

# GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

## 09



### CHRYSOSTOM

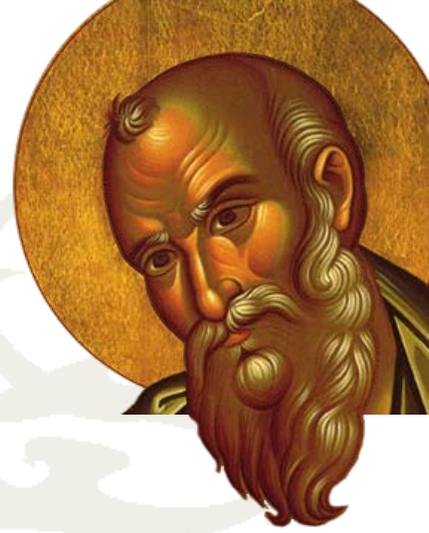
Read St. John Chrysostom's homilies on John chapter 9.



### PRACTICE QUIZ

Take a quiz to test your knowledge of John chapter 9.

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Chapter nine deals with sight—both the physical sense of sight, and spiritual vision. The chapter begins with Jesus passing a man who was born blind. His disciples asked whether sins committed by either the man or his parents were the reason for the man's disability (many ancient cultures held that problems in life were always the result of personal or group failings) (9:2). Jesus responded that no one's sins were responsible for the man's blindness, but the man's blindness would be used to reveal the works of God (9:3-5).

Blessed Theophylact paraphrases Christ's words in this way, "By healing the blind man's eyes and giving them light, I shall enlighten the souls of many.

I am the light, and I illumine both the senses and the spirit."

The way in which Jesus healed the blind man seems a bit strange to modern readers: He spat in the dirt, made clay, and smeared the clay on the man's eyes (9:6); He then sent the man

to the pool of Siloam—which, St. John Chrysostom notes, is itself a figure of Christ—to wash the clay off (9:7). Why did Jesus use these things to heal the man? Many Church Fathers say He used clay to remind us that He made Adam from clay, and ordered the man to wash in a pool as an image of Holy Baptism (Genesis 2:7). But why did He use *spittle*—rather than water—to make the clay? In order that, St. John Chrysostom answers, "you might learn that the power proceeds from His mouth."

When the man's neighbors took him to the Pharisees to show them the result of Jesus' works, the Pharisees were angry that this supposed healing occurred on the Sabbath (9:14, 16). They at first did not believe the man had been blind (9:18), but after his parents confirmed the disability (9:20-21), they refused to give Jesus credit for the miracle, saying it was impossible because Jesus was a sinner (9:24). The formerly blind man thought this was preposterous: since Jesus performed an unprecedented miracle, it was obvious He was from God (9:32-33). In fact, when Jesus later pointed out to the man that it was the Son of God Who healed him, the man responded, "Lord, I believe! And he worshipped Him" (9:38).

Jesus then used this incident to talk about spiritual sight. Jesus came into the world so that those who did not know Him—who were spiritually blind—might "see" and come into communion with Him; in contrast, however, those who know of Christ but reject Him are in effect "made blind" (9:39). Unfortunately, because the Pharisees claimed to see the truth and

yet nonetheless rejected Christ, Jesus said that their sin remained (9:41). St. John Chrysostom summarizes this teaching like this:

*In this passage He speaks of two recoveries of sight and two types of blindness: one sensory and the other spiritual...But they (the Pharisees) were intent only on the sensory things and were ashamed only of sensory blindness... 'But now you say 'We see,' but you do not see at all.' He shows that what they considered as so great and praiseworthy actually brought them punishment instead.*



### LIFE TIP

It's easy for our lives to be so busy that we become distracted from our worship of God...even as Christians we can blind ourselves to God and His work in our lives and the world. If this describes your life right now, it can be helpful to remember the Kontakion for the Sunday of the Blind Man: "I come to You, O Christ, as the man blind from birth. With the eyes of my soul blinded, I cry out to You in repentance, 'You are the resplendent Light of those in darkness.'"

