

Gospel of John: Chapters 7–9

A Verse-by-Verse Teaching Commentary

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Chapter 7

John 7:1–13 — The Brothers' Challenge

VERSES 1–9

“After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. So his brothers said to him, ‘Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing.’”

The geographical shift back to Galilee at the opening of chapter 7 is not retreat but strategic patience. The Jewish authorities have already determined to kill Jesus (5:18), and he will not precipitate the crisis before the appointed time. The Feast of Tabernacles — the great autumn harvest festival, the most joyful of Israel’s three pilgrimage feasts — draws the entire nation to Jerusalem. It commemorated the wilderness wandering, with worshippers living in shelters (sukkoth) for seven days, and included a daily water-pouring ceremony at the Pool of Siloam and nightly torch-lighting that illuminated the entire city. Both ceremonies will become the explicit backdrop for Jesus’ greatest proclamations in chapters 7 and 8.

His brothers’ challenge carries the tone of worldly counsel: go public, build your following, use the national stage. Their advice is not wicked on its surface — it is the logic of ordinary ambition. But John’s editorial aside is devastating: “For not even his brothers believed in him.” The family who grew up in his household, who witnessed his life from childhood, did not believe. This is the same scandal John introduced in the Prologue: “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (1:11). Proximity to Jesus does not produce faith; faith is the work of the Father.

Skenopegia: the Feast of Booths / Tabernacles — the most jubilant of the three pilgrimage feasts; also called Sukkoth

VERSES 6–10

“Jesus said to them, ‘My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.’”

The word translated “time” here is *kairos* — the appointed moment, the right season, not mere clock time (*chronos*). Jesus’ entire ministry is governed by a divine *kairos*: there is a moment when the world will see him, when he will be lifted up, when the hour of his glory arrives. That hour is not yet. His brothers, unbelieving, have no such appointed moment governing their lives — any time is their time because they operate outside the divine calendar. Jesus goes to the feast, but privately, not publicly — not because of cowardice but because manifestation before the appointed hour would contradict the Father’s plan.

kairos: appointed time, the right moment — contrasted with *chronos* (sequential time); Jesus’ life is governed by divine *kairos*

VERSES 11–13

“The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, ‘Where is he?’ And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, ‘He is a good man,’ others said, ‘No, he is leading the people astray.’ Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly about him.”

The Feast is already charged with expectation around Jesus. John captures the divided murmuring with precision: “good man” vs. “leading the people astray.” These are the only two options the crowd considers — and both fall short of who he actually is. The absence of any neutral position is itself significant: Jesus consistently polarizes. Fear silences open discussion, but it cannot suppress the question of his identity. The crowd’s whispered debate at the Feast is a microcosm of John’s entire Gospel: who is this man?

John 7:14–24 — Teaching in the Temple: The Source of Authority

VERSES 14–18

“About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. The Jews therefore marveled, saying, ‘How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?’ Jesus answered them, ‘My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.’”

The crowd’s amazement at Jesus’ learning reflects the rabbinic educational system. Formal scribal training required years of study under recognized teachers, producing a chain of authorized transmission (*semichah*).

Jesus has no such credentials — he trained as a craftsman in Nazareth, not in a recognized rabbinic school. The question is really about authority: by whose authorization does he teach?

Jesus' answer cuts to the root of the challenge. His teaching does not originate with himself; it comes from the Father who sent him. This is not false modesty — it is the Christological principle that governs everything Jesus says and does in John. The Son speaks what the Father has given him to speak (12:49–50). The test he offers is existential: anyone who genuinely wills to do God's will shall know whether this teaching is from God. Knowledge of divine truth comes not from academic credential but from moral alignment — from the willingness to obey.

VERSES 19–24

“Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?... If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

Jesus presses the internal contradiction in their legal reasoning. The Mosaic law required circumcision on the eighth day even if it fell on a Sabbath — the rabbis had already established that one commandment could override another when they conflicted. Yet they condemn Jesus for healing an entire man on the Sabbath. The logic is devastating: if a partial work on one part of the body is permitted to fulfill the covenant sign, how much more is a total restoration of the whole man permitted? Jesus calls them to “right judgment” — judgment that penetrates beneath surface legal formalism to the intention of the law itself. The law's purpose is life, not prohibition.

John 7:25–36 — Is This the Christ?

VERSES 25–30

“Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, ‘Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.’”

