

Restoration and Investigation

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[0 : 00] We're going to look at this passage today as the next of the miracles of Jesus, and we're going to conclude our study of the miracles with this passage, but I'm going to take it over two weeks because it's by far the longest account of the miracles of Jesus, and especially of the aftermath of what happened following the miracle that you find in regard to any of the miracles of Jesus, this one here, the giving of sight to this man who was born blind.

And as you know, the statements, as we've seen many times before, the statements in John and the miracles that are joined together are joined together deliberately, and that's why we read chapter 8, because if you go back to chapter 8 and verse 12, you see Jesus saying, he spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. And that's really the introduction to the miracle that you find in chapter 9, verses 1 to 12, because you notice there in verse 5, as long as I am in the world, Jesus said, I am the light of the world.

And then after that, for the remainder of the chapter, you come to the way in which this man met with so much conflict and so much challenge to himself and to his understanding of what had happened until you actually come to the high point of the account of the miracle in verse 38, which is where you find Jesus, the man saying, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him.

And that itself was really a step on the way through the gospel of John until you come to the chapter 20 and verses 30 and 31, which really brings out the whole purpose of the gospel of John and why these things were written, where John says, now Jesus did many other signs.

[1 : 55] That's John's word for the miracles. Did many other miracles in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

Why do we study the miracles? Same reason we study the other parts of the Bible, that we may come to know the person in these miracles, the person of Jesus himself, and that coming to know him, we may have that eternal life, the purpose for which this gospel, as it says there, was written. So we're taking this over to studies. The chapter is really about this miracle. Well, first of all, today we're looking at verses 1 to 12, which deals with the restoration of the man to sight and also the investigation that followed by his immediate neighbors.

And next time, God willing, we'll look at the interrogation of the Pharisees, particularly verses 13 following, because really the interrogation is pretty much a persecution of the man trying to bully him into saying things about Jesus, which the Pharisees wanted him to say and which he refused to say.

So much in that for us as well to fit into the context of our present society. And then finally, there's the affirmation with which the chapter finishes, where Jesus found him and met him and revealed himself more to him.

[3 : 23] So it's really in a spiritual way. The chapter is about progress from the beginning of sight, because John, of course, as we're seeing, as we've said, intends we should see this with a spiritual meaning and a spiritual lesson for us.

So the whole chapter is really about coming spiritually to sight, to see Jesus, to know Jesus, and then through testing and difficulties and challenges and through the word of Jesus himself, we come to an affirmation where Jesus affirms and assures us of that life that we have in him.

So let's look at the restoration, first of all, verses 1 to 7. Now there's a correction here by Jesus of the disciples, first of all, because as they saw this man blind from birth, his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

And Jesus answered, it wasn't that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. Now the disciples were wrong in actually concluding that it must have been either a fault, a sin on the part of his parents, or a sin on the part of this man himself that left him blind from birth.

And Jesus wants to say, it's nothing to do with that. You're actually wrong even beginning thinking that way. And that too is very often something that we ourselves are guilty of.

[4 : 55] We often find ourselves, as well as the world in which we live, that we judge people, that we come to conclusions about people using our own criteria.

Using things which we think bring us to the right conclusion. Using things which we, arguments which we ourselves are convinced of we need to use, and yet which very often you bring to the Bible, and in the light of the Bible you see they are wrong.

You don't judge by what people look like. You don't judge by what people's lives used to be like before they became Christians. You don't judge people by sometimes what they say inadvertently, or things that sometimes happen in a Christian life which we would not want to happen, and yet it happens because we're all, at the end of the day, vulnerable people.

We're judged by God's truth. And here is Jesus correcting the disciples themselves. And of course, we could go into developing that point.

I'm not going to do that, but it does lead us in the direction of concluding that we have to value all human life.

[6 : 08] It doesn't matter whether it's life that doesn't have sight, that a person doesn't have sight, or hearing. A person that's been born, let's say, with some other disability, limbs disability, somebody born with Down syndrome, whatever else it might be, we value all human life.

We value life pre-birth, before birth. We value life coming to the end stage of life. We have to stand against the movement in our society that increasingly calls for euthanasia to be legalized.

Just earlier this month, the well-known atheist Richard Dawkins again reiterated his view that the removal of such disabilities, as he regards it, or such types of life as are lacking what most people have, would actually lessen the burden on society or the amount of suffering in the world.

What kind of a mind is that? It's a mind that's godless, a mind that doesn't go by the light of God's truth.

We value all human life. And sometimes those who have fewer of the faculties that most of us have, they are the most rewarding people in the world to know.

