

Pharisees Challenge The Man's Healing

A great tragedy occurs again and again! That tragedy is how unbelief responds to truth. Have you ever told someone something that was true only to have that person dogmatically say that you were wrong? Maybe worse, they claimed they were an expert? I knew a little girl, who when she was a toddler, believed that she could command the moon to come to her. I listened to her repeated commands that the moon come to her. She believed that she could control the moon and was disappointed when the moon did not move toward her. She believed something that was actually not true. But worse is the person who does not believe something is true and then experiences tragic consequences. Examples of this are common, such as the self-centered spouse who insists on the other person changing so that he/she can enjoy the marriage. The other spouse is supposed to make the changes. How about the person who does not believe that they have to work hard at their job in order to remain employed? Just wait until the annual review occurs and they receive a negative report from their supervisor or they are not promoted because they had the wrong belief. Our study is about unbelief and its consequences.

REVIEW OF THE LAST STUDY. Our last study was in John 9:1-12. We need to summarize that study before beginning this study because this study continues the last one. We discovered in the previous study that a man had been blind since birth and then Jesus healed him. One would have thought that those who knew him best, his neighbors, and the crowd would have rejoiced with him. They did not, except for a

few. Sadly, most of the people could not believe he was the same man. Why? Because now he could see. They did not believe that one who had been blind since the day he was born would miraculously be able to see. Finally, some in the crowd asked, "Where is the one who healed

you?" The blind man did not know. That was the message of the last verse of our study, which was John 9:12.

They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." John 9:12 (NASB)

MAN IS BROUGHT TO THE PHARISEES. The opening verse of our study (John 9:13-34) tells us that the man who was once blind but now is healed was brought to the Pharisees.



They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. John 9:13 (NASB)

The literal meaning of the word "brought" has the idea that the man was forced to go to the Pharisees. The Greek word for "brought" is *ago* and it has the idea of leading a

person by holding on to them or accompanying them. It is possible that the man was forcibly brought to the Pharisees.

However, we are not given enough information to draw that conclusion.

Some suggest that the next verse indicates that the man was brought to the Pharisees on the Sabbath.

Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. John 9:14 (NASB)

But the verse states only that the healing occurred on the Sabbath. It does not tell us that the man met the Pharisees on the Sabbath. The purpose of this statement is to help us understand the Pharisees' comments in the discussion that follows.

The first part of verse 15 helps us conclude that the Pharisees were present when Jesus healed the man since we are told the Pharisees had asked the man *again*, "How did you receive your eyesight?"

Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. John 9:15a (NASB)

The key word is *again*. This means that this is at least the second time they asked the question. But this time they are interrogating the man. We will discover later in verse 24 they interrogated the blind man another time. This means that on the Sabbath the Pharisees spoke with the man briefly. Now it is Sunday, the next day, and they are ready to interrogate the man.

BAD THEOLOGY CREATES WRONG ASSUMPTIONS. The Mishnah contains a list of rabbinic rules that every faithful Jew was expected to keep. The book reveals that kneading was prohibited on the Sabbath since it was a form of work, and kneading was required in order to make clay.¹ Consequently, according to the Pharisees' bad theology, Jesus had violated the Ten Commandments. That is, Jesus had violated the fourth commandment which prohibited work on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11). Therefore, according to their bad theology, Christ had sinned.

This violation of the Pharisees' bad theology will govern the investigation that is recorded for us in this chapter. The

rest of the chapter can be outlined in three sections. Verses 15-17 is "Bad Theology Creates Wrong Assumptions." Verses 18-23 is "Bad Theology Affects the Investigation" and verses 24-34 is "Bad Theology Results in Wrong Conclusions." Our next study will look at verses 35-41 which is about "Bad Theology is Due to Sin."

