

Two Blind Men Healed by Our Lord as He Left Jericho

Matthew 20:29-34

Matthew 20:29-34 - *“Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. ³⁰ And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!”*

³¹ Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!”

³² So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

³³ They said to Him, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened.”³⁴ So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.”

Background Notes

The Lord had completed His brief ministry in Perea, on the east side of the Jordan River. The blind men were healed near Jericho, after the Lord and His disciples crossed over the Jordan River. They were now on their way up to Jerusalem and the events that awaited the Lord during the final week of His earthly ministry. So this miracle took place about a week before the crucifixion.

Jericho is located down in the Jordan Valley, about fifteen miles from Jerusalem. When you travel from Jericho up to Jerusalem you travel literally uphill all the way, because Jerusalem is a couple of thousand feet above sea level, and Jericho is about a thousand feet below sea level. On our Holy Land study tours, it's interesting when we drive down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Driving downhill out in the middle of the Judean wilderness, suddenly we see a sign that says “Sea Level” – and continue to drop down below sea level to go down to Jericho.

There are a couple of differences in the parallel accounts of this miracle in Mark 10 and Luke 18, but these differences can be harmonized with no problems. One difference has to do with the number of blind men who were healed, and the other difference has to do with exactly where the miracle took place. Matthew says that there are two blind men: *“And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David! (v30).* Matthew says that both were healed: *“So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him” (v34).*

But in the accounts in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, we read of only one blind man. Mark also gives us the name of one man: Bartimaeus. So how many blind men were there? Notice that Mark and Luke did not say that there was **only one** blind man, because there were **two** blind men.

However, Mark and Luke concentrated on one: Bartimaeus, probably because he was the more outspoken and prominent of the two blind men. There were two blind men, but under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Mark and Luke chose to concentrate on one of the blind men, and Mark says that his name was Bartimaeus.

Here's an illustration. If you look at my car, you'll see a lot of "dings" and dents that were caused by a recent severe hailstorm. If you ask me what I plan to do about my damaged car, I'd tell you what my options are for insurance, repairs, etc. But that's not the whole story. I have another vehicle that also was damaged in that same storm, but I didn't tell you only one vehicle was damaged. No, I chose to talk about only **one** of the **two** damaged vehicles.

What about the question of where the miracle took place? Where, exactly, did it happen? Matthew and Mark said it occurred as they were leaving Jericho. "*Now as they went out of Jericho...*" (v29). Luke, on the other hand, says the miracle took place as they were entering Jericho. Luke 18:35: "*Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging.*" So Matthew and Mark say as they're **leaving** Jericho, but Luke says they were **entering** Jericho. Is this a contradiction in the Bible? No! There are two possible answers:

1. Possibly the blind men made their request for healing as Jesus was entering Jericho, but the actual healing took place as they were leaving Jericho.
2. The more likely solution: there were **two** Jerichos at that time. In fact, if you go to Jericho today, there are three Jerichos! There's the modern city of Jericho, the tel of Old Testament Jericho, and the remains of the Herodian resort of Jericho. But at that time there were two Jerichos: Old Testament Jericho, which was in ruins at that time, and there was New Testament Jericho, the winter resort built by Herod the Great, not far away along the road up to Jerusalem. The outskirts of both Jerichos merged. Most likely the miracle took place **between** the two Jerichos: as they were leaving Old Testament Jericho (according to Matthew and Mark), and as they were entering New Testament Jericho (according to Luke).

So there's no problem solving these apparent "contradictions"! Knowing historical background can certainly help you. Matthew and Mark, who were Jews and steeped in the tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures, would refer to the Jericho of the Old Testament, even though it was in ruins. The road to Jerusalem certainly went by Old Testament Jericho. "Dr. Luke," on the other hand, was a Gentile. He was less familiar with the ruins of Old Testament Jericho, so he referred to the Jericho that was inhabited at the time of Christ - Herodian or New Testament Jericho. So these apparent discrepancies, contradictions, differences in the Gospel accounts can all be harmonized. **No problem!**

By the way, the two blind men who were healed in Matthew 20 were not the same two blind men who were healed in Matthew 9. Clearly that was a different event.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord will never ignore the cry of faith!

The cry of these two blind men was more than just a cry for help. They cried out **in faith** to the Lord. How do we know this? They cried out, *“Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!”* They addressed Jesus as “Lord” and “Son of David.” “Son of David” was a Messianic title. The men recognized that Jesus was the promised Messiah who would be born in the line of David, according to the prophetic Scriptures. Notice that they didn’t cry out “Have mercy on us, O, great healer!” or “O, great teacher.” No. It was the cry of faith to **Jesus as Lord and Messiah!**

There was no way that the Lord would have ignored this cry of faith. He stopped, and with compassion He healed the blind men. What a wonderful picture of salvation! Before we’re saved, we are spiritually blind. We’re in spiritual darkness. But when we put our faith in Christ as Savior and Lord, we are brought out of darkness and into His marvelous light. *“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...” (1 Peter 2:9).*

The Lord will never ignore the cry of faith. Yes, the Bible teaches the doctrines of election and predestination in reference to salvation, but at the same time, the Lord will never ignore the cry of faith! *“Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).* Have you called upon the name of the Lord for salvation? You can’t save yourself by your own good works (or by any other means). You must call upon the name of the Lord for healing from sin, because He took the penalty for your sins when He died on the cross. Put your faith and trust in Jesus. Call upon the Lord in faith right now, and you will be saved - because the Lord will never ignore the cry of faith!

2. The Lord has come to cancel the effects of sin.

The miracles of our Lord Jesus not only backed up His claim to be God, but they demonstrated what it will be like in the future when the effects of sin will be removed from this earth. In the New Heavens and the New Earth there will be no more **disease** or **death** or **demonic** activity or natural **disaster**. Did you catch those four “D’s”? No more **disease**. No more **death**. No more **demonic activity**. No more **natural disaster**. All of these “D’s” are the effects of sin in this world. If sin had never come into the world, we would have none of those tragic problems that are bad fall-out from sin.

When the Lord healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, and calmed the storms, He gave us a glimpse of what it will be like when **all** the effects of sin are removed! There will be a new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells. *“...in keeping with His promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).*

So in this miracle of the healing of the blind men we not only have a wonderful picture of salvation, but a foretaste of the great future time when all the effects of sin are removed. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He died for the sins of the world **and** for all the bad effects and bad fall-out that we experience because of sin. The Lord has come to cancel the effects of sin!

Practical Application

Now that you can see, in what direction are you traveling?

If you're a believer, you're like the blind men who were healed. They had to call out to Jesus against the crowd that told them to be quiet. *"Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!'"* You, too, have to cross that hurdle. The "crowd" of "this world" will never point you in the right direction. When you're searching and looking for salvation and crying out for the Lord, they'll tell you to be quiet. The world will never point you in the right direction.

After the blind men were healed and could see, they went in the right direction. They **"followed the Lord"** (v34). They didn't stay in Jericho. They didn't just use their ability to see for their own enjoyment. They followed the Lord up to Jerusalem!

The road to Jerusalem is not an easy road. It's uphill all the way. And we know what kind of reception the Lord received when He got to Jerusalem.

How about you? Now that **you** can see, in what direction are you traveling? Now that you're a Christian, are you following the Lord? Traveling uphill with the Lord is not as easy as coasting downhill, doing your own thing. Traveling with Christ will not be easy, and will bring persecution from the crowd, but the Lord is with you on the road - **if you're going in the right direction!**

Now that you can see, in what direction are you traveling?