

Text: Matthew 20:29-34

Title: The Blind Receive Their Sight

Truth: Faith in Christ moved the mountain of blindness.

Date/Location: July 10, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

The Lord Jesus is on his final journey to Jerusalem (the triumphal entry comes in the opening verses of chapter 21).

I. Problems Brought Up by the Passage

There are two other records of this event: Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43.

A. Were there two men or one? Matthew says two; Mark mentions only one named Bartimaeus; Luke says only one. It is possible to explain this apparent discrepancy as two separate events. It seems better to understand that Bartimaeus was the more prominent blind man; perhaps he was the one of the two who did the most speaking, or became the more well-known follower of Christ. The text in Matthew records that both men did follow Christ, although as is most often the case, there is no comment about whether they persevered in the faith. It must also be emphasized that we have three different eye-witnesses here (Matthew, and whoever the 'informants' were for Mark and Luke). The stories of even completely truthful eyewitnesses will vary depending on their vantage point, what they wish to emphasize in their testimony, etc.

B. Was Jesus leaving Jericho or going in? Mark reports that the Lord and disciples came to Jericho and then as they were leaving they encountered the blind man. Luke 18 records that as Jesus was approaching Jericho, they encountered the blind man. Chapter 19 in Luke has Jesus entering and passing through Jericho. Matthew says they were going out. There are two reasonable solutions proposed for this apparent discrepancy.

1. The first is that they encountered the blind men both on entering and on leaving. I imagine a situation where they saw the men on the way in; the men learned from the crowd that it

was Jesus. Later, when Jesus came out, the men heard the same kind of hubbub and learned that it was Jesus again and this time they were ready to ask to be healed.

2. The second is that there were actually two segments of Jericho. There was the original mound of the ancient city that had been destroyed during Joshua's time, and then rebuilt. And then there was "New Jericho" which was a live city with residents. In my study, I noted that the timeline does support the existence of a second Jericho or second part of Jericho:

- i) Jericho was destroyed by Joshua, under God, in about 1400 B.C.
- ii) David told some men to briefly stay in Jericho, 2 Samuel 10:5. He reigned about 1010 B.C. to 970 B.C., so roughly 400 years later. Therefore there was a city called Jericho at this time, but the original one had not yet been rebuilt (see next).
- iii) Hiel of Bethel build Jericho and it cost him his firstborn and youngest sons (Joshua 6:26, 1 Kings 16:34). This was during the reign of Ahab in the northern kingdom, which was about 874-853 B.C., over 100 years later than the mention of Jericho in 2 Samuel. Now that this one was rebuilt, it appears that there were two neighboring towns, both by the same name.

The region was simply known as "Jericho" and everyone alive in that place over those ages would understand implicitly what was going on. This is entirely reasonable from my perspective. I grew up in Chelsea where "Old US-12" was a prominent road. The "real" one is farther south, although I do not know the history of the Chelsea version as part of the 2500-mile long US-12 highway. "Old US-23" and "Old US Hwy 27" are similar. The town of Hibbing, Minnesota had to be moved because of a iron mine that was causing unstable ground. The new city was relocated two miles south.

C. I take the "two men or one" and "into or out of Jericho" issues as "apparent discrepancies" which initially appear as discrepancies to a careful reader but which evaporate with further faithful consideration. We who have become followers of God in Christ do not consider the Bible to be a suspect book which requires us to sit

in judgment upon it. No, rather, we sit under its judgment. It is the word of the living *God*, not merely the word of *man*.

The view I take on this is a carefully thought-out position that is not merely a leap of faith into the dark. We find no reason to disbelieve God in the things we can easily grasp and understand, like the gospel and creation and similar things because of the clear and multiple witnesses to the truth (about 40 authors...not just one book by one author!). There is no reason to start distrusting Him in the things that are more murky. Intellectual humility will go a long way in this regard.

