

Meeting Jesus

LEADERS NOTES

Week 4

Another long passage but necessary to get the full picture.

1. The Bible certainly does make a link between sin and suffering. In a general sense all suffering is a result of sin because if Adam had not sinned there would not be suffering and death. However, it also shows that some suffering is directly linked to specific sins.

What this incident and others show is that this is not the only reason people suffer and so we should be very wary of trying to say that some particular instance of suffering is the result of particular sin in a person's life.

The passages we looked at in 2011 were

Job 5.17 & 11.6 (Job's friends said he suffered because of sin, they were wrong). Job suffered for precisely the opposite reason because of his righteousness. (Job 1.8-12)

Acts 12.21-23 - Herod (Agrippa) died because of his sin of pride.

2 Cor 11.23-28 - Paul suffered persecution for righteousness sake.

2 Cor 12.7 - Paul had a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him humble.

Rom 5.12 - we die because of sin, which entered because of sin.

Whilst Jesus suffered not because of His sin but because of ours.

2-3. This will be picked up again at the end. Most often Jesus' miracles are performed simply by His commanding (the storm to stop, people to rise from the dead etc). So the instances where he does things differently seem to be deliberate. Here the fact that the man did not see Jesus until later seems significant. The man is not with Jesus when he regains his sight but by the time he does see him again (and not that Jesus seeks the man) he had already gone a long way in faith.

4. Look at the opposing responses in verse 9 amongst the acquaintances of the man and verse 16 amongst the Pharisees.

6-10 These questions go together and I hope they make sense. Many, but not all, the Pharisees seem to have been completely unwilling to consider the implications of the facts before them. To those who believe this seems extraordinary, but then we can feel the same way about people who won't believe today. It is something to be aware of in sharing the gospel and something that is widely recognised.

However, as indicated in question 9 Christians are accused of the same blindness to the facts - people like Richard Dawkins will use that expression.

When people get so entrenched it is hard to see how they can be reached. However, although I didn't put it in the notes don't forget that certain other Pharisee Saul of Tarsus who was obstinately opposed to the gospel but came to faith. Along the way God also blinded Paul and only restored his sight through Ananias.

Question 10 might seem a bit off the point but there has been a movement within churches of people who have wanted to continue to believe in God but have rejected many of the facts of the faith as presented in the Bible. They have presented doubt positively, saying that in the modern world we cannot believe what people in the past believed. So they have seen faith as believing despite the evidence to the contrary. That is to ignore what the gospels do, which is present clear facts for faith.

14. The key verses are 11-12, 17, 25, 31-33 and 35-38.

16. The works are seen not only in this man receiving sight, which as he said was unheard of, but also that he came to faith in Christ. His response was to worship.

*David Phillips,
March 2015*