

Bartimaeus, the Blind Beggar, Healed

Mark 10:46-52

Mark 10:46-52 – *“Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*

⁴⁸ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁹ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, “Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.” ⁵⁰ And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ So Jesus answered and said to him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” The blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.”

⁵² Then Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.”

Background Notes

In verse 46, the Lord and his companions came to Jericho. They had crossed the Jordan River from the area of Perea, where all the previous events of Mark 10 had taken place. Now they entered and passed through the city of Jericho, which was located near the Jordan River.

The Lord, His disciples and a great crowd of pilgrims were traveling up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast in Jerusalem. The Lord was making His way to Jerusalem for the final week of His earthly ministry. Jerusalem is about fifteen miles up the old Roman road from Jericho - and it's definitely uphill all the way. Jericho is more than 1000 feet below sea level, and Jerusalem is more than 2000 feet above sea level. It's quite a hike from Jericho to Jerusalem, and it's uphill all the way!

As they passed through Jericho for the last time, the Lord miraculously restored the sight of a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. When you read the parallel accounts of this event in Matthew 20 and Luke 18, there are some significant differences. Not contradictions, but differences, and they're significant enough that we need to harmonize these accounts.

In the Matthew's account, *two* blind men are mentioned, and the miracle took place as they were *leaving* Jericho. In Luke's account, only *one* unnamed blind man is mentioned, and the event took place as they were *entering* Jericho. In Mark's account, only *one* blind man is mentioned, he's named, and the event took place as they're *leaving* Jericho.

How do you harmonize these accounts? Did a critic of the Bible ever ask you about this? Maybe you've never realized the apparent problem that exists here. But it's not really a problem - the accounts can be harmonized!

As to whether there were two blind men or one blind man: there were two blind men. Two blind men were healed. Luke and Mark select to mention only one of the blind men - probably the more outspoken man, whose name was Bartimaeus. If Mark and Luke had said that there was only one blind man healed, then we would have a problem, but they didn't say that. Two blind men were healed, but Luke and Mark chose to concentrate on the outspoken blind man.

As to where the miracle took place, Matthew and Mark say they were *leaving* Jericho, but Luke said they were *entering* Jericho. How do you harmonize that? There are two possible ways. One is that they made their request for healing as the Lord was entering Jericho, but the healing actually took place as they were leaving Jericho.

However, I think the most likely way this took place, and how this account should be harmonized, is that there were two Jericho's in that day. There was the Old Testament Jericho that was conquered by Joshua at the time of the Conquest, and a New Testament Jericho that was built by Herod the Great. Most likely the miracle took place on the road *between* the two Jericho's.

If you visit Jericho today, you'll actually find three Jericho's: the modern city of Jericho, the tel (or mound) of Old Testament Jericho, and the remains of New Testament Jericho, the Herodian Jericho that was inhabited in our Lord's day.

Modern Jericho today is under the control of the Palestinian Authority, and order is maintained by a Palestinian police force. As you ride out of modern Jericho toward Jerusalem, you pass the ruins of Old Testament Jericho. Old Testament Jericho was probably not inhabited during our Lord's time, but in the minds of Matthew and Mark, the Jewish writers, *that* was Jericho. So as far as they were concerned, the miracle took place as they were *leaving* Jericho.

But as you follow the old Roman road toward Jerusalem, about a mile away you pass near the ruins of New Testament Jericho - Herodian Jericho, where archaeological work is being done. This is the Jericho that was inhabited during our Lord's time, so most likely Luke, the Gentile writer, was referring to this Jericho. So for Luke, the miracle took place as they were *entering* Jericho. So there are no problems with harmonizing these accounts.

There are no contradictions in the Bible! Don't let critics rattle you when they talk about "mistakes" or "contradictions" in the Bible. Background studies may help you greatly in harmonizing these "apparent discrepancies" in Scripture.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord Jesus always honors the request of faith.

In verse 51, the Lord said, *“What do you want Me to do for you?”* The Lord said that before, in Mark 10:36, when He said to James and John, *“What do you want Me to do for you?”* Then they made a very selfish and ambitious request - that they might sit on the right hand and left hand of the Lord when He would come in His glory. They wanted to have top rank in the kingdom.

In the case of James and John, when the Lord said, *“What do you want Me to do for you?”* they made a request - but it was denied. In the case of Bartimaeus, the Lord said the same thing, *“What do you want Me to do for you?”* - but his request was granted!

What was the difference? When James and John made their request, it was not a request of faith. It was a selfish and ambitious request, and it was certainly not based on faith.

When Bartimaeus is asked the same question, he made his request in faith. When he cried out, *“Son of David, have mercy on me!”* this is evidence of his great faith. “Son of David” was a Messianic title. Bartimaeus, unlike so many in the crowd, recognized Jesus as the Messiah, as the Christ.

Bartimaeus made his request in faith, and it was honored. The Lord said to him, *“Go your way; your faith has made you well!”* Your faith has made you whole, has healed you, literally has saved you! Blind Bartimaeus received more than his physical eyesight. He received his spiritual sight as well. The Lord Jesus always honors the request of faith.

Remember, the request of faith will be centered in God’s will. The greater the faith, the greater the sensitivity to God’s will. Suppose I had cancer and I asked God for healing. Is that a selfish request or a request of faith? Well, I may not know for sure right away, but as I analyze my motives before the Lord, and continue to walk in faith, and continue to pray for God’s will, I will begin to become more sensitive to God’s will.

My request of faith may continue to be for healing. On the other hand, if I sense more and more by faith that it is not the Lord’s will that I be healed, my prayer may change to “Lord, may I glorify you in my suffering and my death”. The Lord always honors the request of faith, because the request of faith is centered in God’s will.

2. Discipleship means following Christ up to Jerusalem.

In Bartimaeus we have a great picture of salvation and discipleship. Before he met Jesus Christ, Bartimaeus was going nowhere. He was a blind beggar, sitting beside the road down in Jericho. What a picture of us before salvation! Unbelievers are like the blind men - spiritually blind, spiritually hungry, beggars, sitting around going nowhere.

But then Bartimaeus met the Lord. What a change! He now could see. No longer was he going nowhere - he was following the Lord up to Jerusalem. However, going up to Jerusalem is not easy. It is a rough road, and uphill all the way. And suffering certainly lay ahead for the Lord and His followers in Jerusalem.

What a picture of salvation and discipleship. Discipleship means following Christ up to Jerusalem, and accepting the suffering it entails. Are you willing to be a disciple?

Practical Application

Don't let the crowd keep you from Christ!

Verse 48: *"Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"* The crowd told Bartimaeus to be quiet. Why? Maybe some in the crowd were offended by the use of the messianic title, "Son of David." Maybe some of the crowd did not like the disruption of this man crying out. In any case, Bartimaeus was not turned off by the crowd. He was persistent.

It's a good thing he wasn't deterred from crying out for healing, because this was the last time the Lord passed through Jericho. Suppose Bartimaeus had been silenced by the crowd? Suppose he had felt embarrassed? He never would have received his sight and salvation!

This is a great application for us. Don't let the crowd keep you from Christ! Is it possible that up to this point, you've let the crowd dictate your life? You go to church, but that's where a lot of the crowd goes on Sunday. What about the rest of the week? Do you just follow along with the crowd at work, or on the college campus, or in your neighborhood?

Don't let the crowd keep you from Christ. This applies to coming to Christ for salvation, and it also applies to following Christ in discipleship.

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