

AM John 9 Questions Jesus was asked - 1 Three answers from Jesus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 November 2024

Preacher: Dr Alistair Mackay

[0 : 00] Together, John's Gospel, chapter 9. John's Gospel, chapter 9. This is the account of the man born blind.

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

Jesus answered, It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which means sent.

[1 : 09] So he went and washed and came back seeing. And the neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?

Some said, It is he. Others said, No, no, but he's like him. He kept saying, I am the man. So they said to him, Then how were your eyes opened?

And he answered, The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed and received my sight.

And they said to him, Where is he? He said, I don't know. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, He put mud on my eyes and I washed and I see.

[2 : 13] Some of the Pharisees said, Oh, no, this man's not from God for he does not keep the Sabbath. But others said, How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?

And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, What do you say about him since he has opened your eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, Is this your son who you say was born blind?

How then does he now see? His parents answered, We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, but how he now sees, we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes.

Ask him. He is of age. He will speak for himself. His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

[3 : 25] Therefore his parents said, He is of age. Ask him. So for the 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 answered, Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.

They said to him, What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again?

Do you also want to become his disciples? And they reviled him, saying, 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 comes from.

The man answered, Why? This is an amazing thing. You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.

[4 : 31] We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. They answered him, You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us? And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, he said, Do you believe in the Son of Man?

He answered, And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him? Jesus said to him, You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you. He said, Lord, I believe.

And he worshipped him. Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

[5 : 38] Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, Are we also blind? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt.

But now that you see, we see, your guilt remains. May God add his blessing to this reading of his word.

Let's focus in on John chapter 9 this morning. One of the ways in which we've been created by our Heavenly Father is with an interest and a capacity for counting, for numeracy.

And though it would be as well, I don't mean anything as complex as calculus or astrophysics here. If I gave you a handful of chocolates, you would instinctively count all five, eat one or two, and you would know just how many you had left.

And so, we count things. And counting things in the Bible is a favourite pastime for some. This is not inevitably a profitable thing, but there may be some merits.

[7 : 02] For instance, we've been studying Psalm 119 in our evening services at Dumfries Baptist Church recently, and I felt moved to initiate a pronoun count. So, I or my occurred 304 times in the 22 alphabetical sections of the Psalm.

You or your occurred 249 times, but the third person, he or his, or she or her, for that matter, was hardly mentioned.

And this longest Psalm is clearly a multifaceted, acrostic prayer between the Psalmist, I, and his creator and comforter, you, whatever else this majestic, poetic composition may be.

Now, I've talked here before about some of the questions our Lord Jesus asked, of which there are 307. And these questions penetrate right to the heart of who we are and what we believe.

Questions like, who do you say the Son of Man is? Or, who do you say that I, the Son of Man, am? Or, I am the resurrection and the life.

[8 : 18] Do you believe this? Or, who touched me? Or, why do you persecute me? And God willing, I'll come back to more of those questions in the future, but today I'd like to think about some questions that people asked Jesus, not the other way around.

I counted that there were 144 such questions. Though there was quite a bit of overlap with similar questions being recorded regarding the same incidents in the four Gospels.

But these questions are just so instructive. Some of them are requesting apparently basic demographic information as we might call it nowadays.

Who are you? John 8.25. Where are you staying? John 1.38. When did you arrive? John 6.25.

Where are you going? John 13.36. Each one of these is a sermon on its own. But today, I'd like to home in on six questions that the Lord Jesus was asked.

[9 : 35] Three this morning from this chapter we've read together, to all of which Jesus gave us answers. And then this evening, God willing, we'll look at three questions Jesus was asked, but to which he did not reply.

He did not give an answer. Actually, John chapter 9 is full of questions, just like real life, of which, of course, it is a part.

We have the following people asking questions in today's chapter. We've got an unnamed blind man that is congenitally blind, blind from birth.

We have his parents asking questions. We have the Pharisees asking questions. We have Jesus' disciples asking questions. And we have the Lord Jesus himself asking questions.

Uniquely for the four Gospels, Jesus and his disciples are absent from much of the narrative in John 9 from verses 8 to 35.

[10:40] But during those verses, there is the most wonderful confrontation recorded between an astonished blind from birth, but in the first hours of seeing ever man, his standoffish parents who seem more concerned about their own status with the synagogue and with the Pharisees than the astonishing transformation in their son, and the Pharisees whose hackles had risen at the affront of anyone, they probably knew it was Jesus, anyone who healed any body on the Sabbath.

So they questioned the blind man's identity. They questioned the authenticity of his previous blindness. They questioned the identity of his healer and the character and the moral standing of his healer.

I just love the forthright way the man meets the Pharisees self-righteousness head on. Who are these Pharisees anyway?

