

## **John 9**

**John 9:2 who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?**

**Bruce R. McConkie**

"Apparently the Jews had some understanding of the doctrine of pre-existence. Among their righteous forbears it had been taught plainly as a basic gospel truth. (Moses 3:4-9; 4:1-4; 6:51; Abra. 3:22-28.) Such scriptures as were then available to them however, contained only passing allusions to it. (Num. 16:22; Isa. 14:12-20; Jer. 1:5.) But it was a doctrine implicit in the whole plan of salvation... Jesus' disciples-probably as a direct result of his teachings-knew and believed that men were the spirit children of God in pre-existence and that in such prior estate they were subject to law and endowed with agency. Otherwise they never would have asked nor would there have been any sense or reason to a question which is predicated upon the assumption that men can sin before they are born into mortality." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1973], 1: 480.)

**Neal A. Maxwell**

"There are clearly special cases of individuals in mortality who have special limitations in life, which conditions we mortals cannot now fully fathom. For all we now know, the seeming limitations may have been an agreed-upon spur to achievement-a 'thorn in the flesh.' Like him who was blind from birth, some come to bring glory to God (John 9:1-3). We must be exceedingly careful about imputing either wrong causes or wrong rewards to all in such circumstances. They are in the Lord's hands, and he loves them perfectly. Indeed, some of those who have required much waiting upon in this life may be waited upon again by the rest of us in the next world-but for the highest of reasons." (Cory H. Maxwell, ed., *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 84.)

**John 9:3 Neither...but that the works of God should be made manifest**

"I had never understood this scripture. Jesus healed the blind man, so the works of God were manifest. But what about all those who are not healed? What about my sister with disabilities, who had died when I was a child? What about Cameron, our home teacher's son who had cerebral palsy and was in a wheelchair?

"As I thought of Cameron, scenes flooded my mind. We are sitting on our back porch with our home teachers. Cameron is in his wheelchair. He is bearing his testimony, slowly, painstakingly-fighting the obstinate, uncooperative muscles in his face.

"I know God loves me, he says. I love God. It takes much effort, much time before he is finished. My husband, Van, leans forward.

"Cameron,' he says earnestly, 'you are improving so much on your speaking. It is so much clearer. I can understand every word!'

"Cameron beams with pride. I see my husband's tender, caring face, and I wonder: Are not the works of God made manifest?

"Dennis, Cameron's father and our home teacher, relates in sacrament meeting the story of how Cameron got his first wheelchair from caring members of their ward. I see Cameron's joy and gratitude. Again the thought: Are not the works of God made manifest?

"At twelve, Cameron is old enough to pass the sacrament. One of the brethren in our ward has designed and fitted his wheelchair with a special tray. The bread and water are placed on his tray by members of his Aaronic Priesthood quorum. He wheels to the end of the pew, where a member lifts the tray to partake of the sacrament. Are not the works of God made manifest?

"I see Cameron, my sister, and others I have known who have disabilities in mind or body. Others carry them; others are their arms, their legs, their minds. I see these same individuals with disabilities, giving others gifts of love and hope. I see the works of God made manifest for them and by them." (Ruth Cosby, "Cameron's Picture," *Ensign*, Sept. 1994, 48)

## **James E. Faust**

"The challenge of having handicapped people is not new. Many have questioned why some have such limitations. It was so in the time of Jesus...How are the works of God manifested in these, our handicapped brothers and sisters? Surely they are manifested greatly in the loving care and attention given by parents, other family members, friends, and associates. The handicapped are not on trial. Those of us who live free of such limitations are the ones who are on trial. While those with handicaps

cannot be measured in the same way as others, many of the handicapped benefit immensely from each accomplishment, no matter how small.

"The handiwork of God is manifested with respect to the handicapped in many ways. It is demonstrated in the miraculous ways in which many individuals with mental and physical impediments are able to adjust and compensate for their limitations. Occasionally, other senses become more functional and substitute for the impaired senses in a remarkable way. A young friend greatly retarded in speech and movement repaired a complicated clock although she had had no previous training or experience in watch or clock making.

"Many of the special ones are superior in many ways. They, too, are in a life of progression, and new things unfold for them each day as with us all. They can be extraordinary in their faith and spirit. Some are able, through prayer, to communicate with the infinite in a most remarkable way. Many have a pure faith in others and a powerful belief in God. They can give their spiritual strength to others around them.

"For those who are impaired, trying to cope with life is often like trying to reach the unreachable. But recall the words of the **Prophet Joseph Smith**: 'All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement.' (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 354.) Certainly, in the infinite mercy of God, those with physical and mental limitations will not remain so after the Resurrection. At that time, Alma says, 'the spirit and the body shall be reunited again in perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame.' ("Alma 11:43Alma 11:43.) Afflictions, like mortality, are temporary.

