**Monday Evening Bible Study**

**March 13, 2023 – John 9:1-41**

**Immediate Context**

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| John 7:1-9 The Unbelief of Jesus’ Brothers | **John 9:1-41 A Man Born Blind Receives Sight** |
| John 7:10-24 Jesus at the Festival of Booths | John 10:1-21 Jesus the Good Shepherd |
| John 7:25-31 Is This the Christ? | John 10:22-42 Jesus is Rejected by the Jews |
| John 7:32-36 Officers Are Sent to Arrest Jesus | John 11:1-16 The Death of Lazarus |
| John 7:37-39 Rivers of Living Water | John 11:17-27 Jesus the Resurrection and the Life |
| John 7:40-44 Divisions among the People | John 11:28-37 Jesus Weeps |
| John 7:45-53 The Unbelief of Those in Authority | John 11:38-44 Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life |
| John 8:1-11 The Woman Caught in Adultery | John 11:45-57 The Plot to Kill Jesus |
| John 8:12-20 Jesus the Light of the World | John 12:1-8 Mary Anoints Jesus |
| John 8:21-30 Jesus Foretells His Death | John 12:9-11 The Plot to Kill Lazarus |
| John 8:31-38 True Disciples | John 12:12-19 The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem |
| John 8:39-59 Jesus and Abraham | John 12:20-26 Some Greeks wish to see Jesus |

**Summary of John 9:1-41**

A story of the dangers of thinking you know something with certainty when, really, you are blinded to the truth. Jesus heals a man that was born blind. The blind man is cast out of the synagogue. His parents are threatened. And the religious authorities fail to recognize Jesus’ identity; the Messiah “sent” by God, the living water, the light of the world, the Good Shepherd who has come to seek and to save the lost.

***The Blind Man Washes in the Pool of* *Siloam* at the Brooklyn Museum by James Tissot (1836-1902)**



**Suggested Course of Study**

* Read the prologue John 1:1-18.
* Read the Nicodemus story John 3:1-21
* Read The story of Jesus healing on the Sabbath John 5:1-47
* Read all of John 7:1—10:42 in order to understand the important context of this passage (make sure you notice what is said about Jesus in John 10:21).

**Helpful Scriptures**

**Genesis 2:4–7 (NRSV)**

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, 5 when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; 6 but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— 7 then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

**Leviticus 23:33–44 (NRSV)**

33 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 34 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting seven days, there shall be the festival of booths to the Lord. 35 The first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. 36 Seven days you shall present the Lord’s offerings by fire; on the eighth day you shall observe a holy convocation and present the Lord’s offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations. 37 These are the appointed festivals of the Lord, which you shall celebrate as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the Lord offerings by fire—burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day— 38 apart from the sabbaths of the Lord, and apart from your gifts, and apart from all your votive offerings, and apart from all your freewill offerings, which you give to the Lord. 39 Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of the Lord, lasting seven days; a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. 40 On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. 41 You shall keep it as a festival to the Lord seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations. 42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Israel shall live in booths, 43 so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. 44 Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed festivals of the Lord.

**Numbers 20:1–13, 22–29 (NRSV)**

1 The Israelites, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. Miriam died there, and was buried there. 2 Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and against Aaron. 3 The people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had died when our kindred died before the Lord! 4 Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die here? 5 Why have you brought us up out of Egypt, to bring us to this wretched place? It is no place for grain, or figs, or vines, or pomegranates; and there is no water to drink.” 6 Then Moses and Aaron went away from the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting; they fell on their faces, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. 7 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 8 Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and your brother Aaron, and command the rock before their eyes to yield its water. Thus you shall bring water out of the rock for them; thus you shall provide drink for the congregation and their livestock. 9 So Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he had commanded him. 10 Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Listen, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” 11 Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff; water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank. 12 But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” 13 These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and by which he showed his holiness.