The Jerusalem crowd brings a popular messianic tradition: the Messiah would appear suddenly, from an unknown origin. Jesus turns this tradition on its head with characteristic irony: yes, they know where he is from — Nazareth, the son of Joseph. But they do not know where he is truly from. “I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.” The deeper origin — the eternal relationship with the Father — is precisely what they cannot perceive because they do not know the Father. The attempt to arrest him fails because “his hour had not yet come” — the divine *kairos* holds even the hands of those who wish him harm.

VERSES 31–36

“Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, ‘When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?’”

Belief spreads even in the charged atmosphere of official opposition. The crowd's question is rhetorically powerful: if signs authenticate a messenger from God, and this man's signs are unparalleled, what more would a Christ need to do? Many come to faith on this logic. Jesus responds with a word about his departure: “I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.” The Jews misunderstand: will he go to the Diaspora, to teach Greeks? The irony is characteristic of John: they are far closer to the truth than they know. He is indeed going to a place they cannot follow — back to the Father through the cross.

John 7:37–44 — Rivers of Living Water

VERSES 37–39

“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”’ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

The timing is everything. The “last day, the great day” of Tabernacles was the seventh day (or perhaps the eighth, the closing assembly), when the water-pouring ceremony — in which priests carried water from the Pool of Siloam in golden vessels and poured it at the base of the altar while the Hallel psalms were sung — reached its climax. Into this moment of liturgical longing, Jesus stands and cries out. The word for “cried out” (ekrazen) is emphatic — a loud, public proclamation, not a private conversation. Every element of the ceremony — water, thirst, the ceremony evoking the water from the rock in the wilderness — finds its fulfillment in him.

John’s explanatory note is pneumatologically decisive: the rivers of living water that will flow from the believer are the Holy Spirit, who had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified. The Spirit’s outpouring (at Pentecost) is contingent on the glorification of the Son — meaning his death, resurrection, and ascension. The gift of the Spirit is the fruit of the cross. This is why Jesus in 16:7 says it is to the disciples’ advantage that he go away: without the departure, the Paraclete cannot come.

ekrazen: cried out, shouted — a public, urgent proclamation; the same word used for Jesus’ cry from the cross (19:30 in some readings)

pneuma: spirit, breath, wind — the Spirit who was not yet given because the glorification was not yet complete

VERSES 40–44

“When they heard these words, some of the people said, ‘This really is the Prophet.’ Others said, ‘This is the Christ.’ But some said, ‘Is the Christ to come from Galilee?’”

The crowd fragments along the lines of their messianic categories. “The Prophet” alludes to Deuteronomy 18:15 — Moses’ promise of a prophet like himself to come. “The Christ” points to the expected Davidic king. The objection about Galilee reflects a genuine misunderstanding: they know he is from Galilee but do not know he was born in Bethlehem, the city of David (cf. Micah 5:2). The irony again is sharp: the very objection that would seem to disqualify him is based on incomplete information. Each category the crowd applies is true in a qualified sense and insufficient in a total sense. The whole of John’s Gospel is the answer to the question “who is this?”

John 7:45–53 — The Officers Return — Nicodemus Speaks

VERSES 45–52

“The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why did you not bring him?’ The officers answered, ‘No one ever spoke like this man!’ The Pharisees answered them, ‘Have you also been deceived?’”

The officers sent to arrest Jesus return empty-handed and bearing testimony. “No one ever spoke like this man!” — this is not a theological confession but it is a truthful one. Even those sent to silence Jesus are arrested by the power of his words. The Pharisees respond with contempt for both the officers and the crowd: the people who do not know the law are “accursed” (epikataratos). It is a stunning expression of the religious establishment’s disdain for ordinary people — the very people Jesus consistently seeks out and welcomes.

Nicodemus — last seen coming to Jesus by night in chapter 3 — speaks up from within the council. His defense is procedural and careful: “Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?” He does not yet confess Jesus publicly, but he uses the law they claim to honor to demand fairness. The council’s response dismisses him with the same Galilean slur they applied to Jesus: “Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.” The irony is that a prophet had arisen — indeed, more than a prophet. Nicodemus falls silent. His journey of faith, which began in the darkness of chapter 3, will not be complete until he assists with Jesus’ burial in chapter 19.

Chapter 8

John 7:53–8:11 — The Woman Caught in Adultery

VERSES 1–6

“The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, ‘Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?’ This they said to test him.”