"Surely more sharing of the burden will contribute to the emotional salvation of the person who is the primary caregiver. Just an hour of help now and then would be appreciated. One mother of a child who is handicapped said, 'I could never dream of going to Hawaii on a vacation; all I can hope for is to have an evening away from home.'

"The Savior's teachings that handicaps are not punishment for sin, either in the parents or in the handicapped, can also be understood and applied in today's circumstances. How can it possibly be said that an innocent child born with a special problem is being punished? Why should parents who have kept themselves free from social disease, addicting chemicals, and other debilitating substances that might affect their offspring imagine that the birth of a disabled child is some form of divine disapproval? Usually,

both the parents are blameless. The Savior of the world reminds us that God 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' (Matthew 5:45.)

"May I express a word of gratitude and appreciation to those many who minister with such kindness and skill to our handicapped people. Special commendation belongs to parents and family members who have cared for their own children with special needs in the loving atmosphere of their own homes. The care of those who are diminished is a special service rendered to the Master himself, for 'inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' (Matthew 25:40.)" (*Reach Up for the Light* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990], 88-90.)

### **Neal A. Maxwell**

"Interviewed on television recently was a young wrestler who is blind and who wants to try out for the 1980 U.S. Olympic team. This marvelous young man apparently asks of his opponents only that they touch him (fingertip to fingertip) as the match begins, which, frankly, is all that some of them remember, because he is so fast and pins them so quickly! But as the young wrestler's strong but sweet attitude came through in the interview that followed, the scripture came to mind in which a disciple of the Savior said, 'Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither,' said the Savior, reassuringly, 'but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.' ("John 9:2"John 9:3John 9:2-3.)

"There are some things allotted to us in life that have been divinely fashioned according to our ability and our capacity. When we see individuals coping with what seems to be a tragedy and making of it an opportunity, then we begin to partake of the deep wisdom in the Savior's response concerning the blind man.

"The Lord has said, 'I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.' ("Isa. 48:10Isaiah 48:10; "1 Ne. 20:101 Nephi 20:10.) He knows, being omniscient, how we will cope with affliction beforehand. But we do not know this. We need, therefore, the refining that God gives to us, though we do not seek or crave such tribulation.

"Is not our struggling amid suffering and chastening in a way like the efforts of the baby chicken still in the egg? It must painfully and patiently make its own way out of the shell. To help the chick by breaking the egg for it could be to kill it. Unless it struggles itself to break outside its initial constraints, it

may not have the strength to survive thereafter." (*All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], 38.)

**John 9:6-7 he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man...And said...Go, wash in the pool**

Priesthood administrations are always performed by the laying on of hands. The Savior, however, frequently performed many miracles using other means. While the pattern has been taught by the Brethren and established for our generation, Christ's manner of healings teach us that it is the faith that heals not the oil nor the ordinance. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** noted, "Healing miracles are performed by the power of faith and in the authority of the priesthood. By doing these physical acts, however, the Master's apparent purpose was to strengthen the faith of the blind or deaf person, persons who were denied the ability to gain increased assurance and resultant faith by seeing his countenance or hearing his words." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the New Testament* 1:320.)

In the case of the blind man, he has never seen nor heard Jesus before. How could he have had any faith in Jesus? Remarkably, the Savior didn't ask whether he believed or not. He just responded with a kind word and a healing touch-bolstering the man's faith in the goodness of Jesus. This blind man knew that no man born blind from birth had ever been healed (v. 32), but he did not quarrel with Christ's instructions. His response was remarkably obedient.

### **Spencer W. Kimball**

"Strange-we provide pure, sterile tissue for spittle and forbid expectorating even on sidewalks.

"We bathe with soap, scrub with disinfectants, and scald dishes, pots, and pans with boiling water to kill the germs from the filth of clay.

"We use for culinary purposes and especially in hospitals and sickrooms only water purified by chemical processes.

"But here the Master disregarded all our rules of sanitation and prescribed spittle, germ-ridden clay, and impure water...Is there healing in mere clay to make eyes see? Is there medicinal value in the spittle to cure infirmities? Are there curative properties in the waters of Siloam to open eyes of

congenital blind? The answer is obvious. The miracle was conceived in the womb of faith and born and matured in the act of obedience.

"Had the command involved oil instead of spittle, herbs instead of clay, and waters of a pure bubbling spring instead of filthy Siloam, the result would have been the same. But some would have said that oil and herbs and pure water had healed the eyes, but even the untrained must know that these could not cure one. Consequently, only one conclusion could be drawn: The unparalleled miracle was positively the result of faith obedience. But had the sightless one disobeyed any of the phases of the command, he would indubitably have suffered till death with continued blindness.

