

LESSON 5

PART I: JESUS AS THE LIGHT

John 9:1-41

Introduction

Jesus' teachings about Himself and the hostile reaction of His opponents reach a climax in these verses. His teachings had become a threat to the religious authority of the Jewish rulers. They sought to enlist the witness of the blind man against Jesus and accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath. The healing of the blind man provided Jesus the occasion for additional teachings.

The Healing of the Blind Beggar

9:1-12

Jesus had claimed to be the light of the world (8:12). The healing of the blind beggar demonstrated that claim and the statement was repeated (v.5). The miracle of giving sight contained a symbolic significance as well as a physical benefit.

The disciples were acquainted with the accounts of creation, Adam's sin, and the affliction that came upon society as a result of Adam's sin. They knew the warning in the Law of Moses that the guilty would not be disregarded but God would visit "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exod. 34:7). Perhaps they placed more emphasis on the Law of Moses than on the writings of the prophet Ezekiel who stated that a son would not suffer for his father's sin but each man who sinned would bear his own iniquity (18:20).

When the disciples saw the blind man, they questioned whether his affliction was a punishment for his own sins or for those of his parents (v.2). Although affliction and suffering are results of sin introduced by Adam and perpetuated by his descendants, each physical ailment cannot be attributed to punishment for personal sin. In the case of the blind man, Jesus stated that another purpose was involved: he was blind in order that the power of God through His Son might be manifested through him (v.3). Not all suffering or affliction can be attributed to sin committed by the individual who suffers. The disciples would experience persecution and suffering for righteousness even as the prophets of old had. Sin would be the cause of the trouble, but it would be the sin of the persecutors.

*According to the two Old Testament verses listed below, state the differing views concerning the cause of blindness of the man Jesus healed.*

*Exodus 34:7* \_\_\_\_\_

*Ezekiel 18:20* \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

*Jesus explained that in this case the man was blind in order that the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ might be manifested.*

*(power, God)*

With the mentioning of the works of God displayed in the healing of the blind man, Jesus' thoughts turned to the urgency of the work God had sent Him to do (v.4). His time was short and was compared to a day in which man works. The coming of night means the end of work. That day had arrived for Jesus, but it would be very brief. It was important that Jesus and His disciples do the works of God who sent Him as long as it was day.

Isaiah had predicted the glorious work to be done in the Day of the Lord: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert" (Isa. 35:5f.).

Giving sight to the blind illustrated Jesus' claim that He was the light of the world. In the establishing of God's Kingdom, spiritual sight was given as well as physical sight (v.5). John's view was that the world had been alienated from God and was under the power of the devil. Jesus would be in the world only a brief time to undo the work of the evil one. Jesus' works included deliverance from physical affliction as well as from spiritual captivity. Since men are deceived by the promises of Satan concerning worldly values, Jesus as the light of the world gives men vision to see that Satan's ways lead to death. The time is brief when men have opportunity to respond to Him as light and to be delivered from falsehood.

Jesus used the elements of spittle and clay, which were believed to have medicinal value, to anoint the eyes of the blind man (v.6). Clay symbolized the original creation of man, and Jesus' spittle symbolized the creative power of God's Son. Like Elisha of old who had challenged the leper Naaman to wash in the Jordan, Jesus tested the blind man's faith by sending him to wash in the pool of Siloam (v.7). The creative power of God gave sight to a man who had not been given sight at his birth.

The author gave a vivid description of the events which followed this giving of sight. Some of the man's neighbours questioned whether he who came seeing was the same one as the blind beggar whom they were accustomed to seeing (v.8). Others were positive of the identity while some concluded that there was a resemblance, but the man with sight and the blind beggar were not the same person (v.9). Those who made a positive identification asked the beggar how he had received his sight (v.10). He recited the account of Jesus' anointing his eyes with spittle and clay and instructing him to wash in the pool of Siloam (v.11). When the neighbours inquired where Jesus was, the man was vague in his knowledge of Jesus (v.12).

*The restoration of sight to the blind symbolized Jesus as the \_\_\_\_\_ of the*

\_\_\_\_\_.

*(light, world)*

*The various responses of the neighbours concerning the man who received sight were:*

- 1. Some \_\_\_\_\_ whether he was the blind beggar.*
- 2. Others were \_\_\_\_\_ that he was the blind beggar.*
- 3. Others concluded that there was a \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(1. questioned, 2. positive, 3. resemblance)*

## The Blindness of the Jewish Leaders

9:13-34

### Blindness caused by legalism (9:13-16)

John gave a rapid and vivid description of the events which followed the healing of the blind man. For some unexplained reason, the neighbours brought the blind man to the Pharisees. Those who were convinced that he had been given sight may have concluded that Jesus was the promised Messiah. The Pharisees also were looking for the Messiah, but they rejected Jesus because He did not comply with their legalistic system. The legalistic interpretation of keeping the Sabbath blinded the Jewish leaders to the Messiah promised by the Law and the Prophets. The mixing of the clay and spittle represented a technical breach of the Sabbath Law which prohibited kneading. The placing of the mixture on the eyes was prohibited in that only ointment which had been used during the week could be used on the Sabbath. Since blindness did not endanger human life, no emergency existed to justify the act of mercy on the Sabbath. The giving of sight could have waited until another time.

