

“Metaphorical Miracle” (Jn. 9)

1. Blind From Birth (1-5)

a. Theological Assumptions? (1-2)

- i. Exo. 20:5-6 re: parent’s sin. However, Jer. 31:29 (cf. Ezek. 18:1-4) states that sins’ punishment is particular to the sinner. but consequences (not punishment) of sins visit the fathers’ children (Lam. 5:7).
- ii. Ezek. 18:19-20; Ps. 89:31-32 states sin has punishment but how could he have sinned before birth? “Jewish teachers believed that suffering, including blindness, was often due to sin; one could suffer for one’s parents’ sins or even for a sin committed by mother or fetus during the pregnancy.”¹
- iii. Ps. 51:5 affirms original sin and the federal headship of Adam. See Ro. 5:12.
- iv. **Further Study:** Just as there are general and particular consequences of sin there are general and particular forms of revelation. Jesus said no one can come to Him unless drawn by the Father (Jn. 6:44). Taken alone, it seems God arbitrarily chooses those who will believe/repent. However, Romans 1-2 where Paul stated that no one has an excuse to not believe in God. He testifies to God’s revelation which requires man’s response. God provides creation conscience, Christ, and the canon of Scripture for us to consider.

b. Theological Appointment! (3-5)

- i. For a sign of God’s glory and Jesus’ authority (3). The man’s blindness serves a particular purpose in a particular window of time (4) when Jesus could work signs for salvation.
- ii. The light of the world offers sight to the blind!

2. Opened Eyes (6-12)

a. The Physical Means (6-7)

- i. Using unclean dirt to cleanse the eyes would likely be seen as an indictment by those opposing Jesus. “The use of spittle in the surrounding pagan culture was so often associated with magical practices,⁴ [thus] it appears that rabbis more commonly condemned the use of saliva (so, for instance, Rabbi Akiba, in Tosephta, *Sanhedrin* 12:10; cf. SB 2. 15).²
- ii. However, there could be a correlation with Gen. 2:7 re: God’s creation of man from dust and Jesus healing a man from the dust with God’s power – not unlike the finger of God which wrote on the tablets (Exo. 31:18; Deut. 9:10) could correlate with Jesus writing with His finger in the sand which seeming equated with the Law which accused the accusers (Jn. 8:6).
- iii. “Another suggestion, recently put forward by David Smith,⁵ has its attractions. Building on the work of the cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas,⁶ Smith notes that,

¹ Keener, C. S. (1993). [*The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament*](#) (Jn 9:2). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴ There are many examples listed in the major commentaries. The one most commonly cited is the healing of the blind soldier, Valerius Aper, apparently by Asclepius, in which no spittle was used, but an eye-salve made of the blood of a white cock and honey (cf. A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* [Hodder and Stoughton, 1910], p. 132.

SB H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München: C. H. Beck, 1926–61).

² Carson, D. A. (1991). [*The Gospel according to John*](#) (p. 363). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁵ David Smith, *TrinJ* 6, 1985, pp. 151–156.

⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Ark, 1984).

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judging by the Old Testament and by later Jewish tradition, Palestinian Jews, like people in many other cultures around the world, believed that human excreta (including urine, breast milk, saliva, menstrual flow, *etc.*) were all forms of (ceremonial) pollutant, ‘dirt’. In such tribes, under certain conditions that same ‘dirt’, in the hands of people authorized with the appropriate power, could be transformed into an instrument of blessing. Thus blood and saliva pollute, but in the right context blood cleanses and saliva cures. Certainly uncleanness in the Old Testament can be conveyed by saliva (Lv. 15:8). If the reversal of the taboos also applies (and here the evidence is admittedly scanty), then by using spittle as part of his treatment Jesus is making a claim to have religious authority. The situation is not entirely unlike the healing of a man with leprosy: by touching him Jesus does not contract the leper’s uncleanness, but heals the leper of his disease (Mt. 8:1–4).”³

b. The Spiritual Meaning (6-12)

- i. Jesus was not concerned with how they might try to discredit his uncleanness and subjecting himself to their added laws. He was demonstrating authority by taking what was unclean and using it – repurposing it for healing.
- ii. Why John’s emphasis on the meaning of Siloam? Jesus ‘sent’ the man to the pool of “sent.” Jesus insisted that He was the One sent by God (claimed 5 times in ch. 8) to heal and make the blind see. He did so physically and spiritually cf. Lu. 4:18-21. Only Jesus and the Spirit (sent by Jesus (Jn. 14:16)) can offer the illuminating light which causes the blind to see! Lu 24:45
- iii. Isa. 8:6 further reveals John’s emphasis on Siloam where the Jews reject the waters which flow from the “sent” One thus fulfilling Isaiah’s prophesy both spiritually and physically, not unlike giving sight to the blind.
- iv. Jesus used common dirt seen as unclean (unconcerned of their blind judgments) and focused on the blind man’s need. He demonstrated both his authority and compassion in performing the sign of giving sight.
- v. Our spiritual sight is, in part, thanks to our blindness. Had he not been blind and recognized his need, he’d not be washed in the cleansing water. When one’s eyes have been spiritually opened by Christ, he sees that his liabilities were used as assets.
- vi. Furthermore, others will also take note of the great change in us after Jesus has shined His illuminating light on and in us!

