John 9

Verse 1: Chapter 8 ends with the phrase “passed by” and chapter 9 begins with those words. Did the events of chapters 9–10 happen as Jesus was leaving the temple precincts, or did they occur later? (See verses 2 and 14 for some clues.)

Why is it important to the story that the man has been blind since birth?

As you read the story, ask yourself: “How we are like the blind man: in what ways are we or have we been blind from birth? How do we come to see? What do we see when we have been healed?”

Verses 2–5: How could the disciples believe that the man’s sins could be responsible for his blindness since he was born blind?

What do you make of the fact that over and over again we see Jesus ignoring general, hypothetical, and legal questions such as the question that the disciples ask? (See, for example, Luke 10:25ff. and John 8:3ff.) What does he deal with instead?

How does Jesus explain the man’s blindness? Does he say that is giving complete explanation? As you read the rest of this story, ask yourself what works of God are made
manifest through this healing. What night might Jesus be speaking of in verse 4?

Light is that by which we see things and which makes it possible for us to do our work. Is Jesus the light by which we see the world? What would it mean for that to be true? Given the symbolism of verse 4–5, what can we conclude will be the case if we do not see the world by his light?

**Verses 6–7:** Do you see any symbolic meaning in the spit and the clay with which Jesus anoints the man’s eyes?

The Siloam pool (also translated as “the waters of Shiloah” in Isaiah 8:6) was the pool from which the water for the Feast of the Tabernacles was drawn and that Jesus seems to have used symbolically in his sermon at that feast. (See John 7:37–38.) Is that relevant to understanding this story?

Why does John stop to tell us that the name Siloam means “sent”? (That etymology is perhaps inaccurate, but it is the one that those listening would have assumed.) Does the name have anything to do with the story? Is the comparison to Elijah sending Namaan to wash in the river Jordan (2 Kings 5) intentional?

**Verses 8–12:** Who is questioning the man who has been healed? The Greek word translated neighbor in verse 8 means, etymologically, “one who shares the earth or land.” It and related words are most commonly used to speak of locality. John tells us that these are the people who lived around the blind man. Who else is asking?

What is the people’s discussion like in verse 9?
In verse 11 the man describes Jesus as “a man that is called Jesus.” What does this tell us about the healed man’s relation to Jesus?

Why might those who question him want to know where Jesus is (verse 12)?

**Verses 13–17:** Why do the man’s interrogators take him to the Pharisees? Which Pharisees might that have been?

Why does John think it is important to tell us that Jesus performed this miracle on the Sabbath? Why does Jesus do so many of his miracles on the Sabbath?

What division do we see in verse 16, and what does that tell us about these events? What does it suggest about the Pharisees?

In verse 17, why do they keep badgering the man who was healed? How does the man’s answer compare with his description of Jesus at the beginning of verse 11?

What does the statement in verse 17 tell us about how the man’s understanding has changed? What has brought about that change? Is the man’s change of understanding perhaps one of the godly works that is to be shown by his healing? How does our understanding of Jesus and our relation to him change?

**Verses 18–23:** Notice that those referred to as “the Pharisees” are now referred to as “the Jews” in verse 18. Since we know that not all Jews were Pharisees, what does that suggest us about the term “the Jews” in John’s Gospel?

Why do the Pharisees ask his parents about the man, and why do his parents hold back from saying how he was healed? Being blind, the man would have already been ritually outcast;
now that he is healed, he is in danger of continuing to be outcast. How might the Pharisees have put people out of the synagogue? (Formal excommunication seems to have been rare at this time.) Do we ever put people out of the Church unjustly? In what ways?

**Verses 24–27:** What is going on in verse 24?

When the Pharisees say that Jesus is a sinner, what are they saying about him?

Why does the man stand fast (verse 25)? Why not simply do as they’ve asked and give God the praise? What would be the harm?

What do we see about the man’s understanding of the Pharisees in verse 27? What does the word also in the man’s question of the Pharisees (verse 27) suggest?

**Verses 28–29:** Compare what the Pharisees say in response to John 1:17. What point is John making in these two verses? By what light do the Pharisees see? To what are they blind?

**Verses 30–34:** What gives the man the courage to argue with the Pharisees as he does? What does he find amazing (marvellous in the King James Version)? Has his understanding of Jesus changed since he declared Jesus to be a prophet in verse 17?

How do the Pharisees explain the man’s blindness (verse 34)? Is it significant that they give an answer to the disciples’ question but Jesus did not?

**Verses 35–38:** Why does Jesus search out the man?
A better translation of the Greek word translated believe in verses 35 and 36 would be “trust in.”

What does verse 36 tell us about the man’s understanding of Jesus?

How do you think the man is using the word lord in verse 36? Is he using it differently in verse 38? What explains the change in understanding that we see in these few verses?