When questioned by the Pharisees how he had received his sight, the man answered with the brief statement: "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see" (v.15-RSV). The Pharisees were in agreement that such a miracle could come only from God. Their conclusion was confused by the fact that a man from God would not break the Sabbath (v.16). Others argued that God would not manifest His power through a sinner; therefore, a division arose among them.

### Blindness caused by unbelief (9:17-23)

Since the divided Pharisees could not solve the problem with rational theological arguments, they turned to the man who had experienced healing and asked his opinion (v.17). The man did not hesitate to answer that he believed Jesus was a prophet. No ordinary man could have given sight to the blind. The Old Testament contains numerous miracles done through the prophets Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. The prophet Isaiah had spoken of the giving of sight to the blind in the Day of the Lord. Some of the Jewish leaders adopted the position of the neighbours who doubted the identity of the man who claimed to have received sight until his parents identified him (v.18). They asked three questions of the parents: "Is this your son? Was he born blind? How does he now see?" (v.19). The parents could answer two of the questions but not the third. They knew that he was their son and had been born blind. They could not answer the question of how he had received his sight (v.21). They avoided giving an opinion in order to prevent their being put out of the synagogue (v.22). They placed the whole responsibility back on their son by stating that he was old enough to speak for himself (vv.21,23). The Jewish leaders were unwilling to confess Jesus as the Messiah because they were blinded by the legalistic system of Judaism.

*Give the legalistic interpretation given by the Jewish leaders of each detail of Jesus' healing act:*

1. *Mixing the clay and spittle--* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. *Putting the mixture on the eyes--* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. *Blindness did not endanger human life--* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

*Place an X by the incorrect statement.*

1. *The Pharisees concluded that the miracle of healing the blind man could come only from God.*
2. *The Pharisees were unanimous in believing that Jesus must be from God since He healed the blind man.*
3. *Some Pharisees denied that Jesus was from God because He healed on the Sabbath.*

*(X-2)*

Blindness caused by pride (9:24-34)

The man who had received his sight was recalled by the Pharisees and admonished to tell the truth. They deemed it impossible that Jesus who had broken the Sabbath and thus was a sinner could have had power from God to give sight to the blind (v.24). In this argument, John revealed the weakness of Judaism and the superiority of Christianity. The two religions were incompatible. Christianity could not fit within the framework of Judaism.

The man who had received his sight refused to deny Jesus on the basis of an incorrect doctrine of Judaism. His experience of receiving his sight carried greater proof for him than the arguments of the Pharisees (v.25). The real question was whether or not Judaism was of God. If the laws of Judaism regarding the Sabbath were correct, it would have been inconsistent for God to bless one who broke them. If God blessed one who broke the Sabbath laws, it was obvious that Judaism was in error. This problem was so disturbing that the Pharisees asked the man who had received his sight to repeat his description of what had happened (v.26). The man replied that he had explained carefully what had happened but the Jews refused to accept what he said. In irony, he asked the question: "Do you also want to become His disciples?" (v.27-NEB). The sharp contrast between the disciples of Moses in Judaism and the disciples of Christ is drawn in verse 28. The Jewish pride of being right in their legalistic interpretations kept them from recognizing the truth manifested through the miracle of giving sight to the blind.

The Jews boasted of being right because their beliefs were based on Moses to whom God had spoken (v.29). Although they could not deny that the miracle of healing was from God, they refused to admit that Jesus who had broken the Sabbath could be from God. They contended that they did not know where Jesus was from (v.29). John presented the unlearned blind beggar as more logical than the educated Pharisees. It was obvious to the man who had been healed that Jesus possessed the power of God; therefore, he concluded that Jesus must not be a sinner (vv.30f.). The miracle was a sign that Jesus was doing the will of God who heard and answered His request (v.31). The man who was given sight concluded that Jesus must be the promised Messiah whose coming had been associated with the Day of the Lord when the eyes of the blind would be opened (v.32). The Pharisees could not refute his argument nor his interpretation of the Old Testament; however, their pride prevented their accepting the obvious. Their only recourse was to attack the man's character and put him out of the synagogue. The fact that the man had been born blind was interpreted to mean that he was a sinner, and they would not be instructed by a sinner (v.34).

If God blessed one who broke the Sabbath laws, the logical conclusion was that \_\_\_\_\_ was in error.

(Judaism)

The logic of the blind beggar was superior to the legalistic application of the educated Pharisees and followed these steps:

1. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ the blind man.
2. Therefore, Jesus must have had God's \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Since He had God's power, Jesus must not have been a \_\_\_\_\_.

