

# A BLIND MAN FINALLY SEES

Jn 9:1-41

## I. A THEODICY? [defending God's goodness] (vv. 1-5)

- A. An ancient question re God and suffering—Job's story & meditation perennially insightful
- B. Inadequate/deficient proposals
  - 1. Deterministic—"que sera sera"
    - a. Atomistic—matter-in-motion, dominos falling (Democritus; Lucretius; many current thinkers)
    - b. Astrological—planets' powers (fortune cookies)—amazing persistence (e.g. teacher in *Why Meadow Died* trying to deal with grief)
    - c. Genetic/DNA, pre-planned script—*She Has Her Mother's Laugh*
    - d. Societal—products of society (i.e. criminals not personally responsible); Watson's & Skinner's once powerful influence: behaviorism
    - e. Economic—Marxist premise: "mode of production" shapes all else (Socialist mantra, evident in Bernie Sanders & Elizabeth Warren *et al.* candidacies for president)
  - 2. Reincarnational
    - a. Hindu *karma*—punished or rewarded for prior lives (consequently little compassion for others)
    - b. Some Greeks—e.g. Plato's cyclical view of history
    - c. Some Jews—Hellenistic, Alexandrian strain (deeply affected by Platonism) somewhat evident
    - d. Origin (Alexandrian biblical scholar/theologian)—seeking to fuse Greek & Jewish thought posited embodied souls doing penance for earlier sins (later condemned by councils)
  - 3. Parental/Ancestral/Racial determinants
    - a. OT: sins of parents visited on subsequent generations (cf. Ex 34:7)
    - b. Freud & psychoanalysis—pervasive, if spurious, influence; N.B. *Freud: The Making of an Illusion* deconstructs his theories; Jung & "collective unconsciousness"
    - c. Malpractice (whether voluntary or involuntary) determinative—thus many blame parents for kids' failures and a few children have sued their parents for poor parenting
- C. Jesus (and Job) provide prescient, ultimately best perspective
  - 1. Only God knows fully—we need "mystery bag" for unanswerable questions, and Christ on the Cross fully reveals the mystery's only deeply satisfying resolution
  - 2. Augustine, Leibniz and many others suggest this is the best possible world (though we fail to see *in toto*) and in eternity we'll see it clearly

## II. A BLIND MAN'S HEALING PROVOKES CRITICISM & PROVIDES REVELATION

- A. The Miracle/Sign
  - 1. Jesus sees the man's predicament, makes mud with saliva, anoints his eyes, sends him to pool of Siloam (archaeological data abundant)
  - 2. Sight restored, beggar becomes subject of discussion
- B. Criticism Ensues & elicits healed man's convictions
  - 1. Neighbors question the man and he recounts what happened to him, though he knew not (at the time) who touched him
  - 2. Pharisees focus on Jesus' Sabbath violation (asserting only a sinner would have done so), but when asked who healed him the man said "He is a prophet"
  - 3. Fearing excommunication, the man's parents merely say he had been born blind
  - 4. Pressed to explain, the man declares his healer must be from God
- C. The *Finale*: Revelation & Belief
  - 1. Finding the man in the Temple, Jesus asks: "Do you believe in the Son of God?" (v. 35)
  - 2. Man asks "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" (v. 36)
  - 3. Jesus replies: "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you" (v. 37)
  - 4. To which the man said: "Lord I believe!" (v. 38) and "worshipped Him"
  - 5. *In fine*: progressive revelation evident in blind man's story, showing why John wrote the Gospel—"that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (20:31); pattern for presenting Gospel?
    - a. Initial impression: Jesus is a man (v. 11)—wonderful inasmuch as He cared for beggar
    - b. Deeper insight: Jesus is surely a prophet (v. 17)—bringing God's message
    - c. Final understanding: Jesus is The Son of God (v. 38)