**Matthew 20:29-34**

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Jesus encounters two blind men at Jericho as He passes through the town on His way to Jerusalem. The blind men call Him the Son of David. He invites them to come to Him and asks them what they want from Him. When they answer that they want to see, Jesus is moved with compassion and opens their eyes.

The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43.

As Jesus and His disciples were on their way up to Jerusalem they went to Jericho. The city of Jericho was located near the eastern edge of Judea along the main route between Jerusalem and the river Jordan.

Jericho was the first major city to be taken during the conquest of the Promised Land (Joshua 6). Israel’s leader at that time was named Joshua. Joshua’s name in Hebrew is “Yeshua,” which means “God saves.” The Greek version of “Yeshua” is “Jesus.” Jesus was a second Joshua. Like His namesake, Jesus was a conqueror. And like Joshua before Him, Jesus crossed the Jordan and had come to Jericho on His way to Jerusalem. But this particular conquest of the Messiah was of a very different nature than Joshua’s. Joshua overcame Canaanites (Joshua 3:10). Jesus overcame sin and death (Isaiah 25:8; 1 Corinthians 15:56-57; Colossians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 12:14). Jesus will return again as a physical conqueror, and fulfill His role as a type of Joshua (Revelation 19:11-16).

Matthew wrote that while Jesus was at Jericho, He healed two blind men. Mark and Luke also wrote of these things. But there are a couple of minor differences between the three Gospel accounts that are worth noting. Matthew reports that Jesus and His disciples were leaving (literally “departing”) the city of Jericho when they encountered the blind men. Luke reports that they were “approaching Jericho” (literally “entering”) when this happened (Luke 18:35). And Mark wrote “Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho” (literally “departing”) before narrating the encounter (Mark 10:46). Matthew states that there were two blind men. Mark and Luke both only mention one. Besides these small differences the three accounts are strikingly similar.

One possible way these differences could be resolved is by recognizing this account as two separate but similar incidents. Jesus healed two blind men by the road to and from Jericho, but each at a different time. He healed the first blind man as He was approaching Jericho. And then as they were leaving Jericho, Jesus encountered the second blind man and healed him, in a near perfect repeat of the first encounter. Luke recorded the first instance with a blind man. Mark told about the second instance. He identified the man as “a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus” (Mark 10:46). Matthew included the accounts of both blind men by summarizing the two instances together.

Matthew wrote how a large crowd followed Jesus. He noted that two blind men were sitting by the road in and out of Jericho. The reason these blind men sat by the road was because they were beggars. (Luke explicitly wrote the first blind man was “begging” and Mark described Bartimaeus as a “beggar” (Luke 18:35; Mark 10:46).) They were beggars because they were blind. Because they could not see, they could not work and earn a living. They were almost entirely dependent upon the mercy of others. The two blind men probably were sitting near the gate, where there was the most traffic which gave them the most opportunity for receiving alms.

The road in and out of the city would have been extra busy at this time of year because the Jericho road was the preferred route of Galilean Jews to visit Jerusalem for the Passover. This route started south from Galilee into the Decapolis and Perea before turning west and crossing the Jordan and passing through Jericho toward Jerusalem. By going this way, Jews could avoid passing through Samaria, since they despised Samaritans. This was the route Jesus took for His final journey to Jerusalem (Matthew 19:1).

As Jesus was passing by, the extra noise and commotion of the crowd caught the attention of at least the first blind man (Luke 18:36). Because the blind men could not see, they had to ask someone what was causing the stir. And someone told them Jesus was passing by. Based on their response to this information it is apparent that these two blind men had heard stories of Jesus and His miracles. They likely had been told reports of the blind receiving sight, the lame walking, and the lepers being cleansed (Matthew 11:5).

Perhaps when the blind men heard these miraculous accounts, they could hardly keep from hoping that one day Jesus would restore their sight and open their eyes. If these were in fact two separate incidents, then the second blind man, Bartimaeus, likely became aware that Jesus had come to Jericho and strategically planted himself near the gate specifically for the purpose of catching Him as He left town (Mark 10:46).

As Jesus went by, they cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” Mark and Luke both specify that the cries of these blind men were addressed to Jesus (Mark 10:47; Luke 18:38). Their cries revealed their desperation, their hope, and their faith. Their desperation was evident in their voices and their debilitating circumstances. Their hope was that Jesus would have mercy on them and restore their sight. And their faith was that Jesus was able to heal them. From what they had previously heard about Jesus, these blind men believed that He was the Messiah. The Son of David was an overt kingly reference to the Messiah.

God promised King David that He would always have a descendant upon the throne:

“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever…Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”
(2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16)

The Jews understood this descendant to be God’s Messiah. And even though they could not see, these blind men recognized from only what they had heard about Jesus that He was David’s long-awaited descendant. And they were proclaiming Jesus as such in front of the Jericho crowd.

The crowd was bothered by their outcry. Some people in it sternly told the two blind men to stop making a fuss and to be quiet. These people may have been trying to hear what Jesus might have been saying, and the blind men’s shouts made it difficult to hear.

But the blind men were not deterred. They cried out all the more, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

Jesus stopped and called them. Luke wrote that Jesus “commanded that he be brought to Him” (Luke 18:40). Mark wrote Jesus instructed the crowd to “Call him here,” and that when the people in the crowd heard Jesus, they quickly changed their attitude toward Bartimaeus. Instead of being annoyed at him and rebuking him for his cries, they suddenly became friendly toward him and said, “Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you” (Mark 10:49).

When the two blind men were before Him, Jesus asked them “What do you want Me to do for you?” It was obvious what they wanted Him to do for them. They were blind. Jesus was known to have the power to make the blind to see. And they were calling for Him to have mercy on them. But Jesus’s question was personal and direct. It was dignifying. And it gave them an opportunity to express their faith in Him.

Mark wrote that Bartimaeus said, “Rabboni [the Jewish word for a religious “Teacher”], I want to regain my sight!” (Mark 18:51). Luke wrote that the blind man responded, “Lord, I want to regain my sight!” (Luke 18:41). Matthew summarized their answers as “Lord, we want our eyes to be opened.” Their answers demonstrated a belief that Jesus was capable of miraculously restoring their sight.

Matthew said that Jesus was moved with compassion by and for these blind men. Mark and Luke each record that Jesus spoke something similar to the man He was healing. Jesus said to the blind man in Luke, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well” (Luke 18:42). Jesus said to Bartimaeus, “Go, your faith has made you well” (Mark 10:52). The word that both Mark and Luke use for “made you well” is the Greek word “sozo.” It means to save. When we see the word “save” we should always ask “What is being saved from what?” In this case, these men are being delivered from blindness by Jesus. The faith these blind men had in Jesus moved Him to save their eyes and restore their sight.

After saying these things to these blind men, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they miraculously regained their sight. They were no longer blind. Matthew ends his summary account by adding: and they followed Him.

Luke reported that the man who was blind began following Jesus, glorifying God. And that all the people who saw what had happened began to give praise to God also (Luke 18:43).

Mark reported that Bartimaeus began following Jesus on the road to Jerusalem (Mark 10:52).

**Biblical Text**

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