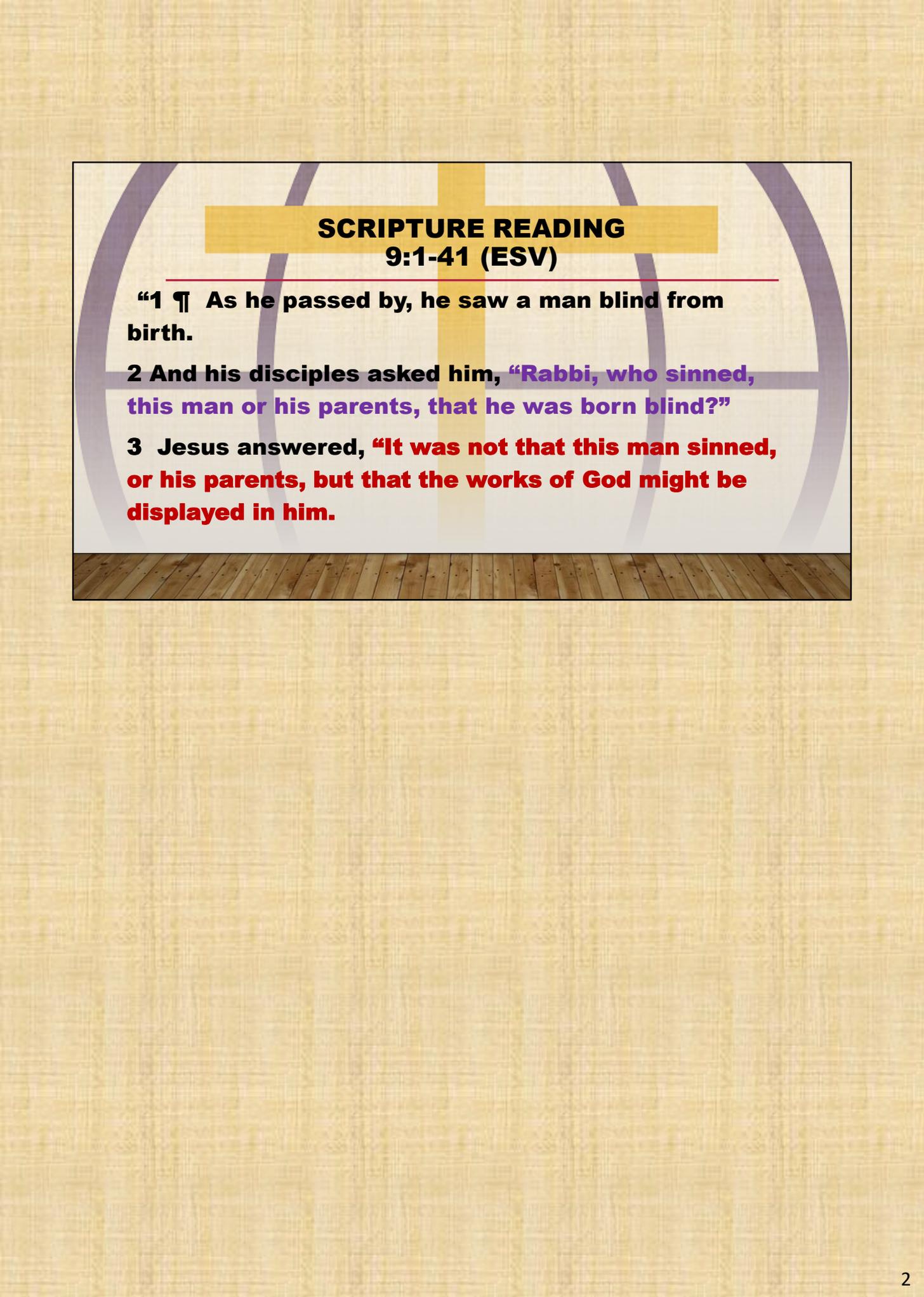


TO KNOW JESUS: TRANSFORMATIVE

GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA

MARCH 22, 2020

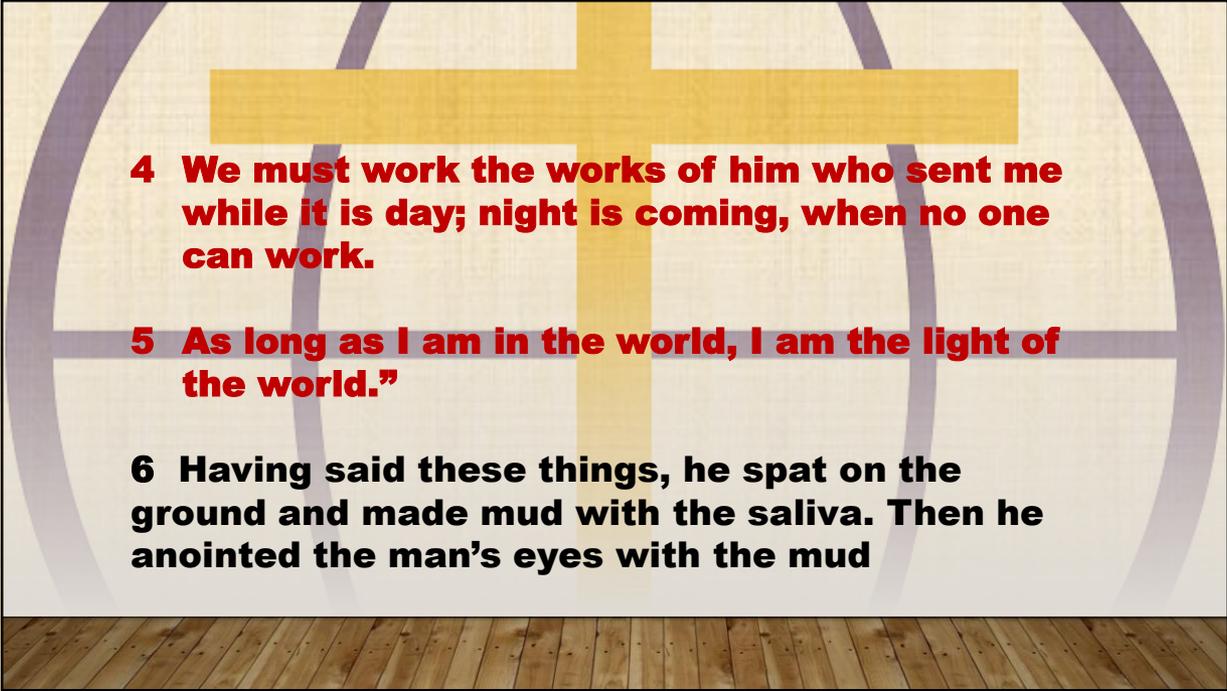


SCRIPTURE READING
9:1-41 (ESV)

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?”

