

Healing the Blind Man

An Allegorical Miracle

(John 9 & 10)

INTRODUCTION

As often as brethren have referred to John 9:4 (“the night cometh in which no man can work”), it seems we have carelessly neglected its context. In so doing, we have also in great part missed what may be the true significance of the passage.

It is, at the outset of this presentation, necessary to note that its content will be to some degree speculative. Nevertheless, there is sufficient support within the passage to warrant the speculations made. This presentation is offered not as a criticism, but as “food for thought” — particularly for those who find our traditional viewpoint of John 9:4 unsatisfying.

Bible students of our era have had nearly a fixation with John 9:4. Too many of us have thought it represented a period of terrible persecution on the Church. To justify the fearful interpretation, many have found it necessary to add the adjective “**DARK**” to the verse! Consequently it has become quite natural to refer to “***The Dark Night!***” But the passage does NOT read that way, and we are guilty of corrupting Scripture by adding the word. Others swing far to the other side of the argument, and, wanting to negate the frightening interpretation, have postulated that “the night in which no man can work” is simply a representation of when we die — and, therefore, can work no longer. This interpretation does just as much violence to the context of the verse, just in an opposite direction.

This famous verse, in order to be understood, **MUST NOT BE ISOLATED** from its context. And its context is rather large! It seems to begin in the 8th chapter of John and extend to the 11th chapter.

Among other things, this miracle (the healing of a blind man) is by far the longest recorded miracle worked by Jesus. It has an enormous amount of detail which simply cannot be an attempt to fill space! This fact alone leads us to suspect that there is **MORE HERE** than the simple record of one of Jesus’ miracles. It seems, as we shall see, that this miracle is allegorical — something which actually happened, but which has far more significance (prophetic significance) than the miracle alone would warrant.

Thus we will examine the details recorded regarding the actual event, and then we will suggest that the event portrays bigger things at both of Jesus' advents.

Finally, we will consider some Scriptural equivalents (some synonyms) for this "night." We will also briefly consider another religious "fixation" — that of dying as martyrs. Nearly every religion in the world seems to some degree to think that its adherents must meet a martyr's end. Are WE just like all the rest of these religions? What are the Scriptural indications?

THE UNIFYING ELEMENTS

Because we are suggesting a BIG CONTEXT (parts of four chapters), it will be helpful to begin our presentation by seeing what elements UNIFY this miracle with its surrounding narratives.

First of all, if we notice that John 10:21 makes clear reference to the miracle of Chapter 9, we will be forced to recognize a connection between the healing of the blind man and the discussion of sheepfolds — a connection rarely, if ever, mentioned. But 10:21 does, indeed, make reference to the opening of the eyes of the blind man in the sheepfold context.

Based on this little hint, we suggest that the ***REAL TOPIC*** of this LARGE CONTEXT is a COMBINATION of two lines of thought. (1) It IS about removing blindness, but (2) it is ALSO prophetically about removing blindness from VARIOUS SHEEPFOLDS at various times. John 10:16 has Jesus saying: "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them ALSO, and they shall hear my voice [i.e., they shall SEE]; and they shall become ONE FLOCK with ONE SHEPHERD." In other words, IN THE END, all of the various sheepfolds will be unified into one. Jesus shall have brought all of the sheep from the various ages together with restored sight into the one household of God.

This is hardly a new thought. Jesus refers to sheep in at least three ages.

(1) In the Jewish Age, Jesus refers to "the lost SHEEP of the house of Israel." (Matthew 10:6; 15:24)

(2) In the Gospel Age, Jesus instructs Peter to "Feed my SHEEP." (John 21:17)

It might be a bit speculative, but Jesus FIRST (John 21:15) asks Peter to feed his LAMBS. Lambs are NEW SHEEP. This MAY BE a reference to the Gentiles who had never been sheep, but now WOULD BE. Then Peter was asked

(verse 17) to feed the SHEEP. This may, by contrast, be a reference to the Jewish sheep who had been transferred from the Law (Moses) to the Grace Covenant. These would be the faithful “remnant” sheep from Israel. Peter, of course, was privileged to serve the Gospel to BOTH “folds.”

