.

But sometimes just the testimony is the most powerful thing of all. As long as you're arguing philosophically, you leave things open for them to come back with philosophical arguments. Whether they're valid or not, they will always act like they are.

But when you give a testimony of what happened to you, what can they say? They can't say it didn't happen. Well, they can, but then they just have to say you're a liar. And maybe they will.

But you've done what you can. God doesn't expect you to answer everyone's question and to know everything. He expects you to testify.

To be ready to give everyone an answer for the reason of the hope that is in you. It says in 1 Peter 3.15. And the reason this man believed is because he had been blind and he now saw. He didn't even know, he never even laid eyes on Jesus.

He just saw what Jesus had done for him and that's all he could testify to. But it was a powerful testimony and these theologians who were trying to discount it couldn't answer him. But he was unimpressed with their theological objections.

Because they didn't seem to fit what he knew to be true from his little bit of experience with Jesus. And they said to him, again, what did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? Now, this man had told this story already a number of times. And he was tired of telling the details.

Not that he wouldn't tell it for a hundred more times in his lifetime. But to the same people, the same day, it's obvious that they couldn't have already forgotten. They wanted to retell the story so maybe they can catch him in a contradiction.

Maybe he'll tell it differently this time. So, let's just have him keep telling it until we see some flaw in it. Until we catch him contradicting himself or something.

So, he said, tell that story again. And he answered them, I told you already and you did

not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples? Now, this is the first time we actually see a note of sarcasm in the man.

Up to this point, he simply has patiently told them the truth. Well, he was a little sarcastic, perhaps. He said, well, I don't know if he's a sinner or not.

I know what I saw. I know what I see. There may have been a touch of impatience in his tone when he made that point.

Certainly, he had every right to be impatient with them. But now he's getting outright sarcastic with them. Oh, do you want to be his disciples too? Is that why you want to hear how he did it? You want to start doing what he does too because you're a follower of his? And they got angry at that.

Then they reviled him and said, you are his disciple but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses. As for this fellow, we do not know where he is from.

So, they're saying Moses has credentials. He's been around a long time and we all have known that he's from God. I mean, Moses did miracles.

Our ancestors saw it, testified to it. We all have known since our childhood that Moses was a true prophet of God. That's not up for debate.

What is up for debate is who Jesus is. And Jesus apparently has violated what Moses said. Moses gave us the law and the Sabbath.

This man, Jesus, seems to have broken the Sabbath. Now, there's obviously a conflict between these two men and we know where Moses is from. Moses is from God.

So, what we're trying to decide is where Jesus is from. And we can't tell you where he's from. And the man answered and said to them, why, this is a marvelous thing.

That you do not know where he is from. And yet he has opened my eyes. Now we know.

Now, see, they said we know that God spoke through Moses. He says, now we know that God does not hear sinners. So, he's actually beginning to teach theology to these people.

But if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, he hears him. This is actually what many of the rabbis taught in sometimes this exact statement. If anyone does God's will, God hears him.

There were rabbis who said essentially that same thing in slightly different phraseology. This man's theology was not bad. I mean, as far as the Pharisees were concerned.

The truth is that he's not entirely correct in saying God doesn't hear sinners. Because if a sinner cries out for mercy, God will hear him. But what he means, no doubt, is that God

does not act through and work through the requests of sinners to do miracles like Jesus has done.

He says, it's a strange thing that you'd say you don't know where he's from. And you know where Moses is from. One thing we can agree on is that God doesn't hear sinners.

And you're saying Jesus is a sinner. But look, certainly this miracle he's done was a result of God hearing him. And God responding to him and granting his request to heal me.

And he says, you know, if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, he hears him. So he's basically saying Jesus must at least be a worshipper of God. He doesn't know if Jesus is the Messiah.

He's never heard any suggestion of it. He doesn't know Jesus is the son of God. He doesn't know that Jesus is divine.

He just knows that he has to at least be a worshipper of God. Not a rebel against God. Or else God wouldn't be using him in this supernatural way.

Now, the Pharisees, of course, could answer, and any good evangelical could answer, well, sometimes miracles are not of God. And even Deuteronomy chapter 13 says that if a prophet or dreamer of dreams comes along and gives you a sign or a wonder and it comes to pass and he leads you away from worshipping Yahweh, don't believe him. So Moses had indicated that there could be false prophets who were not men of God who could give a sign or a wonder.

