

SIGHT FOR THE BLIND

Matthew 20:29-34

The Lord had finished His ministry in **Galilee**...ministering on the *east side* of the **Jordan** in **Perea**. Now, He's crossed back over the **Jordan** into **Judah**...just above the **Dead Sea** near **Jericho**.

Jesus was on His way to **Jerusalem** to celebrate the **Passover** with His disciples. But this time...everything would be different. This time...He was going there to *suffer* and *die* (**Matthew 20:18-19**). He would be celebrating the **Passover** for the last time and then giving Himself as the one, final, **Passover Lamb**...sacrificed for the sin of the whole world.

“For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”

~Hebrew 7:26-27

His *arrest*, *trial*, and *crucifixion* were but a few weeks away.

I. THE CONTRADICTION?: (vs. 29)

As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him (vs. 29)...

Jericho...The city of **Jericho** was a jewel in the desolate wilderness that surrounded the **Dead Sea**. It was an oasis of *fresh water*... *beautiful trees*...and productive crops of *figs*, *citrus*, and *other fruits*. It was known as the **city of palms**. **Herod** had built a *fort* and *winter palace* there. **Josephus** wrote that when there was snow in **Jerusalem**...only *15 miles away*, **Jericho** was *warm* and *pleasant*.

- **Jericho** is where **Rahab the harlot** lived...a very special woman in **Israel's** history and in Jesus' own ancestry. Though a *pagan Gentile* and *prostitute*, she trusted in the God of Israel and, along with her family, was spared when the Lord destroyed the ancient city. (Along with **Ruth**, another Gentile, **Rahab** is *one of only two women* named in the genealogy of Jesus...**Matthew 1:5**).
- In the wilderness hills to the west of **Jericho**...clearly visible from the city...is where Jesus was *tempted for 40 days by Satan*.

Contradiction...in order for there to be a contradiction there would have to be a direct contrast of facts being presented. **Matthew** and **Mark** stated that they were *leaving Jericho*...**Luke** said that they were *approaching Jericho*. **Matthew** says that there are *two* blind men...**Mark** and **Luke** spoke of *one*. But in order for there to be a contradiction **Mark** and **Luke** would have had to have stated that there was only one blind man.

As they were leaving Jericho...**Matthew** and **Mark** (**Mark 10:46**) report that Jesus was *leaving Jericho*. **Luke** says that He was *approaching Jericho* (**Luke 18:35**). The difference can be explained by knowing that there are *two Jericho's*...the *old city* that lays in ruin...and a new, rebuilt, *contemporary city*. **Matthew** and **Mark** were referring to the *old Jericho*...while **Luke** was referring to the *contemporary city*. Jesus would have been moving out of the ruins of the old city and into the new. This is where Jesus would later encountered **Zaccheus** (**Luke 19:1-2**).

II. THE CRY: (vs. 30-31)

And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” (vs. 30)...Ordinarily these men would have gone unnoticed since **blind** people were extremely common in the region. **Mark** and **Luke** report that they were **beggars**...which the majority of **blind** people were. And like most other **beggars**, they congregated outside the city gates to take advantage of travelers...who were more likely to be carrying money than the average person on the street.

A special *balsam bush* grew in **Jericho** from which a medicine was made to treat blindness. Consequently, **Jericho** had an unusually large number of blind people who came there in hope of being cured.

Two blind men...Again, there is a difference between the gospel accounts. **Matthew** writes that there are **two blind men**. **Mark** (**Mark 10:46**) and **Luke** (**Luke 18:35**) reports that there was *one*. **Mark** even names him...**Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus**.

Bartimaeus was probably unknown while he was a **blind beggar**... but later became highly respected in the early church and was known to **Mark**.

Hearing that Jesus was passing by... These two men were obviously desperate...realizing that their last possible hope of seeing would soon pass by and depart. They obviously had heard of Jesus...and probably the stories of how He has healed others... including other blind men (**Matthew 9:27**). But the blind men's knowledge of Christ and their great determination was tempered by humility.

Cried out... Gk. *krazo*, a word used to describe *any sort of screaming or anguished shout*...like that of the *ranting's of people that are insane*...and of *a woman's cries at childbirth*.