(1. healed, 2. power, 3. sinner)

The Giving of Spiritual Sight to the Believer

9:35-41

Jesus stated that His teachings would not fit in the old wine skins of Judaism. Although the early Christians continued for a season to participate in the temple and synagogue services, it soon became obvious that Christianity was incompatible with Judaism. The man who received his sight supported Jesus and was put out of the synagogue (v. 35). Jesus found him and made him a disciple. He was asked whether or not he believed in the heavenly Son of Man. The man was not blinded by pride but was willing to believe in the promised Messiah when He was identified (v. 36).

John did not draw a clear distinction between the Christ and the Son of Man. Apparently the Son of Man added a heavenly dimension to the Davidic Messiah. John's understanding of Christ was that He was the Son of Man from above. When Jesus informed the man that He was the Son of Man, he responded in faith and worshipped Him (vv. 37f.). Again, John focused on miracles as signs which led to faith.

Verse 39 appears to contradict the statement in 3:17. Although Jesus was sent on a mission of redemption rather than judgement, His coming as the light of the world required men to make a decision. Those who believed in Him received eternal life. Those who rejected Him continued in condemnation. Jesus' redemptive mission carried an element of judgement.

This world was not Jesus' home, for His home was above. He came that those who were blind like the beggar might be able to see, not only physically but also spiritually. His coming also meant that those who had the Law to give them sight would become blind because they rejected the Messiah of whom the Law spoke (v. 39). The Pharisees who accompanied Jesus understood the point of His statement. They inquired whether they too were blind (v. 40). Instead of giving a positive reply, Jesus answered with a paradox. Since the Pharisees had the light of the Law to guide them, they claimed to be able to see; therefore, they were responsible for their sins (v. 41). If they had admitted their blindness and had come to Jesus seeking light, they would not have been held accountable for their sins.

John's understanding of Christ in relation to the Davidic Messiah was that He was the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ from above.

(Son, God)

*Underline the correct words.*

*The Pharisees (were, were not) accountable for their sins because they (had, did not have) the light of the Law, which they (relied, did not rely) upon.*

(were, had, relied)

## PART II: JESUS AS THE SHEPHERD

John 10:1-42

### Introduction

The opening words of chapter 10—"truly, truly"—indicate that the passage which follows grew out of the events of Jesus' giving sight to the blind man and the man's being cast out of the synagogue. Instead of having concern for the afflicted man and rejoicing in his cure, the Pharisees cast him out. Jesus found him and brought him into the true fold of God's people.

The discourse in chapter 10 is often called an allegory, but C.K. Barrett states that it is neither parable nor allegory, although it is related to both forms of utterance.<sup>1</sup> It involves symbolism alongside of direct statements. Jesus appears both as the shepherd and the door of the sheepfold.

### The True Shepherd

10:1-6

The Pharisees had assumed previously that they alone were the authoritative guides of the people. Jesus challenged that claim and asserted His own unique role as a true shepherd (v.1). He was recognized as a true shepherd by His entrance through the door of the sheepfold (v.2). Whoever would seek entrance by another way was labelled as a thief and robber. The details of the illustration were true to Palestinian life. Shepherds often slept lying across the door to the sheepfold in order that they would be awakened by the passing of anything into or out of the fold. Under such circumstances, thieves and robbers would seek entrance by climbing over a wall or fence.

The sheep were not to follow those who entered the fold by any means other than the door, for they were thieves. Sometimes more than one flock of sheep was kept in the same fold. Each shepherd's voice was recognized by his sheep, and they followed him out of the fold when the keeper opened the door (v.3). After the shepherd called his sheep from the fold, he would go before them, and they would follow him because they knew his voice (v.4). Sheep would not follow the voice of a stranger (v.5).

The thieves and robbers who attempted to lead the sheep are not identified. Jesus may have had in mind the kings of Israel and Judah who proved to be unfaithful leaders. Possibly the leaders of Judaism were the "thief and robber" (v.1) and the "stranger" (v.5).

<sup>1</sup>The Gospel According to St. John (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), p. 304.

READ ALL OF THE TOPIC THE TRUE SHEPHERD BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISES.

Who had assumed that they were the authoritative guides of the people?

\_\_\_\_\_

(The Pharisees)

Rearrange the letters below to form the missing words.

A true shepherd--

\_\_\_\_\_ the door of the sheep-  
(drugas) fold.

\_\_\_\_\_ his flock from other  
(paserseta) sheep in the fold.

\_\_\_\_\_ his sheep.  
(deuigs)

(guards, separates, guides)

The shepherd who knew his sheep by name (v.3) and called them to follow him had reference to the Messiah. Those who have been chosen by God for the Kingdom are known by name to Jesus. Apparently many sheep are in the fold, but only those belonging to Him will be called. The author explained that Jesus used a figure of speech, something like a parable, to teach the crowd, but they did not understand what He meant (v.6).