And the Jews knew that. They were aware of sorcerers. They were aware of those kinds of things.

But Jesus' miracle wasn't that kind of a thing. Jesus' miracle was an act of mercy. It wasn't strictly being a spectacle.

He didn't just go out and say, okay, everyone watching, I'm going to do this miracle so you'll believe in me. Jesus didn't do that kind of thing. He never did any miracles that were mere spectacles.

Of course, his miracles were spectacular. But he did them as acts of compassion and mercy, not as circus tricks. He never pulled a rabbit out of a hat or cut a lady in two and then put her back together again when you open the box.

He never did anything that was just impressive in itself with no purpose behind it. Everything he did fed hungry people or healed sick people or raised dead people or did something useful for people. These are the works of God, not the works of sorcerers.

They're not mere spectacles. So this kind of work could not be said to be not of God. He said, since the world began, it's been unheard of that anyone open the eyes of one who

is born blind.

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing, at least nothing like this. So the man is now definitely preaching to these people. And they're kind of at his mercy because they don't have any answers for him.

And so they just lash out like cornered wild animals do. They've been trying to argue. They've been trying to conduct an investigation.

They're trying to find evidence for the proposition they want to support. They're trying to bring arguments. And suddenly they're at the wit's end.

There's nothing more they can say. They're in the wrong. They're clearly wrong.

He's got them backed into a corner. His arguments are unanswerable. And so what do they do? They say, you know, maybe you're right.

No, they don't do that. And in this we see that they are not honest people. Jesus was right about them.

They weren't just honestly confused about who Jesus was and got the wrong answer. They were confronted with the truth in an unanswerable proof of Christ's being the messenger from God at the very least. And they instead say angrily, they answered and said to him, you were completely born in sins.

And are you teaching us? And they cast him out. Probably excommunicated him from the synagogue like his parents feared being done to them. Now when they said you were completely born in sin, they apparently are giving the answer to the question that the disciples asked Jesus.

Was it this man or his parents who sinned that he was born blind? And Jesus said it had nothing to do with their sins, any of their sins. Well, the Pharisees had decided it was your sins. Or at least your parents' sins.

It was somebody's sins. Your whole birth was marked by sin. They're not giving the theology that every Christian would give that we're all born with a sin nature or something like that.

They're basically saying your birth was marked with sin. That's why you were born blind. Since we can't deny you were born blind now, we have to say, well, there's something more than meets the eye here.

And we're not going to listen to you preach to us because you obviously have been in sin since birth. You think you can teach us the experts? From time to time, I've known pastors and preachers to respond this way to honest questions from simple Christians who say, you know, Pastor, you said such and such. But I wonder, where's that in the

Bible? And I know of many cases, I'm not making this up, where pastors said, where did you go to Bible school? By implication, we're the experts here.

We have the training. We've been to seminary. Where did you get your training? Well, obviously, in most cases, the Christian asks the question, I don't have any special training.

I just asked where that was in the Bible. But a lot of people don't like to be challenged, especially if they can't answer. If you point out to them that their theology is perhaps weaker than they are trying to let on, instead of saying, you know, well, that's a good point.

You know, maybe what I was teaching wasn't well backed up. I mean, it seems like a preacher should thank someone for pointing that out to them. If the preacher's preaching something that's not biblical, the person who points that out to them does them a favor.

It's a little embarrassing if you're the guy who went to college to learn this stuff, and someone who doesn't have any training spots the hole in your logic, spots the flaw in your theology. And it happens a lot, because many times God has hidden these things from the wise and prudent and reveals them to babes. And so if a babe comes along and says, you know, I think you're missing the point entirely.

The trained theologian has his ego in many cases. Now, you might find a trained theologian who's not an egotist and who is humble and teachable. But it is often the case that a person considers that their position as a trained professional spokesman for religion puts them above criticism, at least from people of a lower status than themselves.

And that's exactly the attitude of these people. You're teaching us? Do you know who we are? We're the rabbinic scholars. We've studied this all our lives.

We know what we're talking about. We recognize the breach of Sabbath when we see it. Who are you? You're born in sin.

Why should we even listen to you? Well, that's an answer that people give when they can't answer rationally. Because how could they? The man made a rational observation that they couldn't answer. And so they just decided to abuse him, verbally abuse him and throw him out.

