

Unbelief Investigates a Miracle

Scripture: John 9:13-34

Code: 1526

John presents Jesus Christ as God in human flesh. John presents Christ as the Messiah of Israel. John presents Christ as the Savior of the world. That's John's purpose in this gospel. And in the gospel of John, Jesus appears before the people of Israel to make His claims to be their Messiah. As we have seen, they have rejected His claims, even though again and again Jesus has made them and corroborated them, there have been a few in Israel who have believed, but not many, a small number. Most have rejected Him.

God deeply and greatly loved Israel, and still loves Israel. God loves the Jew. He made His own Son of Jewish birth. His chosen people is still Israel. And God still has things for Israel. We believe that the nation that blesses Israel will be blessed and the nation that curses Israel will be cursed.

At the same time, it is tragic that in Israel when Messiah came, they did not see Him as Messiah. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, asks that not only Israel but that the whole world believe His claims. And they didn't and they don't today. People today don't believe the claims of Christ any more than they did when He came first of all.

And in our study of John's gospel, we have seen this particular thing recurring all through the gospel. Jesus makes a claim and the people don't believe. And we've seen all different reactions that unbelief takes. Unbelief is interesting. It has all different facets. And this morning we're going to talk about a particular interesting aspect of unbelief on the subject "Unbelief investigates a miracle." We're going to see what willful, ignorant unbelief does with a miracle that Jesus performs.

Now we've already seen a lot about unbelief. We saw, for example, the bewildered unbelief of Nicodemus, to whom Jesus had to say, "If I told you earthly things and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" And then we saw the demanding unbelief of the nobleman from Cana who came to Jesus, and to whom Jesus said, "Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe."

And then we saw, also, the self-centered hypocritical unbelief of the scribes, and the Pharisees, and the Jewish leaders. Back in chapter 5, Jesus spoke to them and said this, "How can you believe who receive honor one of another?" You're so busy patting each other on the back, you couldn't believe anybody else. All truth resides in you. No one could tell you anything.

And then we saw the blind unbelief of the Galileans who saw the miracles which Jesus did, and to whom Jesus said, "You also have seen Me and believe not, even in view of the miracles." We saw also the mysterious unbelief of Jesus' own brothers of whom John says, "For neither did His brethren believe in Him." We saw also the willful, truth-rejecting unbelief of the scribes, the chief priests, and the Pharisees, to whom Jesus said, "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not."

Now we have seen unbelief on all those angles, and we could really build a theology of unbelief from the gospel of John. But before we would build our theology of unbelief, we would have to carefully consider chapter 9, because chapter 9 classifies for us in great detail the characteristics of willful ignorant unbelief.

Now there are two kinds of unbelief at least at this point. There is the unbelief of the searching heart. That heart is unbelieving only because it hasn't heard the truth. The unbelieving searching heart is one thing. The closed-minded, willful, truth-rejecting, that kind of unbelief is something else all together, for the honest heart that says, "I'm willing to believe if I can see the truth," God reveals the truth. To that that says, "I do not want the truth. I reject the evidence. I am willfully ignorant. I am statically unbelieving," God has nothing to say. And that's the kind of unbelief we see in chapter 9. And can you imagine of all things that kind of unbelief trying to be objective in examining a miracle performed by Jesus Christ?

Now this passage, then, shows us some key characteristics of willful unbelief. And one by one as the chapter unfolds, we're going to see these characteristics. Now we've already considered the first 12 verses, which was the miracle of Jesus healing the man who was born blind. Now we're going to see the results of it. And as we watch the investigation, as the Pharisees dive into this thing to try to figure out what happened when Jesus made this man to see, we're going to see one by one the characteristics of willful unbelief as they unfold before our eyes.

Jesus has just given sight to the man born blind. He put clay on his eyes mixed with saliva, told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The man obeyed, and he received his sight. He went immediately to his neighbors, and they were astounded, just astounded because here was this congenitally blind man with sight. They grabbed the beggar - he was a blind beggar - and they whisked him off to the Pharisees, and that's where we begin in our passage this morning, as the neighbors have the blind man and they escort him to the Pharisees.

Now as I studied this, I began to wonder in my mind why the Holy Spirit designed to take a whole chapter on this little dialogue, why He bothered with all of this investigation which goes nowhere. And I got a twofold answer. Number one, this is all here, I believe, because it so carefully shows us the character of willful unbelief. I have no doubts from now on what willful unbelief is really like - it's all right here - and how it operates.

And from now on, when you go to witness for Jesus Christ to share your faith, you're going to find out that when you meet this kind of unbelief it will be classified for you just immediately because you'll reflect back on it from chapter 9. This is a very important chapter.