We are going to discover soon that the Pharisees did not believe the man had been healed. Maybe they did not want to believe the man had been healed because that would mean they had reached the wrong conclusion about Christ. We will discover later that they knew Jesus had healed the man. Apparently, they were not present when the man was healed. Maybe they hurried to where the man had been healed, saw Jesus, and then spoke to the man. What is clear is that they did not believe the man could have been healed because that would mean the healing occurred on a Sabbath and why would God do that? That would be contrary to their bad theology. Surely, their theology was correct! They could not believe that a man who was blind was now walking around able to see. Even worse, if Jesus had actually healed the man, that would mean He was a sinner, as we will soon discover.

The last part of verse 15 reveals that the Pharisees repeatedly questioned the man who had been blind but now could see. Then the man gave a brief explanation of the healing.

And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see." John 9:15b (NASB)

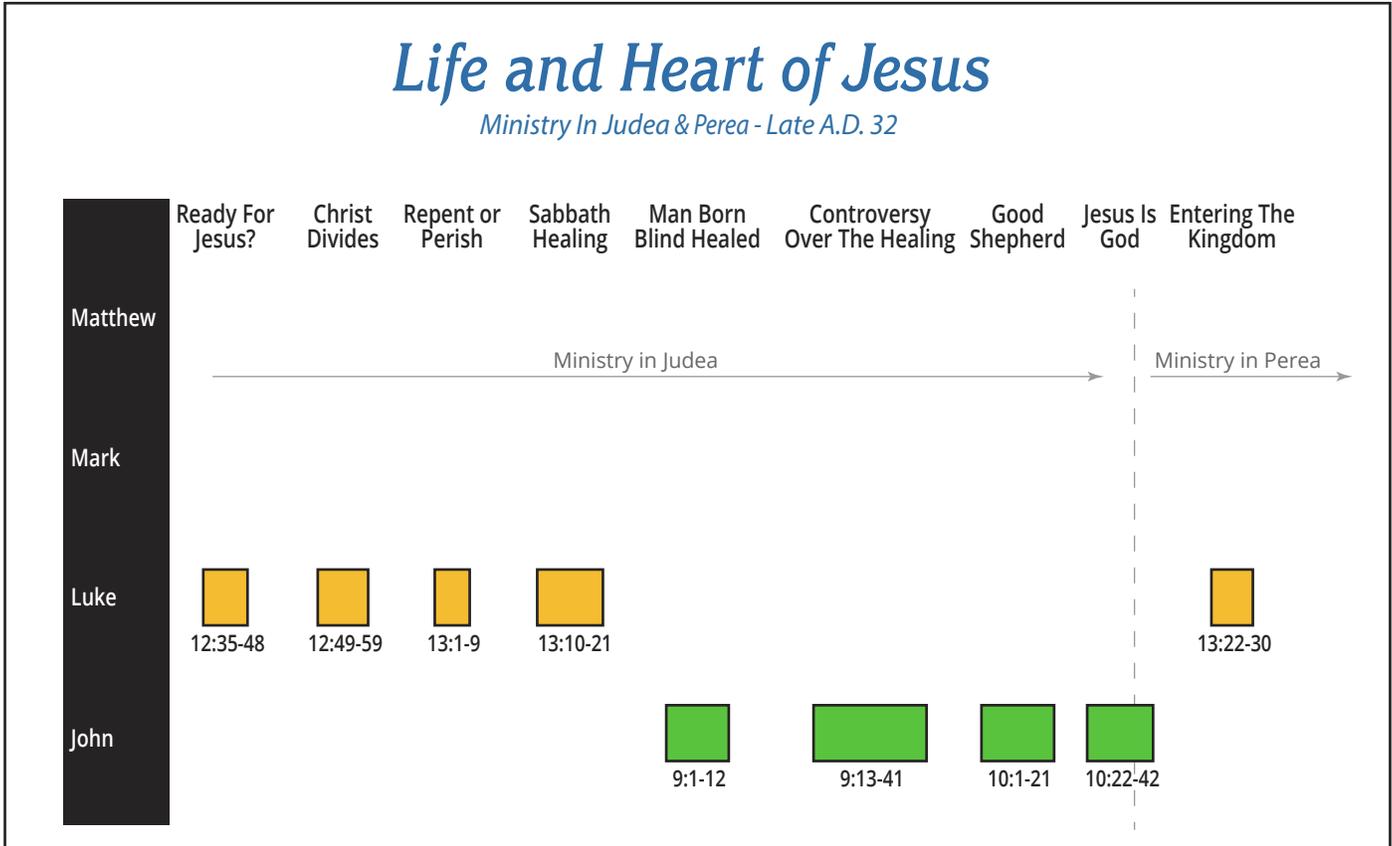
The Greek word that is translated as "asking" is *eroatao*. This verb is in the imperfect tense which implies repeated action. That is, the interrogation was like a boxing match. The Pharisees were repeatedly punching the man with questions. This is a picture of a man being bombarded by those who could not believe he had been healed. The man's answer also reveals that Jesus did some work on the Sabbath, at least from the Pharisee's bad theology He did some work.

Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. John 9:16 (NASB)

¹ Mishnah Sabbat 7:2.

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Verse 16 reveals several important details at this inquisition. First, we discover the inner thoughts and attitudes of the Pharisees. It appears that the Pharisees never expressed their joy that the man was healed. We are not told that they rejoiced with the man that he was healed because they did not believe it happened. Imagine how the man felt. This wonderful thing happened to him and now he is being ambushed.

Instead, all that the Pharisees cared about was that their Sabbath rules had not been kept and the crowds might believe that Jesus was the Christ. Note that the Pharisees knew that some man had violated their man-made Sabbath rules by not keeping the Sabbath. That is, the man did some “work.” In verse 22 it will become clear that they knew the man was Christ. If we look ahead to verse 18 we are told that the Pharisees concluded the man was not healed from blindness. They concluded the man was not telling the truth.

It is sad to realize that the Pharisees never asked themselves why God healed the man on the Sabbath or at least allowed him to be healed on the Sabbath. Most likely they

never thought about that because they were so dogmatically confident due to their horrible theology. They were the blind leading the blind. They thought that they were the spiritual elite who guided the spiritually immature. But others challenged the Pharisees with the question, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” The question was so logical that others asked, but not the Pharisees.

We should notice in the following verses that even though God had already performed the healing, He allowed the doubters to continue doubting and harass this healed man and even his parents. Before we think that God is unfair because we believe He should have protected the man against such evil, we must remember that God will punish those who abused him. He will punish those who abuse us.

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. Romans

12:17-19 (NASB)

For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted . . . 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 (NASB)

Romans 12:17-19 is a wonderful passage because it promises that God will punish or take revenge on those who do evil to us. It is wonderful that God returns evil for evil. We are to love them (Matthew 5:43-44; 7:12) and leave our just God to justly judge those who are evil toward us. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 records a promise that God will punish those who afflict us. It is best that God punishes them since He is just and knows what truly happened. He will punish them fairly - maybe more or maybe less or not at all if we are at fault (1 Peter 4:15-16). He can make them suffer or be merciful! He is just and righteous.

The Pharisees' question, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" reveals that division existed in the meeting. Their question also reveals their bad theology. We have already discovered that the apostles healed people and cast out demons and the apostles were sinners. But they were sinners whom Christ had empowered. How could someone perform such an incredible miracle if the person was not from God? Their bad theology was that God never used sinners to do anything miraculous. The correct answer was that Christ was God. The Pharisees' bad theology caused them to miss the most extraordinary event in human history. Later we will read in John 20:30-31 why the apostle included this miracle and other miracles, signs and wonders.

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name. John 20:30-31 (NASB)

Since there was division between the Pharisees and the crowd about Jesus, the Pharisees put the man, who was once blind, on the "hot seat" and asked him for his opinion about Jesus.

So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet." John 9:17 (NASB)

The man replied with facts and then concluded that the man who healed him was a prophet. The blind man did not know Christ's name but the Pharisees did.