The Door of the Sheepfold

10:7-10

A second stage of the parable begins by repeating the words in verse 1, "truly, truly" (v.7). John recorded a number of "I am" sayings of Jesus. Readers expect John to say that Jesus claimed to be the shepherd, but instead He claimed to be the door to the sheepfold. As the door, Jesus regulates access to the sheep. He provides the way of entrance into the security of the sheepfold or salvation and the exit of the sheep to the green pastures or spiritual sustenance (v.9).

The function of the Messiah as redeemer was to provide a door between heaven and earth. Genesis 28:17 speaks of the door or gate of heaven. That door was the place from which Yahweh made His presence and Word known to Jacob. John had used already part of the dream of Jacob to speak of the opening of heaven and the ascending and descending of angels upon the Son of Man (1:51). Jesus as the spiritual door provides protection from one's enemies and access to eternal life. He is the only door through which man may enter the Kingdom of God. The interest of the thief or false leader centres in himself. With no concern for others, he is willing to steal, kill, and destroy. By contrast, Christ came to benefit the sheep—to give them abundant life.

The Good Shepherd

10:11-21

Jesus returned to the theme of the shepherd in the parable. His relation to the sheep as the Good Shepherd was contrasted to that of thieves, robbers, and hirelings. A thief takes the life of the sheep, a hireling flees and leaves the sheep unprotected, but a good shepherd gives his life for the sheep (vv.11ff.).

There is a relationship of mutual knowledge between Jesus and the sheep. This knowledge causes the sheep to trust Him. It is intimate and is compared to Jesus' knowing the Father and the Father's knowing the Son (v.15). The mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son involves love; therefore, the knowledge Jesus has of the sheep involves a love which causes Him to be willing to lay down His life for the sheep.

*The symbolical meaning of Jesus as the door of the sheepfold is that--*

*He provides \_\_\_\_\_ from one's enemies.*

*He provides \_\_\_\_\_ to eternal life.*

*(protection, access)*

*Describe the following to show the contrast among them:*

*Thieves and robbers-- \_\_\_\_\_*

*Hirelings-- \_\_\_\_\_*

*A good shepherd-- \_\_\_\_\_*

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

Jesus had sheep in the fold of Judaism who would be called out to follow Him. He also had other sheep which were not of the fold of Judaism but among the Gentiles (v.16). His sheep among the Gentiles must also be called and added to the Good Shepherd's flock. The sheep from other nations would not come unless they heard the voice of the Shepherd who called and compelled them to follow. The sheep from different folds were not to remain distinct from one another; that is, there was not to be a separate Jewish church and a separate Gentile church.

The reference to the crucifixion of Jesus which has been implied throughout the discourse becomes more prominent in verse 17. The Father loved Jesus because He was willing to lay down His life in obedience to the will of the Father. The death of Christ was not an indication of God's rejection of Him but a manifestation of Jesus' obedience to the Father's will. The fact that the Father enabled the Son to take up His life again after laying it down is proof that His death was according to the Father's will. Jesus was not compelled by any outside force to die (v.18). He was not overcome by His enemies but took the initiative in offering His life as a sacrifice for sins. Jesus was not the victim of the cross but the victor who chose to do the Father's will and to defeat the power of Satan.

The parable of the shepherd caused a division among the Jews (v.19). Some accepted His teachings that the Messiah as the Good Shepherd would lay down His life for the sheep, but others rejected these teachings about the cross and accused Him of having a demon (v.20). John continued to emphasize the fact that many of the Jews looked for a victorious Messiah who would not die but would conquer the enemies of the Jews. However, the miracle of giving sight to the blind man convinced other Jews that Jesus was from God and not from Satan (v.21). They were willing to accept His teaching that the leader of the people must die and be raised by the Father.

### The Shepherd's Relation to the Father

10:22-42

John introduced the Feast of Dedication, but Jesus' teachings on that occasion did not seem to relate to the feast (v.22). This feast was first instituted by Judas Maccabeus in 165 B.C. after the profaning of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes who had swine's flesh offered in the Temple. The celebration became an annual eight-day festival which began the twenty-fifth of the ninth month Kislev (approximately our December). Apparently John mentioned the feast to indicate that a couple of months had passed since Jesus' teachings about the Good Shepherd during the Feast of Tabernacles. John made additional historical reference to the wintry weather which may have explained why Jesus walked under the portico of Solomon rather than in the open (v.23).

Jesus' sheep were from the fold of \_\_\_\_\_ and also among the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Judaism, Gentiles)

Write the words victor and victim in the proper blanks.

Jesus was not the \_\_\_\_\_ of the cross but the \_\_\_\_\_ who chose to do His Father's will.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The parable of the shepherd caused division among the Jews because:

Some \_\_\_\_\_

Others \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The debate concerning Jesus' identity continued to be a live issue (v.24). The miracle of healing the blind man existed as evidence of Jesus' unusual relation to God, but His actions had not identified Him clearly as the Messiah (v.24). Perhaps all of the Jews would have accepted the miracle as evidence that He was a political messiah, but not all were willing to accept His teaching that the Messiah would die according to the will of God. When the Jews inquired how long Jesus would keep them in suspense, He answered that He had told them who He was but they had not believed His words (v.25). Actually, Jesus had declared Himself directly as the Messiah only to the Samaritan woman, but His works had given evidence that He was the Christ.