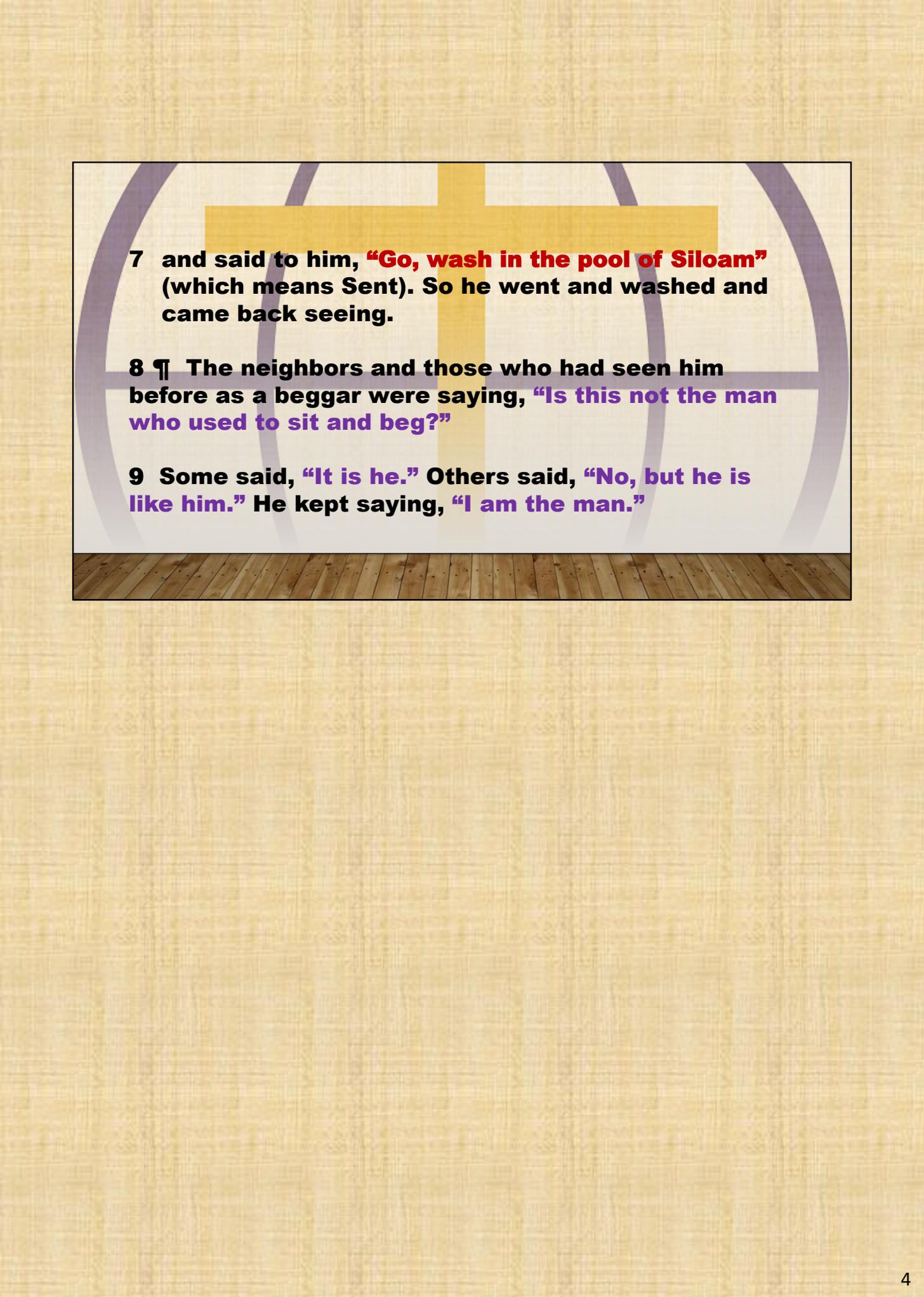
3 Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.



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.”

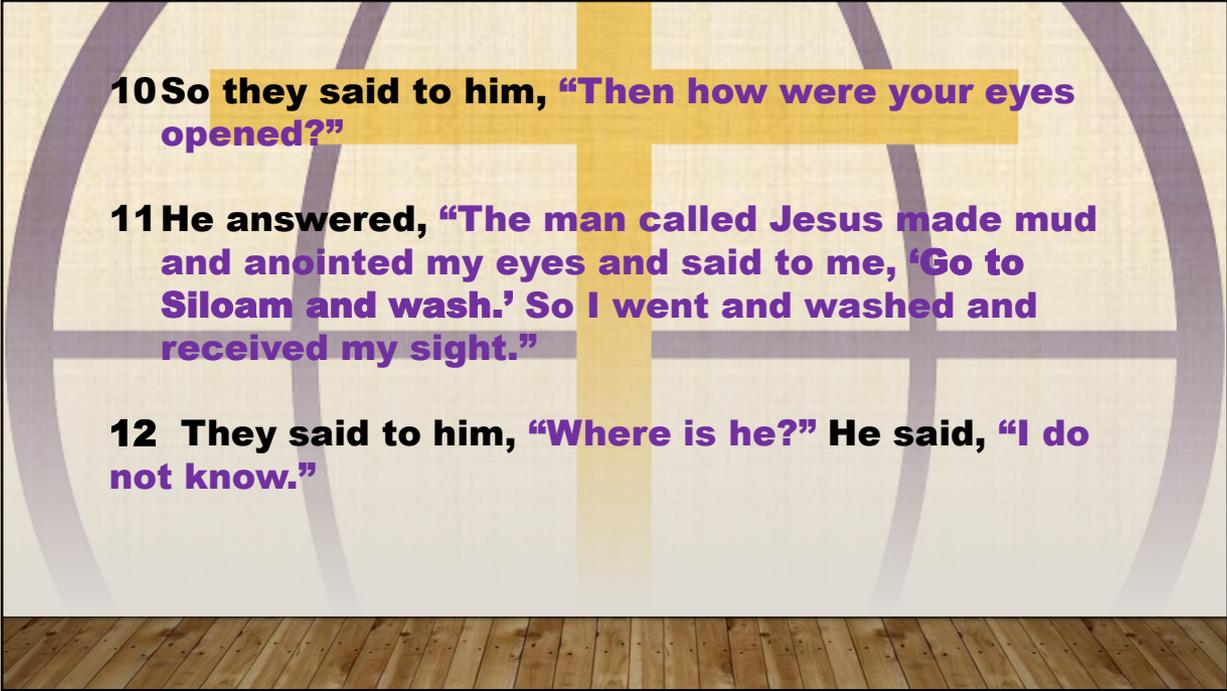
6 Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud



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

8 ¶ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, **“Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?”**

