

Do You Believe?

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: 13 September 2020

Preacher: Nigel Anderson

[0 : 00] Do you believe? You know, the questions that Jesus asks are questions that none of us can evade. Questions that strike at the heart of your faith in him.

Questions that show whether truly you do know him, you know Jesus as Lord. Questions that expose your heart to the reality of where you are in relation to the Lord Jesus.

Yes, these were questions that we read in God's Word. Questions that were asked 2,000 years ago when the Lord Jesus lived on earth. But these are the same questions that Jesus asks of you and of me this day.

And one such question that Jesus asked, as we read there in John chapter 9, a very simple question in many ways. And yet at the same time, an utterly profound and crucial question that each one of us needs to answer from our hearts.

That question that Jesus asked that man, that blind man. That question that he asks even you this day. Do you believe? And it's that question that brings division to the whole race.

[1 : 16] Either you will affirm, you will say, yes, I believe, I believe in the Lord Jesus with all my heart. Or you'll declare, I don't believe. And there's no neutral ground.

You know, we live in a world that's divided in so many things. Whether it's politics or sport or war, conflict. But there's only one division that has eternal consequences.

And that's the division over Jesus. Either you believe in him or you don't believe in him. Either you love him or you hate him.

Either you follow him or you reject him. Either you have faith or you have unbelief. As I said, there's no neutral ground. And when we come to look at this question that Jesus asked, we have to see, of course, the context in which Jesus asked that question.

And as you will have seen in the headings that were put on the screen, we see in that passage, John chapter 9, we see three responses, in fact, concerning Jesus.

[2 : 27] Three responses concerning belief. There's the reaction of unbelief. There's the reaction of undecided belief, which in fact, of course, is in fact unbelief.

And then there's the reaction of faith. There's the action of true faith in the Lord Jesus. And it's these responses that we're going to look at this morning.

As we said, although three separate groups give a response to Jesus, in effect, there's only two. Two responses.

The response is reduced to two. Either faith or rejection of Jesus. And these questions bring you to see, where do you stand in relation to Jesus?

Is it faith or is it unbelief? Let's look at the first response then. The first reaction that we see expressed in the religious leaders of the day.

[3 : 28] As they express their unbelief, their lack of faith, their zero faith in Jesus. Remember what's happened. Jesus has healed a man who'd been blind from birth.

And, of course, that miracle, to those who believe, would point to Jesus truly as the promised Messiah, the promised Christ, the divine Son of God.

These religious leaders, they knew their scriptures. They knew of the promise of one to come from heaven who brings salvation to his people. These religious leaders, they'd studied the scriptures. But what do we find? We find that these same religious leaders, these Pharisees, they don't just doubt that Jesus is the Messiah. They reject him.

And they do so with the most bitter, hostile rejection of the Savior. Even though a miracle has happened in their presence, they reject Jesus.

[4 : 30] And you see then that it's the Pharisees who are blind. The blindness of the Pharisees, their hearts that have refused to accept Jesus, that Jesus could work that miracle of healing.

And they give all their arguments. Jesus healed in the Sabbath, so they say he's performed a work in that day, and therefore, how can he be? Be the Messiah, the Christ.

He'd made mud to put in the man's eyes, and of course, to the Pharisees, that was work. And again, done on the Sabbath. He'd put mud in the man's eyes.

Again, that was considered to be work, forbidden according to the Pharisees. How can a man that breaks the Sabbath be from God? How can a sinner perform miracles?

They're thinking. They're saying, we know this man. They're saying, Jesus, this Jesus is a sinner.

They say, we don't know where this Jesus comes from. They're saying, we know.

[5 : 27] They're thinking. They're saying, we know that he's not from God. And their arrogance. They'd blinded their own eyes. They were blind to the Lord Jesus.

Their legalism, their interpretation of the law had blinded them to the Savior. They said, they claimed they were right about Jesus. But they were wrong.

They were deluded by their own assessment because of their unbelief. And so they're showing, these Pharisees are showing the blindness of the human heart that will not accept the claims of Jesus, the claim of Jesus as to who he is.

And that blindness, that blindness is seen in the hatred of the heart that you see expressed. And the Pharisees there, and the kind of language that they're using, their hatred of Jesus, their blasphemy, they're despising the love of God and that love that sent Jesus as the Lamb of God to die for our sins.

What about you who are listening here in this building this morning, or you who are at home watching on through the live stream? Where are you in your heart? Because you're being confronted again with the claims of Jesus when Jesus declared that he is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the one who alone can heal you of your sin, the one who alone can bring you into his kingdom and change your life, the one who alone can make you right with God, the one who alone took that punishment for sin on the cross.

[7 : 12] What's your response to Jesus? Are you going to use your own way of thinking, your own reasoning that leaves out the power of God, that leaves out the grace of God, that reasoning that denies the love of God for sinners?

Are you just going to dismiss even the miracles of Jesus as fantasy, just explain away? Some of you will know the external artwork of a man called Nathan Coley.

You'll see it at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh if you're ever driving past that area in the west end of Edinburgh. And you know that illuminated construction that boldly declares there'll be no miracles here.

