

Exegesis

Vs. 26-29 – This is now the third time the Pharisees have asked about how the blindless man received his sight (vs. 15, 19). Are they hoping he'll make a mistake and might contradict his earlier testimony?¹ It is hard to say. Whatever the reason, the once-blind-man is frustrated by their stubbornness as he says, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear...." Interestingly, his response finds a close parallel to Jesus' own words in John 5:37, where he says, "the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape." It does not matter whether it was Jesus who was doing the talking or the man himself who had been healed; the religious leaders refused to believe the things they were hearing. Thus, seeing the pointlessness of answering their question once again, he turns and starts questioning the Pharisees: "wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?" Some commentators view these questions as being naively sincere.² But the majority see them as being deliberately sarcastic.³ I tend to agree, given that he already admitted that they weren't listening to him. Even how he asks the questions makes it sound like he expected the answer to be "no."⁴ However, while he knew that such an idea was absurd, the question implied that, unlike them, he was Jesus' disciple. At what point did that happen?

To no one's surprise, the Pharisees reel from the idea of being Jesus' disciple. And in an attempt to humiliate the blindless man, they say, "Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." Juxtaposing Moses and Jesus is at the heart of the centuries-long debate between Judaism and Christianity. As Beasley-Murray explains, "Moses and the Law are set over against Jesus and his teaching; the authority of Moses is indisputable, the authority of Jesus is spurious."⁵ The Jews claim that it can only be one or the other, whereas the Christian affirms that it is, in fact, both (cf. 1:17, 45; 5:45-47; 7:19; Lu. 24:27).⁶ N.T. Wright put it marvelously when he said, "John wants us to see that Jesus is himself the climax, the true end of the story—

¹ Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 158.

² Köstenberger (2004), p. 290; Keener (2003), 1:790.

³ Wright (1950), p. 226; Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 158; Thompson (2015), p. 217; Carson (1991), p. 373, says that he displays "a quite marvelous gift for sardonic repartee." Kruse (2017), p. 260, does not take a stance.

⁴ Morris (1995), p. 437.

⁵ Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 158.

⁶ Thompson (2015), p. 218.

and indeed the beginning of the new story which grows out of the old, and which in turn is now spreading throughout the world.”⁷

The Pharisees said that Moses was a reliable source, whereas "this fellow" was an enigma to them. That is true, given that they did not know the Christmas story (*see notes 7:40-43*). However, Jesus had been very clear about where he came from (cf. 8:42). These claims had been backed by his teaching and multiple miracles. Even some of their ilk believed that he was "from God" (cf. 3:2). And did not the Jews say that the Messiah's origins would be shrouded in mystery (cf. 7:27)?⁸ The fact that they were so confused about his background should've helped Jesus' cause. Regardless, saying "we know not" wasn't an admission that they lacked knowledge. They knew Jesus' declarations perfectly well. They just didn't believe him.

Vs. 30-34 – The once-blind-man gets bolder and bolder as the conversation dissolves even further. His mocking of the religious leaders, which was but a few deft quips before, is now an all-out assault on their ineptitude: "Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes." He was the one who was blind. If anyone should have trouble comprehending what's occurred, it should've been him. He had no formal religious training. He was not a part of the Sanhedrin. He could not read or write. He was a beggar by trade, whereas the Pharisees were, quite literally, paid theologians. Yet the blindless man knows that Jesus must be from God when some of the most well-educated spiritual leaders on the planet thought such a conclusion was ludicrous. Their unbelief in the face of such undeniable proof was more remarkable than the miracle itself!⁹ The once-blind-man was quite right. That is a "marvelous thing" indeed.

In total dramatic irony, a man who was assumed to be, at best, a novice proceeds to teach these religious experts a bible lesson. And though brief, the once-blind-man's sermon comprises three parts: a scriptural basis, some practical evidence, and a reasonable conclusion. In doing so, he demonstrated that he had considerable skill in expositing the Scriptures. Many a preacher would do well if they followed his pattern.

