

Summary Sheet for John 9

...to accompany Notes 17

GOAL of this 1-2-1 study

Humbly come to Jesus with confidence, hostile reactions are part of the plan - his work achieves both miraculous sight and blindness

Context – how does this chapter fit in?

In chs 5-8 we've seen extreme hostile reaction to Jesus from God's historic people the Jews, both from opponents and from those who initially 'believed'. Jesus has exposed their illogical hypocrisy and their true state as 'children of the devil'. Jesus has continued to make amazing offers of rescue but we're left with the question - if even these Jews won't accept him, is there a problem with Jesus' work and mission? Chs 9-10 provide the answer. In ch 9 Jesus demonstrates that his work does achieve true belief, eg in the blind man who miraculously becomes progressively more spiritually sighted, but his work also brings 'blindness', eg in those Jews who reject Jesus and become progressively more resistant.

Impact on us

Jesus really is the Light of the world – he gives sight to people who know they need rescue, but also blinds those who don't think they need help. So, don't be shaken by the fact that the people we'd most expect to welcome Jesus have no time for him. Only Jesus can give people 'sight' to believe who he is, and he gives this sight gladly to all those who realise they need it. But he will also 'blind' those who think they are spiritually fine without him. Will we continue to listen to Jesus' words, worshipping him as our Lord, or will we think we can live life on our own terms, preferring our darkness to the *Light of the world?*

How John writes to make his point

Ch 9-10 concludes this second section of John's gospel in the same way it began in ch 5. Jesus again initiates a miraculous healing (a 'sign') on the Sabbath, which is followed by extended discussions with hostile Jews. These discussions both reveal something of Jesus' identity, why Jesus has come, and expose the flawed reasoning of those who oppose him.

We might be tempted to 'guess' what the significance is of the sign but John records Jesus' explanation in v3 and v39. It is to demonstrate Jesus' work.

Ch 5 explained that the work of Jesus is to give life and to judge. Ch 9 provides a demonstration of this and convincing evidence of Jesus' ability to do it: his work enables a blind man to see physically and spiritually, while also 'blinding' those who think they are spiritually 'clear-sighted' and are unwilling to accept Jesus and his rescue, despite undeniable evidence.

Structure

9:1-7 The sign: Jesus restores sight to a blind man, **“that the works of God might be displayed in him.”**

9:8-38 Seeing faith vs blind disbelief – Jesus' grows true faith while also blinding:

8-12: The neighbours listen to the evidence

13-17: The Pharisees listen to the evidence: the blind man's testimony Part I

18-23: The Pharisees listen to the evidence: the blind man's parents

24-34: The Pharisees rejection of the evidence: the blind man's testimony Part II

35-38: The blind man worships Jesus

9:39-41 Summary: Jesus has come to give sight to those who know they're 'blind' and blind those who think they already 'see'

John's references to the Old Testament and why they matter

- "I am the light of the world"

Blindness in the OT is more than just a physical thing. It is used as a metaphor to illustrate total spiritual failure. This is a major theme in the writings of the prophet Isaiah:

- Blindness is a sign of refusing to see and believe God (Isaiah 29:9; 42:18-25).
- In fact God, in judgment, spiritually blinded those who rebelled (Isaiah 6:9,10).
- This blindness will be remedied for God's people when the Messiah comes to rescue them (Isaiah 29:18; 32:3; 35:5; 42:7).
- God's saving light will extend to all the nations of the world (Isaiah 9:1-2 & 49:6)

In ch 9 Jesus is developing the 'light of the world' theme, which first appeared in 8:12. In ch 8 he had offered freedom to the Jews but they rejected him because they were blind. Now, in ch 9, Jesus gives sight to the blind but blinds those who rebel.

Some questions you could use to guide someone through ch 9 -

Opener: What doubts about Jesus' work might we have when we look around at a society which by and large won't accept his teaching?

Considering the text1: How compelling is the evidence that Jesus really has healed a man blind from birth?

Considering the text2: How do Jesus' explanations in vs3-5 & v39 help us understand what we are being shown in this episode? How does the blind man's belief in Jesus develop throughout the chapter? How does the 'blindness' of the unbelieving Jews develop throughout the chapter?

Considering the text3: In chapter 8v12, Jesus described himself as the light of the world - what impact therefore is his 'light' having on the blind man and the unbelieving Jews?

Sum up: We could be tempted to conclude after chs5-8 that Jesus' mission isn't very effective. How does ch 9 help to renew our confidence in Jesus and his mission?

One to keep chewing on: If we are someone who believes in Jesus what have we understood from Jesus' work in the blind man about how our belief has come about? If we are someone who doesn't believe in Jesus what is the challenge to us in this chapter? (particularly from v39)