The second reason I believe it's here is not only to declare unbelief's characteristics, but secondly, this becomes the first great schism, the first great division, the first great fractioning between the synagogue and Christ's new organization soon to be called His church. This is the first person that's thrown out of the synagogue. And that begins the cleavage that finally comes in a full cleavage between Christ and Israel. And so it's an important passage.

Now I want to show you five characteristics of willful unbelief. And these five render an unbeliever incompetent to judge a divine miracle. Now I'm going to say that again because it's important. These characteristics of unbelief make an unbeliever incompetent to evaluate God's acts. Since when can an unbelieving, willfully ignorant individual come and competently judge the activity of a God He doesn't believe in? And yet that's exactly what you have here, investigating a miracle from the standpoint of unbelief.

Now I want to show you these five things, five characteristics of willful unbelief. Number one, unbelief sets false standards. And these are universal. They operate today. Number two, unbelief always wants more evidence, but never gets enough. Number three, unbelief does biased research, purely subjective. Number four, unbelief rejects the facts. And number five, unbelief is totally egocentric.

First of all, notice this, unbelief sets false standards. Now as we pick up the narrative, the neighbors who brought the blind man to the Pharisees and the trouble begins, verse 13. "They brought to the Pharisees him that formerly was blind." Now the Pharisees were a sect in Israel and they were legalistic. They were oriented around the law of Moses. They adhered to the law of Moses, and they added to the law of Moses.

In fact, they added, and added, and added to the law of Moses until they had built up a legalistic system, and it had just become vast in its bondage over them, and they tried to push this legalistic bondage on the people of Israel, as well.

Now it's very likely that they brought this blind man to the Pharisees after the Sabbath. The miracle had occurred on the Sabbath, and we'll get to that problem in a minute. But they brought him likely after the Sabbath, because the Pharisees wouldn't have been convening on the Sabbath. That would have broken every standard that they had. So it's very likely a day or so later. They bring him to the Pharisees.

Now the question arises immediately. Why would they bring this blind man to the Pharisees? Well, what's the point of that? Why do they scoop him up and drag him off to the Pharisees?

Well, commentators and biblical scholars disagree at this point. They run the gamut of ideas. Let me give you three basic possible answers and the one which I prefer, and you can take your choice. Number one, some say that they were in confusion. The neighbors didn't understand this. They were confused and they wanted to go to the Pharisees to get the Pharisees to determine for them what really had happened, because the Pharisees were assumed to be the final authority on everything.

Whenever you had a legal problem, whenever you had a spiritual problem, whenever you had a biblical question, you go to the Pharisees. They were the final authority. And so some say that these people were in a state of confusion, and they did not understand what had happened. They did not know how to evaluate it. They did not know how to fit it into their theology. And so they brought the blind man to the Pharisees for the Pharisees to make a judgment on it and determine what happened. Now that is possible. That's possible.

Some say that it was a formal court that the Sanhedrin had set up. In other words, that they had assigned the Pharisees to meet as a body in a certain hall and the blind man to be brought. It was formal. Others say it was informal. Whichever, both are immaterial. The only point is they brought him to the Pharisees. Personally, I think it was informal. The reason I think it was informal was because of the results that took place and the character of the hearing, which was completely non-formal. It was just the very opposite of that.

Now that's the first option, that they were in a state of confusion and they wanted an answer. That's possible. The second one is that they brought him for a positive reason, that these neighbors had been hearing the Pharisees continually knocking Jesus, continually saying Jesus is a fake, Jesus is a fraud and they'd even called Him a dirty demon-possessed Samaritan. And they had really let Him have it. And they had been trying to stone Him, and all of this for a long time. And that these neighbors knew this, and so now they were ready to slap it on the Pharisees by confronting them with what was going on.

As if to say, "You've been saying Jesus is a fake, and Jesus is a fraud, well what are you going to do with this, fellas," and shove the blind man right up there and say, "Now, look at him. He sees. What's going on? Is this what your fraud did, or your fake?"

In other words, some feel that they were trying to push the Pharisees into a corner where they would have to reject what they had been teaching. Personally, I think that's highly unlikely. The people were so afraid of the Pharisees, anyway, that I doubt very seriously whether they ever would have come into direct confrontation. They would have been afraid of being thrown out of the synagogue.

In verse 22 of the same chapter it says right there that “if any man confess that He was Messiah - ” that’s “Christ” in the Greek, anybody said that He was Messiah, why “ - he’d be thrown out of the synagogue.” And they weren’t about to put themselves on that spot. So it’s very unlikely that they were trying to corner the Pharisees.

The third option - and the one that I prefer - is that they felt a negative thing here, that they were just a part of the whole bandwagon thing, as well, and that they knew this miracle had happened on the Sabbath, and they knew how the Pharisees dealt with people who violated the Sabbath. And so they were bringing the blind man to the Pharisees to see what the Pharisees would do about this violation of the Sabbath, because it was illegal - according to them - to heal on the Sabbath.