[7 : 35] They bring the most joy and the most fulfillment, and they live these lives themselves. So there's Jesus saying, make sure that you don't judge, that you don't come to conclusions, just using your own criteria.

Follow what the Bible gives you by way of principles. So let's move on from that. But Jesus' reply shows that. But in verses 4 to 5, you can see there's a note of urgency there.

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'm in the world, I'm the light of the world.

In other words, Jesus is saying, while you have the opportunity, make the most of the light that God has given you. You go to chapter 12, you'll find verses 35 to 36, Jesus saying, the light is among you for a little while longer.

Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he's going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons or children of life.

[8 : 45] What a wonderful sentence that is. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become the children of light. That's the message of the gospel. That's the message of addressing our opportunities and our need.

As you find the light of Christ coming through in the teaching of the gospel, this is what is again and again presented to us in the message of the gospel, in the free offer of the gospel.

While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may be the children of light. Because as Jesus said, the night is coming. Life comes to an end. Opportunities come to an end.

Circumstances, you have them now in this life, come to an end. Now is the time of opportunity. Now is the time for coming to make sure that your life is safe by having Jesus himself as your savior.

That's the correction that Jesus brought to the disciples. A connection that he tied up with this note of urgency to make every opportunity, take every opportunity to make use of the light.

[9 : 56] And then he came to restore this man's sight. Now when I say restoration, I suppose in one sense it's not really restoration because this man never had sight.

He was born blind. So it's not restoration in the sense of giving back to him something that he used to have. But it is restoration, certainly in the spiritual meaning of it because it is restoring, Jesus restoring something that in a spiritual sense is what we ought to have.

Something that we lost in our fallen Adam, our spiritual sight, our spiritual life, eternal life. That is in the sense of, that's the sense in which we're looking at it spiritually as a restoration.

So he restores the sight of this man looking at it in that context. And you notice verses 6 to 7 as he says here, Having said these things, he spat on the ground.

In other words, Jesus is demonstrating there, and that's why John is using these words, having said these things. He's demonstrating there, this is how Jesus actually presented the fact that he is the light of the world.

[11 : 08] He's demonstrating this by giving sight to this man in this way. The whole thing holds together, it's the word of Jesus saying, I am the light of the world, and then demonstrating how it can be so by the power he has to restore this man's sight.

And here's such a meaningful thing to the blind. First of all, he makes contact with him. He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva.

Then he anointed the man's eyes and said, go and wash in the pool of Siloam. And that's such a meaningful thing to this man who had never had any sight. And we've seen that previously in some of the other miracles, how the touch of Jesus is so important to people, to give them reassurance and a measure of understanding of what's happening and who he is and what he's about.

And the compassion of Jesus so often is demonstrated and comes through his touch as he deals with people, with whatever needs they have as he comes to bring them a cure or bring them the benefit of his power.

And it's the same with this man. And it does appear at first sight a very strange way of giving sight to somebody who had never seen anything to actually come and make mud and cover the man's eyes with it.

[12 : 28] And it seems the very opposite of what you would do in order to bring back the person's sight. And that, again, is an important spiritual point because the same is true of the cross of Christ and of the death of Jesus.

Think, for example, of 1 Corinthians, how Paul was actually addressing those who thought that the preaching of the cross, the preaching of a crucified Jesus was just simply foolishness.

How on earth could that possibly be meaningful even then, let alone now, in order to address people's needs as human beings? And that's why Paul wrote, The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

For Jews demand signs, and Greeks seek wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

It doesn't look like wisdom to spit on the ground and make clay and put it on the eyes of a blind man in order to actually be a process or means by which his sight is restored.

[13 : 45] It doesn't seem to human wisdom sensible to actually preach the death of someone who died on a cross at Calvary all of these years ago in order to meet human needs today in this century.

And it's always going to be like that. Because the preaching of the cross is to human wisdom foolishness. God's methods to those who reject those methods, who don't want God's way of doing things, of course it'll be foolishness.

That's why we in preaching the gospel and you in witnessing to Christ are always going to be dealing with foolishness, with the world's folly, with the foolishness of unbelief. That's the great problem we have as human beings.

Our own wisdom turns out actually to be foolishness, as far as these things are concerned anyway, which is why God is turning it on its head and why Jesus here gives us another illustration of his method being the method that really is effective to reach its own ends, whatever humans think of it. And he didn't just make a clay, that's just the first part of it. He then said to him, go and wash in the pool of Siloam, which means scent. So he went and washed and came back sea.