9 Some said, **“It is he.”** Others said, **“No, but he is like him.”** He kept saying, **“I am the man.”**

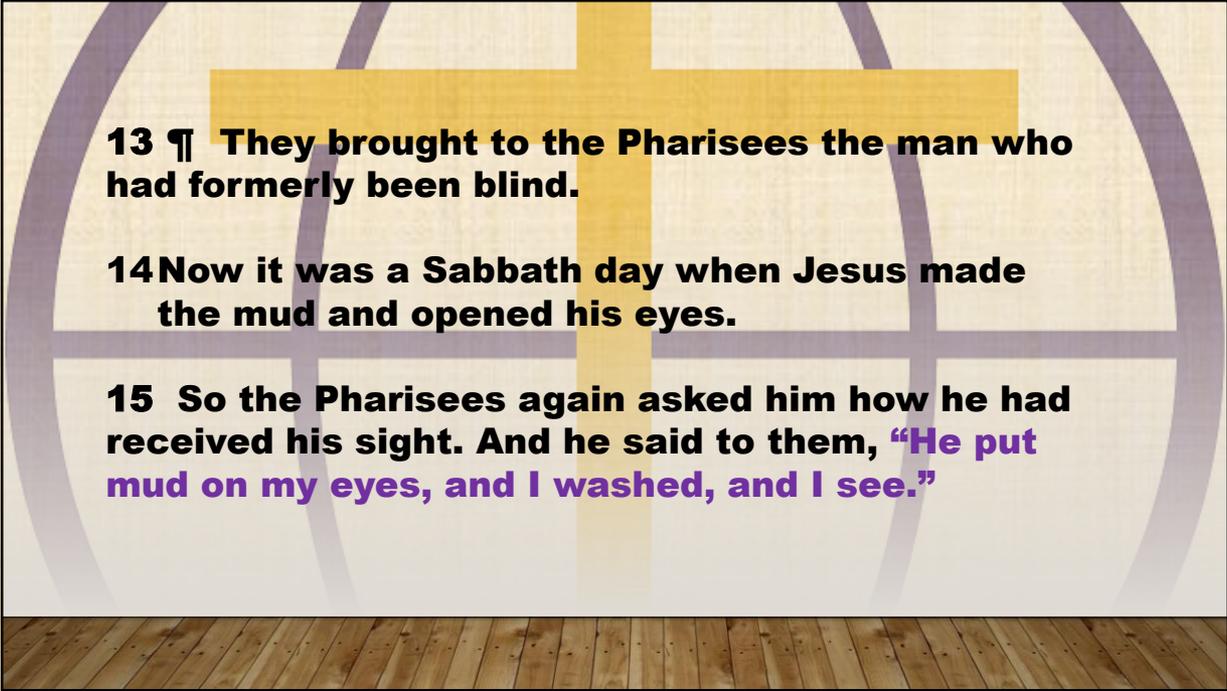


10 So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?”

11 He answered, “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.”

12 They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

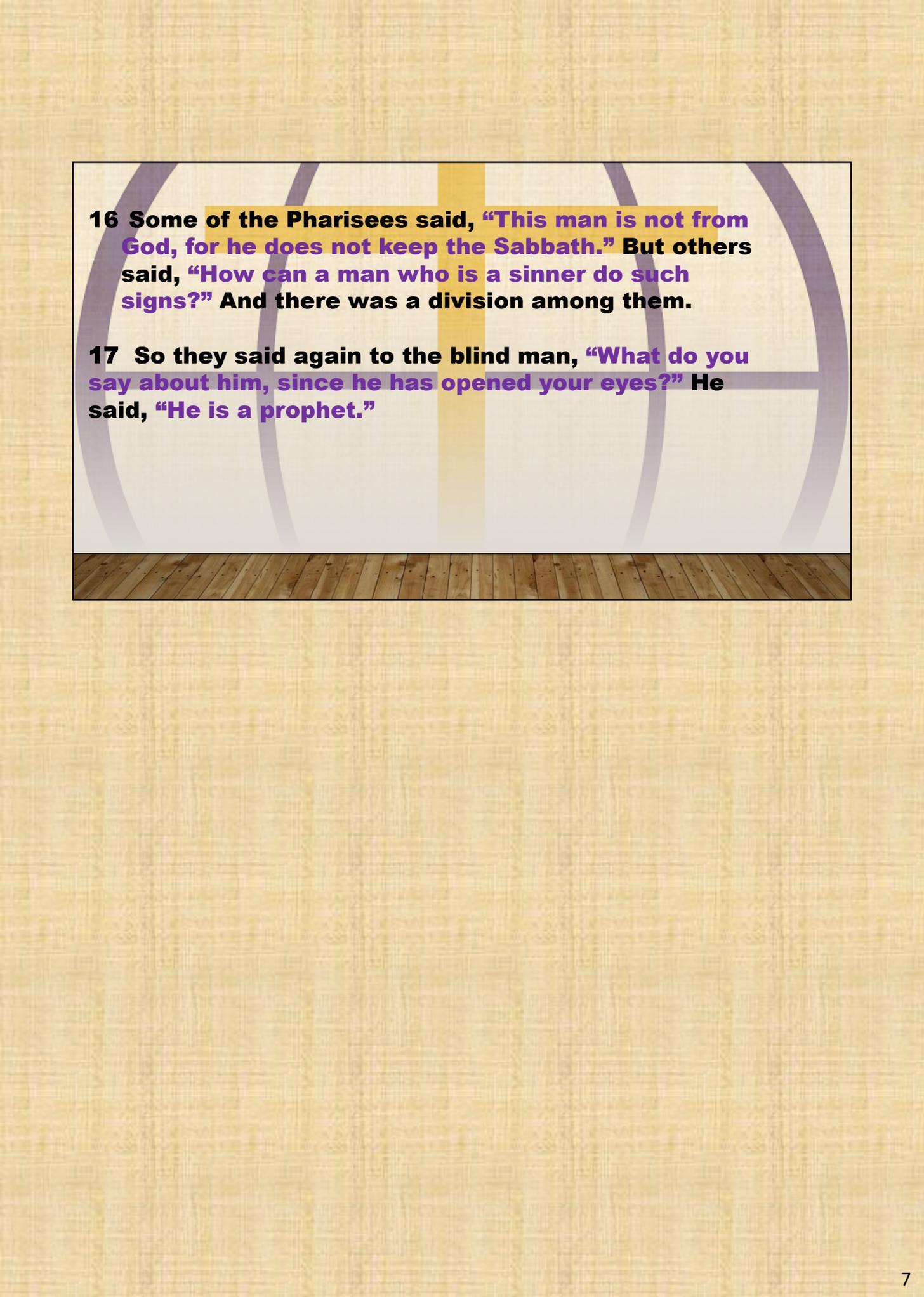
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13 ¶ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

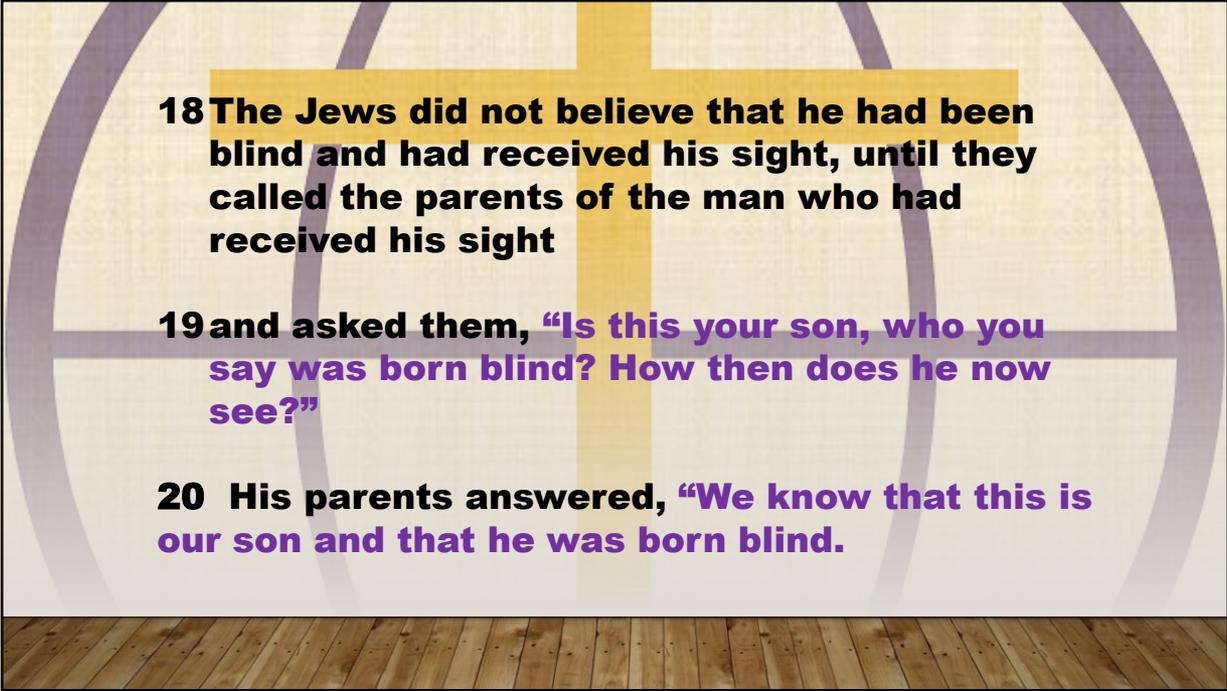
14 Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.