And so they were bringing him for the sake of letting the Pharisees do what they would do to somebody who broke the Sabbath. It says nowhere in my Bible that these neighbors were defenders of Jesus at all. Rather, I’m convinced that they would have been part of the mainstream of Israel, and they would never have confronted the Pharisees except to agree with them because they were afraid of them.

And I think that’s doubly indicated by the character of verse 14, which immediately jumps in and says, “And it was the Sabbath Day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.” See? So, it seems to me to be that the Sabbath Day was the issue. And Jesus had truly broken the Sabbath - not God’s Sabbath, but the Sabbath that the Jews had added all the rules to. He broke it two ways. Number one, you couldn’t make clay on the Sabbath, and He had spit on the ground and mixed it with His saliva and made clay, and that was strictly a no, no according to the traditional law.

Some of the traditions that had built up at that time were very, very interesting. For example, I’ll read a couple of them. “A man may not fill a dish with oil and put it beside a lamp and put the end of the wick in it.” Another one, “if a man extinguishes a lamp on the Sabbath to spare the lamp or the oil or the wick, he is culpable.” That means he’s guilty. Can’t even turn out the lights. And even today that’s why many orthodox Jewish homes still have an electrical system on a time clock that turns their lights on and off on the Sabbath because they are still adhering to these kind of traditions and these kinds of laws. And these are the things that God’s Son Jesus Christ came to liberate Israel from. This is the message we preach to Israel that they might see that they’re free through Jesus Christ from the bondage of law.

Another thing that they said is this. “A man may go not out on the Sabbath with sandals that are shod with nails.” You had to wear your nailless sandals or go barefoot because walking around with sandals with nails in them constituted carrying a burden. Also, “a man might not cut his fingernails or pull out a hair of his head or beard on the Sabbath.”

Now obviously, these rules were not biblical. They had grown up to kind of orient around a legalistic system because people were trying to please God by the do's and don'ts. And in the light of such laws, obviously making clay would be work. And so, Jesus had broken the Sabbath by that.

It was also another interesting rule, you couldn't heal on the Sabbath. Medical attention could only be given if life was in actual danger - and mark this one - and even then, it only could be the medical attention that kept the patient from dying, while at the same time it didn't make him any better. Now you try to figure out how to operate that balance.

One of the rules that illustrates this was that if a man had a toothache, he couldn't pull the tooth but he could suck vinegar through his teeth. He couldn't get rid of the problem, but he could at least pacify it until the next day.

And since the blind man was in no danger of losing his life, and since Christ clearly made him better, and since He made clay, He had broken their Sabbath. And, you see, it was by these petty rules and these little details that the scribes and the Pharisees sought to honor God. But to Jesus, these rules were fantastic, they were irrelevant, and they were inane. They had no point at all.

And so it seems likely to me that they brought the man to inform the Pharisees that Jesus had done this on the Sabbath. And as I say, that's supported by verse 14. Immediately it qualifies it by saying "it was a Sabbath Day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes." That's the point.

In fact, a rabbinical statement recorded by Maimonides many many centuries back says this. "It is prohibited to put saliva on the eyes on the Sabbath." You say, "Well, who would ever make a rule like that? Who would bother to put saliva on somebody's eyes?" Well, you see, the saliva was thought to have some kind of a medicinal quality and it was used as a healing agent. I don't know how they justified it after years of trying it and nothing ever happening. But nevertheless they did. And so they had a rule that prohibited that. So he had broken the law every which way, one of their little rules.

Now you say, "Well, why would Jesus do this? I mean, it just seems to irritate them every time He does it. Why does He always confront them and just smash right into them headlong? I mean, can't He just kind of put His arm around and say, 'Hey, fellas, I really like you a lot, but you got a lot of weird things?' Why doesn't He sort of sneak in?"

Listen, my friend. If we don't understand this yet, we'll never understand it. Jesus always confronted somebody at the point of their error and He did it face to face with them. He never backed off and went into a dialogue about their good qualities. Whenever there was a flagrant violation of God's truth, Jesus went straight at it, not indirectly, but right straight at it directly and confronted it.

And if you're ever going to communicate truth with somebody you've got to hit them at the point of their error and make them realize it. Jesus did it because He cared about them. Jesus kept on relentlessly pounding these truths into the heads of the Pharisees in hopes that some time they would open up and understand. They were following the traditions of men, and He was hitting at those legalistic, hypocritical traditions.

And they were the wall, you see, that kept out the truth. He couldn't get past that legalism to get to them. And He had to smash it, and so He constantly attempted to do that. They had perverted the law, twisted the Sabbath, which had been meant for man's good. They had turned it into man's bondage.

