

Blind Beggar Receives Sight

Read John 9:1-38

Further: Matthew 11:1-6

Key Verse:

“To open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison, and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 42:7

Extra: What evidence does the N.T give for the fulfillment of the promises in Isaiah 42:7?

Level 5 lesson 17

PROPHECY FULFILLED

The Key verse in our lesson today is from Isaiah. The Pharisees knew that this was a prophecy concerning the Messiah. You may recall when John the Baptist was in prison, he sent His disciples to ask Jesus if He was the Messiah. Jesus simply referred them to this same passage. “Tell John that the lame walk, the deaf hear and the blind can see!” John would know immediately that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. In our story today, the Pharisees too, were now confronted with this fact; a blind man who could now see! How had this happened? What would their reaction be? Let’s go back to the start...

JOYFUL DELIVERANCE

As Jesus and the disciples walked along, they came across a poor, blind beggar. The disciples asked, “Who sinned to cause this man to be born this way - him, or his parents?” “Neither!” said Jesus. “This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” This lesson shows us clearly that God is able to work through anyone, to show Himself to others, and to bring glory to Himself. Is there a greater privilege for us to aspire to in our lives? Be encouraged; God can use you too, no matter who you are!

Then, making some mud using dust and saliva, Jesus smeared it on the man’s sightless eyes. “Go and wash in the pool of Siloam,” He told him, “and you will be able to see!” The man may have wondered what was going on, but he went without question. Verse 7 tells us the result of his faithful obedience; “He...came home seeing!” Overjoyed, he began telling the incredible news to everyone he met, “Once I was blind - but now I can see!” Soon a group of incredulous neighbours had gathered around the man. An argument developed, with some saying he was the blind man, while others said he was merely like him. Finally, the man settled it. “I am the man!” he said.

Of course then they all wanted to know, “How can you now see?” In reply, he told them the simple facts [v11]. On hearing this, they decided to confront the Pharisees for their opinion. They had said Jesus was an imposter; a fake. Could Jesus be a fake and make blind people see?

BITTER OPPOSITION

The man repeated his story for the Pharisees, “He (Jesus) put clay on my eyes, and I washed and now I can see!” (v15)

Learning this had happened on the Sabbath day caused an immediate division among the Pharisees. Some thought that if Jesus really was from God, He wouldn’t heal on the Sabbath. Others though, questioned how an imposter could do such a miracle. They were perplexed! Again they asked the beggar, “What do you say about Him?” “He is a prophet!” he replied. Unwilling to accept this, the Pharisees sent for the man’s parents. Perhaps they hoped that they would resolve their dilemma by denying that he was their son who had been born blind! However, they admitted that the man was their son and that he was born blind. Fearing that the Pharisees would excommunicate them if they sided with Jesus though, they told the Pharisees, “Ask him what happened! He’s an adult.”

UNSHAKEABLE TESTIMONY

So once again the Pharisees turned to the man and tried to make him change his story, hinting that they knew Jesus couldn’t have done it and he should finally tell the truth. But the man stuck to his story. “Whether Jesus is a sinner or not, I don’t know. I do know this; once I was blind, but now I can see!” He went further and challenged them, “Will you be His disciples like me?” That really upset them! Mad with rage, they insulted him and threw him out of the Council Chamber in public disgrace, a serious judgement.(v22).

Why was this man so firm in his conviction? How could he stand up against such opposition? He had experienced for himself the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ! As the Apostle Paul could write later, he “knew in Whom he had believed.”

So the poor man was cast out of the synagogue alone and friendless. Well, not entirely! Jesus knew what had happened to him and went to find him. “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He asked. The man, perhaps recognizing the voice, but having not previously seen Jesus, replied, “Who is He, Sir, that I might believe?” Jesus said, “You have now seen Him; in fact, He is the one speaking with you!”

Immediately the man bowed at the Lord’s feet, saying, “Lord I believe!” and worshipped Him. Can you from your heart say, “Lord, I believe?” Will you too, acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and commit your life to Him? If you will do this, from your heart, you too will be truly converted and be able to testify and stand up for the Saviour as this man did.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why did Jesus work this miracle?	.....
2. Why did the neighbours take the once blind man to the Pharisees?	.....
3. Why did the Pharisees oppose Jesus?	.....
4. What did the man say as he stuck to his story and remained loyal to Jesus?	.....
5. How can we be truly converted and stand firm for Jesus?	.....

