

Worksheet #10: John 9:1–41

Summary: Chapter nine recounts an incident that appears to have taken place sometime after the Feast of Tabernacles described in chapters seven and eight and before the Feast of Dedication (mentioned in 10:22). One unique feature in this chapter is the general absence of Jesus from much of the narrative. He appears in vv. 1–7 and vv. 35–41, but otherwise the focus of the action is on the man born blind, his parents, and the Jews (as represented by the Pharisees). Laced with irony, this story draws attention to striking contrasts between what people “know” and “don’t know.” This highlights a sharp divergence between those who are characterized by spiritual insight (or, as John would say in his epistles, those who are “walking in the light”) and those who are spiritually blind (or “walking in darkness”). The passage concludes with Jesus challenging the man born blind to “believe” (9:35–38) and condemning the Pharisees for their spiritual blindness (9:39–41).

Abbreviated Outline¹ (current passage in bold):

- I. INTRODUCTION: THE WORD MADE FLESH (1:1-18)
- II. THE BOOK OF SIGNS: THE SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH (1:19-12:50)
 - A. *The Forerunner and the Coming of the Messiah (1:19-51)*
 - 1. The Testimony of John the Baptist (1:19-34)
 - 2. The Beginning of Jesus’ Ministry (1:35-51)
 - B. *The Cana Cycle: Jesus’ Inaugural Signs and Representative Conversations (2:1-4:54)*
 - 1. Sign 1: Changing Water into Wine at the Wedding in Cana (2:1-12)
 - 2. Sign 2: One of Jesus’ Jerusalem Signs: The Clearing of the Temple (2:13-22)
 - 3. Representative Conversations: Nicodemus the Jewish Ruler, the Samaritan Woman (2:23-4:42)
 - 4. Sign 3: The Second Sign in Cana: The Healing of the Royal Official’s Son (4:43-54)
 - C. ***The Festival Cycle: Additional Signs amidst Mounting Unbelief (5-10)***
 - 1. Sign 4 at an Unnamed Feast in Jerusalem: The Healing of the Lame Man (5:1-47)
 - 2. Sign 5: Galilean Passover: Feeding the Multitude and Bread of Life Discourse (6:1-71)
 - 3. Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1-8:59)
 - 4. **Sign 6: The Healing of the Blind Man and the Good Shepherd Discourse (9-10)**
 - D. *Final Passover: Climactic Sign, the Raising of Lazarus, and Other Events (11-12)*
 - 1. Sign 7: The Raising of Lazarus (11)
 - 2. Final Events of Jesus’ Public Ministry (12)
- III. THE BOOK OF EXALTATION: PREPARING THE NEW MESSIANIC COMMUNITY AND THE PASSION OF JESUS (13-20)
 - A. *The Cleansing and Instruction of the New Covenant Community, including Jesus’ Final Prayer (13-17)*
 - B. *The Passion Narrative (18-19)*
 - C. *Jesus’ Resurrection and Appearances, Commissioning of Disciples (20:1-29)*
 - D. *Concluding Purpose Statement (20:30-31)*
- IV. EPILOGUE: THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF PETER AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE (21)

¹ Adapted from Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 307–308.

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Compare 9:2–3 with Luke 13:2–5. According to these texts, what can we know about the relationship between sin and suffering?

2. What marks the distinction between the “day” and the “night ... when no one can work” (9:4)? How does 9:5 help us to distinguish between the time of “day” and the time of “night”? What is the point of the contrast?

3. What does the man who had been born blind “know” in 9:8–12? What do the Pharisees “know” in 9:16?

4. Contrast the beliefs of the man born blind and the Pharisees, as expressed in 9:17–18.

5. Can the Pharisees claim to be “Moses’ disciples” in 9:28–29 while insisting that Jesus is a sinner? How does the man’s response in 9:30–33 refute their claim to be followers of Moses?

6. How does the healing of the man born blind serve as a judgment on the unbelieving world (9:39)?

7. Notice how Jesus’ response to the Pharisees focuses on sin, rather than blindness (9:41). What does this tell us about Jesus’ assessment of their condition specifically and of the nature of spiritual blindness generally?

Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage tell us about Jesus? How does it help us to understand “his place in the sweep of redemptive history”?²

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

² D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 102.