

Daily Bible Study Commentary by Pastor Steve

We're excited to have you digging deeper into the Word. The best way to use this study guide is to read the Bible verse(s) first, then Pastor Steve's commentary. God bless you.

John 8:56-59

vs56-59: Then Jesus made a statement that simply stunned His opponents. He said, "Abraham, your father, rejoiced [in his spirit] that he might see My day, and he saw [it] and was glad" (literal). Jesus may have intended these words to mean that Abraham prophetically looked into the future and saw that God would send His Son to die for our sins. That moment of "seeing" may have occurred when Abraham offered a ram instead of his son, Isaac, on Mt. Moriah (Ge 22:7-14). But Jesus' opponents took His words literally. They said, "You are not yet fifty years, and you have seen Abraham?" To which Jesus replied, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham came into being, I am" (literal).

John 8:56-59

vs56-59 (continued): They told Him it wasn't possible; He wasn't old enough to have seen Abraham. They asked how He could say that He had. And whether or not His opponents had misunderstood what He meant by His original statement, Jesus answered their question. How was it possible for Him to have known a man who had died twenty centuries earlier? The answer was: He was older than Abraham, far older (Jn 1:15). Like the One who spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Ex 3:13-14), or perhaps because He was the One who spoke to Moses from the burning bush, Jesus applied to Himself one of the greatest statements of self-revelation made by God in the entire Bible: He used the term "I am" which God used to reveal His eternal nature.

John 8:56-59

vs56-59 (continued): It means He is timeless; He doesn't have a beginning or an end. He always is. This is a quality possessed only by God. So either Jesus' statement is true, or it is breath-taking blasphemy. And His opponents chose to believe it was blasphemy and picked up stones to stone Him as a blasphemer (Lev 24:16). Then John says, "Jesus was hidden and went forth out of the temple" (literal). His followers may have hidden Him by surrounding Him, so He could slip out through the crowd and leave the temple.

John 9:1-2

vs1-2: As He walked out of the temple Jesus passed by a beggar (v8) who had been blind from birth. Apparently He stopped and looked at the man which drew His disciples' attention as well. The man must have been a familiar face to those who regularly came to the temple. Either his life-long blindness was obvious due to a physical deformity, or his personal history was well known because the disciples knew his condition extended back to his birth. And it was the fact that the man had been born with that disability that raised a moral question in the minds of the disciples. They asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents so that he might be born blind?" (literal). Their question reveals a common religious explanation for the cause of suffering: God sends suffering to punish people for their sins, so suffering proves that there must be sin. Based on that explanation, this man's blindness would therefore have to be the result of something he or his parents had done wrong.

John 9:1-2

vs1-2 (continued): It is not easy to assign moral guilt to a child still in the womb. One has to speculate that an unborn child is capable of deliberate disobedience. Even more farfetched is the thought that God might be punishing an unborn child for sin he or she was going to commit later in life. To justify the first suggestion, that an unborn child is capable of deliberate disobedience, someone may have pointed to the struggle between Jacob and Esau in the womb (Ge 25:22-26). There is no biblical example to justify the suggestion that God might punish someone for a sin they had not yet committed. But when looking for the cause of the man's blindness, the disciples did not stop there. They also asked if the guilt rested with the parents. In other words, was the child the innocent victim of his parent's sin? To justify this thought biblically they may have pointed to the death of David and Bathsheba's first baby (2Sa 12:13-23) or to the covenant God made with Israel which warned that the guilt of one generation might bring calamity on future generations (Ex 20:5-6; Nu 14-18; Dt 5:9; Ne 9:2). Didn't Jeremiah lament that his generation bore the punishment due their fathers, as well as their own (La 5:7)?

Daily Bible Study Commentary by Pastor Steve

We're excited to have you digging deeper into the Word. The best way to use this study guide is to read the Bible verse(s) first, then Pastor Steve's commentary. God bless you.

John 9:3-4

vs3-4: Regardless of how the disciples came to the conclusion that the man's disability was the result of someone's sin, their question was intended to do more than assign blame. They wanted to understand the spiritual cause of this suffering, probably so they could avoid having such punishment done to them. They were really asking, "Why did this happen?" And Jesus immediately and bluntly rejected both of their suggested answers. He said, "Neither this man sinned nor his parents" (literal). His message was clear: They were trying to blame innocent people. The child and his parents were guiltless in this matter. But both were victims of a tragedy God was about to correct. Then Jesus said this, "But so that the works of God in him might be revealed (illuminated by having light to shine on them). We must work the works of the One who sent Me while it is day; night comes when no one is able to work" (literal). He didn't say "so that the works of God might be revealed in him;" He said "so that the works of God in him might be revealed." The difference is important.

John 9:3-4

vs3-4 (continued): Earlier in His ministry when Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, He spoke to him about God "working" in someone's heart to prepare that person to believe in Him (Jesus Christ). He told Nicodemus that the person who "does truth comes to the Light" (Jn 3:21). Then using words very similar to what He was now saying about this blind man, He explained that when a person comes to Him their response reveals that their works (deeds) had been "worked in God." That means that God prepared that person for the moment of revelation, for the moment when they would see the "Light." If this is the correct meaning of Jesus' words, then He never answered the disciples' question. He never entered into a discussion on the subject of why. He left that a mystery. And if so, then it's very important to note that He didn't say, as this passage is so often interpreted to mean, that God made the baby blind in the womb so that many years later when Jesus passed by He could open those eyes.

John 9:3-4

vs3-4 (continued): If Jesus' words indeed mean that God made the baby blind in the womb so He could perform this miracle, then the lesson here is that this particular man was chosen to suffer so that he might glorify God by receiving his sight. As we read on we'll discover that the man became a disciple through this encounter, and his eternal life was surely worth far more to him than those years of blindness. But if Jesus didn't say that, if that was not the lesson He was teaching, if what He actually said was "so that the works of God in him might be revealed," then Jesus wasn't explaining why this man was blind, but why He stopped to minister to him. After all, this man was only one of many beggars that lined those streets.

John 9:3-4

vs3-4 (continued): When Jesus passed the man He "saw" something in the Spirit. The Father pointed the man out and revealed that He had been at work preparing him to believe. So Jesus stopped because He knew the man, though blind to natural light, was ready to receive spiritual light (v39). He knew the miracle He was about to perform would reveal the "works" the Father had already done inside the man's heart. He knew he would respond in faith and become His disciple (vs27-28, 38).

John 9:4

v4: Another key to understanding this passage is the fact that the subject of Jesus' statement in this verse is plural, not singular. Jesus said, "It is necessary for us to work..." or it might be translated, "We must work..." What's surprising here is that He did not say, "I must work..." If this blind man was a special case whom God blinded in the womb, so Jesus could give Him sight, then surely Jesus would have said, "I must work the works of the One who sent Me..." But He didn't. He said "we" which means He was modeling something He expected His disciples to continue doing after He ascended into heaven. He had been vigilantly watching for the Father to show Him people to whom He was to minister. In the same way, He wanted them to be vigilant to watch for the Father's leading so that they too would do the "works of the One who sent Me." Then He added a note of urgency. He told them that they must do these works "while it is day, [for] night comes when no one is able to work" (literal). In other words, He told them to seize every opportunity the Father showed them because such opportunities pass away quickly. Seasons of spiritual opportunity often come unexpectedly and then pass away just as quickly. Jesus compared those opportunities to daylight and their absence to night.