For example, in Luke chapter 6, I think it is, that important passage - right, "It came to pass - " Luke 6:6, " - on another Sabbath, He entered in the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was paralyzed." It's on the Sabbath again. "And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him, whether He would heal on the Sabbath Day; that they might find an accusation against Him." See, this was illegal. "He knew their thoughts." So you know what He did because He knew their thoughts? He didn't heal him. No, wrong. He healed him. He confronted them absolutely direct.

"He said to the man with the paralyzed hand, 'Rise up and and get over here in the middle of the crowd,' - " right here where everybody can see you. No secret miracle. Got the man right in the middle. "Then Jesus said unto them - " that is all the religious leaders " - I'll ask you one thing; - " let's talk about the primary law of the Sabbath.

"Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil?" It's a good question. "To destroy life or to save life? And looking round about upon them, He said unto the man, 'Stretch forth your hand.' And he did so: and the hand was restored just like the other. And they were filled with fury; and discussed with one another - with one another what they might do with Jesus."

He had broken their law flagrantly and right in front of their faces He did it because He wanted to confront them, you see, at the problem. Constantly He did this, constantly, relentlessly. And He had a higher law than any Sabbath law. And so do you.

First Corinthians 10, Whatever you do, "whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all - " what? " - to the glory of God." That, my friend, is the highest law, and if it's glory to God to heal a paralyzed hand on the Sabbath, then heal it. That supersedes any legalism.

And besides that, Jesus said in Mark 2:27 that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." We're not supposed to restrict ourselves on the Sabbath. We're supposed to have rest, and the bondage of the Sabbath was worse than the rest of the days. Besides that, in Mark 2:28,

Jesus says that I am the “Lord of the Sabbath.” I’ll do what I want on the Sabbath.

In fact, in John’s gospel earlier, you remember, He said, “I work and My Father works.” We work on the Sabbath. We don’t rest. The Lord is Lord of the Sabbath. They had made a fetish out of the Sabbath. And He knew its purpose, and He confronted their misuse of it, and used it rightly to heal, to do good, to give glory to God.

And they were using it to give glory to man so they could go around and say, “We keep the Sabbath. We keep the Sabbath. See us over here with the stuff on our heads? We keep the Sabbath.” And Jesus says that’s not keep the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath is giving glory to God, not yourselves for your legalism.

Verse 15, “Then again the Pharisees asked him - ” evidently they had asked him before, and his neighbors had also asked him back in verse 8 and following. “Then the Pharisees asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them - ” simple answer. I like this fella and you’re going to like him a lot better as we go. “He put clay on mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.” That’s a terrific answer. Just plain ol’ simple, “I was there, and He put clay on my eyes, and I washed it off, and I can see.” It doesn’t give you a whole lot of information about how he did it in terms of the power.

But isn’t it interesting that they ask him this question again? The question has already been asked, but they don’t care about the man. You don’t hear them say, “Oh, isn’t it wonderful, you can see after all these years?” They could care less about him. They don’t care one thing about that blind man. They’re after Jesus. They hate Him.

And, you know, isn’t it an interesting thing that this is always the way Satan works? And remember back in chapter 8 how He said to them, the Pharisees, “You are of your father the devil,” and they act like it because that’s exactly what the devil does. He doesn’t care about anybody. He only cares about getting God, doesn’t he? He’s after God. He’s after Jesus Christ. He only uses people as dupes to fight against God. When he’s done with you, he’ll chew you up and spit you out, a roaring lion seeking who he may devour. He doesn’t care at all about you. He doesn’t care about any of us. But he’ll use us to get at God and Christ, if he can.

And so the Pharisees begin their investigation, and they have a false standard. Their standard is, “Well, first of all, we could start this investigation by saying this. He did it on the Sabbath, and if He did it on the Sabbath He’s not of God, because God’s people don’t break the Sabbath.” See, that’s their false standard. Unbelief always has a false standard. Look at it in verse 16. “Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God because He keepeth not the Sabbath Day.”

Now there they start their investigation, with that bias, with that false standard. They use a syllogism. Major premise, all people from God keep the Sabbath. Minor premise, Jesus didn’t keep the Sabbath.

Conclusion, Jesus isn't from God. That's their syllogism. They've identified their own trifling hair-splitting Sabbath regulations with obeying God.

Unbelief is like that. You know, it always sets false standards. It says, "Well, now this is true, and this is true, and here are the rules, and I'm sorry, all that Christianity stuff, all that Jesus, it doesn't make it. Here are the rules." Who set the rules? "I did." Who gave you the right? "It's just innate within me." Foolish, foolish. "I set my standards. Sorry, Christianity, you don't make it, you don't fit. Jesus, You don't make it into my little thing."

That's the way unbelief is. Always false standards. He couldn't be God because He didn't qualify. Who set the standards? They did. That's backwards, folks. That's backwards. My friend, you don't judge Jesus Christ and you don't judge God. They judge you.

