International Bible Lesson
International Bible Study Commentary
L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Manmade Rules and Spiritual Blindness
John 9:13-23

Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them (John 9:16—KJV).

Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them (John 9:16—NASB).

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man (Jesus) is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided (John 9:16—NRSV).

No one in Jerusalem had ever heard of a man born blind being healed, but when Jesus met a man born blind, He gave him physical and spiritual sight. Despite their knowledge of the Scriptures, many Pharisees did not have spiritual sight, so they became divided over Jesus whenever He healed on the Sabbath. The Pharisees made rules on how to keep the Law of God, but many of their rules radically departed from the Law of God and made the Law of Love almost impossible to obey, especially when it came to loving God and your neighbor. For example, according to their rules, it was legal to keep someone from dying on the Sabbath, but it violated their laws to make a person better on the Sabbath. Some Pharisees believed Jesus did not observe the Sabbath because He healed on the Sabbath and claimed to do the work of God. Because of their rules, when Jesus made someone whole on the Sabbath, they could not see Him revealing God through His healing work. Many Pharisees showed no interest in the people Jesus healed other than to seek reasons to kill Jesus for disobeying their rules. The Pharisees knew, and the Bible teaches, that not every miracle is a sign someone is from God. But, by what Jesus taught and did, those with spiritual sight recognized Jesus was the Light of the world. Some Pharisees, such as Nicodemus, loved God and their neighbors; therefore, they praised and thanked God whenever Jesus healed anyone.

Thinking Further

1. What was the problem with Jesus healing someone on the Sabbath?

2. How did the man born blind describe His healing?

3. In what way were people divided after Jesus healed the man born blind?

4. When asked, what did the man born blind say about Jesus? Why did this take courage?

5. When questioned, why were the parents of the man Jesus healed afraid?

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Contact: P.O. Box 1052, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083 and lgp@theiblf.com.