

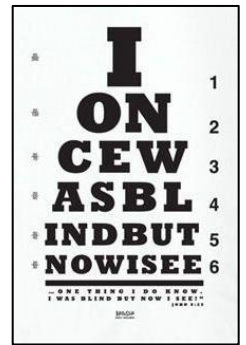


Spiritual Blindness

Everybody's Got it!

Exam #9

BLINDNESS OR IMPAIRMENT



A Few Thoughts

- Y N Does a certifiable blind man (no light, no vision) need corrective lenses (glasses, etc.)?
- Y N In order to have corrective lenses prescribed, would you need to have correctible vision?
- Y N If you were seriously physically visually impaired with very little hope of a solution or a cure, would you take part in a experimental treatment to cure your eye problem if you have the opportunity and the finances to do so?
- Y N If you had a serious "Spiritual Vision Impairment", would you have the same desperation and eagerness to get that fixed?

So far in our studies, the subject of "spiritual blindness" seems to be either total blindness or partial blindness. It appears that a person starts out (at birth) totally spiritually blind (an unbeliever). After the unbeliever becomes a believer (accepts Christ as Personal Savior), that total blindness will change to either average spiritual eyesight or eyesight requiring corrective lenses.

Let's look closer at "Saul", also called "Paul" later.

Philippians 3:3-4 We worship God in the Spirit; rejoice in Jesus, and have no confidence in the "flesh" (old nature & own efforts). I certainly am tempted to have confidence in my flesh; I have more reason to.

Philippians 3:5 I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law.

1. How did Paul describe himself before he was a believer in Jesus Christ? (Phil. 3:5) (Flashback)
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
2. Y N Paul did not need or want Jesus before he became a believer.
3. Y N The religion that Paul belonged to was Jewish; that is all he needed.
4. How did Paul feel about all this after he became a believer? (Phil. 3:3-4)

5. How could the **same man** have two opposite beliefs & lifestyles? _____

<i>I grew up in a middle-class family; I had responsible parents; we did no church. I learned to steal, swear, lie;</i>	<i>God loved me.</i>
<i>I went to a church; my parents did not go; I didn't want to steal, swear, and lie; I wanted something else.</i>	<i>God loved me.</i>
<i>I wanted a better life; I still stole, swore, and lied; I still went to church; my parents were still no help here.</i>	<i>God loved me.</i>
<i>I became a believer; I went to church more; I slowed down on the stealing, swearing, and lying; I tried really hard.</i>	<i>God loved me.</i>
<i>I am an adult now; I still go to church; I stopped stealing, swearing, and lying; I disappoint God in other ways now.</i>	<i>God still loves me.</i>
<i>Spiritually impaired eyesight causes us to hurt people & disappoint God. A believer can do this too.</i>	<i>God still loves me.</i>

SAUL - HE HATED CHRISTIANS (BELIEVERS) - Totally Spiritually Blind

Acts 7:58	And they (Jewish leaders &/or hired guns) stoned Stephen, and the witnesses (legal) laid down their cloaks (outer coats) at the feet of a young man named Saul.
Acts 8:1	Now Saul consented to Stephen's execution (stoning).
Acts 8:3	As for Saul, he attacked the church like a wild animal, entering every house, dragging men & women off to prison.
Acts 9:1	Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, wrote letters to the synagogues in Syria (using the High Priest's letterhead) so as to find any believers, arrest them, and arraign them in Jerusalem.
Acts 22:19-20	Paul said, "in every synagogue I imprisoned & beat believers; I stood by and consented to the execution of Stephen; I even guarded the coats of the witnesses & executioners.
Acts 9:13	Ananias said to the Lord, "I have heard from many about this man (Saul), how much harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; he is proceeding with the total authority from the High Priest to arrest all believers."
Acts 9:4	Jesus said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me"?
Acts 9:5	Again Jesus said, "I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting"?