The blindless man explains, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." This was true. The Bible is filled with so many verses which talk about this very thing that one N.T. author will conclude that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Ja. 5:16; cf. Jn. 14:13-14; 16:23-27;

⁷ Wright, N.T., *John For Everyone*, Part 1, Chapters 1-10, (London; Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), p. 142.

⁸ Morris (1995), p. 437.

⁹ Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 158.

1 Pet. 3:7; 1 Jn. 3:21-22).¹⁰ The term "righteous" is the operative word in that verse. And while God hears the prayers of all men to a certain extent, he is far more inclined to accommodate the requests of the obedient than he is the disobedient (cf. 11:41-43). To worship God while aligning with his will positions a person so that God will not close his ears when they call to him. After all, they are likely asking for the very things that God wants to give them. "The Jewish leaders had rightly insisted that God *spoke to* Moses; the man born blind pointed out that God *listens to* Jesus!"¹¹ How else could he now see if God didn't listen to Jesus?

Leaving the scriptural basis for his argument, the blindless moves to a more practical observation when he says, "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." Had he not qualified his statement by referring only to those "*born blind*," his claim would've been untrue and nothing more than hyperbole. Greek and Roman fables, which the Jews would've been familiar with, spoke of the blind receiving sight. A few extra-biblical Jewish texts actually testify that something like that might've occurred outside the canon of Scripture.¹² However, the story of someone blind since birth receiving their sight was novel. Even the closest scriptural parallel—2 Ki. 6:8-32—deviates significantly from what's occurred. Thus, based not only on sound biblical principles but also common-sense reasoning, the blindless man emphatically concludes, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."¹³

Bristling at being talked down to by someone they thought of as their intellectual inferior, the Pharisees say, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" Notice how they did not attack his arguments, choosing instead to attack the man himself (cf. 8:48).¹⁴ Ironically, this runs against Jesus' comments in verse 3 that "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." And failing to see that this man was a living testament that the Messianic age had dawned (cf. Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7),¹⁵ John tells us that "they cast [the blindless man] out" of the synagogue (cf. vs. 22). And what else could they

¹⁰ Köstenberger (2004), p. 292, Thompson (2015), p. 218, give the following supportive passages: 1 Sam. 2:25; Job 27:9; Ps. 34:10, 15-18; 66:18; 109:7; 145:19; Prov. 15:8, 29; 21:27; 28:9; Isa. 1:15; Jer. 7:16-18; 11:14; 14:11-12.

¹¹ Kruse (2017), p. 261.

¹² Keener (2003), 1:793.

¹³ Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 158-159, quoting Hoskyns, "If once it be assumed that a miracle proclaims the presence of a prophet, a miracle without parallel since the world began proclaims the presence of the Christ."

¹⁴ Molière, a 17th-century French satirist, famously wrote in his play *Tartuffe*, "Those who have greatest cause for guilt and shame are quickest to besmirch a neighbor's name. When there's a chance for libel, they never miss it. When something can be made to seem illicit, they're off at once to spread the joyous news, adding to fact what fantasies they choose. By talking up their neighbor's indiscretions, they seek to camouflage their own transgressions, hoping that other's innocent affairs will lend camouflage to theirs or that their own black guilt will come to seem part of a general shady color scheme."

¹⁵ Kruse (2017), p. 262.

do? They couldn't rightly have him staying around and contradicting them. As Wright explains, "Those who cannot be answered must at least be silenced."¹⁶ But, the irony of ironies, in affirming the man's sin using the evidence that he had been blind since birth (a claim they disputed), the Pharisees tacitly acknowledged that a miracle occurred and that Jesus was the one who had performed it.¹⁷

¹⁶ Wright (1950), p. 226.

¹⁷ Carson (1991), p. 375; Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 159.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | John | Week 15

Text: **John 9:26-34**

In complete dramatic irony, a man who was assumed to be, at best, a novice proceeds to teach some religious experts a bible lesson. And though brief, the once-blind-man's sermon comprises three parts: a scriptural basis, some practical evidence, and a reasonable conclusion. In doing so, he demonstrated that he had considerable skill in expositing the Scriptures. Many a preacher would do well if they followed his pattern.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: