

GIVING SIGHT TO THE BLIND

Excerpts from a sermon by Rev. Daniel W. Heinrichs

The story in the ninth chapter of John about the Lord giving sight to a man born blind is dramatic and deeply touching. We sense in it the joy and wonder of the man who received sight after so many years of utter darkness. We are warmed by the compassion and mercy which the Lord showed toward the blind man. And we are amazed, astonished and dumfounded by the hostility and antagonism which the Pharisees exhibited toward the man who had been blind, and by their fanatical desire to discredit the Lord. Instead of rejoicing at this man's good fortune and marveling at this wonderful miracle, they rebuked and persecuted the man and his family and finally expelled him from the synagogue.

Dramatic as this story may be, and wonderful as the miracle was in itself, this story is not merely history. It is not an event which is done and finished. The miracle of giving sight to the blind is one which the Lord is continually effecting with all people who genuinely desire it. Remarkable as all the Lord's miracles were in themselves, they were not the fulfillment of His mission on earth. Because the Lord is infinite, everything He did while on earth looked to spiritual and eternal ends. The Lord did not come on earth to heal people's bodies. The body lives for only a few short years and then it is discarded, like clothing that has served its use. He came to heal the spirits of people, which live on in the spiritual world when the body has been put off. All the miracles which the Lord performed were ultimate representations of spiritual things—things that pertain to the hearts and minds of people (see *Apocalypse Explained* 475:19).

All the diseases which the Lord healed while on earth have their spiritual correspondences (see *Apocalypse Explained* 815:5). The man born blind whom the Lord healed represents all those people who are ignorant of Divine truth, and who, through a genuine desire to know the truth, are enlightened by the Lord at His coming.

In Isaiah 29:11-12 we read of a closed book that none could understand, neither the learned nor the simple. This book was the Word. Through their refusal to obey the Lord's precepts, the Jewish church of the time had closed its understanding to the truth revealed by the Lord in His Word. Thus the book was closed to the leaders and teachers of the Jews, and so the learned also closed it to the simple who depended on them for instruction from the Word. Instead of teaching genuine truths from the Word they taught man-made precepts: "their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men" (Isaiah 29:13).

Because of this situation the Lord prophesied that He would do a marvelous work when He came on earth. "In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness... These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmured will learn doctrine" (Isaiah 29:18, 24).

Here we see described one of the purposes of the Lord's coming: to open the understanding of people—their spiritual sight—so that they could see Divine truths in the Word. He came to open the closed "Book" so that people could learn doctrine from it: doctrine applicable to life, Divine

doctrine and not the commandments of people. This is the interior meaning of the miracle which the Lord performed for the man born blind. And the means by which He healed the man also describe the means by which He may open the interior understanding of each individual and impart a genuine rational faith.

The clay which the Lord used to anoint the man's eyes represents good—the good affections which a person has acquired by living a life according to truth (see *Arcana Coelestia* 6669:6). After anointing the man's eyes, the Lord told him to wash in the pool of Siloam. This represents a cleansing by repentance from what is evil and false, for all the ceremonial washings in the Word represent repentance, for example, the baptism of John in the fords of the river Jordan.

This miracle represents the fulfillment of one of the Lord's purposes in coming on earth. He prophesied in Isaiah that He would come to open the human understanding so that people could see the inner contents of the "Book" which was closed by their spiritual blindness. He was going to teach them doctrine so that they would cease to err. He proclaimed this purpose again immediately before and after He had healed the blind man, saying, "I am the light of the world... For judgment I have come into this world that those who do not see may see, and those who see may be blind" (John 9:5,39). Those who think they see are blinded, because they see from self-intelligence rather than from the Lord who is the "light of the world"—their self-illuminated understanding in an illusory light. They see what is false as the truth, and what is true they see as false. They close their eyes against the genuine light of Divine truth.

The purpose of the Lord's Second Coming is the same as that of His First Coming. In the book of Revelation we read of a "Book" sealed with seven seals, which nobody was worthy to open except the Lord Himself. This was a prophecy of how, in the Christian Church, the Word would again become a closed Book, no longer understood by the learned or the simple, a book which only the Lord Himself could open in His Second Advent. And it is opened! The spiritual meaning of the Word is now revealed! It gives spiritual understanding—spiritual sight—to those who receive and acknowledge it.

So this story of the healing of the blind man is not just an historical record of the Israelites, of the Lord's life on earth and the wonders He performed during the three short years of His ministry. The Word contains within it living truth which can heal our spiritual blindness and cleanse our minds and hearts from what is false and evil. In the revelation of His Second Advent, the Lord has opened the Book that was closed. He has revealed Himself anew so that those who err in spirit may come to understanding and those who murmur may learn true doctrine.

May the Lord, through His open Word, heal all of us who have been born in ignorance. As we apply these revealed truths to our lives and repent of our sins, may our understandings be opened so that we become seeing. And may we be led to acknowledge, as did the man born blind, that only the Lord Himself can open the interior sight of our minds and illumine their darkness, so that we may say of the truth when it is presented to our minds, "Lord, I believe."