I've never seen them before. That's a little joke that the man was making in his head. And the unadulterated drama of verse 30 which is captured best I think in the NIV translation where the blind but now seeing man now he may have been blind from birth but he certainly hadn't lost his wits he had his wits about him he actually lost it a bit as we might say with the Pharisees and perhaps with a trowel full of sarcasm declares now that is remarkable you don't know where he comes from yet he opened my eyes we know that God does not listen to sinners he listens to the godly person who does his will nobody has ever heard of the opening of the eyes of a man born blind if this man were not from God he could do nothing of course the Old Testament tells us that the opening of the eyes of the blind was a hallmark of the

Messiah and the Pharisees reaction is draconian but not at all unexpected given their character they excommunicated him they threw him out you were steeped in sin at birth how dare you lecture us and actually that response of the Pharisees that steeping in sin at birth takes us to the first question asked of Jesus in this chapter it was actually asked by his own disciples in verse 2 and the disciples question and the Pharisees comment in verse 34 because I don't think the Pharisees were thinking about original sin here these are predicated by the myth that what happens to us in this life is necessarily the consequence the reaction the reward for what we or our parents have done and before we dismiss this as some sort of archaic or foreign concept just think about the number of times you personally have said well he or she didn't deserve that or after the way he or she has behaved it's not right they should get off scot free or

[14:08] I'm glad to see that so and so got her comeuppance or they must be a bad lot those makais for that catalogue of problems to land on them these are the sort of things we still say we do don't we implying that there's a sort of natural consequential justice outwith our control one which delivers consequences appropriate consequences by our way of it particularly to those who have done wrong there was a kind of forensic pseudo-religious thinking in Jesus' day that attributed ill health or deformity to previous sin in this way and as the disciples asked Jesus who sinned this man or his parents so that he was born blind now this is a difficult subject actions sinful actions may well have immediate obvious and devastating consequences because the young man under the influence of alcohol driving at 90 miles an hour in a twisty country road may crash his car and kill himself and his three passengers a so-called therapeutic abortion chosen using her own free will may lead to a lifetime of poor mental health for an individual woman the co-founder of a cancer charity may embezzle the funds to feed a lavish lifestyle and may by so doing prevent additional care for many needy people and may fracture what seemed to be strong interpersonal relationships of his or her own we can all think of examples sin may provoke consequences but many's the time the car does not crash the post abortion mental health may seem fine and the process sadly may be repeated on a subsequent occasion or the embezzlement may not be discovered for many years and the good relationships between people might appear to continue untarnished in the interim in scripture though we have an example from Acts 13 verses 4 to 12 where

Elemas the sorcerer was doing everything in his power to prevent the intelligent Sergius Paulus the proconsul from coming to faith in Christ as a result of Paul and Barnabas teaching and Paul said to him you are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that's right you're full of all kinds of deceit and trickery will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord now the hand of the Lord is against you you're going to be blind for a time not even able to see the light of the sun and immediately mist and darkness came over him and he groped about someone to lead him by the hand and when the proconsul saw what had happened he believed for he was amazed at the

teaching about the Lord but against that we have years and decades of long suffering by the Lord of Israel's rebellion and disobedience before he punished them with exile for instance to Babylon so sin may provoke consequences that are obvious it may not and righteous living on the other hand doesn't guarantee exemption from what the world considers as bad things happening consider Job read that book again when you've got a couple of hours to spare think about Johnny Erickson Tadda think about her paraplegia after a diving accident look at Psalm 73 Asaph's Psalm on this subject let's just read a few verses truly God is good to Israel to those who are pure in heart Psalm 73 but as for me my feet had almost stumbled my steps had nearly slipped for I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked for they've got no pangs until death their bodies are fat and sleek they're not in trouble as others are they're not stricken like the rest of mankind therefore pride is their necklace violence covers them as a garment their eyes swell out through fatness their hearts overflow with follies they scoff and speak with malice loftily they threaten oppression they set their mouths against the heavens and their tongue struts through the earth therefore his people turn back to them and find no fault in them and they say how can God know is there knowledge in the most high behold these are the wicked always at ease they increase in riches all in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence so wrong behaviour not just being unpunished but the wrongdoer appearing to prosper we could also read a wee bit from Psalm 78 at verse 32 where it's speaking about the children of Israel in spite of all this they still sinned despite his wonders they did not believe so he made their days vanish like a breath and their years in terror when he killed them they sought him they repented and sought God earnestly they remembered that God was their rock the most high

