

John 9 (HCSB)

The Sixth Sign: Healing a Man Born Blind

9 As He was passing by, He saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples questioned Him: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

³ “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” Jesus answered. “This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him. ⁴ We ^[a] must do the works of Him who sent Me ^[b] while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ After He said these things He spit on the ground, made some mud from the saliva, and spread the mud on his eyes. ⁷ “Go,” He told him, “wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means “Sent”). So he left, washed, and came back seeing.

⁸ His neighbors and those who formerly had seen him as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the man who sat begging?” ⁹ Some said, “He’s the one.” “No,” others were saying, “but he looks like him.”

He kept saying, “I’m the one!”

¹⁰ Therefore they asked him, “Then how were your eyes opened?”

¹¹ He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So when I went and washed I received my sight.”

¹² “Where is He?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he said.

The Healed Man’s Testimony

¹³ They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. ¹⁴ The day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ So again the Pharisees asked him how he received his sight.

“He put mud on my eyes,” he told them. “I washed and I can see.”

¹⁶ Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for He doesn’t keep the Sabbath!” But others were saying, “How can a sinful man perform such signs?” And there was a division among them.

¹⁷ Again they asked the blind man, ^[c] “What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?”

“He’s a prophet,” he said.

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe this about him—that he was blind and received sight—until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight.

¹⁹ They asked them, “Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”

²⁰ “We know this is our son and that he was born blind,” his parents answered. ²¹ “But we don’t know how he now sees, and we don’t know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he’s of age. He will speak for himself.”²² His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews, since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him as Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue. ²³ This is why his parents said, “He’s of age; ask him.”

²⁴ So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, “Give glory to God.^[d] We know that this man is a sinner!”

²⁵ He answered, “Whether or not He’s a sinner, I don’t know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!”

²⁶ Then they asked him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?”

²⁷ “I already told you,” he said, “and you didn’t listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don’t want to become His disciples too, do you?”

²⁸ They ridiculed him: “You’re that man’s disciple, but we’re Moses’ disciples. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man—we don’t know where He’s from!”

³⁰ “This is an amazing thing,” the man told them. “You don’t know where He is from, yet He opened my eyes! ³¹ We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He listens to him. ³² Throughout history^[e] no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, He wouldn’t be able to do anything.”

³⁴ “You were born entirely in sin,” they replied, “and are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out.^[f]

The Blind Man’s Sight and the Pharisees’ Blindness

³⁵ When Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, He found him and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”^[g]

³⁶ “Who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?” he asked.

³⁷ Jesus answered, “You have seen Him; in fact, He is the One speaking with you.”

³⁸ “I believe, Lord!” he said, and he worshiped Him.

³⁹ Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind.”

⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and asked Him, “We aren’t blind too, are we?”

⁴¹ “If you were blind,” Jesus told them, “you wouldn’t have sin.^[h] But now that you say, ‘We see’—your sin remains.

Footnotes:

- a. [John 9:4](#) Other mss read *I*
- b. [John 9:4](#) Other mss read *sent us*
- c. [John 9:17](#) = the man who had been blind
- d. [John 9:24](#) *Give glory to God* was a solemn charge to tell the truth; [Jos 7:19](#).
- e. [John 9:32](#) Lit *From the age*
- f. [John 9:34](#) = they banned him from the synagogue; v. [22](#)
- g. [John 9:35](#) Other mss read *the Son of God*
- h. [John 9:41](#) To *have sin* is an idiom that refers to guilt caused by sin.

Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*¹

John 9

9:1-41 Jesus' identity as "the light of the world" was illustrated in His sixth and penultimate "sign" recorded in John's Gospel—the healing of a man born blind (see note at [2:11](#)). As in chapter 5, Jesus healed on the Sabbath and thus suffered persecution from the Jewish leaders. But in contrast to the lame man of chapter 5, who showed no faith and reported Jesus to the authorities, the formerly blind man showed a progression of faith and ended up worshiping Jesus ([9:38](#)). Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their spiritual blindness ([vv. 40-41](#)).

9:2 The disciples' question reflected the assumption, customary in ancient Judaism, that suffering could be traced to specific sins (cp. [Job 4:7](#)). The underlying concern of this assumption is to clear God of wrongdoing against innocent people ([Ex 20:5](#); [Num 14:18](#); [Dt 5:9](#)). Yet the NT makes it clear that suffering is not always a direct result of a person's sin ([Lk 13:2-3](#); [2Co 12:7](#); [Gal 4:13](#)). We should not speculate about the cause of a person's suffering but realize that even evil can contribute to the greater glory of God (esp. the crucifixion; cp. [Jn 12:28,37-41](#); [17:1,5](#)).