BAD THEOLOGY AFFECTS THE INVESTIGATION. The answer of this man was not acceptable to the Pharisees. Most likely they were fearful that others agreed. One would think the Pharisees would have stopped at this point and realized that their theology was horribly wrong; but they did not. It appears that they wanted to prove the man was never blind from birth and, therefore, prove that Jesus never healed the man and was not the Christ. Therefore, they called his parents to meet with them.

The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" John 9:18-19 (NASB)

Their key question is recorded for us, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind?" They wanted to know if this man was really blind at birth.

His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." John 9:20-21 (NASB)

The man's parents' answer is factual. Their son was blind at birth. The Pharisees must have been emotionally upset at that point and maybe in a little panic. At this point the man's parents said that they did not know why he could see or who had healed him. That was another disappointment for the Pharisees. Then his parents said in essence, "We do not want to answer you, go ask our son!"

The next verse tells us why they did not answer their ques-

tion.

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." John 9:22-23 (NASB)

This verse reveals that the Pharisees knew that the one who had healed the man was Jesus. If the man's parents had said that Jesus had healed him, they would have been in trouble. That would be tantamount to saying Jesus was the Christ. Remember the Pharisees had asked, "Then how does he now see?" The parents knew that if they admitted the healer was Jesus, they would be excommunicated from the synagogue and so they said nothing.

Notice that the Pharisees' bad theology adversely affected the investigation.

The citizens already knew the only acceptable answer. Any other answer would result in a personal tragedy. The Pharisees believed that no sinner could perform miracles. That was bad theology since the disciples did in Luke 10:1-29. Since the Pharisees believed Jesus was a sinner, they believed He could not perform miracles. That was bad theology. They missed Micah 5:2-3 that prophesied the Christ would be born in human flesh and would be "from long ago from the days of eternity." He would be God, the Holy One. But they were not willing to reevaluate their bad theology and many others echoed it. Therefore, the spiritually blind and frustrated Pharisees left the man's parents and called the man once

again for another interrogation.

BAD THEOLOGY RESULTS IN WRONG CONCLUSIONS. The spiritually blind Pharisees were so confident that Jesus was a sinner that they encouraged the man, who was once blind, to give glory to God.

So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." John 9:24-25 (NASB)



They wanted the man to deny that Jesus had healed him. But the man refused and instead said that he knew one thing was true. He could now see. The Greek reveals an interesting play on words between the Pharisees and the man. When the Pharisees

said, "We know that this man is a sinner" they used the perfect tense of "know." The perfect reveals they had concluded and continued to hold to the view that Jesus was a sinner. When the man replied with, "I do not know; one thing I do know," he used the perfect tense each time for know. He was not as confident as the Pharisees that Jesus was or was not a sinner, but he was confident that Jesus had healed him. William Hendrickson writes,

Boldly he places both his "I do not know" and his "I do know" over against their "we know." We say "over against," for instead of asserting to the proposition "This man is a sinner," he openly

declares that *he*, the one formerly blind, is not aware of this; but that he is very definitely aware of the fact that, though blind, he is now fully able to see! Between the lines of his terse saying one can surely read this much: “Over against your *mere say-so* I place this *one great fact of experience*: though I was blind, I now see. *Facts* are more stubborn than unsupportable *opinions*.”²

The man did not care about their bad theology since he knew he could now see.

So they said to him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” He answered them, “I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?” John 9:26-27 (NASB)

Then the Pharisees demonstrate their continuing frustration when they repeat a question they had asked before. “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” The man replied that he had already told them. The man’s reply is truly amazing. “Do you want to hear it again?” Then he asked a question that probably made the Pharisees furious. Do you want to become His disciples too? That was the last thing the Pharisees wanted to do. Earlier the Pharisees had already decided to kill Jesus (John 5:18). John 7:11-12, 25, 32, 45-48 all reveal that they wanted to arrest Jesus. In John 8:58-59 they were so angry when Jesus declared He was God that they tried to stone Him. The last thing they wanted to do was to become His disciples. At this point they wanted to collect a host of reasons to justify murdering Him. Consequently, the healing of this man and his testimony was a threat to their plan.