And whatever the motivation for that construction, the message is clear from those who put that up, who made it, who portray it. It's that refusal to countenance anything beyond the rational, to countenance anything beyond what's observed.

And it's that position of unbelief that will not bow to the God of miracles. That position of unbelief that won't bow to the God who has revealed the miracle of grace in transforming lives through faith in the Lord Jesus.

[8 : 37] And you know that unbelief often is, we might even say, hidden behind a mask of respectability. I mean these Pharisees there, they had outward respectability. In many ways that's why the healed man, the man who was blind, who was healed, was taken to the Pharisees.

They had that outward mark and mask of respectability. But that mask couldn't forever hide the unbelief of their hearts in the rejection of Jesus.

And so we're reminded of this, that respectability won't hide unbelief forever. Unless you're born again of the Spirit, unless by faith you've given your life to the Lord Jesus, unless you've trusted in Him alone for salvation.

You will hear these terrible words of Jesus, I never knew you. So this morning I plead with anyone here who's trying to hide behind that mask of, not a physical mask, but a mask of outward religion. Don't hide behind that respectable mask of works righteousness. Because it doesn't work. God sees and God knows your heart.

[9 : 58] The heart of unbelief, unless you've given your life to the Lord Jesus. But then, secondly, what of the reaction of undecided belief?

Because if the Pharisees showed total unbelief in Jesus, then what about this man's parents, this man who was healed?

What about his parents? When you read of what they're saying at first, they sound more favorable. They're not saying anything directly hostile to Jesus.

They've never called Jesus a sinner, just as the Pharisees called Jesus a sinner. They've never said that Jesus isn't from God. And when the Pharisees asked them about their son, they're very polite.

Yes, he's our son. Yes, he was born blind, but we don't know how he now can see. So they said, better ask him yourself. We're not going to incriminate ourselves, even suggesting that this Jesus is a healer.

[11 : 02] You can see their way of thinking. Better remain on the side of our religious leaders than commit ourselves to the Lord Jesus in faith. And if we do that, we're going to be left apart from the great and good of society.

But their undecided, so-called undecided belief, was actually no belief at all. It's what we might call, they were agnostics.

And do you know what an agnostic is? It's someone who says that it's impossible to know God due to the limits of our experience.

An agnostic says it's impossible to know if God exists or not. Now, atheists deny God absolutely. An agnostic will say, well, the jury's out.

The jury's out in the question of the existence of God. Like the parents, like the parents of this healed man. They were polite. They were non-committal. They didn't want to state categorically that it was Jesus who is as he claims to be.

[12 : 09] And you know, that's what we're seeing there in the parents. The mindset of the polite non-believer. The polite non-believer, he doesn't rattle any cages. He doesn't go out of his way to hurl abuse at Jesus.

He's polite to a non-believer as much as to a believer. But there's no commitment to the Lord Jesus. There's no following Jesus as Lord and Savior. There's no faith, no following and abiding by God's Word.

That sure commitment of faith in Jesus, it's, to the agnostic, just a step too far in a world of relative belief, in a world where to express faith in Jesus is considered to be just arrogant, exclusive, following one faith over another.

But no, God's Word tells us of one faith, one Lord, one baptism. Well, the parents of this blind man, they were polite. They were respectable. They were nice people.

But you know, niceness is not the same as faith in the Lord Jesus. These nice people wouldn't speak against the religious leaders, even though these leaders were wrong in their heart about Jesus.

[13 : 33] And so the parents, they're going to remain in society. They're going to remain in the synagogue. But remaining in the synagogue, they were outside the kingdom. They wouldn't abandon their social and religious respectability for that exclusive place of faith in the Lord Jesus.

And so they were the ones who were blind, just like the Pharisees were blind, blind to the Lord Jesus. The man's parents were blind. I mean, the evidence was there as to who Jesus is, but they wouldn't see.

In their blindness, they wouldn't see that human respectability is a false friend. The parents preferred the respectability of an outward show of religion that demands no faith in the Lord Jesus. And it's that position of indecision, that unwillingness to go beyond that particular attitude of heart, that attitude that won't give to the Lord Jesus your heart and soul to Him.

It's all around. We see it in our own day. And it's not from the bitter, vicious tongues of hatred, but it's from the polite pillars of society that keep Jesus at arm's length.

[14 : 54] Is that anyone here this morning? You don't want to offend anyone, whether it's a non-Christian or even a Christian. You don't want to offend the non-Christian by stating of any particular desire to follow Jesus and you don't want to offend a Christian with any outspoken word of denial against Jesus.

But if that's your position, think again. Because Jesus tells us that when He returns, He'll return as judge. He'll return as that lion, that lion of the tribe of Judah.

He'll return as judge. And He's going to reveal that great division between those who believed in Him and those who haven't. and He'll separate the world as a shepherd used to separate sheep from goats.

Where are you going to stand in that day? Are you going to be with those whom Jesus will condemn and say, depart from me, I never knew you? Or are you going to be with those to whom Jesus will say, come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world?

As Jesus will say, to the man healed of his blindness, that man to whom Jesus asked that searching question, do you believe?