(3) In the Millennial Age, Jesus represents (in the SHEEP & Goats Parable) the separation of the faithful from the unfaithful during the Kingdom. (Matthew 25:32)

THUS: The miracle of healing the blind man (as seen by its greater context) is all about the removing of blindness from different folds at different times.

SOME PRIMARY THINGS TO NOTE IN THIS LARGE CONTEXT

When we look at John 8:55, 56, Jesus is involved with the Jewish leaders — virtually pointing out that they ARE BLIND. They don't KNOW God. The 56th verse then points out that Abraham DID SEE Jesus' day and rejoiced in it. Thus ISRAEL was BLIND. They could not see what Abraham saw *far in advance of them!*

We all know, of course, that only a REMNANT of Israel regained sight at the first advent. So the blind man who was soon to be healed would not represent Israel as a whole, but only the faithful REMNANT of Israel at the first advent. As Daniel 9 puts it, the “most holy” ones would be anointed.

When John 9:1 immediately follows, we see that Jesus saw a blind man and decided to use him as a picture of the situation with which he had just dealt. A REMNANT (the blind man) would be given sight. But the vast majority of Israel would remain blind. They would be subject to “blindness in part...until the fulness of the Gentiles be come ” into the completed body of Christ. (Romans 11:25)

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We also want to note that John 9:5 DEFINES John 9:4. John 9:4 had mentioned the incoming “night.” In the 5th verse, Jesus explains that HE is the “light of the world.” He also explains that as long as HE was present, the night would not set in BECAUSE he provides the (day)light. So, in the case of Israel at the first advent, Jesus' PRESENCE marks day; his departure would be the beginning of night for Israel (the “Jewish Double”). This does not mean that night had to begin at the crucifixion. Actually, we are assured that it would not because “70 weeks” were set aside for Israel. But, when Jesus in A.D. 33 exclaimed that “Your house is left unto you desolate,” we can at least begin to think that some kind of night was beginning to set in for Israel.

Later we will apply the fact that Jesus' faithful disciples are ALSO called "The Light of the World." Thus we have opened up for us a second-advent scene where the Church makes it "day" UNTIL the Church leaves the scene, at which time the second-advent "night" can set in.

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It might be helpful at this point to take a slight detour to show that a time element is hinted at in this prophecy. In John 11:9, 10, Jesus explains that there are "12 hours in a day." We must be careful here. All (including Jesus) know that there are 24 hours in a day. Jesus was speaking of a WORK DAY (or possibly the daylight hours which were just about synonymous with a work day).

However, if we compare the 11th-Hour Workers Parable (Matthew 20:9, 12), we see that the last workers are hired at the 11th hour and work ONE HOUR. Thus, when the 12th hour begins, NO ONE IS WORKING. We have come to "an hour wherein no man can work" which may well be synonymous with the "night wherein no man can work." The Workers Parable strongly suggests to us a second-advent tie-in to the John 9:4 text. In short: the second advent workday will not be normal. It will be an hour short at the end of the age. "Night" comes too early! And Revelation 17 specifies a one-hour dark period.

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The word "SENT" is important in the narrative. In John 9:4, Jesus specifies that he is the "sent" of God. In 9:7, the Apostle John is careful to bring to our attention that the Pool of Siloam MEANS "sent." Thus, at both advents, blindness removal will be dependent on IMMERSION (the pool) into the concept that Jesus IS the "sent" of God. There is NO OTHER NAME by which man can be saved.