My Name is Age

Jesus – the Good Shepherd

Key Verse:

“Jesus said, ‘I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture.’”

John 10:9

Extra: Compare this teaching with Psalm 23.

Level 5 lesson 18

Read John 10:1-21

Further: 1 Peter 2:21-25

JESUS THE TRUE SHEPHERD

A shepherd in the Middle East was very different from shepherds in our country today. Here in New Zealand, we often have thousands of sheep on each property, and our shepherds usually ride horses, or motorbikes, and use sheep-dogs to round up the sheep and move them around. The sheep too, stay outside in their paddocks at night.

Things were done differently in Jesus’ day. The sheep were kept in a ‘sheep-fold’ each night for safety, and the shepherd would sleep in the doorway, on guard against thieves or wild animals. He did not have thousands to look after, and knew each of his sheep by name – and they knew him too!

At daybreak, he would lead the flock out to fresh pasture for the day, before leading them home again to the safety of the sheep-fold each evening. It was a much closer relationship than we are used to. Remember how David, himself a shepherd boy, wrote so fondly in Psalm 23, “The Lord is MY Shepherd!” With this background, Jesus proclaimed Himself to be, “The Good Shepherd.”

Even in Jesus’ day there were good shepherds and bad ones! In verses 1 to 5, our Lord described the true shepherd of the sheep. He is the one who enters the sheep-fold through the gate; sometimes, thieves and robbers or wild-animals would try and get in over the rough stone walls, intent upon stealing or destroying the sheep. Jesus made it plain that He was not one of these.

He came to the ‘sheep’ of His ‘Sheepfold,’ Israel, in the exact way foretold in Scripture. He was born, and lived [and died] in amazing fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah. This was very real proof that He was the true Shepherd of the sheep. The “thieves and robbers” who sought to rule over the people and lead them astray, could never fulfill Scripture as He did.

HIS WORK

Just like an Eastern shepherd, Jesus said He calls His sheep by name “and they hear My voice.” Peter, James, John, Mary Magdalene and the blind man of last lesson, are all examples of those who heard His voice and followed Him.

The Pharisees and their friends were not His sheep, so did not recognize His voice. Sadly, they showed by this that they belonged to Satan, the evil one.

The sheepfold had no door - simply a narrow opening in the wall. The shepherd slept in the doorway at night, so guarding the sheep. He would let them out or bring them back in, using the same single opening. Jesus used this simple picture when He said, “I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture.” Just as there was only one entrance to the sheepfold, Jesus said there was only one entrance to the Kingdom - Him! John 14:6 says “No one comes to the Father [God the Father] except through Me,”

He went on to declare His love for His sheep; He was prepared to die for them! Someone hired to look after the flock would never die for them; when danger arose he would run for his life, leaving the sheep at the mercy of the wild animal.

Not the Lord Jesus! “I am the Good Shepherd,” He said. “The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” We read in v17 that His Father loves Him in a special way because of His love and His readiness to do this for His sheep. This was the most crucial part of God’s plan of salvation. Jesus knew He would rise again from the dead, and confidently stated this in verses 17-18. However, His willingness to suffer and die on Calvary’s Cross; to bear all the punishment for our sin, in obedience to His Father’s will, earned Him a unique love, a special place, in the heart of God the Father.

HIS SHEEP

The Lord spoke in v16 of “other sheep” - who were they? These were those people outside of the Jewish nation, who would hear His voice and in faith “enter the sheepfold by the only Gate – Jesus Christ!” In this way, they too would become part of the “one flock” under the care of the Good Shepherd. If you and I can honestly say, “The Lord is MY Shepherd” and are trusting Him as our Saviour from sin, then we belong to these “other sheep.”

This caused a real division among the people. Some said He was demon-possessed but others were unsure. “Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?” they queried. Down through the ages since, and still today, people are divided about Jesus. Which side are you on? Make sure you are on His side, His sheep - enjoying the love and care of the Good Shepherd.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What proves that our Lord was the true Shepherd of the sheep?

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2. What did Jesus, the Good Shepherd, do for the sheep?