But I like what happens now. Some of the Pharisees are pretty sharp. And some of them disagreed, verse 16 in the middle. "Others said - " this is Group B " - How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them."

Every time you see division in the New Testament, it's a good thing, terrific, except in the letters to the churches, then it's a bad thing. In the gospels, it's a good thing cause it means somebody's cutting loose from the world and getting attached to Jesus Christ. And that's good.

Some of them began to say, "Hey, wait a minute." This is Group B and we have a syllogism. Our syllogism is this. Major premise, only people from God can open eyes that were born blind. Number two, Jesus opened eyes that were born blind. Conclusion, Jesus must be from God. Now I like that syllogism. I'm in Group B.

But Group A is unmoved. Group A is unmoved. Group A doesn't even listen. They don't even hear. Jesus is a fake and they don't hear anything else. And the division stands and holds. And the rest of this passage is Group A trying to prove to themselves, Group B, and everybody else that they are right. They're trying to prove that Jesus was a fraud and no miracle worker at all.

So, they start out with their false standard. He couldn't be from God because He did it on the Sabbath and you don't break the Sabbath if you're from God. Now the second characteristic of unbelief, unbelief always wants more evidence. Interesting thing about unbelief. It always wants more evidence, but it never has enough, right? It never gets enough. You just keep giving more evidence, more evidence, more evidence and they always want more evidence. Never enough.

The blind man had just told them exactly what happened. And the proof was literally staring them in the face. But it's the nature of determined, willful unbelief that it always wants more evidence, but it never, ever, ever has enough. No amount of evidence can reach these apostates because there's no

faith there, see?

Deuteronomy 32:20, Moses talked about apostates who see the truth and reject it willfully, blind willfully. You know what he said about them? Fantastic statement, he said this, Deuteronomy 32, they are “children in whom there is no faith.” Oh, what a statement. No capacity to have faith. They are faithless. There doesn’t even exist the option of believing.

They have determined and set themselves in a static pattern of unbelief, and they have not the option of believing. They are “children in whom there is no faith.” They have no capacity to apprehend the truth. And here they are, and they’re groping around trying to investigate a miracle without a capacity to see it or believe it.

And Jesus dealt with them. You remember how many times this willful unbelief has come up and Jesus could have given them more evidence but doesn’t? Back in chapter 7, they’re all arguing and saying, “Well, this can’t be the Messiah because, you see, the Messiah has to come from Bethlehem, but this one came out of Nazareth.” And Jesus is standing right there, and He could have said, “Hey, men, you just don’t know. I was born in Bethlehem.” But He doesn’t say it. You know why? It doesn’t do any good to give more evidence to that kind of unbelief. All it would want would be more evidence.

So Jesus doesn’t even entertain it. He just backs off. See, willing, apostate, ignorant, self-imposed unbelief Jesus never even deals with, just walks away. That’s the difference between the willing heart that’s seeking to know the truth. That kind of unbelief that wants to believe, God meets and communicates to.

But they had no capacity, and so they demand more, verse 17. “They say unto the blind man again.” They never give up. “What sayest thou of Him since He hath opened thine eyes?” Very profound question, and I’m sure he said, “He’s a prophet, what do you expect? What do you think I’m going to say?” “What’s your evaluation there, blind beggar?” “It’s pretty obvious, man, He’s a prophet. I mean, a prophet’s one sent from God. It’s obvious, see?”

He’s kind - I like this guy even better now. He’s got a little character, got some courage. He’s going to stand up to them and say this is a prophet. He knows what the Sanhedrin has declared in verse 22 has already come to pass. He knows that he can get put out of the synagogue. He’s aware of that. But his own heart has been convinced, and even though he tells them the truth, and gives them the evidence they want, their brains can’t shift. There’s no belief gear, you know? They can’t shift into belief, it isn’t there. They are statically lost in their unbelief. And so they hear the evidence, but attempt to find the fakery rather than believe the truth.

Then the progression of their ignorance is all through this chapter. Now you’ll notice also verse 18, “But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until

they called the parents of him that had received his sight.” Listen, we cannot accept the evidence just from you, see. That’s unbelief, right? Got to have more evidence. So the blind man gives them the evidence. Now that’s not enough evidence. Got to have more evidence. Let’s go get the parents. Boy, we want to get this thing settled right here.

Notice this interesting footnote. The word “Jews” there, John uses the word “Jews” to characterize unbelief. Whenever you see in John’s gospel the word “Jews,” it represents the hostility against Jesus. Now there were some in Israel that weren’t hostile, some who loved Him, and there still are today. And for the others, we pray. But for these who were hostile, they are called “Jews.” That seems to be John’s term of hostility.