"Though there is no compulsion, the spiritual laws of today must also be obeyed if blessings are to be realized." (*Conference Report, October 1954, Afternoon Meeting 55.*)

### **Howard W. Hunter**

"Jesus then spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle mixed with the dust of the earth. He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. If this had been Thomas, would he have gone as he had been commanded or would he have asked the question: 'What good can come from washing in the stagnant waters of that dirty pool?' or 'What medicinal properties are there in saliva mixed with the dust of the earth?' These would seem to be reasonable questions, but if the blind man had doubted and questioned, he would still be blind. Having faith, he believed and did as he was directed. He went and washed in the pool and came back seeing. To believe is to see." (*Conference Report, October 1962, Afternoon Meeting 23.*)

### **Cheiko Okazaki**

"Sometimes we think we can't serve because we're not rich enough or not educated enough or not old enough or not young enough. Remember, if we have the desire to serve, then our bare hands, a little spit, and a little dirt are enough to make a miracle." (*LDS Church News, 1992, 03/21/92*)

**John 9:16 This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day**

### **Bruce R. McConkie**

"Their Messiah stoops down; he spits on the ground, he makes clay with the spittle; and he anoints the eyes of the blind man with the saliva-filled lump of the dust of the earth...There can be little doubt that he is deliberately violating the [rabbinical] law of the Sabbath in two major respects: (1) he made clay, and (2) he applied a healing remedy to an impaired person, which of itself was forbidden, and in addition there was a specific prohibition against the application of saliva to the eyes on the Sabbath. This strange restriction came into being because of a common belief that saliva was a remedy for diseases of the eye." (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979-1981], 3: 208.)

### **Bruce R. McConkie**

"The Rabbis had forbidden any man to smear even one of his eyes with spittle on the Sabbath, except in cases of mortal danger. Jesus had not only smeared *both* the man's eyes, but had actually mingled the saliva with clay!...The Sabbath of Rabbinism, with all its petty servility, was in no respect the Sabbath of God's loving and holy law. It had degenerated into that which St. Paul calls it, a 'beggarly element.' And these Jews were so imbued with this utter littleness, that a unique miracle of mercy awoke in them less of astonishment and gratitude than the horror kindled by a neglect of their Sabbatical superstition.' (Farrar, p. 439. Gal. 4:9.)" (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979-1981], 3: 202.)

**John 9:22 if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue**

### **Neal A. Maxwell**

"How sad that so many cannot see that to be *put out* of the secular synagogues for one's belief in Christ is the first step toward being *let in* the kingdom of God!" (*Things As They Really Are*, p. 62.)

**John 9:25-29 Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see**

There are so many parallels between the Pharisees' response to Jesus and the sectarian Christians response to the Restoration. While on a mission in Canada, Parley P. Pratt performed a miracle which is a particularly good example. The story resembles so closely the interaction between the blind

man and the Sanhedrin as to be uncanny. In recounting the story, it is apparent that Elder Pratt sees the many parallels. Indeed, history was repeating itself yet again.

### **Parley P. Pratt**

"Mrs. Walton requested me to call on a friend of hers, who was also a widow in deep affliction, being totally blind with inflammation in the eyes; she had suffered extreme pain for several months, and had also been reduced to want, having four little children to support. She had lost her husband, of cholera, two years before, and had sustained herself and family by teaching school until deprived of sight, since which she had been dependent on the Methodist society; herself and children being then a public charge. Mrs. Walton sent her little daughter of twelve years old to show me the way. I called on the poor blind widow and helpless orphans, and found them in a dark and gloomy apartment, rendered more so by having every ray of light obscured to prevent its painful effects on her eyes. I related to her the circumstances of my mission, and she believed the same. I laid my hands upon her in the name of Jesus Christ, and said unto her, 'your eyes shall be well from this very hour.' She threw off her bandages; opened her house to the light; dressed herself, and walking with open eyes, came to the meeting that same evening at sister Walton's, with eyes as well and as bright as any other person's.

"The Methodist society were now relieved of their burden in the person of this widow and four orphans. This remarkable miracle was soon noised abroad, and the poor woman's house was thronged from all parts of the city and country with visitors; all curious to witness for themselves, and to inquire of her how her eyes were healed.

"'How did the man heal your eyes?' 'What did he do?-tell us,' were questions so oft repeated that the woman, wearied of replying...But still they teased her for particulars. 'What did this man do?' 'How were your eyes opened and made well?'

"'He laid his hands upon my head in the name of Jesus Christ, and rebuked the inflammation, and commanded them to be made whole and restored to sight; and it was instantly done.'