A textual note is necessary: this passage (7:53–8:11), known as the pericope adulterae, is absent from the earliest and most reliable Greek manuscripts and appears to have circulated as an independent tradition before being inserted at this point (and in some manuscripts, at other locations). Most scholars believe it was not part of John’s original composition. Nevertheless, the church has consistently received it as canonical and as authentic in its portrayal of Jesus’ character, and it is treated here as part of the received text.

The scene is a trap, not a trial. The Mosaic law required the death penalty for adultery (Deuteronomy 22:22–24), but Roman law had removed from the Jewish authorities the power of capital punishment (18:31). If Jesus endorses the stoning, he is in conflict with Rome. If he forbids it, he is in conflict with Moses. The woman is not a person in this calculation — she is a theological instrument. The man caught with her is notably absent, a detail John does not need to name for the hypocrisy to be evident.

VERSES 6–8

“Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground... And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, ‘Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.’ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground.”

This is the only record in the Gospels of Jesus writing anything. What he wrote has generated enormous speculation, but John gives us no content — the act itself is the point. His silence and writing force the accusers to continue pressing: they cannot simply wait him out. When he finally speaks, the response is not a legal ruling but a moral question that turns the trap back on the questioners. “Let him who is without sin” does not abolish the law’s requirement; it applies the law’s full standard to those who would administer it. The accusers are disarmed not by legal cleverness but by moral clarity.

They depart “one by one, beginning with the older ones.” The oldest leave first — perhaps because they have lived longest with their own failures. Conscience, it seems, works more powerfully on the experienced than on the young. Jesus is left alone with the woman. The one who alone qualifies to cast the first stone casts none.

VERSES 10–11

“Jesus stood up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.’”

“Neither do I condemn you” and “go, and from now on sin no more” must always be held together. Grace without holiness is sentimentality; holiness without grace is condemnation. Jesus offers both in a single breath. He does not minimize what she has done — “sin no more” acknowledges the reality of the transgression. But he grants her what no court could give: acquittal from the one who has the authority to condemn and the will not to. This is the Gospel in miniature: the one who has no sin becomes the shield of the one who does.

John 8:12–20 — I Am the Light of the World

VERSE 12

“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

The second of the seven great I AM + predicate sayings. The setting remains the Feast of Tabernacles, with its nightly torch-lighting ceremony that filled the Court of Women with massive golden menorahs and illuminated Jerusalem so brilliantly it could be seen for miles. Into this blaze of light — itself evoking the pillar of fire that guided Israel in the wilderness — Jesus declares himself the true Light. The imagery runs through the entire Gospel: chapter 1 introduces him as the Light that shines in the darkness and the darkness has not

overcome (1:4–5); chapter 3 warns that people love darkness rather than light because their works are evil (3:19); chapter 9 will demonstrate the claim by restoring sight to a man born blind.

The promise is to the one who “follows” him — the language of discipleship, of ongoing, active trust. The result is not merely illumination but “the light of life.” Light and life are permanently linked in John. To have the Light is to have Life; to walk in darkness is to remain in the realm of death. The antithesis is not intellectual but existential: not merely right beliefs vs. wrong beliefs, but the fundamental orientation of one’s whole being toward or away from God.

phōs tou kosmou: the light of the world — echoes Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6 (the Servant as a light to the nations); Jesus claims the role of the Isaianic Servant

VERSES 13–20

“So the Pharisees said to him, ‘You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.’ Jesus answered, ‘Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going.’”

The Pharisees deploy the Jewish legal principle that self-testimony is inadmissible (Mishnah Ketubot 2:9). Jesus’ response operates on a different plane entirely. Ordinary self-testimony is unreliable because ordinary witnesses do not have privileged access to the truth about themselves. Jesus does — because he knows his own origin and destination in a way no other person can. More than that, he is not testifying alone: the Father who sent him also testifies, making two witnesses in the juridical sense. The Pharisees cannot hear the Father’s testimony because they do not know the Father. The irony is that their very inability to recognize Jesus is evidence of their ignorance of the God they claim to serve.

John 8:21–30 — From Below and From Above

VERSES 21–24

“So he said to them again, ‘I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.’... He said to them, ‘You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.’”