There may be a subtle connection here with John 10:39-42. These verses are the "wrap-up" of the whole account. It has Jesus' going to where John's baptism USED TO BE. It is as if Jesus is re-approaching the subject of baptism — NOT now of John's, but of the NEW baptism for the new fold of the Gospel Age. It is here that many now accept Jesus. Thus he now is "sent" to a new sheepfold — the Grace Covenant of the Gospel Age.

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What happens next is probably not coincidental! It is likely the continuation of the “large context.” As Chapter 11 opens, we have the story of the raising of Lazarus. We know that Jesus makes a parable about this incident in Luke 16. In that parable, Lazarus represents the Gentiles — the NEW SHEEP. Jesus even points out in the parable that NOTHING could make Israel “see.” They SAID in the parable that they would believe if one came back to them from the dead. But they DIDN’T. Lazarus DID come back from the dead, and, instead of their believing, they were so upset that they plotted to kill Jesus because of this miracle!

In other words, the raising of Lazarus (Chapter 11) was a PROOF of Israel’s blindness and of the righteous judgment in casting them off. The 11th chapter IS a part of the greater context of the John 9 miracle.

CONSIDER THREE APPLICATIONS OF JOHN 9 & 10

- (1) The actual miracle was just that — an actual miracle. However, because of its stunningly large amount of detail, we will want to look at what all happened in the actual miracle so that we can consider its details when we look at the possible allegorical meanings.
- (2) We have already speculated a bit on the FIRST ADVENT meanings of the allegory. We can, however, profit from finding more details.
- (3) The SECOND ADVENT seems also to have prophetic tie-in to the details of this miracle. We have already noted a little of this.

(1) Lessons from the Actual Miracle Description

Just a point of caution: As we look briefly at the content of this miracle, we will, of necessity NOT be mentioning many details. Please read the account several times in order to notice and absorb the richness of the description. Doing so might well increase understanding far beyond what this paper proposes.

In John 8:59, we see that Jesus “went out of the temple.” (When we get to prophetic applications, this will be significant. Jesus was leaving the old Jewish order behind.) Here, however, leaving the temple simply allowed him to see a blind beggar whose experience he could use.

Then (9:1) Jesus sees the man born blind. Jesus, seemingly was saying to himself, “I can use this man to make a point.”

In verse 2, the disciples ask a very logical question; “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?” The first part of their question seems quite strange. The man could not have sinned before he was born! But their question comes out from the Jewish Law. Those who obeyed the Law were “blessed in basket and in store.” If someone was condemned to being a beggar, the Law’s implication was that he was a sinner. So, the disciples did have a legitimate question — even if strangely stated!

It is Jesus’ ANSWER that gives us the information we need. In verse 3, he says (paraphrased), “This man is blind for ONE REASON only. It is so that I can now make a point about “the works of God.” This verse PROVES that the miracle is an allegory. Jesus SAYS SO! He says the entire narrative is here because it will teach something about what God is doing.

John 9:4 (our famous verse!) now comes into play. First, it is necessary to note that the KJV is incorrect. It says, “I must...” But the manuscripts just about unanimously say that it should read “WE must...” This is important. While Jesus is making a point about the Israel of his day, he is pointing out that the application of this miracle GOES BEYOND HIM and his day. It continues into the works that will be accomplished by his body — “WE must...” Jesus is imploring us to look into the future.

It is also SO IMPORTANT to note that Jesus here (by action) teaches what GOD’S WORKS are! God’s works will be the removing of blindness.

The 5th verse shows that the incoming “night” will be caused by the removal of Jesus’ presence. BUT, since he had said that WE must do these works, we can well delay Israel’s “night” until the disciples are ALSO removed — NOT physically, but by enlightenment which makes them remove themselves from the fellowship of Judaism. THEN the “night” for Israel would set in.

THE FIVE QUESTIONINGS

While what we will now notice will likely have more importance in the allegorical application, the Lord allowed these details in the actual event so that we would be cognizant of them when applying the lessons prophetically.