"'Well, give God the glory; for, as to this man, it is well known that he is an impostor, a follower of Joseph Smith, the false prophet.'

"Whether he be an impostor or not, I know not; but this much I know, whereas I was blind, now I see! Can an impostor open the eyes of the blind?"

"Perhaps, then, you intend to be his disciple, to join the *Mormons*?"

"He said nothing to me about joining the *Mormons*, but taught me the gospel, and bore testimony that God had restored its power to the earth. Would you like to be partakers thereof? Or why do you inquire so earnestly about my eyes being healed?"

"Oh, we are John Wesley's disciples. We are the Christian Church. We know John Wesley, but as to this man, we know not whence he is."

"How is this that you know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened my eyes? Did John Wesley open the eyes of the blind? Can an impostor do it?"

"Ah, we see how it is. You are determined to forsake the Christian Church, the good old way, for the sake of these fools, these weak impostors-the *Mormons*. Well, farewell. But remember, you will have no more support from our society, no more encouragement of any kind; you shall not even teach a school for us. How then will you live?" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 137-139)

**John 9:29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is**

## **Hugh Nibley**

"Here we have something in the nature of a general principle. The rejection of living prophets and the veneration of dead ones is not a folly limited to one nation or to one generation. It meets us throughout the long history of Israel as a sort of standard procedure. Nor did it cease with the coming of Christ, who promised his disciples that they would be treated as badly and rejected as completely as he. The wise men of his time had a ready answer to Jesus: 'Abraham is our father' (John 8:39), they protest. 'We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God' (John 8:41). 'We are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is' (John 9:28-29).

"God had visited the earth in remote times; he had spoken to Abraham and to Moses. Venerable traditions burdened with a magnificent weight of art,

poetry, scholarship, and ritual attested the sincere devotion of the race to the memory of God's visits to men in times past. But to ask men to believe that that same God had spoken in their own day, and to a plain man who walked their streets-that was simply too much to take! That was the test that Christ's generation could not pass.

"It was a test that few have ever passed: the humiliating test of recognizing a true prophet and taking instruction from the weak and humble things of the earth." (*The World and the Prophets*, 3rd ed., 7-8.)

**John 9:35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said...Dost thou believe on the Son of God?**

How many miracles has Christ performed to this point in his ministry? In all these miracles we see the thankful recipients joyfully running off to tell their stories. Yet we don't know how many become faithful disciples. This particular miracle is different. Like the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, Christ seeks out the man so that he can perform another miracle. What a tragedy if this man had been given physical sight but had remained in spiritual darkness! And so, the Master inquires, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' The man's faithful answer shows his true devotion.

To be saved by Christ is greater than to be healed by Christ, but both are miracles.

**Howard W. Hunter**

"Now sight had been given twice-once to remedy a congenital defect and once to behold the King of Kings before He would ascend to His eternal throne. Jesus had quickened both temporal and spiritual vision. He had cast his light into a dark place, and this man, like many others in that day as well as in our own, had accepted the light and had seen." ("The God That Doest Wonders," *Ensign*, May 1989, 16-17)

**John 9:39 For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind**

To paraphrase, "I came into the world to enlighten those in spiritual darkness and to darken the minds of those who claim to be spiritually enlightened." One may ask, well why would he want to darken the minds of anyone? Well, the answer is not that he *wants* to darken their minds, but that he knows how they will respond to the truth. Prior to Christ's preaching, the Jews were hypocrites.

However, once they were confronted face to face with Jesus and rejected his message, their sin was multiplied a hundred-fold. They were given an opportunity to accept or reject him, and chose the latter. This opportunity was given to them so 'that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day' (Alma 14:11). Ezekiel and Isaiah saw the same rebellion in their day and knew that it would be repeated in the Savior's day:

'Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.' (Ezek. 12:2)

'And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.' (Isa. 6:9-10)

**John 9:41 If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth**

### **Spencer W. Kimball**

"Knowledge of the gospel has come to many men and women in this life together with adequate opportunity to live it. Such will be judged by the gospel law. Should one not have had opportunities to hear and understand the gospel in this mortal life, that privilege will be given him hereafter. Judgment is according to knowledge and compliance.

"Latter-day Saints are in the first category. Having been blessed with the gospel privileges they are and will be judged on gospel criteria. Where the law is, it is a serious error not to comply with it, as the following scriptures emphasize:

'Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.' (Jn. 9:41)

'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.' (Jn. 15:22)

'And that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.'

'But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required-'.(Lu. 12:47-48)

"Jacob's words to his people might have been spoken directly to us:

'But wo unto him that has the law given, yea, that has all the commandments of God, like unto us, and that transgresseth them, and that wasteth the days of his probation, for awful is his state!' (2 Ne. 9:27)" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 12-13)