15 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.”



16 Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.

17 So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”



18 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

19 and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”

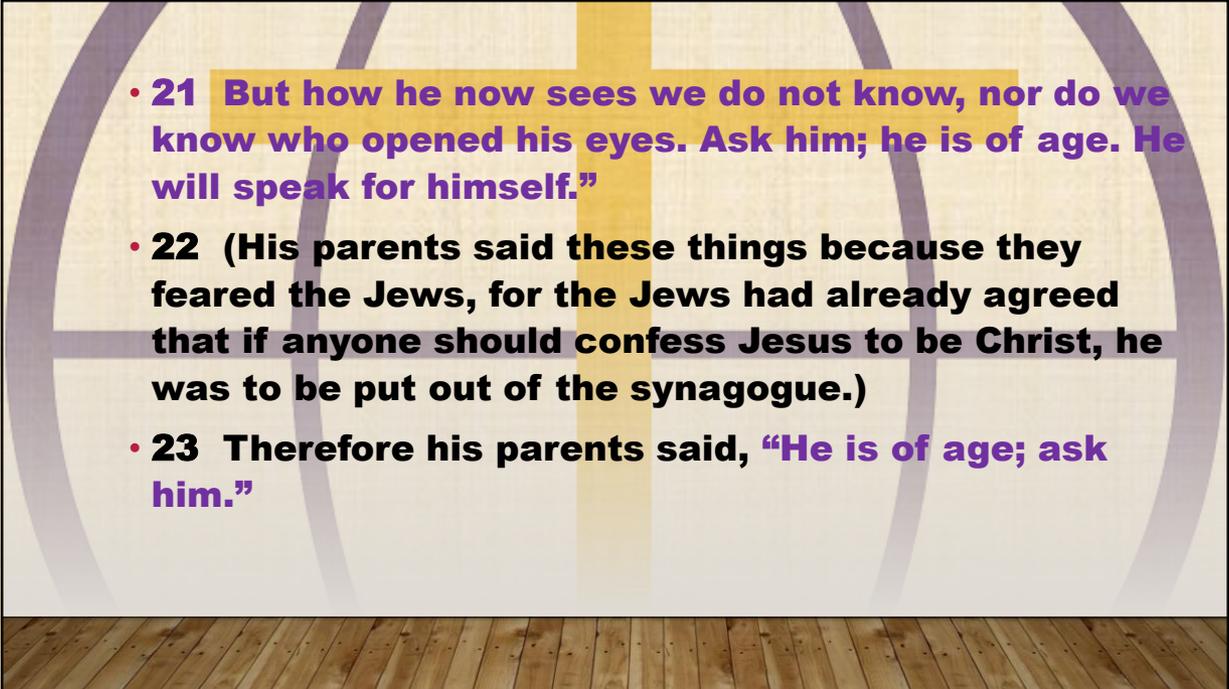
20 His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind.

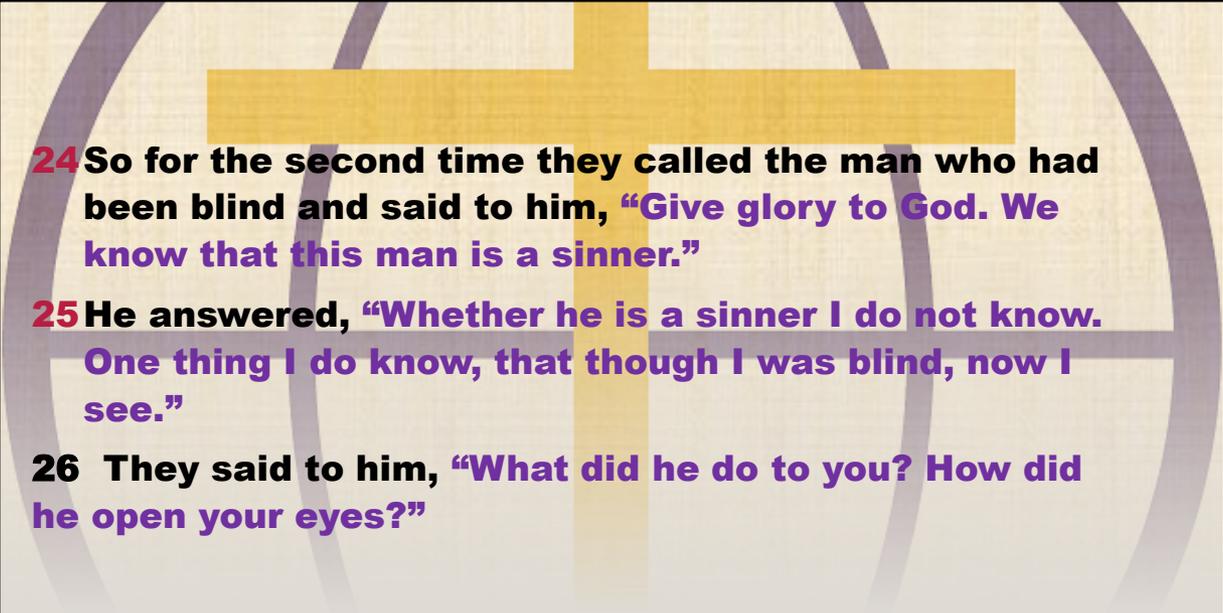
This passage of Scripture is well-known by most Christians who regularly read their Bibles and who regularly really worship with other Christians.

In my earlier years as a Christian, like Nicodemus I did not understand what Jesus was saying. I read this passage with preconceived ideas. I could not understand the tremendous and magnificent blessing that Jesus was talking about to Nicodemus.

The blessing spoken about by Jesus to Nicodemus has eternal consequences.

During today's sermon, we are going to probe a little deeper into the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus.

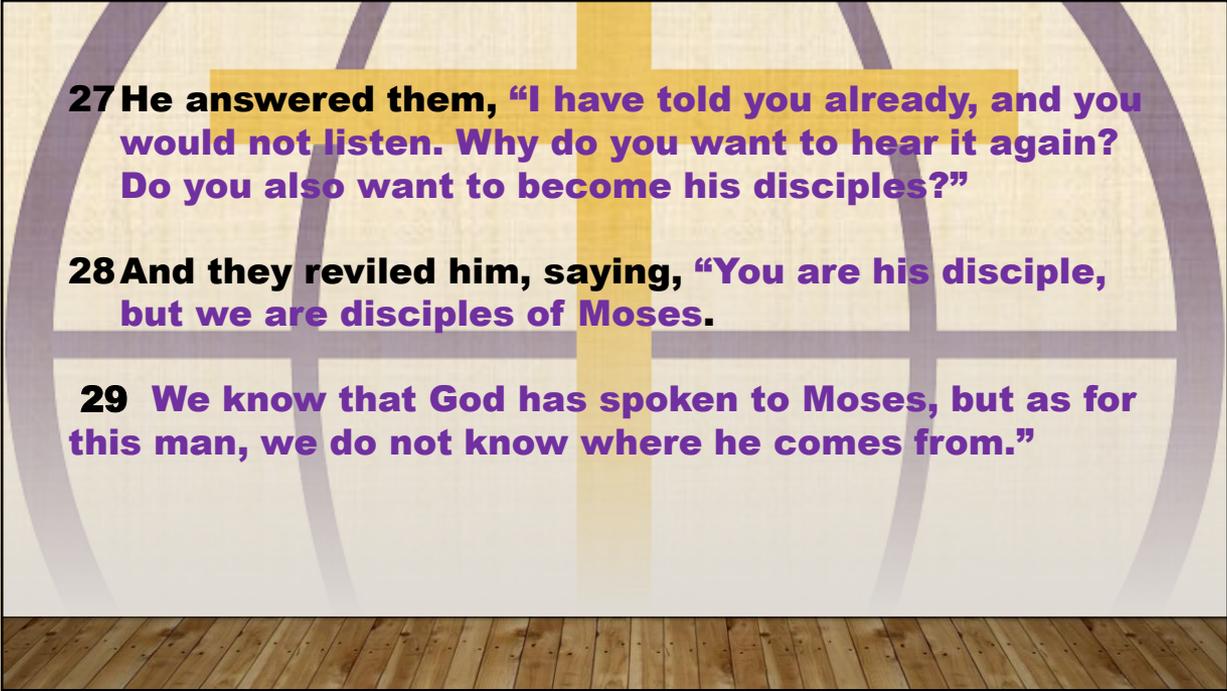
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- **21** But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.”
 - **22** (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.)
 - **23** Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”