The “blind man” (now healed) had an awful time being dragged back and forth to different groups who couldn’t figure out what had happened to him. There are distinctly five questionings of this man. These show the struggles which the enlightened of Israel would face as the Jewish Age concluded:

- 9:8 His neighbors were baffled, and they speculated.
- 9:15 The Pharisees call him, not for understanding, but for ridicule.
- 9:18 The Jews ask his parents. They want to get to him via those who are close to him.
- 9:24 The Pharisees get involved once more — basically to condemn.
- 9:35 Finally, Jesus questions him to secure his faith.

Once this has all transpired, Jesus launches into the Sheepfold explanation (Chapter 10). Chapter 10 is NOT a new beginning! It is a continuation of thought based on what had just happened. It is a justification for the change of sheepfolds and for the rejection of “thieves and robbers.”

In verses 10:1-18, Jesus gives both the parable and its explanation. He uses a number of symbols, most of which he defines.

In verses 10:19-24, we see the Jewish reaction to Jesus’ teachings and, importantly, we see a peculiar reference to where Jesus WAS and what time of year it was. These are clearly placed here for antitypical significance.

The 19th verse shows that the Jews were divided. This division (or harvesting of wheat from chaff) was a part of Jesus’ first-advent commission. The literal miracle, among many other things, was a part of what separated the Jews — sometimes because of fear (as was the case with the man’s parents).

Verses 25-42 show Jesus’ response to their reactions. Verse 26 is particularly revealing: “But you do not believe BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OF MY SHEEP.” The Jewish sheepfold was being abandoned.

(2) First Advent Prophetic Applications

As we have scanned these verses, we have already seen some of the obvious applications of the miracle to first-advent prophecy. But going through the material once more with the specific purpose of first-advent application will help to cement our understanding.

The miracle actually has the first advent as its PRIMARY lesson. It does, indeed, have second-advent applications, but the first advent obstinacy of the Jews is what prompted Jesus to institute the miracle in the first place.

Prophetic of the first-advent Jewish “harvest,” we see the following points:

- 8:55-59 We see that Israel's blindness creates their desire to do away with Messiah.
- 9:1 Jesus sees an opportunity to give a lesson on blindness, including a prophecy of how a PART of Israel would receive sight.
- 9:2, 3 Jesus makes his allegorical intent manifest.
- 9:4, 5 Israel's "night" (its "Double") would set in soon after the crucifixion. We see this prophecy fulfilled ultimately in the A.D. 70 siege of Jerusalem. But the A.D. 36 end of the 70-weeks will have "anointed" (given sight to) the "most holy" remnant of Israel.
- 9:6, 7 We see what would be the "formula" for blindness removal. Israel was "dry ground." (See Isaiah 53:2 and Haggai 2:6.) In order to give it "sight" (irrigate it), we need water ("spit") from a very specific source: Jesus' mouth (the message from him). This, then, must be followed by IMMERSION (= a pool) — being totally surrounded and engulfed by the fact that Jesus is the "SENT" One from God, Himself. (This was the POINT of John's baptism at the time — to bring the faithful Jew into a recognition of Messiah. The Jews were, by John's baptism, to be brought into harmony with the Law — the Prophets. By the words of the Prophets, they could see Messiah when he appeared. Hence we have Jesus' words on the road to Emmaus: "Oh, slow of heart to believe all the prophets have written" concerning Messiah!" (Luke 24:25, 26)
- 9:8, 9 The FIRST RESULT of the remnant's beginning to see the due truths is that their own community (other Jews) can't figure out what is happening.
- 9:13ff The SECOND RESULT is that the established religious authorities get wind of the matter and scoff at it (demonstrating their continuing blindness). Jesus gives a parable (the Prodigal Son) to illustrate this struggle between the enlightened and the "privileged" son. "Division" is caused. We call this division the Jewish Harvest. But even among the authorities, the divisive arguments begin to show some enlightenment as with the case of Nicodemus. (See 9:16)
- 9:18 The THIRD RESULT is that those of the disciples' households reject him because fear dominates over love and reason. (Matthew 10:34-36; 13:57)
- 9:24-27 The FOURTH RESULT is that, once again, (perhaps post crucifixion?) the authorities zero-in against the disciples.
- 9:28 The Jews fail to give up the Mosaic Law — even though they don't LISTEN to it! (Compare Luke 16:29.)