[15 : 11] So along with the contact, or following the contact, he gave this command, go and wash in the pool of Siloam. That's way back in the Old Testament, a pool mentioned in the Old Testament, the likes of Isaiah chapter 8, where it's there really to do with the refusal of the people to accept the provision of God, which is illustrated by the waters of Siloam.

And they had refused that, and the king and the people had refused that in those days. And here is God, through Jesus Christ, really reversing that by saying, go and wash in the waters of Siloam. The method that I have, the procedure that I'm using, the provision that I make is the means of your cure. You can tell yourself how that applies spiritually to human life.

And it reminds us of Naaman, a Syrian who, in 2 Kings chapter 5, was told by Elisha to go and wash in the Jordan.

And his initial reaction was one of fury. He totally rejected the idea. He thought the waters of the rivers of Damascus a lot better, or at least equivalent, to the waters that he was being pointed to.

[16 : 26] And unfortunately, that's the same initial reaction that you find frequently repeated when the gospel is presented to people in our day. That's just completely inadequate to meet my needs.

I have better waters than these. I have something that I myself know is superior to the gospel. And Jesus here is showing us how we need to actually counter that by accepting his word, by accepting his method, his provision.

So here is this man. Jesus makes contact with him. He's then given this command. And the man, as he accepted the word of Jesus, as he obeyed the command, as he did what Jesus commanded him, what was the outcome?

He came back seeing. There's a wonderful sentence there. I think it's absolutely so powerful. At the end of verse 7 there. So he went and he washed, and he came back seeing.

He went and he washed, and he came back seeing. He went on the basis of the word that Jesus had given him, on the command that Jesus had given him.

[17 : 41] He did what Jesus commanded. And as he did, as he carried that out, he came back a new person. He came back with his sight. Isn't that just how it is?

You go to Christ. You comply with his requirement, with his command to come to him. You accept his word. You accept the offer of the gospel, where Jesus is presented as your savior, as the savior of sinners.

And as you go to him, and as you go to the fountain of water that's in him, you come back seeing. That's how our life is changed. How he changes our life.

By his method. In his wisdom. By his provision. There is the restoration of the man.

The restoration of his sight. He went and washed and came back seeing. But then there's an investigation. And that immediately follows. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, is this not the man who used to sit and beg?

[18 : 49] Some said, it is he. Others said, nobody's like him. And then you notice, he kept saying, I am the man. And all the way through the chapters, we'll see God willing next time, this man really represents the person who has come to know Christ and insisting, this is the truth.

This is what I know. This is what he has done for me. So here, this interest, they knew he was a beggar previously, probably his only means of support then.

They knew him as one who was blind and sat begging. And now he's coming back a changed person. And our spiritual change always attracts interest.

But the rest of the chapter shows us that the change that Jesus brings into our life and the attention that that then draws to us and as has changed people, well, that then becomes a means by which we keep presenting Jesus to people.

Because all the questions and all the opposition throughout the rest of the chapter were met by this man insisting, this is what happened, this is who did it, this Jesus, and all the time he presents Jesus to them.

[20 : 03] And you can see in the rest of the chapter towards what we'll see next time that there's a gradual process on the part of this man up to the point at which Jesus reassures him that he indeed has been given life.

And Lord, he says, I believe, and he worshipped him. And all the way through to that, you have various steps on the journey because our spiritual growth doesn't happen all at once.

Once we come to have our spiritual sight restored, come to know Jesus as our Savior, it's growth from then on. And it's growth that needs the Word of God, that needs to be under the preaching of

the Word, that needs to be accompanied with prayer, it's growth that needs the company of other Christians, that needs discussion, that needs fellowship.

All of these things fit into how we grow in our belief, in our assurance, in our relationship with Christ and with one another. And this chapter really illustrates that for us so well.

You look at the stages of that, verse 12, where you find, where is he? He said, I do not know. And what he was saying, and then in verse 17, they again said to the blind man, what do you say about him?

[21 : 22] Since he opened your eyes, he said, he is a prophet. And verse 25, taking the thing further, he answered, whether he's a sinner or not, I don't know, but one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.

And then verses 35 to 38, you come to the point, as we said, where he believes and confesses his belief and worships Jesus. And there's growth, therefore, all the way through these stages on the way towards that wonderful high point of the chapter where it comes to worship Jesus.

And the first section that we're looking at here, in verse 12 here, where they say, where is he? That's not presented, the language there is not one of skepticism.

It's not one where these people, the neighbors, and those who knew the man are actually coming in a very disinterested or opposed fashion. It's put in such a way that they're really looking to get at the truth.