1. Describe the actions of Saul in the verses above. _____

2. Y N Is there any mention in the verses as to **why** Saul persecuted the believers?

3. Y N Do you think that Saul was absolutely against religion?

4. Y N Do you think Saul believed in laws, morals, God, Holy Scriptures?

5. SAUL - HE WAS POLITICAL & A VERY RELIGIOUS MAN - Totally Spiritually Blind

Acts 9:11	The Lord said to the disciple Ananias, "Arise and go to the main street named "Straight". Inquire at the house of Judas for a man named "Saul of Tarsus" (in the Roman province of Cilicia).
Philippians 3:5	I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law.
Acts 4:5	And it came to pass, on the next day that the rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John and Alexander and many of the high priest's family, were gathered together at Jerusalem (this is a meeting of the Sanhedrin).
Acts 8:1	Now Saul consented to Stephen's execution (stoning).
Acts 5:34	Then a member of the Sanhedrin stood up, a pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people; he commanded that the apostles under arrest, Peter & John, be sent outside.

6. Where was Saul born? _____

7. Who was Saul's teacher in Jerusalem? _____

8. Y N Reminder! A person who is totally spiritually blind is a person who is not a believer in Jesus Christ.

9. Besides being Jewish, what was Saul's political party? _____

10. Who else was in this political party? _____

11. What was the Jewish leaders' legislative council called? _____

12. Who belonged to this legislative council? (Acts 5:34) _____

13. Y N Could Saul possibly have been a member of this legislative council?

Hint: Saul had a very close relationship with Gamaliel.

The Sanhedrin (council) ordered Stephen to be stoned (executed).

Saul was present at the execution of Stephen.

14. What did the "Pharisees" strongly believe? _____

15. Y N Can a very religious person be totally spiritually blind?

16. Y N Can a very religious person be an unbeliever?



Acts 22:3 Paul said, "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up here in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today."

1. In what two towns did Saul receive religious education?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
2. Check two sources of his education:

___Jesus	___His parents
___Harvard	___Gamaliel
___UCLA	___The Disciples

A Few Facts

- ** Both Jesus and Saul were growing up at the same time, one in Nazareth & one in Tarsus.
- ** Without getting too hung up on dates, Jesus may have been approximately 7 years old when Saul was born.
- ** Saul grew up in a very Jewish home located in Tarsus mainly influenced by his parents & the local synagogue.
- ** The Roman Empire expanded all over to include the "Roman Province" of "Cilicia". Jews dispersed there.
- ** Saul was born in a Roman province, so that would make him a Roman citizen at birth.
- ** At age 17 or so, Saul moved to Jerusalem to continue his religious education under the teaching of Gamaliel.
- ** Jesus would have been about 25 years old when Saul moved to Jerusalem, and still living in Nazareth.

1. Though Jesus and Saul were approximately 7 years apart, and lived roughly 900 miles apart, what are the two similar things about their childhood?
 - a. Government: _____
 - b. Education: _____



- ** Tarsus was an education hub & the capital of Roman Province Cilicia. It had active synagogues. Paul went.
- ** Nazareth was a run-down, dusty town but it had a synagogue full of faithful Jewish people. Jesus went.
- ** The Jewish faith was dictated by Holy Scriptures plus all the other rules added by the Jewish leaders.
- ** "The Other Rules" were not from God, but from learned Jewish leaders hung up on their own power.
- ** Any religion that interfered with the Jewish system was looked upon as an enemy of the Roman Empire.
- ** The Roman government did not consider "Christianity" to be their enemy; "Christianity" became the enemy of the Jewish leaders who had to maintain control of the people & convince the Romans that they were right.

2. Y N Jesus grew up in this system but He was God & knew at an early age how everything fit together. He came to give "Spiritual Vision" to mankind.
3. Y N Saul grew up in this system too but was "spiritually blind" like all the rest.
4. Y N Saul was a faithful Jew who was trying to reach God without the Messiah (the Promised Deliverer of the Jewish people, the Christ).

- ** The Jewish people were taught all through their lives that the Messiah would bring them salvation one day.
- ** The Old Testament Scriptures predicted over and over in great detail that the Messiah was coming.
- ** The Jewish people were told to trust in the Messiah as their coming Savior from sin.
- ** All their lives they renewed that faith in the Messiah at the temple, at synagogues, and at Jewish feasts.
- ** They knew their sins were forgiven already & that the Messiah would eventually die to make that happen.

5. When I became a believer, I trusted Jesus as my Savior from the penalty of inherited sin. I had a choice just like you do. What did you choose? _____

6. Y N The Old Testament Jews had the same choice; they could trust the Messiah as their Savior (even before He came) because God promised Him.

No matter what "Testament" we're in, if a person tries to reach God without Jesus (Messiah), they are "spiritually blind".