The indecision of the Jews resulted from their unwillingness to believe His teachings rather than from His failure to tell them who He was (v.26). They did not believe His teachings because they did not belong to His fold (v.26). Previously, Jesus had informed them that they did not understand the words He spoke from God because they did not belong to God (8:47). Jesus did nothing apart from the Father who sent Him, nor can man do anything apart from the Father who created him. Those who belong to Jesus are known by Him and respond to His voice as a sheep follows his master when he calls (v.27). Those who respond by believing His words receive eternal life (v.28). As dependent creatures, their lives are not exposed to the dangers of superior evil forces. The sheep are protected by the Good Shepherd, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Theologians have struggled with the question of human freedom and divine determination in the interpretation of verses 28 and 29. Evidences are found throughout the Fourth Gospel that creaturely man's freedom operates within the limitations of the Creator's will. Man must believe to have eternal life, but he will not believe unless He is chosen by the Father and is called into the fold by the Good Shepherd. These verses stress the assurance of salvation for those who believe. The question is not whether a person who has believed in Jesus as the Messiah will receive eternal life even though he later rejects the Son. Neither is the question whether or not a person who has been chosen by the Father will be saved even though he never believes. John's assumption was that creaturely man can believe only when the Father takes the initiative. Sin blinds a person to reality. The devil is a deceiver, and man cannot come to the truth unless the Spirit of God works within to enable him to see the truth; therefore, the initiative in salvation belongs to God. When the Spirit enlightens man to truth, man must respond by faith. Even though Satan is stronger than man and can keep him deceived and enslaved, Satan cannot prevent God's Spirit from enlightening him. When enlightened man responds by faith and enters the fold of God, Satan does not have the power to overcome the Father, just as a wild

*Underline the correct words.*

*Relative to who Jesus was, the Jews--*

*(would, would not) accept the miracle of healing the blind man as evidence that He was a political messiah;*

*(would, would not) accept His teaching that the Messiah would die according to God's will.*

*(would, would not)*

**READ JOHN 10:28, 29 CAREFULLY BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.**

*John's Gospel assumes that man must believe in \_\_\_\_\_ as the Messiah in order to have \_\_\_\_\_ and that man can believe only when the \_\_\_\_\_ takes the initiative.*

*When the \_\_\_\_\_ enlightens man to truth, man must respond by \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Jesus, eternal life, Father, Spirit, faith)*

animal cannot overpower a faithful shepherd who is protecting his sheep (v.29). The Good Shepherd has the power to protect the flock because He is one with the Father (v.30). The Father who created man is greater than the deceiver who entices man and enslaves him in sin. The one who has received eternal life has no fear that he will be overpowered by Satan's devices and returned to captivity under the dominion of the adversary.

A second teaching of Jesus caused the Jews to reject Him (v.31). In addition to being the Messiah who would die in following God's will, Jesus claimed to be more than an earthly man. The Davidic Messiah was to be an earthly man who possessed the power of God and thus could perform miracles. Jesus' good works showed that He had power from God (v.32), but His teachings claimed that He was divine in nature (v.33). David was called a son of God, but he remained a man who was chosen to lead God's people. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and His teachings revealed that this claim meant that He was of the same essence as the Father. The Jews understood His teachings and attempted to stone Him for blaspheming (v.33).

In answering the charge of blasphemy, Jesus reminded the Jews that their Law spoke of them as gods (v.34). Law here refers to all three parts of the Old Testament, and the reference is to Psalm 82:6: "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High." Jesus adopted the Jewish method of argument by quoting a scripture and drawing the implications from it: If the unjust rulers of the Jews were called gods, how much more reason was there for the One whom the Father sent to be called the Son of God? Psalm 82:6 does not teach the divinity of humanity but means that the judges of Israel, even though they abused their office, were God's representatives.

The Jews used the Law to try to convict Jesus of blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God, but He nullified the argument by using the Law to justify the claim of a man for divinity (v.35). The Jews themselves declared that the Scripture could not be broken; therefore, Psalm 82:6 was inviolable. Jesus asserted that He was consecrated or set apart and sent into the world (v.36). When David was set apart as king of Israel, He was called son of God but was not accused of blasphemy. The assertion of Jesus, however, added a new feature to the title "Son of God." John revealed that the Jews understood that Jesus claimed to be more than a representative of God. In identifying Jesus, John made it clear that the Jews understood Jesus was claiming to be God, and Jesus did not deny this interpretation.

