

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

To Believe or Not To Believe John 9:39-41

One day, at the rapture, the whole of Christ's church will be assembled before Him. Not one born again Christian will be missing. What an exciting day that will be.

And I know that as the followers of Christ, we will be fully occupied in worshiping Him along with the heavenly hosts. But there is one activity that I would be very interested in doing if I were given a chance. And what would that be?

I would like to take roll. Not necessarily making sure that every person written in the "Book of Life" was present and accounted for, but rather, I would like to take roll using our church directory.

And, of course, my hope would be that every person who is listed in our directory would be found present and accounted for. Will this be the reality? I don't know, but I hope that we would labor together according to the power which mightily works within us to do all that we can to make this happen.

Why? We need to do this because we cannot simply take this for granted. The reality of this will hopefully come alive for us this evening/morning as we conclude our study of **John 9**.

Last week we concluded the characteristics of spiritual sight. What were they? Spiritual sight is the product of divine initiative (John 9:35).

Let me read for you **John 9:35**. "**Jesus heard that they had put him out; and finding him, He said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'**" What is the first characteristic of spiritual sight? Spiritual sight is the product of divine initiative. We do not find Jesus, He finds us. What is the second characteristic?

Spiritual sight comes to those who are prepared to believe (John 9:36). Let me read for you **John 9:36**. "**He answered and said, 'And who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?'**" Was this blind man prepared to believe when Jesus found Him? Absolutely!

Spiritual sight is the product of divine initiative. Spiritual sight comes to those who are prepared to believe. What else?

Spiritual sight requires that the person prepared to believe be given the opportunity to believe (John 9:37). Let me read for you **John 9:37**. "**Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.'**" Jesus certainly, in response to the former blind man's question, left no doubt about who He was. He left no doubt that He was the Son of Man, or in other words the Messiah. And in doing this, He provided this former blind man the opportunity to believe. Those were three characteristics of spiritual sight. What was the fourth and final characteristic?

Spiritual sight only comes to those who when given the opportunity to believe actually do so (John 9:38). Let me read **John 9:38**. "**And he said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshiped Him.**" Jesus certainly had opened the door for the former blind man to exercise faith, but it was still the

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responsibility of the blind man to go through the door, and He did that enthusiastically and did exactly what you would expect from someone who, in fact, exercises saving faith. He worshiped Christ, or in other words, he prostrated Himself before Christ and His right to rule over his life.

This weekend we are not going to consider any more characteristics of spiritual sight but this time we will be considering various characteristics of spiritual blindness in **John 9:39-41**.

My hope for this message is that God would use it to make sure that no one here will miss out on the heavenly roll call and that we together would be working to make sure that this, in fact, becomes our reality. What is the first characteristic of spiritual blindness?

Spiritual blindness will be *judged* if people do not respond to Christ's rescue mission (John 9:39). We find the basis for this statement in the very first part of **John 9:39**. Let us read that part of the verse. "**And Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world.'**" This is a very interesting statement and perhaps even confusing, but before we try and understand specifically what Jesus is trying to communicate by this statement, we need to understand the setting for this remark.

Let me ask you this question. Was the former blind man still worshipping Jesus or was he not worshipping Jesus when this remark was made in **John 9:39**? I believe that the former blind man was no longer worshipping Jesus. If he had still been worshipping Jesus, this would have meant that the Pharisees, who are mentioned in **John 9:40**, would have been there when this former blind man prostrated himself before Christ in **John 9:38**. And this is just not very likely considering the fact that if they had witnessed such a thing, they would have gone ballistic. Therefore, I think we would have to conclude that the former blind man was no longer prostrate before Jesus, or in other words, worshipping Him when Jesus said what He said in **John 9:39**.

If this is true, then when Christ said, "**For judgment I came into this world,**" He was not speaking to the former blind man, but most likely He was speaking primarily to His disciples attempting to summarize for them the deeper spiritual truths contained within the events recorded for us in **John 9**, while others were standing around listening to what He had to say.

So, now we need to come back to Christ's statement at the beginning of **John 9:39**. We, first of all, need to understand what He did not mean. When Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world," He did not mean that He came into this world to send people to *hell*. In fact, quite the opposite was true.

