

The Blind Man Healed in Stages

Mark 8:22-26

Mark 8:22-26 – “Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. ²³ So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. ²⁴ And he looked up and said, “I see men like trees, walking.”²⁵ Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. ²⁶ Then He sent him away to his house, saying, “Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town.”

Background Notes

Recognize that the town of Bethsaida was a town under judgment. It was one of the three towns at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee where the Lord had done many miracles. But because the people of these towns would not respond and receive Jesus as Messiah, the Lord pronounced woe upon these cities. “Woe unto you Chorazin, woe unto you Bethsaida, woe unto you Capernaum.” This judgment has already been pronounced. You can read about it in Matthew 11.

When the Lord “spit” on the man’s eyes, He didn’t stand back, take aim, and spit on the man’s eyes. No, He gently placed saliva on the man’s eyes, much as He did with the blind man in John 9, when He mixed His saliva with clay and placed it on the man’s eyes.

In verse 24, the man said that he saw men “like walking trees.” What’s the idea here? It’s not the idea that he saw trees that looked like men. No, he meant that his vision wasn’t clear - he had fuzzy vision. He couldn’t distinguish between people and trees, except that people move and trees don’t. His vision was not yet fully cleared up.

That reminds me of a night when I was jogging on the golf course next to our college campus. I was just about to jump over what I thought were two bushes when suddenly the bushes moved! It was two of my students out there talking. It was night, so I had fuzzy vision. But in broad daylight the man still couldn’t distinguish between trees and people, so the Lord kept His hands on the man’s eyes and his vision was fully restored.

The Lord told the man to go home - don’t go into the town and tell anyone. He was not to tell the crowds at Bethsaida about the miracle because, as we see so often, the Lord did not want people to follow Him just because of the miracles.

Doctrinal Point

Context is helpful in determining the meaning of the miracles.

We've been over this point before, but let's mention it again. *All of the miracles of Jesus had meaning associated with them.* They were designed to *teach*. They weren't just arbitrary or random bursts of divine power. They were pre-programmed - designed.

The miracles of the Lord Jesus were not only demonstrations of the power of God that showed that Jesus is God, but they were preplanned and carried out in such a way as to teach lessons. Couldn't the Lord have snapped His fingers, and this man would have been perfectly healed in an instant? Of course He could have! But He chose to heal this blind man in stages. Why? Because of the *teaching* of the miracle.

We can often come to the meaning of the miracles by looking at the context. So often the surrounding context helps us to understand the meaning. The meaning of this miracle has to do with coming to spiritual enlightenment – to spiritual maturity – to clear spiritual vision. There's no such thing as instant sanctification. There's no such thing as instant spiritual maturity. The Lord continues to clear up our spiritual eyesight as we let Him keep His hands upon our spiritual eyes. That teaching was dramatized in this miracle.

Let's look at the context surrounding this miracle. Go back to verse 17: *"But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?"* The disciples lacked spiritual enlightenment. They were believers – yes -- but they lacked understanding. Go back to verse 21, *"So He said to them, "How is it you do not understand?"* They loved the Lord and they were believers, but they lacked understanding.

And then go to the context after the miracle. Verse 31: *"And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."* So in the context both before and after the miracle, the disciples lacked understanding. They lacked spiritual maturity. Their spiritual vision was not clear. They were believers, but they needed spiritual enlightenment.

And so, tucked right in the middle of this context, we have the miracle of the blind man healed in stages. The miracle dramatizes the very words that the Lord was teaching. The meaning of the miracle is explained by the surrounding context.

So - always look at the surrounding context of any of our Lord's miracles. Many times it will help you to discern the meaning of the miracle. Context is helpful in determining the meaning of the miracles.

Practical Application

Let's take the necessary steps to obtain 20/20 spiritual vision.

a. Let the Lord lead.

The Lord took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town (v23). Too often we want to lead the Lord, rather than allowing the Lord to lead us. If we're going to have 20/20 spiritual vision, we've got to let the Lord lead - not us lead the Lord. Why is it that becoming a missionary to Hawaii appeals to me? Because I want to lead the Lord! We can be Christians, but we can try to make our own decisions - to "lead the Lord" and do the things that appeal to us. But if we want to have 20/20 spiritual vision, we've got to let the Lord lead us.

b. Separate from the world.

The Lord took the man out of Bethsaida. That's why we gave that historical background note about Bethsaida - Bethsaida was a city under judgment. The judgment had already been pronounced. Bethsaida is a picture of the world that is already under judgment. We must practice separation from the world if we would have clear spiritual understanding.

Separation, of course, doesn't mean separating from the people of this world and running off to be a hermit. No, separation means to separate ourselves from the values and attitudes of this world system. You can be a worldly Christian (like the Corinthians) and get to heaven, but you can't obtain 20/20 spiritual vision unless you're willing to practice separation from worldly values and attitudes.

c. Be humble.

The man humbly submitted to the having the Lord's saliva placed on his eyes. Some commentaries state that the saliva of rabbis was highly esteemed in those days. But still, it was not a pleasant experience. It was humbling. Suppose the man wanted to have his eyes cleared up but he refused to have saliva placed on his eyes? He would not have been healed.

Do you want 20/20 spiritual vision? Are you willing to be humbled by God? Really, do we deserve anything more than the saliva of God? We need to take that humble, submissive place before God. We can be Christians and get to heaven without being humble, but if we want clear spiritual vision - spiritual enlightenment - spiritual maturity - we've got to be willing to be humbled by God.

For example, suppose you're working hard and doing a great job at something, but you're not getting any credit. And God is allowing that situation to continue. That's hard to take. That's humbling. But believe it or not, as you're willing to take the humble place and continue on without complaint, you will grow spiritually. 1 Peter 5:6 says, *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."*

d. Let the Lord keep His hands on your eyes.

Notice - when the man allowed the Lord to continually keep His hands on his eyes, his vision became clear. He came to full 20/20 vision.

There's a great lesson here. There's no shortcut to spiritual maturity. There's no instant sanctification. You don't get complete spiritual enlightenment the minute you become a Christian. It's a growth process. We need to let the Lord keep His hands on our eyes. The best way to do that is to read and study the Word of God. If you want the Lord to keep His hands on your spiritual eyes, spend time daily in His Word.

Let's not be content to walk around with fuzzy vision. Let's let the Lord keep His hands on our eyes. Let's take the necessary steps to obtain 20/20 spiritual vision.