

# 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**

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