[16:19] Do you believe in the Son of Man? And so we see then, thirdly, we see that once blind man in his belief of faith. Jesus had opened that man's eyes.

Eyes that had never seen the light of day. Eyes that had never seen the light of the Lord Jesus. But this man was released, certainly, as we see in the parrot in the story, he's released from that burden, that burden of blindness.

And notice, as we read in that chapter, we saw the process that Jesus went through. Jesus made mud. Then he applied that mud into the man's eyes.

And then the mud was washed off that man's eyes. The process of that physical healing, the miracle of the healing of that blind man that points to that process of healing of a person's heart.

The physical healing of that blind man, of course, was superseded by a greater miracle. That healing of that man's heart, that spiritual healing, the man who was once blind but now can see.

[17:31] He wouldn't just see Jesus physically. He would see Jesus as the promised Christ, as the Savior of the world. And you notice how this blind man, this once blind man, gradually comes to faith in Jesus.

You go back to verse 11 of that chapter and at one time the man simply called Jesus, the man called Jesus. But then he sees, reflecting on who Jesus is and what he's done for him, he then calls Jesus a prophet.

And then after all the vicious treatment that he received from the Pharisees, we read there in verse 38, he says, Lord, I believe.

And then he worships Jesus. You see, that process and his growing understanding of who Jesus is and his growing awareness of who Jesus is, he's now acknowledging that Jesus is much, much more than simply a good man.

He's much, much more than just a prophet. He's now saying, yes, this Jesus has come from God. He must have come from God. God.

[18:43] This once blind man, he's not going to take the attitude of the Pharisees in rampant unbelief. And he's not going to take that soft option of his parents and dodge the questions that the Pharisees were giving him about Jesus.

This man's become bold and he's recognizing who Jesus is, that the Lord has come from God. And so this once blind man is not going to back down.

Even when the Pharisees persecute him, even when they hurl insults at him, even when he's cast out of the synagogue, he's going to take his stance for Jesus, Jesus who healed him.

And yes, he'll pay for that stance. He's going to be rejected by the religious leaders, the Pharisees, others in society. He's going to be cast out from those, those individuals.

But he's going to gain the fellowship of Jesus as we see in that blind man's statement of faith that we do need to look at a little more, Lord, I believe. That once blind man his eyes opened by the saving grace of God in Christ.

[19:55] It was that grace rooted in God's love for sinners. And it's seen so beautifully when Jesus comes alongside that healed man. Jesus comes back to him once more.

But this time with Jesus and with that man, there are no Pharisees there to hurl their vicious insults. And there's no indication that the parents are there anymore. It's only Jesus.

And in Jesus' love, his gracious love for that man, he asks that most important question that can be asked of anyone. Do you believe? Do you believe in the Son of Man?

Jesus is saying, do you believe in me, the Son of Man? Do you believe in me, the one sent from heaven? Do you believe in me, God incarnate, God in human flesh? Do you believe in me, the Son of God who became man, the Son of Man, man, to free man from sin?

Jesus is saying, do you believe in me, Jesus, the revelation of God to man? Do you believe in me, says Jesus? Jesus, the sinless one, the sinless man, the man who came to do what the first man, Adam, failed to do in full obedience to God.

[21 : 13] Jesus is saying to the blind man as he says to you and to me, that I alone, Jesus is saying, I alone am to be worshipped as the one sent from God to save his people from their sins.

And when the man asks Jesus, when Jesus says, do you believe in the Son of Man? And this once blind man asks Jesus, who is the Son of Man to believe in him?

Jesus in his gracious love makes himself known. Verse 37, you have seen him and it's he who's speaking to you and without hesitation, the once blind man's eyes of faith are opened and he says, I believe.

Aren't these the most wonderful words to be expressed by any human being? To be expressed from the mouth of a sinner saved by grace? I believe.

And that man shows that he does believe by worshipping Jesus. That worship that shows, yes, his faith is true, it's real, his faith, gifted faith, his sure faith and he does what he hadn't been able to do before.

[22 : 26] He worships, he worships the Lord. And that leaves you with that question, do you believe? You know the finger in Lord Kitchener in the famous First World War poster, your country needs you and the optical illusion with the finger pointing wherever the person who's looking at the poster is going.

You can't avoid the question and that's what's happening here. Jesus is asking that question and the finger of the Lord is pointing to everyone who hears that word, who hears that question.

Do you believe in me? What's your response? We can't close the service without a response from each one of you to that question.

Do you believe? Do you believe in the Son of Man? Do you believe in the Son of God? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus? Are you going to remain in unbelief like the Pharisees who refuse to believe in Jesus?

Are you going to be like the parents of that blind man who say we want, we can't decide, there's no evidence that Jesus is who he claims to be?

[23 : 42] Or, praise God, have you truly given your life to the Lord Jesus and so worship him and follow him and be his disciple and yes, know the cost of discipleship as that once blind man knew that cost when he gave his life to the Lord Jesus.

Well, give your life to Jesus. Give all that you are to the Saviour. Put your faith in him and may there be rejoicing in heaven even this day for one sinner who repents and believes.

Amen. Let us pray.