**Verse 39:** Explain Jesus’s summary of the meaning of this event in your own words.

**Verses 40–41:** Under the circumstances, it is difficult to believe that the Pharisees didn’t know whether Jesus was talking about them. Why, then, do they ask whether Jesus is calling them blind?

Why does saying “we see” mean that their sin remains? What would have taken away that sin?

**John 10**

As you read how Jesus is compared to a shepherd and to a door, ask yourself how these two comparisons are connected to the event of chapter 9. How do they continue the same theme?

**Verses 1–6:** One scholar suggests that “verily, verily” in verse 1, which literally is “amen, amen,” is used when Jesus is going to talk about something that he has already spoken of and he is going to expand on what he said before. Assuming that is true, where have we already seen this teaching, and how does Jesus expand on it? (Compare John 8:47 with verse 4.)
What point is Jesus making by talking about thieves and robbers in verses 1–2? (The distinction between thief and robber is similar to our distinction between shoplifter and armed robber.)

Do you think that Jesus has Ezekiel 34:1–16 in mind when he tells this parable? How would the Pharisees have responded to that comparison had they heard it?

**Verses 7–19:** In the past Jesus has been content to teach the disciples what his parables meant, but to leave the Pharisees in ignorance. Why does he now tell them explicitly what he meant?

How can Jesus be both the gate and the shepherd in the parable? (See verses 7 and 11.) Does the fact that he can be both teach us something about how to interpret parables?

In verse 8, who are “all that ever came before me”?

How would his listeners have understood verse 11? How do we understand it?

Who might Jesus be talking about when he refers to the hireling in verses 12–13? What does verse 13 say distinguishes the real shepherd from the hireling? For whom is the hireling concerned? When are we hirelings rather than shepherds?

The word translated good in verse 14 means not only “good” but also “morally praiseworthy” and “noble.” What makes Jesus the good shepherd?

We understand verse 16 as referring to the descendants of Lehi, but how would the Pharisees have understood what Jesus says here? How would the disciples and the early Church understand this verse?
How do you explain the difference between verse 16 and Matthew 15:24?

There is a wordplay in Greek at the end of verse 16. We can translate that wordplay approximately like this: “There shall be one shepherd, one shepherd.” What point is Jesus making with that wordplay?

How are verses 15 and 17 related to each other?

In verse 18, to what does “this commandment” refer? To what he has said in verses 17–18 or to something else?

Almost the whole of the Pharisees’ religious focus was on the commandments. How is Jesus teaching them something different in this parable and its explanation? What is he teaching them? How might that teaching help us understand what it means to be obedient?

**Verses 19–21:** Once again we see the division among the Jews, in other words, among the community leaders. Why does John think it is important that we know about that division?

**Verses 22–30:** The Feast of Dedication (known today as Hanukkah) typically occurs in December. It celebrates the rededication of the temple altar by the Maccabees in the second century BC. It was also called the Feast of Lights, ostensibly in remembrance of the oil that miraculously continued to burn in the temple candelabra even after it should have burned out, but (according to Josephus) more in recognition of the freedom that the Jews gained, “the light of liberty.”

Several months have passed since the events of chapters 7–8. Perhaps that time passed between chapters 8 and 9.
Perhaps it passed after the parable of the Good Shepherd and its discussion (John 10:1–21). Why does John juxtapose these events that occur at different times?

What question do the leaders have (verse 24)? Jesus has yet to publicly declare that he is the Christ, in other words, the Messiah. Why do they demand that he tell them whether he is? Do they really want to know, or might they have another motive?

How is “the Jews”’ demand like the demand of Jesus’s brothers (John 7:3–5)? How might the demands be different?

When Jesus says “I told you” in verse 25, what is he talking about? What has he told them? How has he told them?

Why is it important to tell these questioners that no one can take Jesus’s sheep from him (verses 28–29)?

Verse 30 seems to be offered as an explanation of verses 28–29. How does it explain them?

**Verses 31–32:** What do you make of the irony of Jesus’s response in verse 32 to their threat to stone him in verse 31?

**Verses 33–39:** In verses 34–36, Jesus defends himself against the charge of blasphemy. What is his argument? (Compare Psalm 82:6.)

The word translated *sanctified* in verse 36 could also be translated *dedicated*. It is the same word used in the scripture for the Hanukkah lesson in the synagogue, Numbers 7:1. How is what Jesus teaches here related to the feast being celebrated?

What is Jesus telling the leaders in the first clause of verse 38?
How do Jesus’s works show that the Father and the Son are in each other? Given what we see in these verses, what does it mean to say that the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father?

**Verses 40–42:** John begins the story of Jesus’s public ministry at the place on the Jordan where John was baptizing. He ends the story of Jesus’s public ministry by telling us that Jesus returned to that spot. Why does he go back to the site of his baptism before he begins the final stage of his ministry, the stage that culminates in his death and resurrection?