22 They set out from Kadesh, and the Israelites, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor. 23 Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, 24 “Let Aaron be gathered to his people. For he shall not enter the land that I have given to the Israelites, because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah. 25 Take Aaron and his son Eleazar, and bring them up Mount Hor; 26 strip Aaron of his vestments, and put them on his son Eleazar. But Aaron shall be gathered to his people, and shall die there.” 27 Moses did as the Lord had commanded; they went up Mount Hor in the sight of the whole congregation. 28 Moses stripped Aaron of his vestments, and put them on his son Eleazar; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. 29 When all the congregation saw that Aaron had died, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.

**Numbers 29:12–40 (NRSV)**

12 On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. You shall celebrate a festival to the Lord seven days. 13 You shall offer a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the Lord: thirteen young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old. They shall be without blemish. 14 Their grain offering shall be of choice flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams, 15 and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs; 16 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering. 17 On the second day: twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 18 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 19 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their drink offerings. 20 On the third day: eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 21 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 22 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering. 23 On the fourth day: ten bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 24 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 25 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering. 26 On the fifth day: nine bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 27 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 28 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering. 29 On the sixth day: eight bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 30 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 31 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offerings. 32 On the seventh day: seven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 33 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 34 also one male goat for a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering. 35 On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations. 36 You shall offer a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the Lord: one bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish, 37 and the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 38 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering. 39 These you shall offer to the Lord at your appointed festivals, in addition to your votive offerings and your freewill offerings, as your burnt offerings, your grain offerings, your drink offerings, and your offerings of well-being. 40 So Moses told the Israelites everything just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

**Deuteronomy 16:13–17 (NRSV)**

13 You shall keep the festival of booths for seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your wine press. 14 Rejoice during your festival, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, as well as the Levites, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows resident in your towns. 15 Seven days you shall keep the festival to the Lord your God at the place that the Lord will choose; for the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all your undertakings, and you shall surely celebrate. 16 Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose: at the festival of unleavened bread, at the festival of weeks, and at the festival of booths. They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed; 17 all shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you.

**2 Kings 5:1–27 (NRSV)**

1 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. 2 Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. 3 She said to her mistress, “If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.” 4 So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. 5 And the king of Aram said, “Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.” He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. 6 He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, “When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy.” 7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.” 8 But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.” 9 So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.” 11 But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?” He turned and went away in a rage. 13 But his servants approached and said to him, “Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” 14 So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean. 15 Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant.” 16 But he said, “As the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!” He urged him to accept, but he refused. 17 Then Naaman said, “If not, please let two mule-loads of earth be given to your servant; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god except the Lord. 18 But may the Lord pardon your servant on one count: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the Lord pardon your servant on this one count.” 19 He said to him, “Go in peace.” But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, 20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, “My master has let that Aramean Naaman off too lightly by not accepting from him what he offered. As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something out of him.” 21 So Gehazi went after Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he jumped down from the chariot to meet him and said, “Is everything all right?” 22 He replied, “Yes, but my master has sent me to say, ‘Two members of a company of prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim; please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.’ ” 23 Naaman said, “Please accept two talents.” He urged him, and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and gave them to two of his servants, who carried them in front of Gehazi. 24 When he came to the citadel, he took the bags from them, and stored them inside; he dismissed the men, and they left. 25 He went in and stood before his master; and Elisha said to him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?” He answered, “Your servant has not gone anywhere at all.” 26 But he said to him, “Did I not go with you in spirit when someone left his chariot to meet you? Is this a time to accept money and to accept clothing, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves? 27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you, and to your descendants forever.” So he left his presence leprous, as white as snow.

**Isaiah 29:18–21 (NRSV)**

18 On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a scroll, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. 19 The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the neediest people shall exult in the Holy One of Israel. 20 For the tyrant shall be no more, and the scoffer shall cease to be; all those alert to do evil shall be cut off— 21 those who cause a person to lose a lawsuit, who set a trap for the arbiter in the gate, and without grounds deny justice to the one in the right.

**Isaiah 35:5–7 (NRSV)**

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; 7 the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

**Isaiah 42:6–12 (NRSV)**

6 I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, 7 to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. 8 I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. 9 See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them. 10 Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth! Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. 11 Let the desert and its towns lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the tops of the mountains. 12 Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise in the coastlands.