II. The Theological Importance of Blindness in the Bible

- A. Why did Jesus do so many miraculous healings and cause blind people to see? Matthew 11:5 shows that this miracle serves to authenticate Jesus as “the coming One”—the Messiah or Christ. He fits the prophecy of Isaiah in 35:5. John 5:36 explains that these works testify that the Father sent the Son. They are one of the several witnesses that verify the testimony of the Son of God that He is the Messiah and that His work would be to give His life a ransom for many.
- B. Is there a significance to the Lord’s healing of blindness in the several cases we read about in the New Testament? I think so. The problem and healing of physical blindness is a very apt analogy for spiritual/heart blindness. Here are some examples. The first follows immediately after Jesus healed a man born blind.

John 9:39-41 And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."

40 Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?"

41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.

John 12:40 He has **blinded** their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should **see** with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them."

Romans 11:25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that **blindness** in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has **blinded**, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Ephesians 4:17-18 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the **blindness** of their heart.

1 John 2:11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in **darkness**, and does not know where he is going, because the **darkness** has **blinded** his eyes.

C. Spiritual blindness is the condition of the non-Christian in which they cannot grasp the significance of spiritual truth about God, Jesus, sin, salvation, the church, the future, etc. It is a spiritual disability that resides deep in the inner person (the “heart”). Unless God illuminates the spiritual heart of a person, that one cannot appreciate the real value, glory, beauty, and grace of the things of God. Will we not repent of sin and trust in Christ in the blind condition. We cannot help *but* repent and believe when our eyes are opened.

III. The Blind Men

- A. The blind men used one of their other senses—hearing—to ascertain that Jesus was coming by.
- B. Notice how they knew Jesus was “the Son of David.” That is interesting to me because the Pharisees thought that Jesus was an “illegitimate child” born of fornication (John 8:41). Evidently, the true lineage of Jesus was more well known by the population than we might think from what we read about the Jewish leaders at the

time. They claimed they did not know where Jesus was from (John 9:29), yet years earlier their kind knew the Messiah was to come from Bethlehem (Matthew 2:5-6). They must have known that the Messiah was an offspring of David, for He was to be King of the Jews! Anyway, they did not equate Jesus with the Messiah because they themselves were blind.

- C. They had faith to call out for help. They knew that Jesus *could* heal them. The question was *would* He heal them? Mark 10:52 says of Bartimaeus that “your faith has made you well.” Luke 18:42 concurs, and 18:43 says that he followed Jesus and was glorifying God. Here is a man healed and truly converted.

Do you have faith in God to call out to him for help? Do you have faith in your friends, parents, grand parents, to be able to call out to *them* when you need help that you are not finding in yourself or others? These men, blind though they were, knew enough to get help from someone outside of themselves! I am not talking about going to just any source for help. Do you trust Google more or your family members? Really? Do you trust a random teacher at school more than your pastor, Sunday school teacher, grandmother?

- D. Like the disciples earlier shooed off the little children brought by their parents (19:13), now the crowd tries to get the “nuisance noise makers” to shut up. The crowd told the blind men to be quiet. And why should they be quiet—what good reason was there? Perhaps Jesus was teaching and the crowd wanted to hear what Jesus had to say. But the ministry to the blind men *was part of Jesus teaching!*

- E. Jesus heard their persistent cries for help (Luke 18:1). This reminds me that you should not stop praying just because people tell you to stop. Keep it up! Jesus asked them what they wanted—though He already knew—because it gave them a chance to express their faith and their request. They did so by asking for their eyes to be opened. So it is with our prayers: God already knows what we need before we ask (Matthew 6:8). But He delights to hear our expressions of trust, dependence, and need, and He gives us the opportunity to voice those things for *our* spiritual benefit.

- F. By the way, I think eyes “opened” is metaphorical. I don’t think that their eyelids were physically incapable of moving to “open” their eyes. Rather, they were asking for their sight to be restored (see parallel passages for this rendering).
- G. Jesus is full of compassion. For this healing, he merely touched their eyes, and immediately they were healed. Their blindness was gone—whatever its cause, and we can think of several causes with our modern medical knowledge.
- H. The blind-now-seeing men followed Jesus. They probably had little else in their lives anyway. Not like a blind person today who has many helps and ADA-compliant buildings and sidewalks and things. Being blind was an extremely difficult life. They left that all behind and followed Jesus.

Conclusion

Has Jesus shown compassion toward you?

Did you have faith to be given your sight?

From what blindness has the Lord delivered you?

Do you now follow Him?

MAP