Jesus reminded the Jews that evidence of His identity was not based on His words but on His works (v.37). The miracles He performed could not be denied as the works of God. Although the Jews might refuse to believe His words, they could know by His miraculous works that the Father was in Him and He in the Father (v.38). Since Jesus' argument could not be

*The Jews rejected Jesus because He made the following two claims:*

1. He was the \_\_\_\_\_ who would \_\_\_\_\_ following the Father's will.
2. He was of the same \_\_\_\_\_ as the Father.

*(1. Messiah, die; 2. essence)*

*The difference between David as son of God and Jesus as the Son of God was that the Jews understood Jesus claimed to be more than a \_\_\_\_\_ of God.*

*Jesus did not deny the Jews' charge that He claimed to be \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(representative, God)*

refuted, the proud but frustrated Jews turned to violence and sought to take Him captive (v.39).

John conveyed again to his readers the supernatural nature of Jesus by alluding to his ability to escape mysteriously the Jewish attempts to arrest Him. John noted that Jesus again departed from Jerusalem and went east of the Jordan into Perea (v.40). The author drew a distinction between the work of John the Baptist and that of Jesus by pointing out that John was not a miracle worker who did signs (v.41). Yet, what he said about the Christ who would come after him had been proved true. Evidence that John was a prophet whose words were divinely inspired was based on their fulfilment in Jesus. Apparently many who had been disciples of John the Baptist came to believe in Christ (v.42).

PART III: JESUS' POWER OVER DEATH

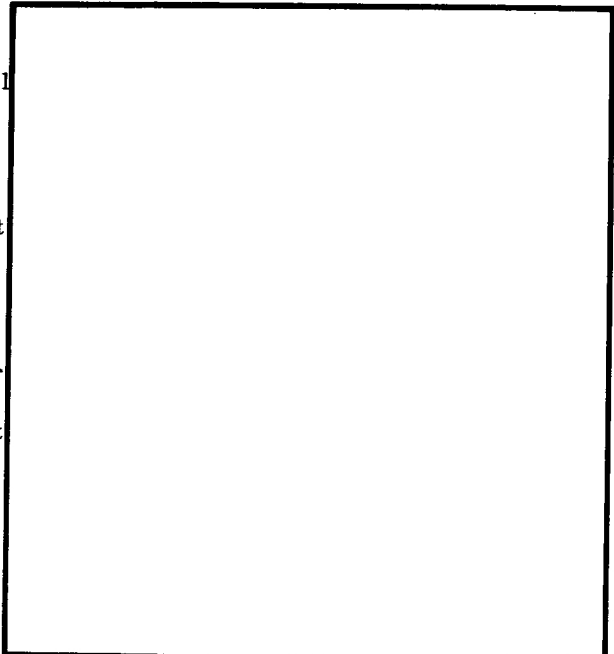
John 11:1-44

John's historical framework reveals that Jesus was in Bethany of Perea (see 1:28) when Lazarus of Bethany in Judea became seriously sick (v.1). Lazarus is identified as the brother of Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair (v.2). Mary and her sister Martha are mentioned in the Synoptics only in Luke 10:38-42. John's reference to the event in Luke implies that he and his readers were acquainted with that Gospel. His emphasis on the identity of persons and places gives the narrative a historical basis. The raising of Lazarus from death does not appear, as some claim, to be a story invented to explain how Jesus is the resurrection and the life (v.25).

The sisters sent a message to Jesus informing Him that Lazarus, whom He loved, was sick (v.3). Jesus replied that his sickness would not end finally in death but had the purpose of manifesting God's glory through the actions of His Son (v.4).

The statement that Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus may have been included to counteract the speculation that Jesus delayed His response to their plea of help because He was unconcerned (vv.5f.). The motive for His delay was to enable the glory of God to be manifested. After two days, Jesus requested His disciples to join Him in returning to Judea (v.7). The disciples reminded Him that they had just departed recently from Jerusalem because the Jews were seeking to kill Him (v.8). It seemed foolish for Jesus to return so soon to the city of His enemies. Jesus' answer to their reasoning emphasized again His commitment to the will of God.

The Jewish day was divided into two periods of twelve hours: from sunrise to sunset and from sunset to sunrise. Work ended when the day ended with the coming of darkness (v.9). Jesus had only a brief time



*The account of Jesus' raising Lazarus from death has historical basis through John's emphasis on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(persons, places)*

*Are the following statements true or false?*

*Jesus delayed two days before responding to the message that Lazarus was sick--*

- 1. because He was rather unconcerned. \_\_\_\_\_*
- 2. because God's glory was to be manifested through Jesus' demonstration of power over death. \_\_\_\_\_*

*(1. false, 2. true)*



to accomplish the Father's will; therefore, He could not afford to waste daylight hours. With the light of day, man would not stumble as one who walked at night (v.10). The hour which would end the day for Jesus would be the hour of His death and exaltation.