9:5 On Jesus as **the light of the world**, see notes at [6:35,48](#) and [8:12](#).

9:7 Jesus' sending the man to **wash in the pool of Siloam** is reminiscent of Elijah's sending Naaman to wash in the Jordan River ([2Ki 5:10-13](#)). The words **which means "Sent"** may echo the messianic reference in [Gen 49:10](#) (cp. [Isa 8:6](#)); see notes at [Jn 1:38](#) and [3:16-18](#). After [9:7](#), Jesus is not heard from again until [verse 35](#).

9:14 The mention of the **Sabbath** here (cp. [5:9](#)) resumes the earlier Sabbath controversy in chapter 5. Jesus had moistened clay with His saliva and then kneaded it to make mud. Kneading dough, and by analogy kneading clay, was included among the 39 classes of work forbidden on the Sabbath by Jewish rabbinic tradition (*m. Shabb. 7:2*).

9:16 The **division** among the Pharisees follows the differing ways of reasoning observed by the schools of Shammai and Hillel. The former argued from foundational principles ("anyone who breaks the law is a sinner"), the latter from the established facts of a case ("Jesus has performed a good work").

9:22 On **the Jews** and their power, see note at [7:13](#).

9:24 The Pharisees' exhortation to the healed man, **Give glory to God**, was a solemn warning for him to tell the truth ([Jos 7:19](#); [2Ch 30:8](#); [Jer 13:16](#)).

9:28 The Pharisees' claim of being **Moses' disciples** was undermined by their failure to listen to the One of whom Moses wrote (see note at [5:45-47](#)).

9:29 The Pharisees' assertion, **We know that God has spoken to Moses**, harks back to God's giving Moses the law at Mount Sinai ([Ex 33:11](#); [Num 12:2-8](#); cp. [Jn 1:17](#)).

¹ Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "John 9".

9:31-33 The healed man's major premise, that **God doesn't listen to sinners**, is borne out by the OT ([Ps 34:15](#); [66:20](#); [109:7](#); [145:19](#)). His minor premise, that there was no precedent for **opening the eyes of a person born blind**, is also confirmed by the absence of such instances cited in OT or extrabiblical sources. The man's conclusion, **If this man were not from God, He wouldn't be able to do anything** (cp. [3:2](#)), fit with the common Jewish view that miracles were performed in answer to prayer.

9:34 The Pharisees' charge against the healed man may allude to [Ps 51:5](#). **Threw him out** refers to expulsion from the synagogue (see note at [v. 22](#)). The way this was done suggests an impulsive action rather than excommunication based on a formal procedure.

hamartolos

Greek Pronunciation [hah mahr toh LAHSS]

HCSB Translation sinner

Uses in John's Gospel 4

Uses in the NT 47

Focus Passage [John 9:16,24](#)

One of the key doctrines of the Christian faith is that every person is a *sinner* and must believe in Jesus as Savior to have eternal life. This teaching is consistent with the use of the word *hamartolos* (*sinner*) in several places and with other related passages about sin ([Rm 3:9-23](#); [5:12](#)). A special use of the term *hamartolos* occurs in the Gospels and refers to those who have a reputation for being guilty of grievous sins, such as tax collectors, prostitutes, and pagans (see [Mt 9:10-11](#); [Lk 6:32-34](#); [7:36-39](#)). In the aftermath of Jesus' miracle of healing the man born blind ([Jn 9](#)), Jewish leaders used the term *sinner* in this especially derisive sense to describe Jesus ([v. 24](#)). In doing so they hoped to undermine the clear implication of this miracle—that Jesus was the Messiah—and to keep people from following Him.

9:39-41 Giving sight to the righteous blind ([Ps 146:8](#); [Isa 29:18](#); [35:5](#); [42:7,18](#)) and blinding unrighteous persons who can see ([Isa 6:10](#); [42:19](#); [Jer 5:21](#); cp. [Mt 13:13-15](#); [Jn 12:40](#)) are common OT themes. Elsewhere, Jesus called the Pharisees "blind guides" ([Mt 23:16](#); cp. [15:14](#); [23:26](#)).

The Apologetics Study Bible²

John 9

9:1-3 If [5:14](#) is taken to mean that all sick and disabled persons are being punished for their own sin, then we have a contradiction. Rather, this incident shows that [5:14](#) cannot be made a universal principle. Often God has specific purposes in allowing His people to remain unwell ([2 Co 12:9](#)). In this case, God will grant healing, but primarily to bring Himself the glory.

Twisted Scripture: John 9:2

This verse, when twisted, seems to support reincarnation. The implication is that in a previous life the man sinned and was thus born blind in the next life. The reference, however, is to a Jewish belief that a fetus could commit a sin while in his mother's womb. The concept of reincarnation was foreign to Hebrew thought. Jews believed in resurrection, not reincarnation.