24 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.”**

25 He answered, **“Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”**

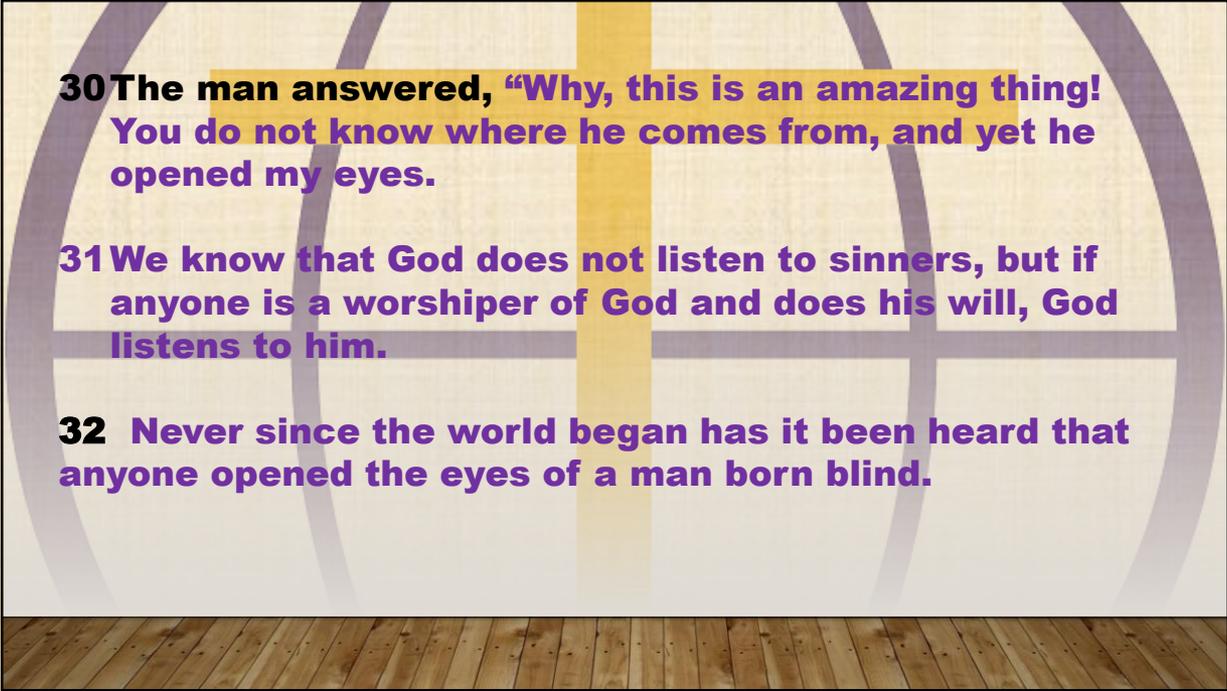
26 They said to him, **“What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”**



27 He answered them, “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?”

28 And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.

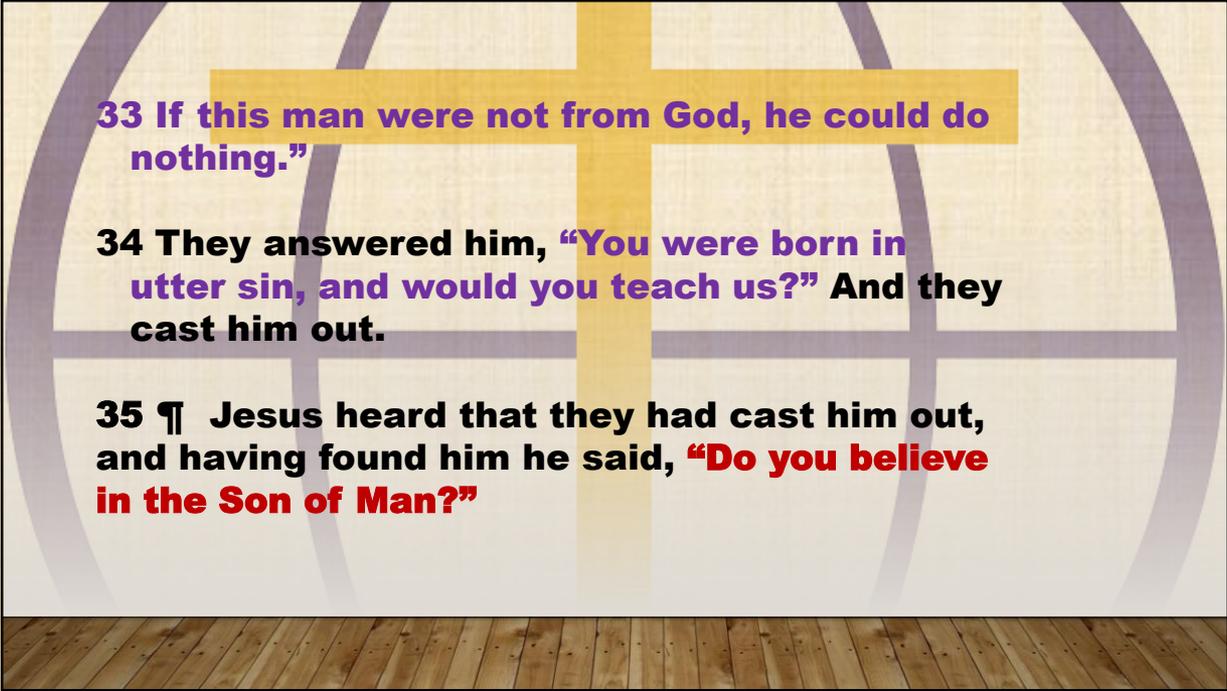
29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.”



30 The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.

31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.