- 9:29 This verse says it all. The poor first-advent Jews couldn't figure out who Jesus was! THAT is their "blindness."
- 9:30-34 Firmness of conviction strengthens among the remnant disciples.
- 9:35-38 The FIFTH RESULT is that the concept of full Gospel-Age consecration is firmly implanted. This passage probably represents A.D. 33-36, the half-week of anointing the "most holy" of Daniel 9. Jesus asks those who approach him, "Are you convinced of who I am? Do you believe fully enough to worship me by a full commitment?"
- 9:39 Jesus explains that the PURPOSE of his first advent is to judge (to harvest) those who see versus those who don't.
- 9:40, 41 The Jewish nation, in their blindness, yet claims that they "see." It is Jesus' point that they are lying, and, therefore, guilty.

CHAPTER 10

Jesus builds on the Jewish blindness (blind in part until a NEW sheepfold has been saved).

- 10:1-6 Jesus offers this parable-like illustration which the Jews do not comprehend (verse 6). They have NO IDEA that the fleshly-Israel sheepfold has a "term limit!" (They don't know it to this day!) This parable deals PRIMARILY with the first advent. But Jesus' explanation of it automatically extends its application to "other sheepfolds" — other ages.
- 10:6-15 These verses constitute Jesus' analysis of his own story.
- 10:12ff Symbols are introduced which are later built upon:
 Door = Jesus
 Sheepfold = A place reserved for those in favor
 Thief & Robber = Pharisees & like-authorities
 Sheep = Those who are the Lord's
 Porter = The Holy Spirit
 Wolf = Rome (at the first advent)
- 10:19-21 These verses CONNECT the blindness miracle to the Sheepfold parable.
- 10:22, 23 The details here provided relate to what was happening at the first advent —

Jerusalem represents fleshly Israel.

Feast of Dedication was a celebration of the beginning of the functioning of Solomon's Temple. Here it would represent the beginning of Jesus' temple (his "body").

Winter shows the setting in of the undesirable condition (i.e., in this context, the "night").

Solomon's Porch was known as "The Porch of Judgment" — I Kings 7:7. It here shows the judgment of the Jewish arrangement.

- 10:24 The Jews, though duplicitous, keep wanting clear explanations which Jesus refuses to give to their hypocritical minds. It is much like the Rich Man in the parable asking for "a drop of water on my tongue." (Luke 16)
- 10:25-39 The narrative shows that the majority cannot believe — even with a miracle like Lazarus, which only makes them want to kill Jesus!
- 10:40-42 Therefore, Jesus goes to revive the concept of baptism — a NEW baptism for a NEW sheepfold. "And many believed in him there."

CHAPTER 11 is yet a part of the context. Jesus will make a parable about Lazarus showing that the previously non-accepted Gentiles will be accepted. There will be a NEW sheepfold growing from his giving sight to those who never before saw — were "born blind."

(3) Second Advent prophetic Applications

We might miss the obvious here. The second advent will eventuate in the dealing with the whole world — which WILL, indeed, be another NEW sheepfold. But in the context of these chapters, we don't want to miss the point that ***Israel*** will ONCE MORE have a separation. God says that He will "purge out the rebels" (Ezekiel 20:38). He says that Jerusalem will "be divided" (Zechariah 14:2). In other words, our second-advent interpretation of the allegorical significance of the blindness removal IS NOT ABOUT Christendom, NOT ABOUT the world, but IS ABOUT a new "remnant" class in Israel.