9:6-7 Here and in [Mk 7:33-35](#) Jesus used saliva rather than just His spoken word in healing someone. Spittle was often believed to have medicinal value in the ancient world. God can heal directly or through all kinds of indirect means, including modern medicine (and, occasionally, mud packs). The pool of Siloam is another location, once doubted, that archaeology has confirmed.

9:22; 12:42; 16:2 It is often alleged that these three verses anachronistically refer to a later Jewish practice of excommunicating synagogue members who became followers of Jesus. But even then the practice was at best only sporadic throughout the empire. Indeed, John's references may not refer to anything more widespread than a policy in Jerusalem, precisely where such persecution would have started at a very early date ([Ac 4-5](#)).

9:33 Like Gamaliel's advice to the Sanhedrin later ([Ac 5:38](#)), this man's logic is not watertight. Satan can counterfeit many miracles. But God providentially used this reasoning to help the man come to faith in this situation. The trustworthiness of Scripture does not mean that every human opinion narrated is true, just that those opinions have been accurately reported.

9:41 All people are sinners, but if these Pharisees acknowledged their spiritual blindness, they would not be guilty of the specific sin of claiming to be innocent when they were not.

² Ted Cabal, ed., *The Apologetics Study Bible: Understanding Why You Believe*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1589-1591.

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

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9:1ff In [chapter 9](#), we see four different reactions to Jesus. The neighbors revealed surprise and skepticism; the Pharisees showed disbelief and prejudice; the parents believed but kept quiet for fear of excommunication; and the healed man showed consistent, growing faith. Each reaction to Jesus allowed the man to reach a clearer understanding of the one who had healed him.

9:2, 3 A common belief in Jewish culture was that calamity or suffering was the result of some great sin. But Christ used this man's suffering to teach about faith and to glorify God. We live in a fallen world where good behavior is not always rewarded and bad behavior not always punished. Therefore, innocent people sometimes suffer. If God took suffering away whenever we asked, we would follow him for comfort and convenience, not out of love and devotion. Regardless of the reasons for our suffering, Jesus has the power to help us deal with it. When you suffer from a disease, tragedy, or disability, try not to ask, Why did this happen to me? or What did I do wrong? Instead, ask God to give you strength for the trial and a clearer perspective on what is happening.

9:6 When Jesus spit on the ground and made mud in order to repair the man's eyes, he was working with original materials. [Genesis 2:7](#) states that God formed Adam's body from the dust of the ground. Jesus was demonstrating a creator's awareness of the materials he first used to shape the human body.

9:7 The pool of Siloam was built by Hezekiah. His workers constructed an underground tunnel from a spring outside the city walls to carry water into the city. Thus, the people could always get water without fear of being attacked. This was especially important during times of siege (see [2 Kings 20:20](#); [2 Chronicles 32:30](#)).

9:13-17 While the Pharisees conducted investigations and debated about Jesus, people were being healed and lives were being changed. The Pharisees' skepticism was based not on insufficient evidence, but on jealousy of Jesus' popularity and his influence on the people.

9:14-16 The Jewish Sabbath, Saturday, was the weekly holy day of rest. The Pharisees had made a long list of specific dos and don'ts regarding the Sabbath. Kneading the mud and healing the man were considered work and therefore were forbidden. Jesus may have purposely made the clay in order to emphasize his teaching about the Sabbath—that it is right to care for others' needs even if it involves working on a day of rest.

9:25 By now the man who had been blind had heard the same questions over and over. He did not know how or why he was healed, but he knew that his life had been miraculously changed and he was not afraid to tell the truth. You don't need to know all the answers in order to share Christ with others. It is important to tell them how he has changed your life. Then trust that God will use your words to help others believe in him, too.

9:28, 34 The man's new faith was severely tested by some of the authorities. He was cursed and evicted from the synagogue. Persecution may come when you follow Jesus. You may lose friends; you may even lose your life. But no one can ever take away the eternal life that Jesus gives you.

³, *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1771-1773.

9:38 This man gained not only physical sight but also spiritual sight as he recognized Jesus first as a prophet ([9:17](#)), then as his Lord. When you turn to Christ, you begin to see him differently. The longer you walk with him, the better you will understand who he is. Peter tells us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" ([2 Peter 3:18](#)). If you want to know more about Jesus, keep trusting him in every area of life.

9:40, 41 The Pharisees were shocked that Jesus thought they were spiritually blind. Jesus countered by saying that it was only blindness (stubbornness and stupidity) that could excuse their behavior. To those who remained open and recognized how sin had truly blinded them from knowing the truth, he gave spiritual understanding and insight. But he rejected those who had become complacent, self-satisfied, and blind.