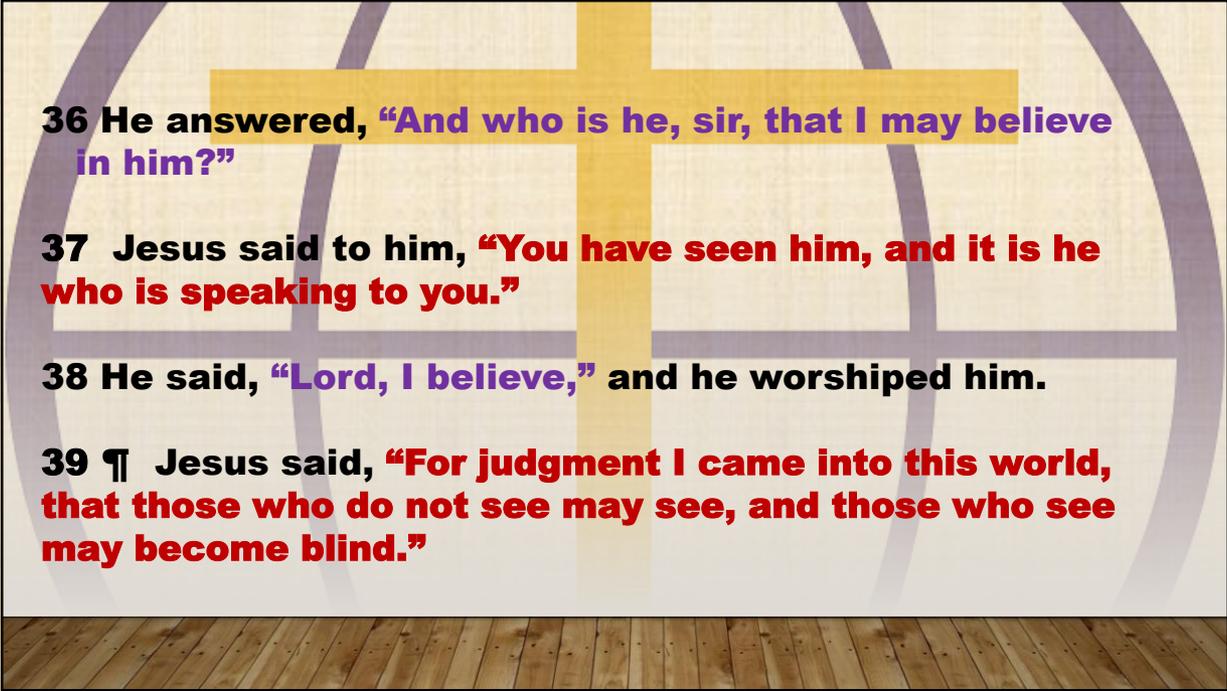
32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.



33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

34 They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

35 ¶ Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

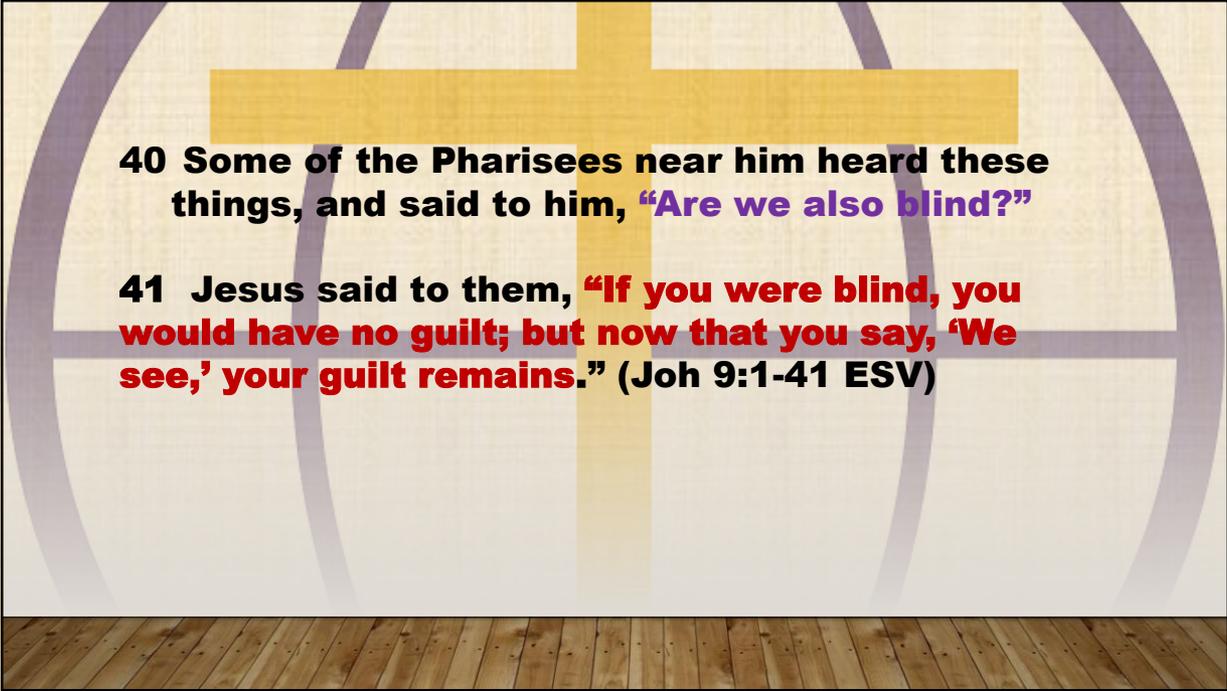


36 He answered, **“And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”**

37 Jesus said to him, **“You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.”**

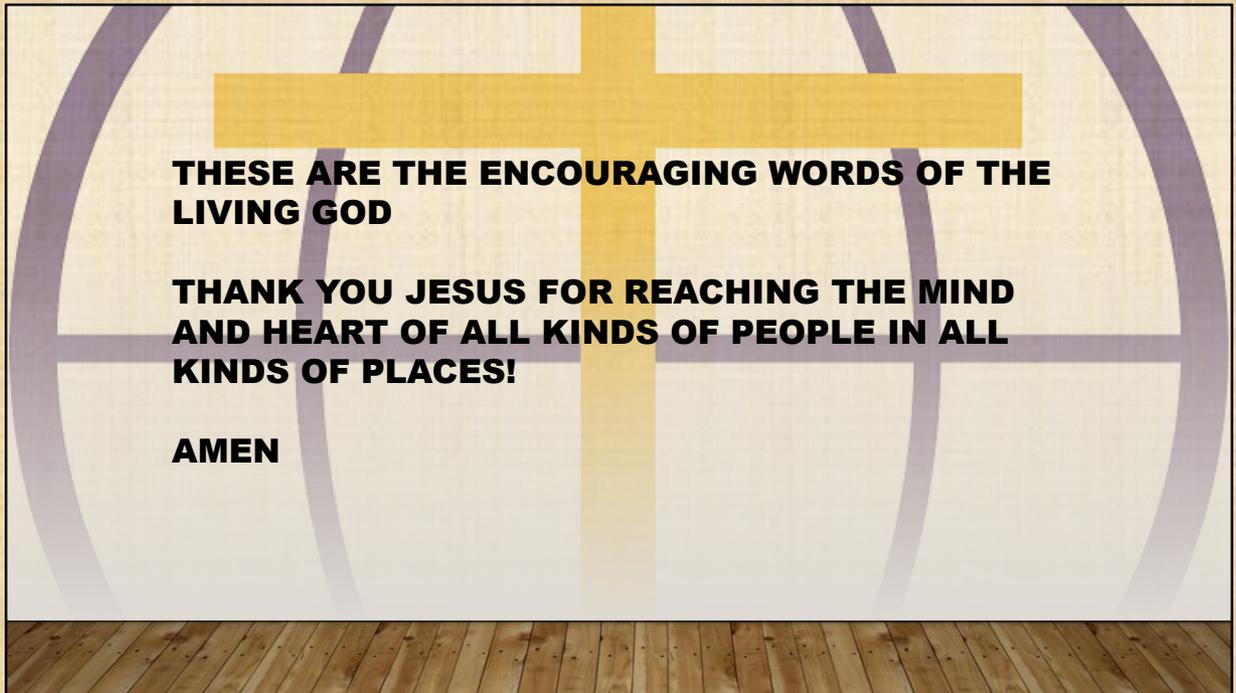
38 He said, **“Lord, I believe,”** and he worshiped him.

39 ¶ Jesus said, **“For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”**



40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?”

41 Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.” (Joh 9:1-41 ESV)



This passage of Scripture is very revealing about how God works.

