

Research: Two Blind Men receive sight

Matthew 20:30–34

“Old Testament writings use the word for blindness [*ivver* -Thayer 5787; used of men who walk in the darkness of ignorance or misery)] predominantly to express loss of sight, whether of the purely physical variety or in allusion to metaphorical blindness. The New Testament most frequently employs the noun for blindness and its corresponding verb in this connection. The prevalence of this affliction in Bible times is indicated by the frequency with which references to it occur in the Scriptures. . . . One of the professed functions of Jesus’ ministry was the ‘recovering of sight to the blind’ (Luke 4:18). He used blindness and ocular deficiencies to illustrate spiritual truths (Luke 6:39), and many of his healing miracles involved blind people.” (*IDB* 1.448).

“The Gospels record more than a score of specific healings wrought by Jesus during his public ministry. These healings extended over a wide range of human afflictions, physical, mental, and moral. He cured sick and disabled bodies; healed paralysis, congenital deformities, chronic and contagious diseases; impaired faculties, insanity; sin, immorality; and he raised the dead.

“In many instances the accounts indicate not only the distressing bodily conditions of those who approached Jesus for help but also their mental state—the fears, doubts, superstitious belief that needed to be cast out, and the faith, repentance, obedience that responded to Christ’ healing touch.

“Jesus was always compassionate, his healings instant. His commands were brief but imperative. A close scrutiny of these healings shows that he demanded action on the part of the one he addressed. He often gave the command ‘rise’ or ‘arise,’ and when obeyed it was followed by positive and immediate results. (Rise means, in part, ‘move upward. . . reach a higher level . . . Syn. Ascend, mount” (Shotwell 358).

30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.

“Jericho is located five miles west of the Jordan and about fifteen miles northeast of Jerusalem. There was an old Jericho and a new Jericho. In Jesus’ time the old Jericho was largely abandoned, but the new one extending to the south was an attractive city. It had been built by Herod the Great who had his winter palace there. Matthew speaks of two blind men. Luke says the healing occurred on the way to Jericho; Mark reports that it took place on the way out of the city. Mark is the only Evangelist who names one of the blind man. Bartimaeus probably means “son of Timai.” In the Middle East, a blind man sitting along the road begging is a common sight” (*EBC* 8.721).

“[Jesus] had left Samaria, and crossed the Jordan. His regular journey was therefore through Jericho” (Barnes 94).

“*Two blind men.* Mark and Luke mention but one. They do not say, however, that there was no more than one. They mention one because he was probably well known; perhaps the son of a distinguished citizen reduced to poverty. His name was Bartimeus. Bar is a Syriac word, meaning *son*; and the name means, therefore, “the son of Timeus.” Probably Timeus was a man of note; and as the case of his son attracted most attention, Mark and Luke recorded it particularly” (Barnes 94).

Blind in Greek is *typhlos* and means “blind (physically or mentally); darkened by smoke; mentally blind” (Thayer 5185).

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.

“When they discovered that Jesus was coming by, they seized the opportunity of approaching him. The title they used to address Jesus—“Son of David”—is messianic. It was not an ambiguous title” (*EBC* 8.722).

“In the Lucan story, since the title surfaces here for the first time, it must be presupposed that the blind man has heard about Jesus’ healing activity and that he knows what the reader of this Gospel knows of Jesus’ origins” (*AB Luke x-xxiv*.1216).

“*hold his peace.* And not annoy, or impede the progress of Jesus” (Jamieson 3.309).

Cried in Greek is *boao* and means “to raise a cry of joy or pain; to speak with a high, strong voice; to cry to one for help, to implore his aid” (Thayer 994).

“In a moving crowd, accompanying some great person on a progress, there are always some who keep ahead of the main body. These, catching the sound first, officiously try to silence them, that there may be no commotion, no interruption: stop that dense crowd in order that the case of a beggar may be attended to? Why, at that rate he would never get on at all. But the earnest suppliant is not to be moved by that. . . Nay, ‘so much the more’ did they cry, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’” (Jamieson 3.309).

32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

“The crowd (they were pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover) did not appreciate the loud shouting of the men and tried to silence them, but they shouted all the more.

Why they wanted them to keep quiet is not clear. Perhaps the title they gave Jesus offended them, or they did not want anyone to delay their journey to the feast” (*EBC* 8. 722).

“The loud cry stopped Jesus. Had the messianic title caught his attention? So he asked them to call the beggar to him. Bartimeus’s response was immediate” (*EBC* 8.722).

Stand in Greek is *histemi* and means “to cause to stand; put; set; in the presence of others, before judges, to make firm; fix establish; to uphold or sustain the authority or force of anything; to stop and stand still; stand firm; to be of a steadfast mind; one who does not hesitate; does not waiver” (Thayer 2476).

What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

“When Jesus asked, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? Did he mean, ‘Do you really wish a full cure?’ The man, if cured, would have to earn his living by a better way than begging; and besides, sight of eyes would be a curse unless his soul also was cleansed. The blind beggar really wished to be cured, and seized the swiftly passing chance” (*IB* 8.318).

In verse 50 of the Gospel of Mark, Mark gives us a detail that Luke and Matthew omit:

50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

“The cloak was his outer garment, which he had probably spread on the ground to receive the alms” (*EBC* 8.722).

“The garment was not his only raiment, but was the outer garment, thrown loosely over him, and commonly laid aside when persons labored or ran. His doing it denoted haste, and earnestness, in order to come to Jesus” (Barnes 94).

Casting away is *apobole* in Greek and means “to throw away; rejection; repudiation; to throw away from one’s self, cast off” (Thayer 580).

“Sinners must ‘rise’ and come to Jesus. They must cast away everything that hinders their coming. As the blind Bartimeus threw off his ‘garments,’ so sinners should throw away everything that hinders their going to him—everything that obstructs their progress—and cast themselves at his feet. No man will be saved while sitting still. The command is, ‘Strive to enter in;’ and the promise is made to those only who ‘ask,’ and ‘seek,’ and ‘knock.’” (Barnes 95).

33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

“His opening the eyes of the blind men stands in sharp contrast to the blindness of the religious leaders he is about to encounter there [they are on their way to Jerusalem during the Passover where Jesus will be crucified]” (*EBC* 8.722).

Immediately in Greek is *parachrema* and means “forthwith, immediately, instantly” (Thayer 3916).

Followed in Greek is *akoloutheo* and means “to follow one who precedes, join him as his attendant, accompany him; to join one as a disciple, become his disciple” (Thayer 190).