God their redeemer but they flattered him with their mouths they lied to him with their heart was not steadfast toward him they were not faithful to his covenant yet he being compassionate atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath he remembered that they were but flesh a wind that passes and comes not again how often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert they tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel so cycles of disobedience punishment divine forgiveness then recidivist behaviour those cycles didn't just begin in the desert after liberation from Egypt but the same behaviour was evident in the Garden of Eden and on and on it goes for century upon century has it ever stopped and the perpetrators who are they well we would like to point the finger at quite a number of others but basically it is us all of us and in

[21 : 36] Psalm 130 we've got the succinct comment that condemns us all if the covenant Lord should mark iniquity no one could stand so what are we to understand in this situation is that we live in a day of mercy and of grace mercy is where we do not receive the punishment and judgment which we deserve and grace is where we receive blessing which we do not merit which we do not deserve and that is a gift from the hand of the almighty mankind you see finds it comfortable to confer consequential judgment and punishment just as long as the punishment is not meted out in him or herself Jesus answer to the disciples flawed question and equally flawed thinking reveals to them that God has an agenda which is different from mankind's agenda his delight is in mercy that is his great work but judgment that too is his work but his strange work as Isaiah 28 21 puts it the Lord will rise up as he did at

Mount Perizim he will rouse himself as in the valley of Gibeon to do his work his strange work and perform his task his alien task you see his heart is a father's heart he does not willingly afflict the children of men his plans are to prosper his people and not to harm them but central in importance fundamental in all that happens to all of us is God's own glory he wants us to glorify and enjoy him forever that is our chief purpose he wants us to walk with him he wants our love he wants our obedience he wants us to follow the example of Jesus and that way is not the way of high living but the way of suffering in 1 Peter 2 and 21 it tells us to this you were called because

Christ suffered for you leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps and the Greek word used there in translated example is only used there in all of scripture and it's a term taken from the classroom it's a word describing two things the Greek teacher did for the young pupil he first of all carefully wrote the script on the wax tablet so that the child could copy the letters precisely and the second thing the teacher did to which example refers was that he would draw an outline so that the child could fill it in like colouring in right up to the edges that's how we have to follow

Jesus example Jesus tells the disciples and in so doing explodes the myth he tells them that the blindness was not a consequence of sin at all but so that the works of God might be displayed in the

blind man and friends if our spiritual eyesight was any good at all we would understand too that all the afflictions we experience are for our good so that the works of God might be displayed in our lives and oh for the serenity of spirit that accepts how God is working out his purposes in our lives realize with awe and humility that he is working out in us his own will and good pleasure and that he's doing this not in some mindless or vindictive way but for our good and for the good of others but first and foremost for his own glory what privilege we have to be part of our father's plans and to suffer for

Jesus sake now such a perspective was far away from the disciples minds and further still from the Pharisees minds but it's a it's a real deep encouragement to us all that there is purpose in our sufferings though we may not immediately see it and it means that God is dealing with us as a father deals with his children and that we have to trust him implicitly because there are unbreakable promises of his presence with us however shadowed the valley may be and that we engage with whatever our lot may be as the hymn puts it we're following the example the template that Jesus showed us in his own life of servanthood and suffering so we may find these things hard to comprehend but then so did

[27 : 43] Asaph till later on in Psalm 73 he says in verse 17 it was all beyond him to understand until I went into the sanctuary of God then I discerned their end and he he goes on does Asaph to realise the amazing presence of God in his life how through all the difficulties he was never left alone nevertheless verse 23 I am continually with you you hold my right hand you guide me with your counsel and afterward you will receive me to glory whom have I in heaven but you and there's nothing on earth that I desire beside you my flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever for behold those who are far from you shall perish you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you but for me for me it is good to be near

God I have made the Lord God my refuge that I may tell of all your works what a wonderful psalm plumbing the depths reaching the highest heights well the second question asked of Jesus comes in verse 36 because after the momentous confrontation between the previously blind man and the Pharisees you can just imagine the blind man's bewilderment well then what do I do now he's out in his ear the religious door has been slammed in his face he's lost his source of income because he's no longer blind and so he can't beg his parents it seems have washed their hands of him the blind beggars of that day don't have friends to rely on and perhaps well certainly he's dazzled by all the brightness and colour that's flooding his senses with this new

God given sight and he is strangely speaking lost he knows the name of Jesus as the person who put the mud in his eyes but he doesn't know what he looks like the Lord Jesus does not leave those he has rescued in a quandary like that if they seek his face and in his grace and goodness Jesus sought him out Jesus sought him out nameless once blind man the Lord of glory seeks him out and asks him that question above all questions it's the question we have to answer to if indeed we haven't done so already do you believe in the son of man now son of man was Jesus favorite name for himself it seems it has got those connotations of messiahship as we find it in