We have to remember that the central figure is Jesus who was sent by the Father to this world to free us from death, to restore our relationship with the triune God and to gift us the gift of sharing in his life – eternal life!

Jesus knows how to reach people's mind and heart with all kinds of people in all kinds of places. Today, we are going to focus on the encounter between Jesus and the blind man in Chapter 9 of John.

In John 3, we have the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a ruling religious figure in Jerusalem (see sermon given on March 8, 2020). He knew that Jesus was special teacher from God but at first, he did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

He had a deep knowledge of the old covenant. Even if he met Jesus at night for fear of being seen by his colleagues, he obviously had the honesty to meet Jesus to have a conversation with him.

Jesus challenged Nicodemus by speaking to him of the new birth necessary to enter

the Kingdom of God. In his discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus referred to Old Testament scriptures that Nicodemus knew well. Jesus challenged him and gave the real meaning of the Scriptures.

Once Nicodemus came to know Jesus personally, his life was changed.

There is a difference between knowing “about” a person and knowing a person. I know about Mr. Frank McKenna, former premier of New Brunswick, but I do not know him as I have never met him. Nicodemus began to know Jesus after spending time with him.

Or let’s say that when we got married, I would have said to Edna, now that we are married, I will not spend time with you. We are okay now. We do not need to grow together in our relationship! That would be the definition of insanity. When a husband loves his wife, he will want to spend time with her.

The same is true for Jesus. To grow in grace and knowledge we need to spend quality time with him!

The Pharisees were part of the group who facilitated the crucifixion of Jesus. As a result of his personal encounter with Jesus, as a result of beginning to know Jesus, Nicodemus had the courage to be with Joseph Arimathea when the body of Jesus was taken from the cross and brought to the borrowed tomb.

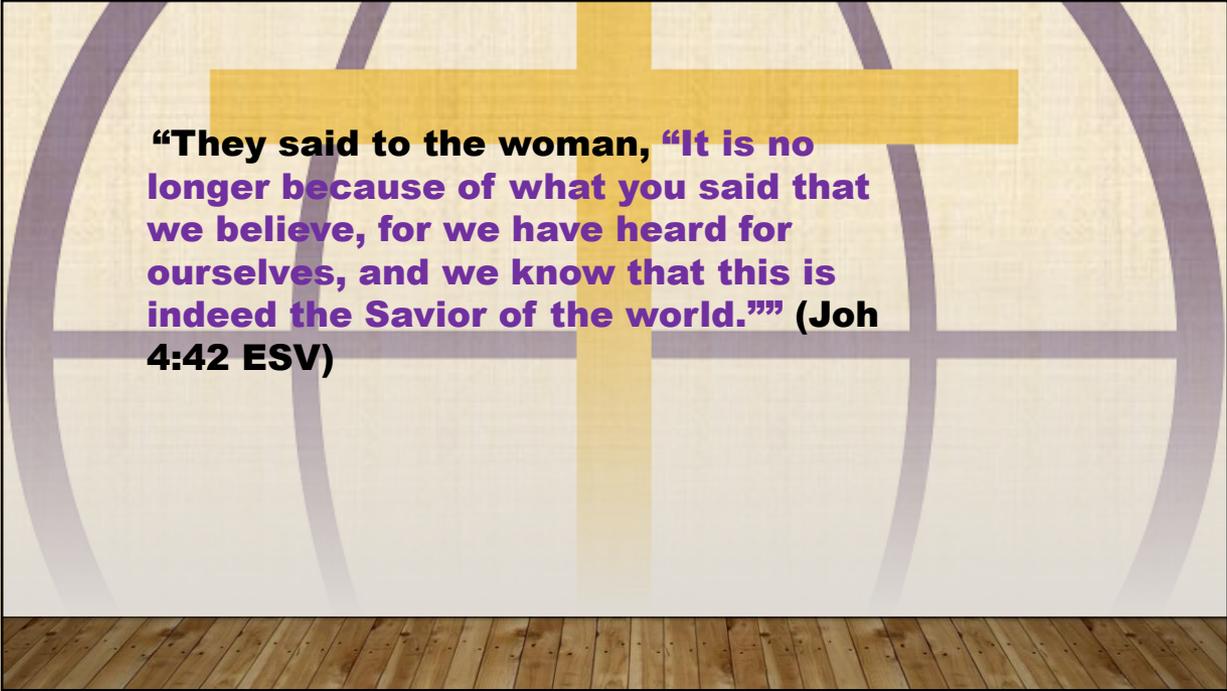
His encounter with Jesus was life-changing. He had the courage to stand up for Jesus in the face of highly probable social rejection by his peers.

The same happened with the Samaritan who met Jesus at the well.

As Jesus was standing by Jacob’s well, he asked her for water. He quickly got into a conversation whereby he gradually revealed himself to this unknown woman, a woman who no self-respecting Jew would have spoken with.

Her encounter with Jesus changed her life. Jesus revealed himself to her to be the Messiah, he who is called Christ. She believed it. She met Jesus.

Jesus changed this woman’s life. He also changed the life of many Samaritans. Jesus spent 2 days with the Samaritans. They met him. They got to know him. The following is what they said as a result of their encounter with the Messiah.



“They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”” (Joh 4:42 ESV)

As we look at the encounter of Jesus with the blind man, we witness a similar transformation.

At first, this blind man had no idea who Jesus really was. After Jesus revealed who he was to him, he became a completely different man.

As we read and think about this blind man, we have to leave our modern conception of a blind man living in our society aside.

Back in the day, they did not have seeing-eye dogs. Blind people could not read or write. Braille was not invented yet.

Braille was invented by Louis Braille, a French educator and a Catholic priest. He invented a system of reading and writing for the blind that is still in use today. Louis Braille was born in 1809 and died in 1852 at the age of 43. He himself was blind in both eyes as a result of an accident while he was still a child.

Blind people in Jesus’ day were despairing people having to beg for a living. They had no status. They were the outcasts, among the undesirable of society. We can just imagine the kind of life that they lived. There were no social programs to assist them.

They relied on begging. They depended on charity and the kindness of others to survive.

The blind man that Jesus healed was obviously very intelligent.

God speaks about blindness in the Old Testament. The following is what we can find. These passages help us understand the challenges blind men lived under. Some of these Scriptures were easily to read out of context. This promoted discrimination against blind people. They thought that blindness was a result of either their sin or their parents' sin.

Some of the passages also reveal God's grace towards them.

Let us consider of a few.

- 1) Blindness was seen as a blemish, as a flaw, as an imperfection. The descendants of Aaron who were blind could not serve in the temple. God still sanctified them but not through service at the temple. (Leviticus 21:16-24).**
- 2) Zechariah 12 – God struck horses and those attacking the Jews with blindness so that the leaders of Judah would acknowledge God in their heart as their true strength.**
- 3) One of the results of disobeying God and his covenant with Israel was that he would strike them with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. (Deuteronomy 28:28)**

4) The Israelites were expected to treat the blind with respect. Because God was their Lord, they were to love their neighbour as themselves. Their neighbor included the blinds. (Leviticus 19:14-18).

5) God is the one who opens the eyes of the blind (Isaiah 42:6-9).

The people in Jesus' day saw blindness as a curse.

John 9 shows us clearly that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who became incarnate in our flesh. John 9 is clearly another sign that the Old Testament is pointing to Jesus and that he fulfilled both the law and the prophets to perfection.

What we see in reading chapter 9 is that is this man trusted Jesus enough to do something that from a physical point of view was completely senseless.

He also showed the disciples who he was, the light of the world.

Why did Jesus spit on the ground and made mud with his saliva?