Jesus stated to His disciples that Lazarus had fallen asleep (v.11). John once again pointed out the misunderstanding of one of Jesus' statements which had symbolical meaning. Although Jesus used the word sleep, and indicated that He would go to Bethany to awaken Lazarus, He actually was referring to death. Since sleep was considered good for the sick, the disciples commented that Lazarus' sleep was beneficial and would lead to his recovery (v.12). They feared for Jesus to return to the area of hostility and implied that Jesus need not go to Bethany to awaken Lazarus. The death of Lazarus provided the occasion for Jesus to teach that He had power over death. The miracle served as a sign which would lead to faith (v.15). Jesus' statement implies that if He had been present with Lazarus, he would not have died, and the disciples' faith would not have been strengthened. Thomas, who was called Didymus (twin), encouraged the other disciples to join him in going with Jesus. The disciples expected Jesus to be put to death, and Thomas was ready to die with Him as a loyal follower (v.16). Thomas' proposal reveals that the disciples did not grasp the significance of Jesus' death nor understand His nature.

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, He found that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days (v.17). According to popular Jewish belief, the human spirit hovered near the body for three days before departing from the corpse. The restoration of life to a body before the end of the third day after death would not have been as significant as the miracle of restoring life to a corpse which had begun to deteriorate.

The short distance from Bethany to Jerusalem was given to explain why it was possible for many Jews to come to console Martha and Mary (vv.18f.). Although Martha was identified as the sister of Mary, she was the leader of the two and went out to meet Jesus when she heard He had come (v.20). Martha was convinced that Jesus was from God and that His request for the restoration of Lazarus to life would have been honoured had Jesus been present (vv.21f.). Martha's confidence in Jesus indicated that she would be receptive to His teachings about the resurrection (v.23). The miracle Jesus was about to perform would point to the resurrection in the last day (v.24). The Pharisees believed in a final resurrection.

Martha interpreted Jesus' statement that Lazarus would be raised up to be an effort to console her by reminding her of the resurrection in the last day. Her misunderstanding provided the occasion for Jesus to give a fuller explanation of Himself as the resurrection and the life (v.25). The presence of Jesus meant more than the substantiation of doctrines regarding the end of time. In the Son is eternal life which enables

The miracle of raising Lazarus served as a sign which would lead to \_\_\_\_\_.

(faith)

Underline the correct number.

Popular Jewish belief concerning death was that the human spirit hovered near the body for (two, three, four) days before departing. Since Lazarus had been in the tomb (two, three, four) days, there was no question that a miracle would be necessary to restore life.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Martha thought Jesus was reminding her of the \_\_\_\_\_ in the last day.

(resurrection)

man who has been a captive in the realm of Satan and death to pass from death into life (see 5:24). Whoever believes in Jesus has passed from the realm of death into life even though he dies physically. Whoever receives eternal life by believing in Christ will never die spiritually (v.26).

The teaching of Jesus communicated effectively the nature of His person and elicited from Martha a confession that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, whom God had promised to send into the world (v.27). The confession acknowledged Jesus as the heavenly Man who came to earth to deliver God's people from the dominion of evil and to give them an everlasting kingdom (see Dan. 7:13ff.).

Although Martha still may not have understood that Jesus would restore life to Lazarus, her confession of faith in Him as Messiah gave her confidence and comfort. She went to her sister Mary and encouraged her to speak with "the Teacher" whose instruction would bring comfort to Mary also (v.28). Martha's sharing secretly with Mary accounts for the Jews' concluding that Mary's rapid departure towards the tomb meant that she was going there to weep (vv.29ff.).

As Mary approached Jesus, she showed more reverence and boldness than Martha, but she repeated the same confidence that if Jesus had been present Lazarus would not have died (v.32). John records that when Jesus saw Mary and the Jews wailing He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled (v.33). This expression usually meant to be moved to anger. If that was the intended meaning of the deep emotion of Jesus, perhaps His anger was against death which had caused so much hurt and sorrow to Martha and Mary. The same word is used to describe Jesus' emotion in relation to two blind men who were healed (Matt. 9:30) and to the leper whom He healed (Mark 1:43). In the light of these Scriptures, it is possible that Jesus' emotion was one of deep concern for those in need.

John stated also that Jesus was troubled. Perhaps He was troubled by the misunderstanding of the Jews concerning His power over death. On the other hand, He may have been distressed by the misery resulting from sin represented by the dead man and the broken-hearted people round about Him. After asking where the body of Lazarus had been placed, Jesus wept as He started towards the tomb (vv.34f.). His outward expression of grief caused the Jews to note how much He loved Lazarus (v.36).