And it’s interesting note that you originally had Pharisees, right? Just one group of Pharisees. But when the Pharisees split, see, and Group A went over here, and Group B went over here, this group couldn’t be called the Pharisees anymore because some of them were over here. So John gives them a new name, the title of hostility and calls them the “Jews,” but they are a portion of the Pharisees.

Okay, the Jews didn’t believe. Let’s get the parents. Let’s get to the bottom of this thing. Interesting thing is they weren’t looking for truth at all. They already knew truth. They knew everything. They only wanted support for their already made conclusions. So they want more of it. Get the parents. Let’s get all the evidence we can get, and it never does any good. So unbelief always wants more evidence but never has enough.

Third characteristic of unbelief. Unbelief does biased researched. It not only sets its own standards, which are false, but it wants more and more evidence and never gets enough, but it also does biased subjective researched. Absolutely amazing. When unbelief investigates a miracle, you can present all the facts, all the evidence, and still the conclusion will be what it was before they began the investigation because it’s subjective.

We want to do the research, verse 19. Parents are there. “They asked them saying, Is this your son who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see?” Oh, you’ve only heard it about five times. Two questions. Is this the man? Is this the one that was born blind? Second question. How did he get his sight?

The parents answer question number one. Here’s the more evidence they wanted. “His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind.” That’s the guy right there. That’s him. But these are really - these parents make the biggest cop out. Verse 21, “But by what means he now seeth, we know not.” That’s a lie. “Who hath opened his eyes, we know not.” Now you know that that man told his parents what happened. You know that. “He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.”

Verse 22. You want to know why they lied? Look at this, "These words spoke his parents because they - " what? " - feared the Jews." We don't want to get excommunicated. "They feared the Jews: for the Jews had already agreed - " Sanhedrin directed it " - if any man did confess that - " He was anointed, He was Messiah, " - He was Christ, he should be put out of they synagogue."

Now these were really wonderful parents, weren't they? Really standing up for their son. No wonder he was a beggar. They probably wouldn't even let him around the house. They couldn't care less about him. And they were most afraid of social problems. They were afraid of being put out of the synagogue. That's a fabulous word in the Greek, fabulous. And they were afraid of the Jews, the Jewish leaders. The people were really afraid of the leaders.

You know what the word is for being put out of the synagogue? It's one word in the Greek, it's aposynagogos. You know what it means? It means "to be unsynagogued." Anybody who claimed Jesus as Messiah would be immediately unsynagogued.

Now the synagogue was the place where they met together for fellowship and everything else. And if you got unsynagogued, that means socially you were cut off from the life of Israel, no social relations at all. Economically, you couldn't buy - you were really in bad shape - and religiously you had no rights at all.

Now there were three kinds of unsynagogued, three kinds of excommunication, all of them called shammata which is the Hebrew word for destroy. The first kind was nesifah. Nesifah shammata which was type number one, meant that you got unsynagogued for 7 to 30 days, and you got a good lecture with it. It was kind of a bawling out and the 7 to 30 day deal, where you were cut off from the life of Israel.

Then if you really did something very bad, you were niddui which is 30 days and over unsynagogued, which means no social relations, no economic relations, and no religious relations. You were just cut off from the life of your nation.

But the worst kind was cherem. Cherem shammata was permanent. And in any of the other kind, if you happen to die at the time you were under those sentences, you would have no funeral, put in the ground, be covered up and that was it. So this was a very serious thing to be cut off from the life of Israel, and they were hiding behind these lies because they were afraid of this.

And so they say, "Ask him." Verse 23, you see it again. "Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Ask him." Now they've got evidence. They know it's the right child. They know he can see. They know Jesus put the clay on his eyes. He went to the pool. He washed his eyes. He came out of there and he could see. They know all the evidence there is to know. And they're going to take all those

facts and do their research.

Now watch the conclusion. Verse 24. "Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise. We know that this man - " who? Jesus " - is a sinner." Listen, we've taken all the facts into account. We've done all our research. Give God the praise. We know Jesus is a sinner.

How do you know? It's innate. See? Stupid. What kind of research is that? All the evidence. He's a sinner. We know it. Evidence aside, witnesses aside, seeing eyes aside, we know. Boy, that's hard to believe. That's unbelievable unbelief.

And Moses was right, they were children in whom there was no faith. All the evidence in the world and we know. That's like the math student, you know? The math student who decides that four and four is not eight, four and four is thirteen and a quarter. And then spends all his life researching it, and every research project comes out eight, but he is unmoved. It is thirteen and a quarter. How do you know? I know.

And that's the way unbelief is, see? Unbelief exposed to all the facts and all the evidence comes up with unbelief. It's the way it is. That's subjective research. That's the worst kind of research there is. Start with some great big conclusion, and then disregard the facts. Personal statement that then does research to confirm that statement is backwards.