In antiquity spittle was thought to have medicinal power. Thus, Jesus' action is not unusual. Mark records two other instances where Jesus does the same thing (Mark 7:32–35; 8:22–25). Burge, Gary M. John (The NIV Application Commentary Book 4). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

In antiquity there was an enormous superstition surrounding the "spittle" of a renowned person. Both the Greek healing cult of Asclepius and Jewish popular belief

gave spittle magical power. The rabbis were generally critical of such superstition. (Footnote 3, idem).

I am sure Jesus told him what he was going to do before applying this mud into his eyes!

This man simply did as Jesus asked and was healed.

The healing was so dramatic that people who knew him thought that he was not the same blind beggar that they had no one for such a long time. They were basically saying, "This can't be"! "Who is this man?". They were doubting their own eyes. In their minds, a man born blind could never see.

The blind man had to confirm his identity.

Suppose his name was Johnny. People were asking are you Johnny the son of so-and-so?

It is interesting that this man had no idea where Jesus was.

They then brought him to the Pharisees. The Pharisees tried to dismiss the miracle by saying that this man could not be of God because, in their eyes, he broke the Sabbath by making mud. This caused division among the Pharisees.

The blind man was so impressed by what happened to him then when asked who had open his eyes, he answered "**a prophet**".

We need to remember that no one had been able to recover site when born blind. When questioned, the parents confirmed that he was indeed their son and that he now had his eyesight. For fear of being excluded from the synagogue, his parents did not answer the questions directed at them by the religious leaders. The told the religious leaders that they could speak directly with their son. He was able to answer for himself.

They again interrogated the blind man and accused him of being a disciple of Jesus.

They saw themselves as being so much superior because they were disciples of Moses, so they thought.

The blind man became braver and showed much courage as he stood up to the Pharisees who were trying at all cost to disparage Jesus.

They were convinced that this man was born in sin and knew nothing. The Pharisees had contempt towards him and rejected him.

After being rejected by the Pharisees, Jesus met him again. Jesus asked him if **“he believed in the Son of Man”**.

When Jesus told him who he was. His immediate reaction was that he believed. He immediately worshipped Jesus acknowledging in his mind and heart that Jesus was God in the flesh, the true Messiah.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE?

Jesus is the one who saw the blind man. He had a completely different attitude from the religious leaders.

The blind man received Jesus empty with a willing attitude to follow whatever Jesus would tell him to do. He accepted that Jesus authentically was there to help him.

On the other hand, the religious leaders had so much confidence in what they believed that they could not accept anyone challenging them about their beliefs.

They were unteachable and even refused to acknowledge the evidence of what Jesus had done. From their point of view, they could not even consider that Jesus was from God. These religious leaders boasted in their superior knowledge and confidence when in fact they were ignorant and misdirected. (Idem paraphrased location 5667.)

This challenges every one of us to ask ourselves, “Do I hold onto belief and ideas that are not in conformity to what God teaches?”

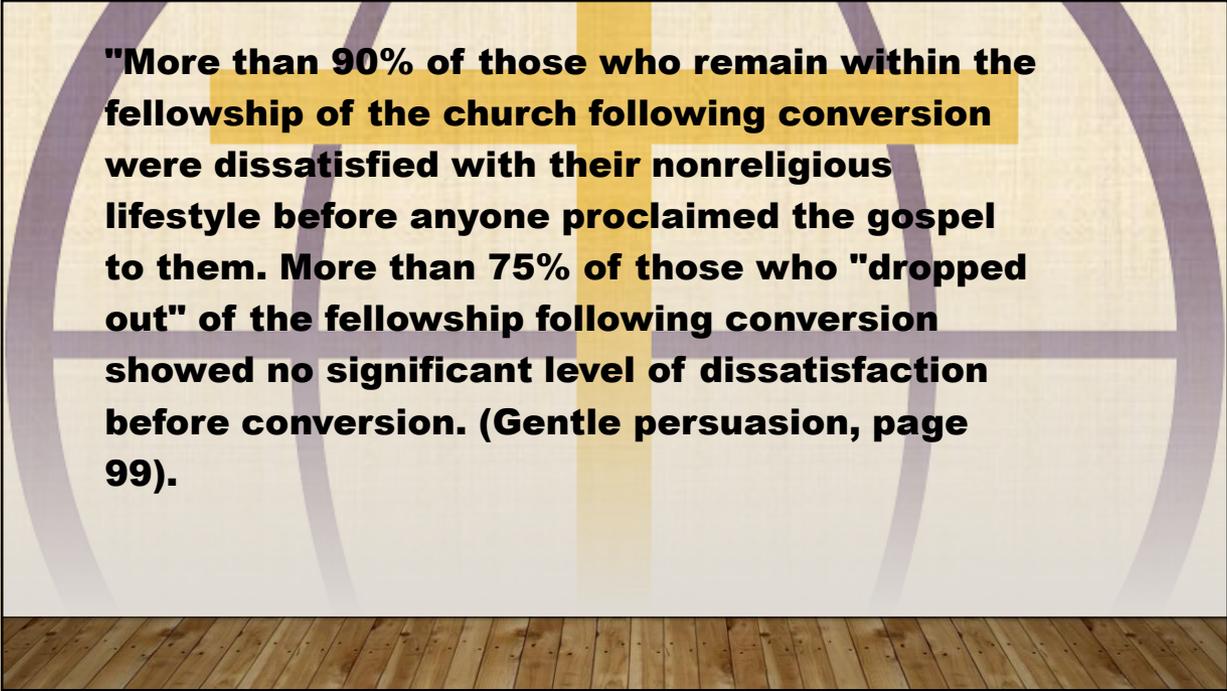
Are we willing to look at what God tells us in his word as truth over our preconceived ideas and traditions, whatever they may be?

Will I accept what God reveals in Scripture or will I be like the religious leaders questioning in an antagonistic attitude? Am I a know-it-all?

Am I willing to be transformed and changed by Scripture as the Holy Spirit leads?

Do we see our need for Jesus or do we feel self-satisfied?

It is an important question for us to ask. In an article entitled, “**The Message of Jesus: The Joy of Salvation**” cites the following:



"More than 90% of those who remain within the fellowship of the church following conversion were dissatisfied with their nonreligious lifestyle before anyone proclaimed the gospel to them. More than 75% of those who "dropped out" of the fellowship following conversion showed no significant level of dissatisfaction before conversion. (Gentle persuasion, page 99).

Do we see ourselves as sinners needing God's grace every day?

Do we realize that we cannot be self-reliant or do we think that we just need a little help along the way?

Are we thankful for God's calling?

Are we thirsty for God? Do we spend time with him. Do we nourish this relationship?
What importance does God have in my life?

His word?

And prayer?

Does my relationship with God become obvious in our relationship with others?

Are we loving?

Are we forgiving because we have been forgiven?

Do we see others through Jesus eyes? In other words, do we exercise the mind of Christ?

Jesus showed that those who are seen as lowest in society have value in God's eyes.

Do we see our great need for God or do we think that we are basically okay on our own? **"And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.' (Mr 2:17 ESV)**

Do we acknowledge that Jesus needs to be our physician through the workings of the Holy Spirit?

Do we appreciate every day the importance of Jesus' new life which God has given to us through the Holy Spirit?

In the most important question, "do we know Jesus" or "do we know of Jesus".

The blind man at board his physical and spiritual eyes opened.

The Pharisees who failed to acknowledge and oppose Jesus were spiritually blind and remained in their sin.

Let us pray to let Jesus have his way with us. Let us be malleable clay the hands of the Potter who is God.

Let us grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus as we grow in our relationship with him!

To know Jesus is transformative. Let us pray!