The account of the miracle is rather brief and to the point. John included several details which support the historicity of the event. Jesus approached the tomb which was a cave with a stone closing it (v.38). Jesus commanded that the stone be removed, but Martha objected that the deterioration of the body and the resulting odour would create an undesirable experience. Her objection implied that the restoring of life to the body would be impossible (v.39). Even Martha who believed that Jesus could have kept Lazarus from

*Jesus' teaching that He is the resurrection and the life means that one who receives \_\_\_\_\_ by believing in Him shall never die \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

*Two possibilities concerning interpretation of the statement "Jesus was troubled" are:*

- 1. Misunderstanding of the Jews concerning His \_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_.*
- 2. His distress over \_\_\_\_\_ represented by the dead man and the broken-hearted people around Him.*

*(1. power, death; 2. sin)*

*Martha's objection to removal of the stone to the tomb implied that restoring of \_\_\_\_\_ to the body would be \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(life, impossible)*

dying expressed unbelief in His power to restore him to life. Jesus reminded Martha that God's power is not limited, and His glory would be manifested if she would only believe (v.40). Although Jesus had stated to the disciples rather than to Martha that the glory of God would be manifested in the death of Lazarus, God's glory was implied in Jesus' statement to Martha that He was the resurrection and the life (see v.25).

When the stone was removed, Jesus expressed His confidence in the Father by thanking Him that His request was heard and answered (v.41). He had made the request that Lazarus be restored to life, not because he doubted the possibility of it, but that the people who were present would see God's glory manifested in the Son and believe that Jesus was from God (v.42). Again, the miracles of Jesus were presented by John as signs to establish faith. The conformity of the Son to the will of the Father made it unnecessary for the request of the prayer to be expressed. With unequivocal faith in the Father, Jesus called for Lazarus to come forth (v.43). There was no question that Lazarus had died, for he still was bound in the wrappings of a corpse. Jesus commanded that the shroud be removed so that he could have freedom to go his way.

<p><i>John 11:40 indicates that Jesus required Martha to _____.</i></p> <p><i>(believe)</i></p>

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Give two Old Testament teachings which caused differing views concerning the reason for the man's blindness. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. How did Jesus' explanation of the blindness differ from that of His contemporaries? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the symbolical meaning of the restoration of sight to the blind? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What were the responses of the neighbours with regard to the man who was given sight? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Illustrate how legalism and unbelief blinded the eyes of the Jewish leaders. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
6. How did Jesus' act of healing threaten Judaism? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How was the blind beggar more logical than the educated Pharisees? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

8. What was John's understanding of the relation of the Davidic Messiah and the heavenly Son of Man? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Interpret John 9:41. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Give three activities of a true shepherd. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What function of Jesus is symbolized by the door to the sheepfold? \_\_\_\_\_
12. How does a good shepherd differ from thieves, robbers, and hirelings? \_\_\_\_\_
13. From where does the Good Shepherd gather His sheep? \_\_\_\_\_
14. What division did the parable of the shepherd cause? \_\_\_\_\_
15. What was the Feast of Dedication? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Why were the Jews in suspense about Jesus' identity? \_\_\_\_\_
17. What is the basic question concerning an interpretation of John 10:28, 29? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. Give two teachings which caused the Jews to reject Jesus. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. How does Jesus as Son of God differ from David as son of God? \_\_\_\_\_
20. What evidence is there against the conclusion that the story of raising Lazarus from death was invented? \_\_\_\_\_
21. Why did Jesus wait two days before responding to the appeal of Martha and Mary? \_\_\_\_\_
22. What is the significance of the statement that Lazarus' body had been in the tomb four days? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
23. What did Jesus mean by the statement that He is the resurrection and the life? \_\_\_\_\_
24. What caused Jesus to be troubled in spirit? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

25. What did Martha's objection to the removal of the stone to the tomb indicate and what was Jesus' response? \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 81-96 in Filson and answer the following questions.

1. How did the disciples interpret the man's blindness, and how did Jesus differ with them?
2. How does Jesus as the Good Shepherd differ from the hireling?
3. Summarize Jesus' response to the Jews' attempt to stone Him for blasphemy?
4. According to Filson, why did Jesus not respond sooner to the report of Lazarus' sickness?

Alternate supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 122-141 in Tasker and answer the following questions.

1. How did the gift of sight to the blind beggar relate to the primary purpose for which Jesus was sent into the world?
2. Identify the thieves and robbers in the parable of the sheepfold and list the contrasts between them and the Good Shepherd.
3. Explain the two arguments Jesus used in responding to the Jews' accusation that His claims to divinity were blasphemy.
4. Why was the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead a sign which disclosed more clearly than any other the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection?

Advanced activity (Level 3)

1. Explain how the miracle of the gift of sight to the blind beggar refuted the conclusion of the Jewish leaders concerning Jesus.
2. What does 10:28-29 teach concerning the security of the believer?
3. Explain "he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled" in 11:33.

#### Seminar Discussion

1. What theological explanation did the Jewish leaders and disciples give for blindness?
2. How did the giving of sight to the blind beggar refute the Jewish accusations against Jesus?
3. What causes spiritual blindness?
4. What is the meaning of Jesus as the door to the sheepfold?
5. How did Jesus as the Good Shepherd differ from the Jewish leaders as thieves and robbers?
6. Why did Jesus wait until Lazarus had been dead two days before journeying to Bethany?
7. How did the restoration of Lazarus to life symbolize the work Jesus came to do?