They really want to understand what's happened. So it's not skepticism at all. It's a desire to meet Jesus. And that, again, fits into the pattern that you see throughout this Gospel of John, where seeing Jesus is a feature all the way through the chapter.

[22 : 40] Chapter 1, verse 46, or bringing people to Jesus. Chapter 1, you find it there, chapter 1, verse 46. Those disciples who had come to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, they actually came to see that this, in fact, was Jesus.

where Philip said to Nathaniel, come and see. You find the same in the woman of Samaria in chapter 4. She invited those of her own townspeople to come and see this man who told me, she said, everything that I ever did is this not the Christ.

They went out to him, they came and saw. Then they said to the woman, now we believe not just because of what you said, we have heard him for ourselves and know that this indeed is the Christ.

And chapter 12, verse 22, just skipping over these, you can follow them through later for yourselves. Chapter 12, verse 22, where you find again the Greeks coming, those who called to the Greeks, came to Philip and said, sir, we want to see Jesus.

And then chapter 5, just to conclude that series of texts, chapter 5, verses 39 to 40, the words of Jesus to the disbelieving Jews, this is what he said to them, chapter 5 and at verse 39, you are searching the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear testimony about me.

[24 : 16] Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. There's a very solemn thing there. these Jews were convinced that these scriptures were in fact the word of God.

They were convinced that through them they would be led to have eternal life. And they were right. But then Jesus said, but you will not come to me.

They refused to accept Jesus as the fulfillment of what their scriptures actually taught by way of prophecy. you will not come to me that you might have life.

How is it with yourself today? I know you're convinced that the Bible is the word of God, that it's God's authoritative book, that you valued in your life, that you wouldn't want to be without it.

But have you come to Jesus himself so that you might have life? To the person of Jesus that this Bible teaches you about?

[25 : 22] Is he still saying about you, whether here or online, listening today, you will not come to me that you might have life. We need to come just like this man needed to go and wash in the water of Siloam, in the pool of Siloam, without which he would not have his sight.

We need to come to Jesus for us to receive our spiritual life, our spiritual sight, the Jesus of the Bible, the Jesus who is God's Son sent into the world for this purpose.

John Duncan, or Rabbi Duncan, as he was more commonly known, who lived in the mid-1800s, one of the famous free church personalities of the time, and a very important missionary as well to the Jews in Budapest.

But in the biography of his life, which I read just very recently, again, he talks about what the gospel offers as a spiritual market.

not that the things the gospel offers are for sale as such, but they're made freely available as if they were a market where everything is free. And what he says is this when he came, first of all, to realize his need of Christ.

[26 : 47] This is how he put it. When I heard all the good things that were offered in this market, I said to myself, I will marry the merchant and they will all be mine.

I will marry the merchant and they will all be mine. You marry this merchant, Jesus. If you haven't done so already and everything you need comes with him, you have Jesus, you have everything. That's the message of the gospel. Let's pray. Lord our God, we thank you today for the freeness with which eternal life is offered to us.

We thank you that that is in your wisdom, that you have procured it for us in such a wonderful way through your own death and resurrection, through your ongoing life.

We thank you today that however great our need may be, you are greater than it. And we thank you that the greatness that belongs to you as the saviour of sinners continues and will continue to be so all the way through time and into eternity.

[28 : 03] Bless us then today, we pray. Help us to know that when we have you, we have everything we require. Lord, we ask all of these things in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. We're going to again conclude with praise, this time Psalm 105, and this is from Sing Psalm, Psalm 105, on page 138, verses 1 to 11.

Give thanks to the Lord God and call on his name. His wonderful deeds to the nations proclaim.

Sing praises to him and his exploits record. Let all those who seek him rejoice in the Lord.

all the way through to verse 11 to God's praise. Give thanks to the Lord God and all of his name.

His wonderful deeds to the nations proclaim. Sing praises to him and his exploits record.

[29 : 13] Let all those who seek him rejoice in the Lord. You chosen ones knew to the Lord and his might.

Seek ever his grace and his wonders beside. His miracles too and his judgments divine.

You children of Abraham, Jacob's own mind. The Lord is our God and he rules all the earth.

Remembering his covenant, the word he set forth. He vowed for the ages to come to make good his promise to Abraham, to Isaac renewed.

To Jacob, his sovereign decree was made sure. With Israel, his covenant would always endure.

[30 : 37] To you, I will give as your portion to stand the country of Canaan, the beautiful land.

Well, as you know by now, I'm sure if you can please remain seated after the benediction until those who are on duty invite you to leave. And please remain socially distant as we leave and also outside and make use of the sanitiser at each of the exits from the building, please.

Let's stand for the benediction. Amen. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

Amen.