Get his testimony out of their face. And so they cast him out. Now, I like the sequel to this.

In verse 35, it says, Jesus heard that they had cast him out. And when he had found him, he said to him, do you believe in the Son of God? Some manuscripts say the Son of Man.

So you'll find it different in different translations.

Now, what I like about this is the first line of verse 35. Jesus heard that they had cast him out. And when he had found him.

What this tells us is that Jesus finds the outcasts. Especially the outcasts who've been cast out of the religious system that was not open to him. People who are on the outside of the religious establishment because they've been rejected.

Because they didn't fit in. And they wouldn't just toe the party line. Because they were a little more interested in finding out the truth.

And so people become outcasts by the system. And Jesus looks them up. This is the first time he had a chance to see Jesus.

And Jesus said, do you believe in the Son of God? Or some manuscripts say the Son of Man. And he answered and said, who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him? And Jesus said to him, you have both seen him. And it is he who is talking with you.

It's kind of the same way Jesus spoke to the woman at the well. When she said, when the Messiah comes, he'll tell us all these things. He'll explain these things.

And she said, I who am talking to you am he. And sort of the same way here. The one who is talking to you is the one who is the Son of God.

Then he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. So this man became a disciple of Jesus.

And so Jesus then begins to speak, not so much to the man, but to whoever is listening. There's probably always a crowd around Jesus. Some of them were Pharisees themselves, as we shall see.

And he said, for judgment I have come into this world that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind. Then some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these words and said to him, are we blind also? And Jesus said to them, if you were blind, you would have no sin. But now you say, we see.

Therefore, your sin remains. Now, his statement, for judgment I have come into this world, might seem like it contradicts what he said back in chapter 8 and verse 15, where he said to the Pharisees, you judge according to the flesh. I judge no one.

And yet he says, I have come into this world for judgment. The judgment he did not come to do at his first coming was the execution of judgment. In this case, although the word judgment is the normal word, it has a nuance in this setting that's different.

It means something more along the lines of to make a distinction. I'm coming to judge

between two things, making a distinction between two categories. And he says, I've come so that a distinction would be made.

And it's between people who are not able to see but will be given sight, on the one hand, and people who do see, or more probably think they do, and will be made blind. He said, he actually used the case of this man being healed as sort of a spiritual parable. This man was blind, I gave him sight.

Now, what's happening spiritually here is people who say they can see, they're being made blind. And the Pharisees, who of course claim to see, they claim to be the ones who knew things. We know that this man's a sinner.

We know God sent Moses. We know, we see everything clearly. But because of their rebellion against God and against Jesus, they shut their eyes to the obvious truth.

The evidence was staring them right in the face and they turned their eyes away. They put the evidence out away from them. They threw them out of the synagogue.

They didn't want to see. And thus they chose blindness. And so Jesus said, you know, that's sort of the result that comes when I come into the world.

Blind people like this man get their sight. It's also true spiritually. People who were spiritually blind, but honest, are given spiritual revelation.

But men who can see but aren't honest, they are sent off into the darkness. They are made blind. When he says those who see in verse 39, I think he means those who think they see.

Because that's how he describes them in verse 41. Because you say we see. He's not necessarily saying you really do see, but you say you do.

You see yourself as the sighted ones. It's a little bit like in Matthew chapter 9, Jesus said those who are well do not need a physician. Those who are sick do.

He said I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Matthew 9, verse 13. Now, when he said I did not come to call the righteous, he doesn't mean that there were really people who were righteous and didn't need to be called to repentance.

He means, of course, those who think themselves righteous. Like the Pharisees themselves. He was talking to them.

I didn't come to call the righteous ones, which is what you regard yourselves to be. And here he says I came so that the people who see, which is what you regard yourselves to be, people who see, will actually be made blinder than you already are. And the Pharisees kind of caught the edge of his remark and realized that he might be talking about them.

And he said are we blind also then? Are you including us and those who are being made blind? And Jesus said if you were blind, you would have no sin. That is, if you really were honestly unable to see anything, if you're in the dark legitimately and had never been given any light, then you would not be culpable. Your sin would be not charged to you.

Because in times of ignorance, God winks, Paul said in Acts chapter 17. But these people claimed that they could see, and therefore they would be held accountable for the light that was brought to them. He says because you say we see, your sin remains.