The New Covenant will be made with Israel — NOT with the world. And it will be made with the faithful remnant of our day. Once again, not all ARE Israel that are OF Israel. Blindness removal will be accomplished in today's faithful remnant, and this blindness removal will result in their being immediately incorporated into the New Covenant. The New Covenant will BE the New Sheepfold. But it will INITIALLY be Israelitish. The non-faithful Jews of our day will be incorporated into the New Covenant even as the world will be. Based on this, we must ever keep in mind that the allegory (as it applies to the second advent) is ONLY about a new Jewish remnant.

In 8:56, we must be mindful that Abraham “saw” TWO DAYS (advents) of Jesus. Abraham “saw” the ransom pictured in the offering of Isaac. Abraham “saw” the Kingdom in the promise that all the families of the earth would be blessed.

9:4 The 2nd advent interpretation begins “WE...” OUR works are many, but they include the removal of blindness from Israel’s remnant. (Isaiah 40:1, 2)

9:5 Jesus (who said that WE are also “the light of the world”) equates OUR collective leaving of the earth with the onset of the “night wherein no man can work.” It is IMPORTANT to note here that when the “night” of this prophecy sets in, WE WILL NOT BE HERE!

9:6, 7 This is still about fleshly Israel, but now about the Gospel Harvest’s Jewish REMNANT. God will “purge out the rebels” (Ezekiel 20:38). In other words, MANY JEWS will not be considered to be Israel. The blindness-removal FORMULA remains the same as previously explained. But, it AWAITS the completion of the Church. (Romans 11:25). The saints will be “on the other side.” We might have to go so far as to say it awaits the Great Multitude’s departure.

According to Song of Solomon 6:1, the Great Multitude will play a final part in convincing the Jewish remnant regarding Jesus’ identity. When the Great Multitude departs, the faithful Jewish Remnant will have “sought him (Jesus)” to the point where they FIND him!

In Micah 5:5, 6, we see that then the faithful remnant will come under the New Covenant, thus allowing them to “raise up against him (Gog — “the Assyrian”) seven shepherds (the help of the Church) and eight princes of men (the Ancient Worthies).”

In other words, the faithful remnant will have totally accepted him whom God had “SENT” — even before the Ancient Worthies appear.

- 9:8-12 Reactions will result: The Remnant will witness to neighbors — but must explain why they cannot “SEE” Messiah!
- 9:13ff The unfaithful will not be able to “see.” They will have to await their own entrance into the New Covenant arrangement until they see to believe.
- 9:14 It is the Millennium when this happens — i.e., the Gospel Harvest.
- 9:16 The unfaithful in Israel (even during the Gog invasion) will still argue on the basis of the Law. Consequently, there will be a “division” in Israel. (See Zechariah 14;2.)
- 9:18-23 There will YET be threats as of old against the faithful remnant. This will be a part of the purging out of the rebels.
- 9:27, 28 But the unfaithful will fail.
- 9:30-34 The Remnant will show their firmness of faith.
- 9:35-38 Jesus will CONFIRM the faith of the Remnant — “Confirm the Covenant.”

CHAPTER 10

We are here entering a new sheepfold — the Millennial Age New Covenant.

10:22, 23 Jerusalem will now be the NEW Jerusalem.

The Feast of Dedication will be the Body of Christ complete.

The Winter will remain until God says, “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46)

Solomon’s Porch marks the beginning of the judgment of individuals.

10:24-29 This represents Acts 3:23 — “Hear that Prophet!”

SYNONYMS FOR “THE NIGHT WHEREIN NO MAN CAN WORK”
(Not Exhaustive)

Here is a list of a number of Scripturally prophetic items which, though not called “night,” are likely quite synonymous in time or in concept with the John 9:4 “night.” Be it remembered, IN ALL OF THESE PROPHETIC INSTANCES, the Church will be gone — “Beyond the veil.” But in most (if not all) the Great Multitude will remain in the flesh.