The fundamental ontological divide between Jesus and his interlocutors is stated with maximum clarity. “You are from below; I am from above.” This is not a statement of moral superiority but of origin: they belong to the realm of created existence, bound by sin and death; he belongs to the uncreated realm of the Father. The consequence is direct: without believing “that I am he,” they will die in their sins. The Greek phrase here — *hoti egō eimi*, “that I am” — has no predicate. It is the absolute *ego eimi*, the divine name from Exodus 3:14 (LXX: *egō eimi ho ōn*). To “believe that I AM” is to believe in his divine identity — not merely his messianic role.

egō eimi (absolute): I AM — without predicate; the divine name from Exodus 3:14 (LXX); occurs three times in John 8 (vv. 24, 28, 58), each time deepening the claim

VERSES 25–30

“They said to him, ‘Who are you?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Just what I have been telling you from the beginning.... When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.’”

The “lifting up” of the Son of Man — *hypsōthē* — carries the same double meaning as in 3:14 and 12:32: the physical lifting up on the cross and the exaltation of the Son in glory. The crucifixion itself will be the moment of revelation: “then you will know that I am he.” The death that his enemies intend as his destruction will be the act that discloses his identity most fully. John’s Gospel is the only Gospel in which the cross is not primarily a scene of abandonment and suffering but the moment of glorification. “As he was saying these things, many believed in him.” Even in the midst of maximum controversy, the word of Jesus gathers a harvest.

John 8:31–47 — The Truth Will Set You Free

VERSES 31–36

“So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”

One of the most quoted sentences in Western culture, and one of the most widely misread. The freedom Jesus promises is not freedom of thought, freedom from oppression, or intellectual liberation — though these are real goods. The freedom is freedom from sin. The context makes this unmistakable: “Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.” Sin is not merely behavior — it is a form of bondage. The one who habitually sins (the present participle *poiōn hamartian* indicates ongoing practice) is enslaved to a power outside themselves.

The crowd responds with the claim of Abrahamic descent — they have never been enslaved to anyone. The claim is historically puzzling (Egypt, Babylon, Persia, and currently Rome), but the deeper issue is the claim of spiritual inheritance. Jesus does not dispute the biological descent; he disputes the moral lineage. If they were Abraham’s children in the sense that matters, they would do Abraham’s works — they would welcome the one whom God has sent, as Abraham welcomed the divine visitors in Genesis 18. The freedom the Son gives — “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” — is not a metaphor for human liberation. It is the actual emancipation from the power of sin and death that only the Son can accomplish.

menō: to abide, remain, dwell — the key Johannine verb of permanent relational union; discipleship is defined by continuing in the word

elētheutheros: free, liberated — the freedom Jesus gives is not political or psychological but ontological: freedom from the dominion of sin

VERSES 37–47

“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Jesus’ language escalates to its sharpest point. The exchange of fathers — Abraham vs. the devil — is not an ethnic slur but a theological analysis of the will. The devil’s character is defined by two things: murder and lying. Both have been present in this confrontation with Jesus — they seek to kill him (murder) and they deny the truth he speaks (lying). Jesus is not accusing them of conscious Satanism; he is exposing the nature of the spiritual allegiance that their rejection of God’s Son represents. To reject the Word of God who stands before them is to align, however unwittingly, with the one whose nature is the antithesis of that Word.

The reason they cannot hear Jesus is ultimately pneumatological: “Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” Hearing (in John’s sense) is not acoustic but spiritual — it is the receptivity of the regenerate heart. This is not fatalism — the Gospel continues to be proclaimed to all — but it is an explanation of why identical words produce radically different responses in different hearers.

John 8:48–59 — Before Abraham Was, I AM

VERSES 48–51

“The Jews answered him, ‘Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?’ Jesus answered, ‘I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me.... Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.’”

The Samaritan slur (the worst possible insult in a Jewish context, suggesting mixed heritage and heretical religion) and the demonic accusation represent the complete exhaustion of the authorities’ theological repertoire. They have no answer to his arguments, so they attack his person. Jesus does not defend himself against the Samaritan charge; he addresses only the demonic accusation, because it touches on his relationship with the Father. The promise he makes next is breathtaking: “if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” The Greek is a double negative (*ou mē ide thanaton*) — the strongest possible assertion. This is not a promise of biological immortality but of passage through death without experiencing its ultimate horror: final separation from God.

