

JOHN CHAPTERS 8:31-9:41

There is growing opposition to Jesus, even among those who supposedly believe. Obviously, their faith does not go deep enough. They are not sufficiently open to Jesus and they do not trust his relationship with the Father and his authority to speak the truth of God.

8: 31-59 - JESUS AND ABRAHAM

Even though many supposedly believe in Jesus (vs. 30), it soon becomes apparent that they really do not. Jesus declares that to believe in him means that a person will continue in Jesus' word. They will receive the truth, and the truth will make them free. The people he is addressing, however, are proud. They claim to be children of Abraham (children of the covenant with God) and therefore do not understand how they need to be freed from anything. Jesus claims that they need to be freed from sin to which all people are slaves. And more, he claims that he is the one who can free from sin.

The people react viciously and want to kill him. This is more evidence to Jesus that they do not have God living in them. To have God or Abraham as their true father, they would recognize the truth in Jesus and would respond receptively and affirmatively to his word. By wanting to kill Jesus they show that their true father is the devil, and they prefer to live in lies rather than in the truth that would set them free.

Jesus also claims to have been alive before Abraham, and in stating that 'before Abraham was, I am....' (58) he is claiming to be God like God his Abba ("I am" - Exodus 3:14).

9: 1-41 - HEALING OF A MAN BORN BLIND

The irony of this whole passage is that a man born blind is made to see while those who claim to see are really blind (spiritually speaking toward Jesus).

In those days, anyone born with a disability would have been thought to have some moral imperfection for which the disability was a consequence (either the person or his family). Jesus rejects this view and instead posits the view that any illness or challenge in life is an opportunity for God to be glorified. How is God glorified in your life in the face of challenges you have faced and may be facing now?

The religious leaders take issue with the fact that the healing is performed on the Sabbath. Their argument is that because Jesus has done this on the Sabbath and broken the law, he cannot be from God but from the devil. According to the man who is healed (and others) such a miracle or 'sign' actually points to the fact that Jesus is from God. So who is right?

The religious leaders claim to be followers of Moses rather than Jesus (Moses is greater) and they discredit the man's testimony about Jesus because he (the man) was born disabled and therefore born in sin. His word cannot count for much in the eyes of God.

The man believes in Jesus and worships him. Jesus' judgement which he declares openly is that those who are born blind are made to see (because they believe in Jesus) while those who claim to see are really blind (the religious leaders). In fact, ignorance won't condemn a person. Wilful ignorance, disbelief and refusal, on the other hand, will. By confronting people with a decision about him, Jesus brings the judgement of God to bear on people. How they respond to Jesus will determine the outcome of their lives, eternally. Choosing against the love of God is choosing evil and death. Sitting on the fence is a choice too.

Life is about what happens in the face of what we cannot control or determine (e.g. being born blind), but it is also about what choices and decisions we make in the face of that. Such choices and decisions have consequences, and God will not protect us from the consequences. But we can learn and grow through whatever we live through (the circumstances beyond our control and the consequences of bad choices and flawed decisions). Jesus is the truth of God's eternal, resurrection love. Believing in him is choosing to follow him and his way. Refusing to believe in him is turning our backs to his way and choosing other ways – e.g. self-interest, greed, our own advantage over others, indifference or lack of concern for the world around us. All such choices have serious consequences for the state of our souls. That's what Jesus is confronting the people around him with. Once he appears before them and addresses them, they have to decide about him. Indecision is a decision. Do we believe in him or do we not? Are we prepared to follow his way for our lives, even when it's inconvenient and costly and we are tempted to choose alternative ways?