Now, elsewhere in Scripture, Jesus mentions that the Pharisees are blind. In Matthew chapter 15, he calls them blind leaders of the blind. In Matthew 15 and verse 14, the disciples said to him, in verse 12, do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard your saying? And he said to them, every plant which my Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

Let them alone, they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch. Jesus said the Pharisees, they were blind people.

Now on this occasion, they say, do you say we're blind? Do you think we're blind? He says, well, if you were really blind, I mean, if you really were disadvantaged people who had no access to vision, like this man was born blind, well, then you wouldn't be guilty of the things you're guilty of. You couldn't be charged with the rebellion that you're involved in because you wouldn't know that you're rebelling. But you do rebel.

You do claim to see. You are the ones who present yourselves as the enlightened ones. And therefore, you'll be held accountable for what you claim to be.

If you humbled yourself and said you're blind, then there'd be some light given to you. But because you think you see, you're going to be among those that will be made blind. And so we find in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, that Paul talks about the state of the Jews who are not currently believers in Jesus.

And he said in 2 Corinthians 3.14, But their minds were hardened, for until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

The idea is they are blinded to the meanings of the Old Testament when it's read to them. When they read Moses, when they read the Old Testament, they can't see it. There's a veil between their understanding and the actual meaning of it.

There's a veil over their heart. That can be taken away when they turn to the Lord. But without turning to the Lord, they will not find that it is taken away.

They will be left blind. In Romans chapter 11, Paul is talking about the Jews again. The

Jews were unbelievers.

And he says in Romans 11, 7 and 8, What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks. The elect have obtained it, and the rest were hardened. Just as it is written, God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.

So, they were hardened. And they were given eyes that could not see. They were made blind.

Why? Well, because they had rebelled against the light that they had had. God doesn't ever just deprive people of sight because He just decided to pick on them. It's a poetic justice.

They don't want the light, therefore He deprives them of sight. Remember, Jesus said in John chapter 3, This is the condemnation, that light came into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Well, they don't want the light.

They hate the light. They try to extinguish the light. That was certainly the case of these people who threw this man out of the synagogue.

He was there shining in their faces the light, the truth, that Jesus is who He claims to be. That Jesus is from God. That they should be listening to Jesus instead of trying to condemn Him.

He was doing the works of God. He was shining brilliantly in their sight. The evidence was irrefutable, but when they couldn't refute the evidence, they just threw the witness out.

They hated the light. Therefore, they would be made blind. They were the ones who were responsible for it.

They were making themselves blind by turning the light away from themselves, so that they would just consign themselves to going back into the darkness. So, there's really two states of heart or mind that people can be in with reference to light. A person can want more light.

And, of course, with that comes the willingness to be exposed. Because if you're in the light, you can see, but you can also be seen. The other thing is to choose the darkness.

Because, although you can't see, people can't see you there either, if you're in the darkness. And because your deeds are evil, you may choose darkness. You may love darkness.

And, I think that all people on the planet either love truth or don't love the truth. And, if a person doesn't want the truth to be known about themselves, and they want to conceal

that, and they want to be in the dark, then they are not lovers of truth. And, therefore, they are deprived of the truth.

And, therefore, God shall send them strong delusion, Paul said, because they did not receive the love of the truth. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 And that was what happened to these men. This is why they conspired to kill Jesus.

Not because they had good reason to believe he was a bad guy. They were committed to their legalism to the point where they were not willing to break free from that and see that God was doing something out of the box. And Jesus had explained to them the reason he could break the Sabbath is because his father did.

And he was able to do what his father did because he was the son of his father, doing his father's work. But they didn't like that explanation. That, of course, threatened their own power base.

Because they were the religious leaders and they weren't on his side, and he wasn't on their side, so they had to get rid of him. Because he was too popular and they were jealous. And Pilate knew that it was for jealousy that the Jews had handed Jesus over to them.

It wasn't so much that they really believed he was bad. They were jealous of him because he threatened their position. And that was the problem with these people.

You'd think, well, why wouldn't these people, these Pharisees, when they see this, just say, wow, praise God. You know, we've got a prophet in our midst at least. Maybe the Messiah even.

That's because if he's the Messiah, that means there's going to be a shift in the power base here. And that means we're going to have to redefine our position in this religious society, not as the ones that everyone looks to and thinks of as the leaders. This guy's going to be the leader.

And we're just not willing to lose that. So they instead are willing to lose their souls.