VERSES 52–58

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’”

The argument reaches its absolute summit. The crowd has pressed: Abraham died, the prophets died — are you greater than our father Abraham? Jesus responds first with a reference to Abraham’s anticipation: “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” The rabbinic tradition associated

Abraham's joy at the birth of Isaac (Genesis 17:17, 21:6) with a prophetic glimpse of the Messiah's day. But Jesus' final claim goes infinitely further: "Before Abraham was [born], I am."

The grammar is the exegetical key. Abraham's existence is described with the aorist (*genesthai* — having come into being, a point in time). Jesus' existence is described with the present indicative *ego eimi* — I AM. This is not a claim to have existed before Abraham in a temporal sense only; it is a claim to the timeless, self-existent being that belongs to God alone (cf. Exodus 3:14: "I AM WHO I AM"). The crowd understands exactly what he is saying: they pick up stones to stone him for blasphemy. Jesus has not been misunderstood — he has been understood perfectly and rejected.

prin Abraam *genesthai*, *egō eimi*: Before Abraham came into being [aorist], I AM [present] — the contrast between created becoming and uncreated being; the supreme Christological claim of chapter 8

Chapter 9

John 9:1–12 — The Man Born Blind: The Healing

VERSES 1–5

“As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”

The disciples’ question encapsulates a theological assumption common in Second Temple Judaism: suffering is a consequence of sin, and birth defects might even be caused by sin in the womb (a concept debated in rabbinic literature). The question presents only two options — the man’s sin or his parents’ sin. Jesus refuses both. This is not because the Bible never connects suffering with sin (it does), but because the disciples’ question applies that connection automatically and without evidence. The radical alternative Jesus offers is that this man’s blindness is not primarily about causation at all — it is about destination. The works of God are to be displayed in him.

This reorientation of the question is pastorally and theologically revolutionary. It shifts the focus from “why did this happen?” to “what will God do through this?” It does not explain away suffering, trivialize it, or make the man’s blindness a mere prop. But it insists that no human suffering is beyond the reach of divine purpose. Jesus then adds: “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” The healing that follows is not incidental — it is the enacted demonstration of that claim.

VERSES 6–12

“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 and said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.”

The method is deliberately unusual. Jesus could heal with a word (as in 4:50 and 5:8); here he makes clay from spittle and ground, anoints the man’s eyes, and sends him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. Ancient readers would have recognized the spittle-and-clay as evoking creation itself: in Genesis 2:7 God forms man from the dust of the ground. Jesus is performing a new creation work — giving sight to eyes that never functioned since birth. The Pool of Siloam was the same pool from which the Tabernacles water was drawn for the daily ceremony, and its name (sent) connects directly to Jesus’ own identity as the one sent by the Father. The man washes in the Sent One’s pool and comes back seeing.

He goes, he washes, he comes back seeing. The obedience is simple and the result is total. John notes the neighbors’ confusion — some say “this is he,” others “he is like him” — a small comic detail that underscores how dramatically he has been changed. When asked what happened and who did it, the man gives the clearest account he can: “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.” He knows what happened. He does not yet know who Jesus is. That knowledge will come.

Silōam: Sent — the pool’s name; John’s explanatory parenthesis connects the pool to Jesus’ own identity as the one sent by the Father

John 9:13–23 — The Investigation: Faith Under Pressure

VERSES 13–17

“They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, ‘He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.’”

The Pharisees’ investigation opens a formal judicial proceeding. The Sabbath violation has given them a legal hook — making clay was one of the 39 categories of work forbidden on the Sabbath in rabbinic law. The division within the Pharisees is honest and significant: “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” vs. “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” The logic of the second group is sound: signs authenticate the messenger, and no agent of the devil could perform the work of restoring sight to a man born

blind. When they ask the man his opinion of his healer, he answers without hesitation: “He is a prophet.” His theology is developing in real time.

VERSES 18–23

“The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, ‘Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?’”

Disbelief in the face of clear evidence leads to an escalation of inquiry: perhaps the man was not actually born blind. The parents are summoned. Their testimony is definitive — yes, he is their son, yes, he was born blind — but then they retreat to the limit of what they will risk. For they know that anyone who confessed Jesus as Christ would be put out of the synagogue (*apodynamōōs*).