So the Pharisees reviled the man because they are frustrated at not being successful in motivating this man to deny that Christ had healed him. Most people have discovered that if you cannot win an argument, then insulting your opponent may provide victory. That was the method the Pharisees used next. Insult the man and maybe score victory. This reveals the evil heart of the Pharisees.

They reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.” John 9:28-29 (NASB)

The Greek word, *loidoreo*, translated as revile has the idea of a highly insulting remark. They think that they are superior to this man. They considered themselves to be superior to the poor man because they thought they were disciples of Moses. They believed the poor man had gone astray by being a disciple of Christ. Their pride and arrogance are obvious. Their insulting words are a megaphone announcing their pride. They correctly understood that God had spoken to Moses but they missed the fact that Christ was God in human flesh and He was speaking to them! The blind guides were insulting a man who knew more than they did.

The man had better spiritual insight than the Pharisees and this is obvious in his reply.

The man answered and said to them, “Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.” John 9:30-33 (NASB)

Notice the man was puzzled and amazed that the religious leaders did not know where Christ was from given the fact that the man could now see. The man knew he had been miraculously healed. Therefore, he challenged their thinking with doctrine from their own bad theology. The bad doctrine is that they did not believe God heard the prayers of sinners. Yet, the Scriptures promised that God would hear the prayers of any who seek after Him (Jeremiah 29:13-14). God even gave dreams to the wicked King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. He heard the Ninevites when they repented of their sins and turned to God in Jonah 3.

The blind man simply used their own bad theology to challenge them to think about Christ. “If God does not hear sinners, then why did God hear Him and heal me?” the

2. William Hendrickson. John. New Testament Commentary. Baker Book House. 1953. p. 89.

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Willingly revise what we believe
in order to arrive at the truth!

blind man asked. The implication of the man's question was that Jesus Christ did the will of God and was God-fearing and was heard. Then he openly challenged the Pharisees. He declared that this type of healing had never occurred before in human history! Jesus is from God! The healed man was masterful and logical. It was a strong statement of fact.

The Pharisees answered with another insult.

They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out. John 9:34 (NASB)

When we are told the Pharisees said the man was born entirely in sins, they were saying his sinful condition was the worst possible. The Greek word translated as entirely is *holos*. It means whole, complete or totally. As far as the Pharisees were concerned, the man's previous blindness at birth revealed the man's sinful condition at birth was the worst possible. He deserved to be born that way. Therefore, why was he teaching them? They were superior! Therefore, they excommunicated the man. He would no longer be able to go to the synagogue or the temple. From the religious leaders perspective, this man was an inferior Jew.

CONCLUSION. In the next study Jesus will find the man, who was once blind but now sees, and reveal to him that He is the Messiah and more. It will be a wonderful study. But this study concludes on a sad note. The Pharisees who should have known that Jesus Christ was the Messiah missed this

extremely important truth due to their bad theology. Their wrong theology affected their investigation and conclusions. That is always the situation unless the person is willing to reconsider what they have been taught and believe.

The sad truth is that many Christians are unwilling to reconsider what they were taught initially as a new Christian. Many Christians will desperately cling to what they were taught when they first became a Christian. Some Christians think they already know what the Bible teaches and when confronted with a different teaching, they refuse to change. They are not interested in being biblically accurate. Dr. J. Vernon McGee once said that he knew there was error in his theology; he just did not know where. The blind man tried to help the Pharisees realize that their theology was wrong, but they refused to change. They were motivated by hatred and jealousy of Christ as we will discover later.

What about you? If someone challenges you about some doctrine that you believed would you willingly reconsider what you believe, or reject it like the Pharisees did? James 3:1 warns teachers to beware of teaching error and 2 Peter 3:16 tells us that the "untaught and unstable" distort the meaning of Scripture. 2 Timothy 2:15 challenges us to diligently study the Word so that we will know the truth. This means that Christians must study the Bible diligently and always be willing to revise what they believe if they discover from Scripture that they are in error! Let's be committed to knowing the truth, even if that means changing what we believe!