**Key Words/Phrases**

**AS HE WALKED ALONG** – Where is Jesus? Jesus has just fled the temple because the Jews had picked up stones to throw at him (8:59). So Jesus is in Jerusalem, most likely near the temple. The reason he is in Jerusalem is to attend the Festival of Booths (7:10). Immediately when he arrives he gets into an argument with the religious leaders as he teaches in the temple. Part of the argument has to do with healing on the Sabbath where Jesus points out that the religious leaders are happy to carry out circumcision on the Sabbath (7:19-24) in accordance with the law, yet they complain that the law is being broken if a man is healed on the Sabbath.

**WHO SINNED –** The question of the disciples reflects the mindset of the people of the time. They believed that sin was the cause for this man’s severe physical disablement—his blindness from birth; that blindness must be a form of divine punishment for sin. The question for the disciples isn’t what caused it, but who caused it: Was it this man’s fault (sin) or his parents? (See Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9). Jesus doesn’t eliminate the idea that sin causes suffering completely. He does in this case. But elsewhere in John, Jesus hints that sin can have bad consequences. (See John 5 where Jesus heals a man on a mat at the Pool of Beth-zatha (Bethesda or Bethsaida); later Jesus finds him in the temple and says *“See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you”* (vs. 14).

Text

Description automatically generated**HE WAS BORN BLIND –** Jesus does not use these words in his answer to the disciples. They do not appear in the Greek in verse 3. The translators have included them because of the context in verse 2. But, a word for word translation of verses 3 and 4 is interesting: *“Neither this man nor his parents sinned. But, in order that the works of God might be revealed in him, I (or we) must work the works of him who sent me (or us) while it is day; night is coming when no one can (δύναται; has the power or ability) work.”* Notice the important footnotes in verse 4; other ancient authorities have either *I* or *we* and *me* or *us*. This shows clearly that Jesus abruptly changes the subject. He doesn’t speculate on the cause of the man’s blindness. He simply says that neither sinned. Instead Jesus wants to focus on what they can do about it now. Paraphrasing: *This man is blind. Forget the cause. Let’s talk about the solution. Let’s talk about why we are here and what God wants us to do; what God has given us the power to do.*

Remember that in the Greek manuscripts, there is no punctuation or spacing. You just have the letters all bunched together (see image to the right). So for instance, you might have the letters “GODISNOWHERE”. How do you read this phrase? Is it “God is now here”? Or is it “God is nowhere”? Separating words and even sentences can be a challenge. Decisions have to be made and we always hope that we make the right ones because the meaning can change significantly.

Verse 3 (Nestle Aland Greek New Testament; 27th Edition)

ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· οὔτε οὗτος ἥμαρτεν οὔτε οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἀλλʼ ἵνα φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.

Literal translation:

*Answered Jesus, neither this one sinned nor the parents of him, but in order that might be demonstrated the works of God in him.*

**I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD –** See John’s prologue; John 1:1-18. See also John 3:19. This is another of the famous I AM sayings. See also John 8:12.

It is interesting that Jesus chose to say this about himself at the time of the Festival of Booths (Sukkot; see Leviticus 23:34ff; Deuteronomy 16:13; Numbers 29:35); a time of remembering the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness as well as a harvest festival celebrating the “ingathering” of the harvest. Because it follows Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) it is a festival of joy representing the time of restored fellowship with God.

Two things are significant about the celebration of *Sukkot*. First, large candelabras were lit in the temple courts, high on the temple mount to symbolize “the revelation and truth of the Jewish faith”. Also, at the festival, priests poured water from the Pool of Siloam onto the temple steps so that it would flow down and out through the Temple to the world outside, and so indicate the way that the God of the Jewish faith would satisfy the world. On the "last and greatest day of the Feast," in the midst of the water ceremony and prayers for God to send water, Jesus proclaimed, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37-38).