John’s parenthetical note about excommunication is one of the most socially and historically significant details in the Gospel. The synagogue was not merely a religious institution — it was the center of community life, social identity, commerce, and family connection in the Jewish world. Excommunication meant not just loss of religious standing but effective social death. The parents’ fear is entirely understandable. But it stands in sharp contrast to what their son will do in the next verses. The threat of social death cannot silence the man who has received physical sight — and is about to receive spiritual sight.

apodynamōōs: put out of the synagogue, excommunicated — a formal exclusion from Jewish community life with severe social and economic consequences

John 9:24–34 — The Man’s Unanswerable Testimony

VERSES 24–27

“So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, ‘Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.’ He answered, ‘Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.’”

“One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.” This is one of the most theologically rich sentences in the entire Gospel. In the face of institutional authority, legal pressure, and social threat, the man anchors his testimony in unassailable experience. He cannot meet the Pharisees on the terrain of rabbinic scholarship or legal argumentation. But he has something they cannot touch: the fact of his own transformation. The invitation to “give glory to God” — a formula used in Joshua 7:19 to encourage a confession of wrongdoing — is an attempt to get him to repudiate Jesus. He refuses, not with boldness but with simple honesty.

When they press him again “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” — he responds with increasing confidence and even irony: “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” The man who a few verses ago gave a straightforward factual account is now sparring with the religious elite. The experience of being healed by Jesus — and of testifying to that healing under pressure — is itself forming him into a disciple.

VERSES 28–34

“And they reviled him, saying, ‘You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.’ The man answered, ‘Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.’”

The man’s theological argumentation now surpasses that of his interrogators. He constructs a syllogism from their own premises: God does not listen to sinners; he opened eyes that have been blind from birth (a thing unheard of); therefore, if this man were not from God, he could do nothing. The logic is impeccable. The Pharisees cannot answer it — so they cast him out. “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” Their response is *ad hominem*: they attack the man’s origins (blind from birth = presumed sinner from birth) rather than his argument.

The casting out is the fulfillment of the parents’ fear (v. 22). The threat has now been executed. The man has lost his place in the synagogue, his community, his social world — because he will not deny what happened to him. What he gains in return is what the next section reveals.

John 9:35–41 — Full Sight: The Confession of Faith

VERSES 35–38

“Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ He answered, ‘And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.’ He said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him.”

Jesus hears that the man has been cast out and goes to find him. This movement — Jesus seeking the one who has been excluded because of him — is one of the most quietly powerful moments in the Gospel. The man did not come to Jesus; Jesus came to him. This is the pattern of grace throughout John: Jesus takes the initiative (4:7, 5:6, 6:35).

The question “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” is the first time Jesus has spoken to him since the healing. His answer is not a confession but a question: “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” The readiness of the question is itself faith-in-formation — he is not asking whether to believe but in whom. Jesus’ self-revelation is direct: “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” The physical sight restored in verse 7 now becomes the vehicle for spiritual sight. “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. The Greek (*prosekunesen*) is the word used for the worship of God. The man who began knowing only “the man called Jesus” (v. 11) ends worshipping him as Lord.

prosekunesen: he worshiped — the same word used for the worship of God; the man’s faith reaches its fullest expression in an act of adoration

VERSES 39–41

“Jesus said, ‘For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.’ Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, ‘Are we also blind?’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say “We see,” your guilt remains.’”

The chapter closes with Jesus interpreting its meaning. Chapter 9 is not merely a healing story — it is a parable in action about spiritual sight and blindness. The man who was physically blind now sees — both physically and spiritually. The Pharisees who can physically see are spiritually blind — and are made more so by their encounter with Jesus, because they have seen and refused. Jesus’ coming “for judgment” does not mean his primary purpose is condemnation (cf. 3:17); rather, his very presence enacts a crisis (*krisis* — decision, judgment) that reveals what is already in each heart.

The final exchange is one of the most penetrating statements in the Gospel. Blindness without the knowledge of light carries no guilt: a person who has never heard the Gospel cannot be held accountable for rejecting it. But to claim sight — to claim to be the guardians of revelation, the authoritative teachers of God’s word — and then to reject the one to whom all revelation points is not ignorance. It is culpable refusal. “Your guilt remains.” The Pharisees’ very confidence in their spiritual clarity is the measure of their spiritual danger. This is perhaps the most sober warning in John’s Gospel to those who handle the Word of God without genuine submission to the God of the Word.

krisis: judgment, decision, crisis — Jesus’ coming does not create new guilt but reveals and makes definitive what was already present in the heart’s response to God

End of Commentary: Gospel of John, Chapters 7–9