- Seventh Plague (Revelation 16:17-21)
- 12th Hour (Matthew 20)
- One Hour (Revelation 17:12), and its Half Hour (Revelation 8:1)
- Winter (Jeremiah 8:20; Matthew 24:20, 21)
- Great Time of Trouble (Matthew 24:20, 21; Daniel 12:1)
- Battle of the Great Day (Revelation 16:14)
- Day of Distress (Habakkuk 3:16-19)
- Gog & Magog Invasion (Ezekiel 38 & 39)
- Winepress (Revelation 14:20)
- Morning and Night Also (Isaiah 21:11, 12)
- Four Winds let loose (Revelation 7)

DYING AS MARTYRS?

While not all brethren assign martyr’s deaths to the John 9:4 “night,” there is a tendency among us to think that the Church will all go up in a “blaze of glory” created by our being tortured or by our being martyred.

Among other considerations, we do not wish to give the impression that some may not, indeed, experience this kind of treatment resulting in their “change.” But it should be obvious that this concept MUST be based on something other than John 9:4. The Church will be GONE when the “night” of John 9:4 sets in.

PLEASE let us not give false impressions about John 9:4 and how horrible it will be for saints by adding the word “dark” to the verse! It is not said to be “the dark night.” That does not mean, of course, that it won’t be “dark” for the world. It WILL! (All nights are dark, by definition.) But Jesus’ point is that WE must finish OUR part in blindness removal BEFORE the Great Time of Trouble settles in.

WHY do we seem to WANT to die as martyrs? It is almost endemic in the world's religions that the adherents either WANT or FEAR being martyred. We remember the effect of this mind-set on groups like the "Branch Davidians" in Waco, Texas — and virtually countless others of examples.

Does this mind-set do us any particular good? If it happens, it happens! And if our faith be true, it will not be a big deal! If it doesn't happen, we hope that THAT ALSO will not challenge our faith. The fact is, our departure method, whatever it be, will be the best method for us and for God's purposes. Dwelling on something we CANNOT FORECAST is a waste of time and emotional energy.

It might be profitable to note that of the seven great messengers "in the Lord's right hand," only ONE of the seven suffered a martyr's death. These seven are:

YES: Paul
NO: John
Arius (Can't be positively established)
Waldo
Wycliffe
Luther
Russell

If these very great and important servants were nearly all exempt from martyrdom, why would WE (little old us!) think it important that we suffer such a thing?

However, it might just be that the Great Multitude are much more likely to experience the death of martyrs. They (as the antitypical "scapegoat" — Leviticus 16) carry the punishment for the willful sins from the first advent until now — much like Israel (Matthew 23:35) carried the sins from Abel until the first advent.

The Great Multitude goes out of this world in the most-troublous time: the "winter" or the "night." The likelihood of martyrdom THEN seems so much greater.

Interestingly, the Great Multitude HAS this attitude of persecution for themselves in the prophecy of Habakkuk 3:16.

"I heard and my inward parts trembled. At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones. And in my place I tremble — because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us!"

Wow! If that isn't the mind-set of troubled religionists worldwide — not just of the Great Multitude. But this should give us pause. If THIS is the thought pattern of the Great Multitude, should WE share it? We think not! It is (not seriously) almost like thinking that if we REALLY want martyrdom, we should strive to be in the Great Multitude!

SUMMARY

The extensively detailed account of the healing of the blind man seems almost certainly to be for a great and allegorical purpose. In its prophetic way, it lets us know about how God (through Jesus and the saints) will remove blindness in various sheepfolds until all are in one fold under one shepherd. It is a lovely and lengthy context — a context which makes us very dissatisfied with the usual treatment of John 9:4.

As earlier stated, we are not attempting to be critical. We are merely attempting to draw attention to material which SURROUNDS the texts we love to quote. This contextual approach to Scripture helps keep us from accentuating the unimportant and from missing the pertinent. May our Father bless us as we compare notes.