In the water ceremony, the High Priest would lead a procession to the pool of Siloam where he would fill a golden pitcher with water and then return to the courtyard of the Temple. When the High Priest would pour out the water, the great crowd of people would wave their *lulavot* and sing out from the messianic Psalm *“Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, let us thrive! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord”* (Psalm 118:25-26). See Numbers 20 and Jeremiah 2:13 for possible connections to this water ceremony.

After the water ceremony, during the evening, special festivities called *Simchat Bet HaShoevah* (happiness of the house of the water-drawing”) occurred. During this time, the four towering menorahs were lit up (lighting up Jerusalem as if it were midday) and the priests would put on a “light show,” performing “torch dances” while the Levites sang and played music. These shows would occur every night of Sukkot, all through the night. These festivities were apparently so spectacular that the Jewish sages have said, “He who has not seen the rejoicing at the *Simchat Bet HaShoevah*, has never seen rejoicing in his life” (*Talmud*). Click [here](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Fall_Holidays/Sukkot/sukkot.html) and [here](http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/1971019/jewish/The-Joyous-Water-Drawing-Ceremony.htm) for more information. See a connection between this celebration and Jesus saying “I AM the light of the world”?

**MADE MUD** – Jesus spits on the ground and makes mud with the saliva. Then he spreads the mud on the man’s eyes. Perhaps we hear an echo of how God formed man from the dust of the ground in Genesis 2:7.

A picture containing ground, building, outdoor, stone

Description automatically generated**GO WASH** – Jesus’ instructions to the man to go and wash in the pool reminds us of the story of Naaman and Elisha (See 2 Kings 5:9-14). In both cases, the healer doesn’t accompany the person who needs healing to the place where they are to wash; and the healing takes place only after the person obeys.

**POOL OF SILOAM** – (Σιλωάμ which means Sent; Ἀπεσταλμένος from ἀποστέλλω). We get our word “Apostle” from the same root. In this Gospel, Jesus is the one who is “sent” (see John 3:34; 7:28-29; 10:36; 12:45); along with John the Baptist (see John 1:6; 3:28).

The pool of Siloam is a rock-cut pool on the southern slope of the City of David, outside the walls of the Old City, to the southeast. It is mentioned several times in the Bible:

* Isaiah 8:6 (שִּׁלֹ֔חַ; Shiloah) mentions the pool’s waters;
* Isaiah 22:9 ff. refers to the construction of Hezekiah’s tunnel.
* Isaiah 8:6 it is the name of an aqueduct in Jerusalem.

As a fresh water reservoir, the Pool of Siloam was a major gathering place at the time of Christ for people making religious pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and the water from the pool was used for purification rituals in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot (see above). So this is a very public setting for a “sign,” with many witnesses present.

This healing reminds us of another healing that took place at another pool (in John 5:1-18; mentioned above). See 2 Chronicles 32:2-8, 30 where Hezekiah redirects the waters of Gihon; Isaiah 22:9-11; 2 Kings 20:20).

Incidentally, the name Siloam also appears in the gospel of Luke where, there too, Jesus challenges the “common wisdom” that sin causes all tragedy (See Luke 13:1-5). In discussing the execution of Galilean insurgents by Pilate, Jesus uses the tragic collapse of the Tower of Siloam to show that tragedy and death isn’t always a divine punishment for the “worst” sinners among us.

**HOW WERE YOUR EYES OPENED?** – No one can believe it. According to the man’s parents, he was born blind. But his neighbors don’t believe it is him. And many of the Pharisees and Jewish authorities can’t believe it either. He gets interrogated three times in this text and his parents once (vs. 8-10; 15-17; 18-23; 24-34); once by the neighbors and three times by the Pharisees, this man’s healing is questioned. The irony is that this healing is a sign in the gospel of John that is supposed to point to Jesus’ identity. The blind man sees the sign and understands. The Jewish authorities (or many of them) don’t. Because in their eyes, the healing violated God’s law (keep the Sabbath holy; a day of rest), it points not to Jesus’ identity as the messiah, but rather to Jesus’ identity as a sinner (or someone who has a demon). They see the sign, but misunderstand its message.