It's the same word used of...

- *The Canaanite woman near Tyre and Sidon who cried out for Jesus to heal her daughter* (**Matthew 15:22**).
- *The crowd shouting for Jesus' crucifixion* (**Mark 15:13-14**).
- *Jesus' crying out from the cross* (**Matthew 27:50**).

"Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"...The amazing thing about these two men was...in spite of their *physical blindness* was their *spiritual sight*. *Physically* they could see nothing...but *spiritually* they saw the **Lord**...the **Son of David**...and called Him by His messianic title.

Previously, *two other blind men* called Jesus, **Son of David** (**Matthew 9:27**)...just as the *Canaanite* woman who asked Jesus to heal her demon possessed daughter (**Matthew 15:22**). By using this title, they were appealing to Him as **Messiah**.

These **two blind men** acknowledged their unworthiness of help and threw themselves entirely on Jesus when they **cried out** for Him to **have mercy on them**.

The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" (**vs. 31**)...In spite of the rebuke from the crowd...they persisted to **cry out**.

Resenting the intrusion of the two men...**the crowd sternly told them to be quiet**. But the **two blind men** refused to be forced into silence by the indifferent **crowd**. Their actions were *loud* and *obtrusive*, but that was the only way they could have been heard over the multitude...but as we will see shortly, their hearts were right.

Sternly...Gk. *epitimao*, means *to admonish strongly and with urgency...to threaten*. It carries the idea of *ensorship*.

III. **THE COMPASSION:** (**vs. 32-34**)

Jesus without a doubt heard them the first time...but for whatever the reason, He waited until they **cried out** again before responding.

And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (**vs. 32**)...**Mark** says that Jesus sent someone else to tell them to come...but either way, Jesus is **calling them** to come to Him.

"And Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him here.' So they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you.' Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus."

~Mark 10:49-50

Bartimaeus and the other **blind man** were apparently so certain of being healed that they didn't even carry their personal belonging with them. They left everything to come to Jesus.

They said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened." (**vs. 33**)...After years of blindness their one simple desire was to see.

Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him (**vs. 34**)...

Compassion...Gk. *splanchnistheis*, means *to feel deeply in one's gut...to yearn to help*...a desire *to alleviate suffering* in the lives of others. Here it's used in an *absolute sense*.

Jesus touched their eyes...Jesus *used many different ways* to perform His healing miracles.

- *Sometimes the afflicted individual was asked to do something for himself.*
- *Sometimes the Lord simply spoke a word.*
- *Sometimes He performed some action*...such as putting His hands on deaf ears, or making salve from mud and anointing blind eyes.

In this case...**Jesus touched their eyes**.

Matthew 20:29-34

29. **As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him.**
30. **And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”**
31. **The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”**
32. **And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?”**
33. **They said to Him, “Lord, we want our eyes to be opened.”**
34. **Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.**

Immediately they regained their sight...Notice that **they regained their sight...**suggesting that these men had once been able to see. If so, they were more keenly aware of what they were missing than if they had never been able to see previously.

And followed Him...This expresses their *believing* and *saving faith*. They not only received physical sight...but their spiritual eyes were also *opened* and they *believed*.

Luke says that **Bartimaeus**...and presumably his friend...not only followed Jesus but were *“glorifying God.”*

“Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.”

~Luke 18:43

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS TRUTH?

- **God’s Word is inerrant...without error or contradictions.** If you are willing to be a diligent student of the Word of God...you will find truth...even when it may initially seem to contradict itself.
- **What Jesus did for blind eyes is a vivid portrayal of what He desires to do for blind souls.** It’s one thing to desire to be *healed physically*. What about *spiritual healing*? The New Testament tells of countless people who were *healed without faith*...many at the request of someone else. i.e. The centurion who pleaded for the healing of his paralyzed servant (**Matthew 8:5-13**). But nowhere does it report that any one is *saved without faith*!
- **God is a compassionate God.** The Lord was never too preoccupied to be *compassionate*...never in too much of a hurry to heal those *suffering* and *afflicted*...never in too much *agony Himself* to be insensitive to the *agony of others*...even when He was on His way to *suffer* and *die* on that cross.