3. Increasing Consternation (Blind By Choice 13-34)

- a. Just as there are those who acknowledge the transformation Jesus performs in a person, there are also those who refuse to ‘see’ such.
- b. It is ironic that the Pharisees refuse to take the very testimony of the only one who could give it! As if he wasn’t there when it happened! Only the one who was blind can prove he now sees!
- c. Yet in their stubborn blindness, they all but gnash their teeth at the One who threatens their positions:
 - i. V. 15 they repeat the same question. It becomes an interrogation rather than an investigation.
 - ii. V. 16 Sabbath breaker
 - iii. V. 17 demanding information prematurely

³ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 364). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

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- iv. V. 18 refusal to believe the man so they reach out to his parents in desperation
 - v. V. 19 same question again (3rd time)
 - vi. V. 22 (& 34) reveals that they weaponized their authority to threaten others with excommunication. This is no small thing as the status of God’s favor to the Jews depended on their solidarity in matters of ceremony, the Temple, sacrifices, etc.
 - vii. V. 24 frivolous accusation. Not only do they call Jesus a sinner but the man a liar (see Josh. 7:19 re: “give glory to God” and confess your deceit.)
 - viii. V. 26 repeat question in interrogation (4th time)
 - ix. V. 28 revile him and elevate themselves
 - x. V. 29 hypocritical denunciation (cf. 7:27)!
 - xi. V. 34 they cast him out!
4. Increasing Courage (Sight By Conviction 15-34)
- a. After the inquisition becomes apparent, he calmly repeats his testimony (15)
 - b. In their unrealistic demand, he concludes at the very least that Jesus was a prophet (17). Deut. 13:1-5 instructs the testing of a prophet and from what the man saw, Jesus qualified. Be careful what you ask for...
 - c. What is happening here is an increase of spiritual sight. He knew Jesus’ name (11). He deduced Jesus a prophet (17). And he will worship Him as Lord (38).
 - d. Vv. 18-23 Parents concerned with excommunication. Conundrum: They knew their son had been healed and would not lie about such, nor bear false testimony and be expelled. However, they felt a legitimate need for assoc. w/ the Temple.
 - e. V. 25 the man keeps it simple. He couldn’t have known all about Jesus any more than a new convert can be a theologian, but he gives testimony to what Jesus had done in his life!
 - f. V. 27 a calm courage grows to a conviction which allows a bold wit (sarcasm).
 - g. V. 30 As he sees their outrage is unfounded, he seems to gain even more confidence in Jesus and deduces that He must be from God – which obviously enrages them. Disillusionment: I like how Carson put it: “he has come to the end of his confidence in the traditional religious authorities.”⁴
 - h. Their logic started with an assumption i.e. Jesus was a sinner. Syllogism of Pharisees: Jesus is a sinner. God does not hear sinners. Therefore, God does not hear Jesus. The man’s logic started with fact and thus the syllogism of the man is: Jesus performed a righteous miracle. No one could do such w/o God. Therefore, God is with Jesus (30-33).
 - i. V. 34 His courage didn’t produce favorable results but that is exactly why it is courageous! He quickly found that acknowledging Jesus comes at a price. Nevertheless, he would also find that conviction produced by Jesus infinitely outweighs the approval, comfort, and security of the worldly authorities.
5. Spiritual Sight & Blindness (35-41)
- a. Vv. 35-38 We find a compassionate Savior who appears immediately after – not before – the man was excommunicated. Jesus may test our faith in order to strengthen it and He will affirm our faith when it is placed in Him.
 - b. Walking by faith is not blindness if faith is in the One who affirms His signs!
 - c. Jesus does more than affirm the man for his convictions, He condemns those who excommunicated him.

⁴ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 376). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

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- d. Jesus used this physical healing of blindness as a spiritual lesson on the reality of spiritual blindness. He offers a warning against self-confidence, self-assurance, self-proclamation, self-aggrandizement, and presumption.
- e. The carnal mind is blinded by sin and thus lives in darkness.
- f. We cannot see (perceive) unless illuminated by God (Jn. 6:44; Lk 24:45) and thus cannot judge spiritual matters (1 Cor. 2:14-16). Those who know they were blind and healed by Jesus can truly see; and those who claim they see clearly are made blind because the Judge of all mankind is the only One who sees all, and they have refused to acknowledge the Judge of heaven and earth.
- g. My thoughts exactly on verse 39 are summed up well by Carson here: “Formally, the entire clause *For judgment (krima) I have come into this world* stands in contradiction with 3:17, ‘For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn (*krinō*) the world’ (*cf.* also 12:47). The charge is superficial. Even 3:17 is immediately followed by 3:18–21, with its contrast between darkness and light and its implicit threat of judgment (*cf.* also 3:36). Jesus’ point in 9:39 is not that the very purpose of his coming was to condemn, nor even simply to divide the human race. He came to save, not condemn (12:47). But saving some entails condemning others. In that derivative sense, Jesus has indeed come *for judgment*. ‘This is the paradox of the revelation, that in order to bring grace it must also give offence, and so can turn to judgment. In order to be grace it must uncover sin; he who resists this binds himself to his sin’⁵

PC for “Metaphorical Miracle” (Jn. 9)

The greatest miracle I know is that I was blind and now I see! “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (Jn. 3:36; see vv. 16-21 also). Although Jesus came to save – because we are already condemned as sinners, He is the Judge of all mankind. One must either take all of Jesus or none of Him. Either He is both Judge and Savior or neither. Those who refuse Him as Savior will meet Him as Judge. And those who acknowledge Him as Judge embrace Him as Savior. Jesus came to give sight to the blind. He conquered so that we could have eternal life. If we claim we can see clearly to judge and live righteously, we are proving our blindness, and thus will be judged righteously by the One who sees all things! Jesus came for the sick, lost, poor, blind, and wretched; and I’m glad I qualified!

⁵ Carson, D. A. (1991). [*The Gospel according to John*](#) (p. 377). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.