**FOR HE DOES NOT OBSERVE THE SABBATH** – The fact that Jesus heals on the Sabbath is reminiscent of the argument he has with the Pharisees (read John 7:10-36 and 5:1-18). It also reminds of other times Jesus or his disciples broke Sabbath traditions/regulations (see Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 1:21-28; 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-9; 13:10-16; 14:1-5). It also reminds us of the many arguments Jesus has regarding his identity in the gospel of John.

**PUT OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE** – To be put out of the synagogue had farther reaching consequences than simply being able to skip worship on the Sabbath. They would be ostracized by the community and “separated from God”. When the exiles returned to Jerusalem, we read about what should happen to people who failed to assemble before the house of God; all their property should be forfeited and they themselves would be banned from the congregation (see Ezra 10:8).

**WE KNOW THAT THIS MAN IS A SINNER** – This passage is clearly about Jesus’ identity and mission. Who is Jesus? Is Jesus a sinner as the Pharisees claim (vs 24) or is he “from God” (vs 33) or “Son of Man/Son of God” (vs 35; see footnote); Jesus the shepherd (vs. 10:2), the gate (vs 10:7), or the Good Shepherd (vs. 10:11) or one who “has a demon” (vs. 10:20)?

Notice that the phrase “we know” is the same phrase used by Nicodemus in John 3:2 where he says *“Rabbi,* ***we know*** *that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.”* This word “know” occurs eleven times in this passage. It is significant because this is a story about seeing and knowing. They think they know who Jesus is and where he comes from. But unfortunately, they don’t.

**HERE IS AN ASTONISHING THING! YOU DO NOT KNOW WHERE HE COMES FROM, AND YET HE OPENED MY EYES** – Do you hear more echoes of the Nicodemus story in John 3:7-8? Or the echoes of Jesus confrontation with the Pharisees in John 8:12-20? In John 3, Jesus mentions that Nicodemus is *astonished* and then goes on to talk about how *“the wind (Spirit) blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.”* In John 8, Jesus is teaching in the Temple treasury and calls himself the Light of the Word and the Pharisees say “Hey! Wait a minute! You can’t testify about yourself!” Jesus replies *“I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards…”*

Notice how this formerly blind man beats the religious leaders in their debate and how they respond. He talks about what he knows (his experience). They talk about what they think they know.

Stories and talk of the blind being able to see again (2 Kings 6:8-23; Isaiah 29:18; 35:5; 42:7)

**DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN? –** Notice the footnote in verse 35 (Other ancient authorities read *“the Son of God”*). The phrase “Son of Man” occurs at John 1:51; 3:13-14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34; 13:31. The phrase “Son of God” occurs at John 1:34, 49, 51, 3:18; 5:25; 6:27; 11:4, 27; 13:31; 19:7; 20:31.

**AND HE WORSHIPED HIM** – *“He said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshiped him”* (vs. 38). *προσεκύνησεν* from προσκυνεω—to prostrate oneself before someone as an act of reverence, fear, or supplication.

**IRONIES IN THE TEXT**:

* The blind man sees, but those who have eyes choose to close them to the truth.
* The authorities call the man to give glory to God by denouncing Jesus as a sinner, but the man gives glory to God by witnessing for Christ.
* The authorities continue questioning the man hoping to find a way to prove their preconceived notions. The man responds by asking if they want to become Jesus’ disciples too. The authorities say that Moses’ authority comes from God, but they do not know where Jesus comes from—implying that he must not come from God. The man responds by pointing out the obvious truth, “If this man were not from God, he could do nothing!”
* The authorities imply that one cannot be a follower of Moses and Jesus, but must choose one or the other. The message of John’s gospel is that one can be faithful to Moses only through faithfulness to Jesus.
* The authorities repeatedly use the phrase “we know”, but repeatedly reveal their ignorance (and their blindness).
* The authorities accuse the man of trying to teach them. The reader is aware that he is capable of doing just that, but they refuse to learn (or to see).