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3. Why did Jesus say His Father loved Him?

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4. How may we belong to Jesus as one of His sheep?

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5. Why were the Jews divided about Jesus?

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Disciples Taught to Pray

Key Verse:

“Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress and He hears my voice.”

Psalm 55:17

Extra: Try to find some other prayers in the Bible.

Level 5 lesson 19

Read Luke 11:1-13

Further: Matthew 6:7; 7:7-11

A DISTINCT DESIRE

As we observe the life of the Lord Jesus, we notice that He spent a great deal of time in prayer. I'm sure that this was a habit begun in childhood and continued right through His earthly life. We may wonder why He needed to pray.

Perhaps the answer is, being human, as well as divine, He felt His need to communicate with His Heavenly Father in this way, often praying for assistance and guidance. It must have been an amazing experience for Him to take on human form, and we can be sure it was not easy. Whatever the reason, we can be 100% certain of one thing; He **CHOSE** to pray often! We know His prayers were always acceptable to God, and we can learn much from them. Perhaps our first thought should be this: if Jesus, the righteous Son of God needed to pray, how much more do we, who are so weak and sinful!

A PATTERN FOR PRAYER

On this occasion, Jesus had been praying, and the disciples had been observing and listening. Can you imagine listening while the Lord spoke closely and intimately with His Father in Heaven? It must have been very special! No wonder the disciples asked Him when He had finished, “Lord teach us to pray!” In reply, Jesus gave them what is commonly called, “The Lord’s Prayer.” Of course, He did not pray this prayer Himself – for example, He had no need to ask forgiveness - but it was a ‘pattern’ for His disciples, to give them broad principles about prayer and how to pray. It is a wonderful prayer which is still used throughout the world today. Let’s look at it together.

“OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN” The disciples were to address God as their Father, a reminder of their wonderful relationship as His children. **“HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.”** They were to desire that God’s Name be honoured and revered by all people everywhere. **“YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.”** They were to pray for the establishment of God’s Kingdom in the world, where people would love to obey God and His perfect will is carried out as it is in Heaven.

GIVE US EACH DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.” This is an acknowledgement that life is from Him, and of their dependence on Him for the provision of their daily needs to sustain that life.

“FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AS WE ALSO FORGIVE EVERYONE WHO SINS AGAINST US.” They were to ask for forgiveness when they sinned, and accept that they must be ready to forgive others too. In this way they could continue in humble fellowship with God.

“AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION; BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL,[THE EVIL ONE].” They were to request deliverance from temptation (or trial) in case they should be overcome by it; this too, reflects an acknowledgement of our inability to defend ourselves and our need of God’s strength and power in our lives to live in a righteous, holy way, pleasing to Him.

“FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER, AMEN. Their prayer concludes with praise acknowledging that the Kingdom, and all power and glory ultimately belong to God. “Amen” simply means, “So be it!”

It is important to remember that Jesus gave His disciples this prayer as a pattern, to follow - not as a magic formula! Some people think that repeating these words over and over again somehow has an effect on God. It does - but perhaps not the one they think!

Listen to these words of the Lord in Mathew 6:7 “When you pray, don’t use silly repetitions as the heathen do; they think they will be heard because of their many words!” God is not impressed with ‘formula prayers’ - He wants us to speak ‘heart to heart’ with Him, earnestly and lovingly sharing our desires and concerns with Him. Since Jesus’ death and resurrection, true believers have the Holy Spirit indwelling them to help them do this, and we are also taught to pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

PERSISTENT PRAYER!

This parable (v5-8) might seem strange at first, but it makes an interesting point. We are to persevere - not give up easily, but keep on - in our prayers. Jesus made this same point in His parable of the unjust Judge in Luke 18:1-8. If we sinful, selfish, humans will respond to persistence, like the judge or the man who was disturbed in the middle of the night, how much more will our wonderful, loving righteous Heavenly Father? Of course, we must ask in accordance with His will, and accept that in His infinite knowledge and love, He wants only to give us what is best for us. Sometimes we can be surprised at what God seems to disallow, and what He allows us to have.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why did Jesus need to pray?	.....
2. For what purpose did the Lord give the prayer of our lesson?	.....
3. What does “Hallowed be your name” mean?	.....
4. Give reasons why we should pray to God.	.....
5. What does the parable about the man asking for the loaves teach us?	.....