Let me read for you **John 3:17**. It says, "**For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.**" In fact, if Jesus had never come into this world and offered up His body on the cross as a propitiation for our sins, everyone who has ever lived in this world would have ultimately been condemned.

Therefore, based on **John 3:17**, when Jesus came into this world, His primary purpose was to conduct a *rescue* mission (John 3:17). He certainly did not come into this world to send people to hell, and therefore, we cannot possibly understand Christ's statement in **John 9:39** in that way.

If Jesus statement, "**For judgment I came into this world,**" does not primarily mean that He came into this world to send people to hell, then what does He mean?

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He explains what He meant as we continue to read the verse. What does Jesus say? **"For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind."**

Though Jesus primary purpose in coming into this world was to conduct a rescue operation, He knew there would be different responses with very different consequences (John 9:39). Therefore, after He tells us that He came into this world for judgment, He give us those responses, and there are two.

The first response is by a group of people who choose to humbly submit themselves to Christ's rescue operation, and in doing this, avoid judgment.

Where do we see this response by this group? Look at the very next words in **John 9:39, "that those who do not see may see."**

And who in John 9 represents this group? The former blind man represents this group. The former blind man, recognizing that he did not see, or in other words who recognized that he had a spiritual need, humbly responded to Christ's rescue mission and was given spiritual sight, and in being given spiritual sight he avoided eternal damnation.

This was the first response to Christ's rescue operation that Jesus details for us in **John 9:39**. What is the second possible response? The second response is by a group of people who choose, in their pride, to reject Christ's rescue operation, and therefore in doing this, invite eternal damnation.

Where do we see this response by this group? Look at the final words of **John 9:39, "that those who see may become blind."**

Who in John 9 represents this group? The Pharisees, who were hostile to Christ, represent this group. These Pharisees, believing that they saw everything perfectly, repeatedly rejected Christ's rescue operation, and in the process they became spiritually blind.

So, what does this mean? Does this describe a spiritual state or does it describe a spiritual dynamic? I believe that both are true. When the Pharisees first rejected Christ, because of their spiritual pride, they entered into the state of blindness that is described in **John 9:39**. And when they entered this state, a very different dynamic was unleashed in their lives than was unleashed in the life of the former blind man.

In the case of the former blind man, when he responded to Christ's rescue mission, the spiritual dynamic that was unleashed in His life allowed Him not only to see Christ and to follow Him but would ultimately usher Him into the glory of heaven to enjoy fellowship with Christ. Unfortunately, the dynamic that was being unleashed in the lives of those who rejected Christ was quite the opposite. Rather than giving them greater opportunity to see Christ, to follow Christ, so that they could one day be ushered into the glory of heaven to enjoy fellowship with Christ, quite the opposite was true. They are rolling downhill and gaining momentum, and at some point in time could very well reach the point of no return.

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When Jesus said, "those who see may become blind," it would appear that Jesus is talking about a blindness that is becoming more and more fixed and perhaps ultimately *irreversible*.

We see Christ describing something very similar to this in **Matthew 13:10-12**. "**And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them [referring to the multitudes] in parables?' (11) And He answered and said to them, 'To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.'**" In other words, using the words of **John 9**, "**To you, like the former blind man, you came to Me, but this multitude, like the hostile Pharisees, have not, so I have treated them accordingly.**"

And what would this mean practically? Let us now read **Matthew 13:12**. "**For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.**"

When people continually and stubbornly reject the rescue mission of Christ it will not be without consequences. Their spiritual blindness will become more and more fixed and perhaps ultimately irreversible.

What did Jesus say to His disciples and to others standing around listening to Him at the beginning in **John 9:39**? "**For judgment I came into this world.**" This means different things to different people. For those in the first group, described in **John 9:39**, this means that Christ came into this world that they might avoid judgment. But for the second group this means that Christ came into this world so that they might invite judgment.

So, how should we respond to these two different kinds of people? We should respond just like Christ did. With the first group, those who recognize that they don't see and are open to the truth, we need to simply keep sharing with them the gospel. Ultimately those people will embrace the gospel and prostrate themselves before Christ recognizing His right to rule over their lives. And what about the second group, those who do not recognize that they don't see and are not open to truth? This question leads us to the second characteristic of spiritual blindness.