Objective research is the only kind that starts with nothing, takes the evidence, and comes to a conclusion. But the Pharisees did their biased, subjective research to find evidence to support their preclusion. And even though they couldn't support it, it didn't change them cause they didn't believe it anyway. That's the way unbelief is.

One of the greatest classic examples of that in modern-day writing is The Passover Plot. Have any of you seen that book? And in The Passover Plot the author starts with a supposition. His supposition is this. I reject Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not the Son of God. Jesus Christ was a phony religious leader who planned His whole big life. He was a big fake, a big deal off, pawning Himself off on the world. He planned the whole deal. That he begins with, and then he grabs all the twisted evidence from history to corroborate it. Foolishness. That is subjective research, invalid.

What do they stand? They stand this way. We hate Jesus. Now looking at the evidence, we conclude Jesus didn't do it. It's obvious he's going to say that, because you hate Him to begin with. So unbelief sets false standards, wants more evidence, but never gets enough, and then it does subjective, biased research which comes to no conclusion, but which was the conclusion to begin with.

Fourth thing, and very obvious, unbelief rejects the facts. Facts mean nothing to unbelief. It has no capacity to accept them. Verse 25. "The blind man tells them again - " and, you know, they're in the category of "my mind's made up, don't confuse me with facts." Verse 25, here's the blind man talking, "He answered and said, Well, whether He's a sinner or not, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see."

What a put down, see? They're saying, "He's a sinner." The blind man says, "Well, I don't know about that, but I do know one thing. I used to be blind, now I can see." See? They are, "We know." He says, "I know I can see." So he puts his "I know" against their "we know." And they're lost now. There's no argument left, see? There's no argument. What are they going to say now? There's all the evidence. All they can say is, "Give God the praise. That man's a sinner. We know He is." No reason, rhyme, or anything except their own unbelief. And so what can they do? They can't argue with the blind man. The blind man has got them. He's one up on them. There's nothing to do.

So you know what they do? They fall to the low levels of conflict. Remember we talked about those a few weeks ago? Look at verse 26 and 27. "Then said them to him again, What did He do to thee? How opened He thine eyes?" You know, the blind man must have gone, "Uh, you know, I've told you so many times." Here they are, "How did it happen? How did He do it," see? For the seventeenth time, see?

And so, "He answered them - " and oh, this answer is fabulous. Listen. "He answered them, I've told you already, and you did not believe." Didn't even hear, didn't even hear. He says, "Why would you hear it again?" Watch this one. "Will you also be His disciples?" Oh, sarcasm. "Will you also be His disciples?" I like this blind man. He's forthright, and he just fires right away, no regard.

No, they weren't about to be His disciples. But I'll tell you one thing, they didn't know how to handle that man. And they lost themselves to the lowest level of conflict. Four levels of conflict that I showed you. Number one, the intellectual level, right? You meet mind to mind when you have a problem. Then you deteriorate to the emotional level where you get really involved.

The next level is the verbal abuse level, where you start calling names when you've lost the argument. And the bottom level is you start beating them up, see? That's the four levels of conflict. You start intellectually, and you end up on the ground, see, pounding each other.

It's just this constant progress. And every conflict takes it. You've seen it in politics. You've seen it where you stand there and you reason, and then you shout, and then you take your shoe off and you beat it on the table. You do all these things. I mean, in other words, there's a progression to the bottom level of conflict.

And here they are at the bottom, verse 28. They don't know what to say. The man has defeated them. There's no - the evidence is all in. And verse 28, "Then they - " what? " - revile him." They started cursing at him. See, I don't know what they said. I don't particularly care to know. But I have a vivid enough imagination to determine the nature of their reviling. They called him names. They started the verbal abuse. And that only lasted till verse 34. At the end of verse 34 it says they gave him the physical. They got to the bottom level of conflict, picked him up and threw him out of the building.

You see, that's a great sign of mental bankruptcy. Did you know that? When you have lost the argument, you resort to that. And there they are throwing names at him. And this is terrific. They revile him and said, "Thou art His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples." And immediately they sucked their Mosaic thumb because they've got to grab security. They have to find security somewhere, and they found their security in Abraham in chapter 8, but Jesus exploded that. They said, "We're the children of Abraham." Jesus said, "If you were the children of Abraham, you'd do the works of Abraham. You're of your father the devil." So Abraham is no security for them anymore, and so they grab Moses.

"We're the children of Moses - great Moshe." And he is, no question about the greatness of Moses. But, you see, they're leaning on their relationship to law because Moses was the one who brought the law from God, see? They're leaning on their "We're the legalists. We are disciples of Moses," and then in verse 29, "we know that God spoke unto Moses." They're right, He did. "As for this fellow - " that is Jesus, whom they won't name. His name is poison to them. " - this fellow, we know not from where He is."