Daniel and other prophecy he really says to Mr seeing blind man do you believe in the Messiah do you believe in God in God son son of man who will be your deliverer your messiah your anointed one and with deep respect and maybe a hint of lovable winsome feistiness the once blind man says who is he sir that I may believe in him this is the highest of drama the work of God's grace has already been progressing in his life I truly think he knows the answer to the question even as he asks it with a half smile of incredulous awe that this is actually happening you see I've got a friend I personally have a friend blind from before he was one year old whose auditory recognition of people is better than my combined visual and auditory recognition put together

Jesus gave him in chapter 9 the instructions about washing in Siloam though he wasn't there at the moment the sight was restored but of course the man knew that voice but he's seeing the owner of that voice for the very first time and Jesus our beautiful gracious Lord plays along with the intimacy and tenderness of this supreme moment you have seen him yes you once Mr once blind man have seen him and you know fine well it's he who is speaking to you do you think it's without great purpose and insight that our Lord shortly after in chapter 10 which directly continues the drama of 9 in addressing the Pharisees he goes on to talk about his sheep hearing his voice and following him sheep have got great lateral vision as we know dare I say this to farmers but behind and in front they're as blind as bats and that's why they follow the shepherd's voice in front leading them what a wonderfully beautiful conversion moment

[33 : 25] Lord I believe and he worshipped him I thank God that coming to faith is only complicated when we make it so in itself it is delightfully simple and I'm reminded of an occasion when a good friend of mine a former pastor in an evangelical church of Scotland was trying to make a point in his children's address he was a past master at children's addresses but he had two sets of volunteers of all ages six or seven in each aisle of the church they had a competition to see who could more quickly transfer a balloon from the start of the queue of parishioners to the end but only using their elbows to hold the balloon and the second round was doing the same only holding the balloon between their knees well knowing that there was a number of participants with prosthetic joints in the congregation

I feared the worst but ultimately the chaos came to an end and no one was permanently injured I was kind of riled up in my free church righteousness such a rammy would be occurring in the church but once everybody had quietened he said the gospel is not repeat not complicated like that we just made it complicated coming to faith is as simple as this and he took a balloon and he handed it to a wee boy and there was a deafening silence and quite a few tears but that's the way isn't it Lord I believe there is no other name under heaven given amongst men by which we must be saved but the name of

Jesus and we express that belief not in some intellectual chat room or to a group of our peers or even to family in the first instance we by faith tell our Lord face to face that we believe come what may worship him very briefly our third question asked of Jesus in this chapter is far and away the most disturbing question it was asked by the religious elite the church goes the all the lives church goes those with a great grounding in scripture they might even have been able to quote great chunks of it they knew their bibles they were fiercely protective of their national status as God's people their lives of these Pharisees might fairly be said to revolve around the synagogue and synagogue affairs are we their 21st century equivalent

I'm not saying we are but it might be profitable to at least think about the possibility they didn't think they were doing anything wrong you see but Jesus owned words to them in Matthew 15 79 were you hypocrites well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said this people honors me with their lips but their hearts far from me in vain do they worship me teaching us doctrines the commandments of men now just in case you think I know something about the attendees at Dumfrey's Free Church that no one else knows that is assuredly not the case and I'm looking into my own heart here am I blind also the particular point Jesus was making in his reply in verse 41 was that the Pharisees claimed spiritual sight when in fact they were blind and in the dark and steeped in the very sin the utter sin themselves which they had allocated to the blind man in verse 34 it's very easy to live by man-made rules and regulations the point here is we have spiritual vision if that is lost we are in spiritual darkness and how great is that darkness if we think we're still seeing fine if my spiritual vision likewise is focused on how other people are seeing

I'm in a desperate place again the Pharisees demonstrated both of those scenarios but what we have to do is answer whether our eyes are fixed on Jesus is he and he alone our focus do we see him and do we hear him and if we hear him do we listen to him and if we listen to him do we obey him we have to come back to the most basic position here left to ourselves we are lost we are without hope and without God in the world no hope no way to God but in his great mercy and grace God so loved us the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal everlasting life this is deeply personal now this is all between you and Christ

[39 : 36] Jesus or me and Christ Jesus nobody else comes into the equation because you're not saved by proxy you're not saved because your family is saved it's all about you yourself it is a personal individual encounter with Jesus of Nazareth that matters and it matters eternally he's asking do you believe in the son of man Lord I believe that's enough you don't need more that's enough and the ramifications are eternal this is the eye salve of revelation 3 that allows us to see the lamb in all his beauty for God who said let light shine out of the darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ if we can say that from our hearts then the answer to the question are we blind two is a resounding no instead we can join with the blind man rejoicing one thing

I know once once I was blind but now I see let's pray heavenly father for everyone time happy together together let's look for next