Jews Attempt to Stone Jesus

Key Verse:

“Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Hebrews 12:3

Extra: Find some reasons as to why people reject Jesus Christ.

Level 5 lesson 20

**Read John 10:22-42
Further Matthew 12:9-21**

A QUESTIONING CROWD

It was winter, when the Feast of Dedication was held throughout Israel, and Jesus was teaching under cover, in a part of the Temple known as Solomon’s Porch. As He taught, the crowd grew in number, listening intently. Finally, someone asked Him, “How long do you make us doubt? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in My Father’s name speak for Me.”(v25)

We have looked at many occasions over the last few months, where Jesus made it plain that he was the Son of God by the miracles He performed. Remember the lame man whose sins He forgave? Remember Christ’s challenge to the Pharisees at that time? “What is easier - to say your sins are forgiven, or to say rise up and walk?” To show that He had the authority to forgive sins, [which as the Pharisees had rightly said, only God has] Jesus told the man to get up and walk and he did! That is a plain answer! The reaction of the Pharisees in this instance, and in many others, shows that they were really only looking for a way to trap Jesus with His words and so have a reason to put Him to death.

These knowledgeable Jews knew exactly what Jesus meant; their sinful hearts blinded them to the truth of Jesus’ many miracles and His claims of equality with God. There is no record that our Lord had told these hostile Jews in so many words that He was the Christ (or Messiah).

He told the woman of Samaria that He was such, and also His disciples; however, He repeatedly claimed to be the Son of God and His works and teachings all declared Him to be the Christ. If they had been sincere and honest they would certainly have found, as others had, abundant reason to believe in Him.

A SIMPLE TRUTH

It’s the same today. There is any amount of proof that Jesus of Nazareth came from God and that the Bible is the Word of God. There is not another Man or another Book which can compare with them. Yet, many are like the people who witnessed His feeding of the 5000 one day, and then the next day asked “to see a sign before they would believe!”

Many people choose to remain in their sin. Jesus spelt it out to this crowd, too. “You are not My sheep!” He said, “My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” There is the real reason for their unbelief; they belonged to the evil one and not the Lord. What a blessed thing it is to be one of Christ’s ‘sheep!’

The Saviour tells us in the next two verses some very precious truths about them: they have the gift of eternal life, and shall never perish. They are safe in God’s all-powerful hands, from which they can never be removed!

A BOLD CLAIM

What a tremendous claim the Lord made in v30: “I and My Father are one.” What did He mean? Well, it means not one in personality, but one in substance, in being; He was claiming, yet again, to be God, equal with the Father. This was their plain answer! As soon as He said this, the Jews showed their ‘true colours’ and prepared to stone him. They understood perfectly what Jesus meant. He asked them for which good work were they stoning Him? They replied that it was not for a good work that they were going to stone Him, but for His blasphemy; He a man, making Himself God.

Jesus justified His claim to be God by telling them that their law applied the word ‘gods’ to their rulers who represented God in their official capacity. He argued that if these could be rightly called ‘gods,’ then He was surely the ‘ultimate Representative!’ He was sent by the Father into the world, and could say without blasphemy, “I am the Son of God.”

Again He reminds them that the works He did proved the truth of what He was claiming; they ought to know and believe that the Father was in Him and He in the Father; He and His Father were truly ‘One.’

A SERIOUS REJECTION

At this point the Jews again tried to seize Jesus but He “escaped out of their hands.” They could neither stone nor arrest Him unless He allowed it; this was yet another proof that what He said about Himself was true!

Jesus then left Jerusalem and crossed over the Jordan River. Many followed Him, convinced by the testimony of John the Baptist, and the words and deeds of the Lord Himself. Our lesson ends with this good news, “Many believed in Him there.” Even if they wouldn’t believe in Jerusalem - they would elsewhere!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What did the Jews who surrounded Jesus want to know?	.....
2. Why should they have known who He was?	.....
3. If nothing can be compared with Jesus, why don’t people believe in Him?	.....
4. Why did they attempt to stone our Lord?	.....
5. Why could they not succeed in arresting Him?	.....