Spiritual blindness can and should, at times, be *confronted* (John 9:40-41). Let me read for you **John 9:40**. "**Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and said to Him, 'We are not blind too, are we?'**" The Pharisees clearly got the point of what Christ said in **John 9:39** and took offense at Christ's implication even though Jesus had not specifically addressed them.

So, they responded to Christ's teaching in **John 9:39** by scornfully repudiating what they thought Jesus was implying, which was what? They were repudiating Christ's implication that they were somehow messed up and needed His help.

The Pharisees, in their spiritual blindness, could only see themselves through their own eyes and not through the eyes of God (John 9:40). It seemed ridiculous to them that they, who viewed themselves, according to **Romans 2:19-20**, as guides to the blind, the light to those who were in darkness, the correctors of the foolish, the teachers of the immature must come to Jesus to receive sight.

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What a tragic condition these Pharisees were in. They assumed something about themselves that was not true. If they had simply paused and perhaps for a moment considered the possibility that they, in fact, might be afflicted with spiritual blindness and humbled themselves before the Lord asking Him to reveal to them the true nature of their spiritual condition, I can't imagine that God would have denied them the grace to see the fact that they were spiritually blind.

How about ourselves? Could there be people among us that might be just like the Pharisees who think that they see but who are, in fact, spiritually blind? And the answer would have to be "yes." Certainly we are warned of this very thing in **Matthew 7** when Jesus tells us that there will be many in the day of judgment who will say didn't we "do this in your name" and "and do this in your name," and what will He say to them? **"I never knew you; depart from me you who work iniquity."**

It is not enough to think that we are okay. It is not enough because professing believers, like these Pharisees, can very easily deceive themselves, thinking to themselves that they see, when the truth is that they are blind.

So, how can we be protected against this? We need to test ourselves to see if the fruit of our profession is truly in our lives. We need to test ourselves to see if our lives truly are demonstrating the fact that we, like the blind man, have truly prostrated ourselves before Christ, recognizing His right to rule over our lives.

Do we need to be doing this? Absolutely! Let me read for you **2 Corinthians 13:5**. **"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test?"** Our protection, as professing Christians, from thinking we see when we are really blind is to ask God for His help in testing the genuineness of our faith (2 Corinthians 13:5).

These Pharisees should have gone before the Lord and asked Him for His help in testing themselves. Would He have given them the grace to see if they had sincerely asked Him? Of course! But rather than asking for God's grace so that they might test themselves to see if they were truly as spiritually healthy as they thought, when Christ implied that they were spiritually blind in **John 9:39** they became offended.

So, how did Jesus respond to their offence? Let us now read **John 9:41** **"Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, "We see," your sins remain.'"**

Let us look at the very first phrase of His response. **"If you were blind, you would have no sin."** What does Jesus mean by this? He simply means that if they really saw themselves as "blind," or in words as needy, they would have responded to His rescue operation as the former blind man had responded and they would **"have no sin."** Unfortunately, this is not how they saw themselves.

Rather than seeing themselves as blind, they saw themselves as seeing. And Jesus will drive home the tragedy of their self-deception in the last part of the verse. Let us again read **John 9:41**. **"If you**

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were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sins remain."

When Jesus in John 9:41 places these Pharisees in the group that He described as "seeing" in John 9:40, He, in effect, declared them spiritually *blind*.

Jesus did not have a problem with confronting people whom He saw as spiritually blind, and neither should we.

When we see people, that we are sharing with, being drawn closer and closer to Christ, then we can easily continue to feed them the basic elements of the gospel of Christ and rejoice in each incremental step. But when we see people, either professing unbelievers or professing believers, who by the way they live their lives are, in fact, spiritually blind or give the appearance of being spiritually blind, we need to be prepared to confront it.

We need to have the courage to call a spade a spade. We need to be willing to confront what we think might be spiritual blindness, exhorting them and pleading with this to ask God for the help to examine themselves to see the true nature of their spiritual condition.

CONCLUSION

Is this important? If it were not important then I don't believe that Christ would be doing what we see Him doing at the end of **John 9**. I can't do this work alone. Just a few of us can't do this alone. We must work together, testing ourselves and challenging others to test themselves.

I hope that you have listened to this message and have taken it to heart. Hopefully the last words you hear from Christ will not be like these Pharisees: "**Your sins remain.**"