

The Gospel of John

Lesson #80
The Journey
Jim Hoffman

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The Gospel of John

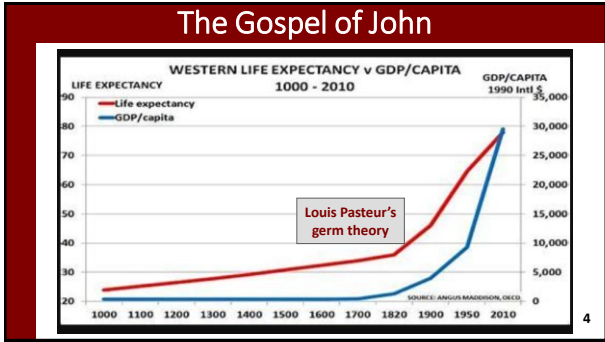
• John 9:1 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud 7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. 2

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The Gospel of John

- Jesus seemed to encounter sickness and physical maladies daily – everywhere he went he saw and healed people by the thousands.
- No mystery - it's the 1st century where germ theory did not exist, and physicians were primitive at best offering herbs and other home remedies.
- The average lifespan in Jesus' day was just 35-40 years – and if the average is 35-40 then lots of people died much, much younger than that. 3

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- As you might expect health issues were a big deal everywhere Jesus went – it was the greatest need of the population everywhere, or so they thought.
- We can only wonder what Jesus thought as he healed each person because he knew any healing he did was temporary – even Lazarus eventually died again.
- He used healing for more than merciful intrusions into lives – if you follow Jesus through the gospels you see his miracles always had a bigger purpose than the present.

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The Gospel of John

- In our text today, Jesus seems to happen upon a blind man and in this case we find that this man was blind from birth.
- What might seem odd is the casualness of the disciples as to the cause of the man's blindness as opposed to, "Jesus please help this man"!
- Their minds went to the theological, not the biological – they wanted to know the answer to one question; "who sinned that this man is blind?"

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The Gospel of John

- The disciples show signs of bad teaching and malicious assumptions – in the Jewish mind of the time if you are sick, it’s due to the sin of someone.
- If you were to ask them why, they may have cited Exodus 20:5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. 7

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- Exodus 20:5 does not mean what so many think it means – the Lord is not threatening to punish the kids and grandkids of those who sin.
- That would violate who God is – he is a God of justice, and punishing one person in the place of another is not his method with one big exception, the cross.
- Revelation 16:7 And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!” 8

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- Ezekiel 18:1 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 “What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? 3 As I live, declares the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. 4 Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.
- In other words, stop using that heathen proverb – God does not punish the children for the sins of their fathers. 9

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- Clearly threatening to punish the sins of the fathers to the 3rd and 4th generations was not God's intention – he is too just for that.
- But have you ever wondered about this Biblical proverb?
- Proverbs 17:15 He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.

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- What did God mean when he had Moses write, "for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me"?
- The teaching here is that your sins today could establish a culture of sinfulness that will take generations to reverse.
- So, if you love your children and grandchildren then straighten up and turn from your sin!

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So, while God does not punish the next generation(s) for the sins of the current one there are often consequences for the generations that follow. While there is not direct punish upon the succeeding generation(s) there may well be indirect pain and suffering that flows from the law of sowing and reaping.

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- Another question behind the question of, “who sinned this man or his parents?” is related to another false doctrine that some rabbis held to.
- That doctrine was that of pre-natal sin – it is false doctrine, but all it takes to create and spread lies like that is a good communicator assisted by the devil.
- Some rabbis would cite Jacob and Esau wrestling in the womb as their proof text for pre-natal sin, but we know from the whole of scripture this is false. ¹³

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- Other rabbis taught that God sometimes pre-punishes people in the womb for sins they will commit later in life.
- It is possible the disciples had been exposed to these false doctrines and more as Judaism festered into a corrupt heap of half-truths.
- There is no real evidence that babies can sin in the womb or that God punishes some sins in advance of them happening. ¹⁴

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It seems the Jews, having derived from the Egyptians the doctrines of the pre-existence and transmigration of souls, supposed that men were punished in this world for the sins they had committed in their pre-existent state. The purport of that doctrine was, that, if a man behaved himself amiss, his soul was afterward sent into another body, where he met with great calamities, and lived in a more miserable condition than before.

Benson Commentary

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- Some of the flawed thinking of rabbis of Jesus' day may be tied to Plato who lived roughly 400 years before Christ.
- Plato was convinced the soul is immortal – and he taught immortality saying our souls lived before our bodies and continued on after our death. (1/2 truth)
- So now we have some insights as to why the disciples raised the “who sinned” question.

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The chosen people of God were far from above reproach in their thinking. What is evident from history is they got into trouble, which got them into different cultures. The progression is like this – first they got into the surrounding cultures and then those cultures got into them!

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- In verse #3 Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”
- Jesus will clear up the mystery with the truth about the man’s condition that would seem even more outrageous to anyone who did not know God.
- Jesus’ answer was that this man was blind from birth (and he may well have been more than 30 years old) so that the works of God could be displayed in him.

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- If this man was born blind so that Jesus could come upon him and heal him to display the works of God, then you have to wonder how many others were ill for the same purpose.
- I hesitate to say, "all" because I believe people are sick and diseased for mostly one reason – sin.
- All of creation is under sin's curse and things are corrupt and not as they should be with decay and disease being the result of the fall.

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So here is where our view of God gets tested – it is evident from Jesus' answer that this man was not blind because of an inherited gene or some other predisposition to a malformation of his eyes. He was blind from birth because God caused him to be blind so in his blindness he could be used by God to glorify himself. He had never seen his mother, his father, or any of his family members. He had never seen a sunrise or a sunset and he had never seen any of the beautiful things found in nature. If you fail to understand the greatness of God this blind man's life may seem like a waste to be in misery for a lifetime, doomed to beg for money, all so God could be magnified.

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Questions?

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