See, they're starting to call Him names, too, without naming Him, "this fellow." His name became poison. It reminds me of that rabbi that I told you about smashed his fist on the desk and said, "Don't ever mention the name Jesus in my presence." That's the kind of level the conflict gets to. To protect their ego, they lash out at Jesus, and they lash out at the beggar, and they convince themselves in a self-satisfied egoism that the facts don't matter, they're irrelevant. What matters is we're disciples of Moses and we know.

And then they add this ridiculous statement, "We know now from where He is." He had told them so many times from where He was. They ought to have known it from how many times He told them. And then the blind man adds a shot that is devastating in verse 30. "The man answered and said unto them, Why here is a marvellous thing, that you know not from where He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes." Terrific statement.

Here is a marvelous thing. I could just see him, kind of a smug look on his face. You know, there's only one thing more amazing than healing blind eyes and that's this kind of unbelief. It's amazing. So, unbelief sets its standards falsely. Always wants more evidence and never gets enough. Has no capacity for faith. Does subjective biased research and rejects the facts.

Lastly, and very obvious, unbelief is egocentric. Verse 31, the blind man continues. And he's dominating now. "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: - " that's true, the Old Testament says "if I regard iniquity in my heart - " Psalm 66:18 " - the Lord will not hear me." That's right. The Lord doesn't hear sinners. You know what the blind man's doing here? He's got his own syllogism. Listen to what he says. He's going to get on their bandwagon.

"Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth." You know what his syllogism is? Major premise, only people from God are heard by God so that they could open blind eyes. Jesus opened blind eyes, therefore He was heard by God. If He was heard by God, He's not a sinner. See, he says, if you're going to add some syllogism, let me throw mine in. He's convinced Jesus is from God.

"If any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth. Since the world - " or the age " - began was it not heard that any man open the eyes of one that was born blind." You know, in the whole Old Testament, there's never a case of healing of congenital blindness? And do you know that congenital blindness was a tremendously common problem, as I showed you last week, from the effects of gonorrhoea? And never a healing. But here's the first one. And only God could do that. Only God can give eyes. The blind man was right.

Well, how are they going to handle this guy? Verse 33 continues, "If this man - " that is Jesus " - were not of God, He could do nothing." Boy, that blind man's convincing himself along the line here. He's progressed right along. And the more they get antagonistic toward Jesus, the more convinced he is that this is somebody from God.

Well, they hit bottom again in verse 34. "They answered and said unto him, Thou was all together born in sin, - " you reprobate, you were born in sin " - dost thou teach us?" You know, egocentric. What are you doing saying this to us? So what do they do? "And they cast him out." That means they threw him out of the building and unsynagouged him at the same time.

You see, with all the facts, and with all the evidence, with all the testimony involved, the willful unbelief is hopeless, and it only resorts to the lowest level of conflict: Start calling names and bodily abuse. You see, that's what they did to Jesus, too, wasn't it? They called Him dirty names and then finally they nailed Him to a cross because they descended to the lowest level of conflict. They couldn't handle Him anymore.

I want to close with two verses, and I want you to write them down. Two verses wrap up this whole thought for us and characterize unbelief as we've seen it here in two thoughts. One is an illustration. The other is an explanation. I want to show you the first one, Acts 7:57. This is summing up this whole chapter. Are you ready for this? Listen - tremendous statement.

Stephen was preaching, tremendous sermon, powerful, dynamic, presenting Christ. “Then they cried out - ” that’s the audience that was hearing him “ - with a loud voice, and stopped their ears.” Just like that. That’s real objective research. They plugged their ears. “And they ran upon him with one accord,” grabbed stones, and killed him. You see, that’s how unbelief does. Willful unbelief isn’t even interested in the truth. It plugs its ears and descends to the lowest level of conflict, physical abuse.

Now I want to show you the theology of it in Titus 1:15, the last verse. “Unto the pure, all things are - ” what? “ - pure - ” watch this one “ - but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; because their mind and conscience is defiled.” You know something? To an unbelieving and defiled mind, you can present all the pure evidence in the world, and it will still be defiled because unbelief cannot be won by evidence. It can only be won by a divine miracle from God to change that heart.

Listen, Jesus is Christ. He is the Son of God. He is the Messiah of Israel. A blind beggar saw it. And next week we’re going to see him as he comes to full knowledge of Christ. A blind beggar saw that, and the religious leaders of Israel didn’t. And I ask you this morning, what about you? Have you seen who He is?

Our Father, we thank You this morning for teaching us again through Your Word, Your truth. And, Lord, if there are some here this morning who have never invited this Christ into their lives, who have never opened their heart to understand and know Him, that they might do it this morning. Father, as we close our service this morning, we pray that You’ll move by Your Spirit upon hearts, that we might recognize Christ in all His glory, and that people might give Him their lives, receive Him as Savior. We pray in His name, Amen.

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