

9. Describe the scene changes from the first request of Jairus until Jesus actually arrived at Jairus' house.
10. Explain the presence of the flute players and the mourners so soon after the death of the maiden.
11. Explain the words of Jesus: "The little girl is not dead, just sleeping."
12. Was the little girl really dead? On what basis do you answer as you do?
13. How many persons actually witnessed the resurrection of Jairus' daughter? Name them.
14. Explain how it was possible for people actually to be expecting Jesus' return from Gergesa so as to be crowding around on the beach as He landed.
15. Describe the political situation in Galilee that renders comprehensible Jesus' requirement that people not tell others about His miracles.

Section 21

JESUS GIVES SIGHT TO TWO BLIND
MEN AND FREES A DUMB DEMONIAK

TEXT: 9:27-34

27. And as Jesus passed by from thence, two blind men followed him, crying out, and saying, Have mercy on us, thou son of David.
28. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.
29. Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it done unto you.
30. And their eyes were opened. And Jesus strictly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.
31. But they went forth, and spread abroad his fame in all that land.
32. And as they went forth, behold, there was brought to him a dumb man possessed with a demon.
33. And when the demon was cast out, the dumb man spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.
34. But the Pharisees said, By the prince of the demons casteth he out demons.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why did these two blind men address Jesus as "Son of David"? What do you think they mean to imply by using the expression? Why not just call Him "Jesus of Nazareth" or something similar?
- b. Why did Jesus ask the blind men if they believed He was able to give them their sight? Would it have not been simpler just to heal them without this questioning?
- c. Why would Jesus forbid these men to tell of their healing?
- d. What do you suppose was the justification these men used for disobeying Jesus' clear orders?
- e. To what would you attribute the fact that Jesus' ministry appealed to a pair of old blind men here, some sick folk there, publicans and other sinners elsewhere, but was not received by the Pharisees? Was it because His evidence did not meet the critical investigation of these erudite scholars?
- f. Why did the Pharisees make such a violent charge as this statement that Jesus' power is attributable to some secret league with Satan? What motivated the charge? What could they have hoped to accomplish by voicing it?
- g. Why could not the Pharisees criticize Jesus' other miracles on the same basis, crediting them to the same satanic power?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

As Jesus was on His way somewhere else, two blind men following along behind Him, shouting, "Take pity on us, Son of David!"

When Jesus had entered a house, these two came indoors too and approached Him. Jesus asked them, "Do you men believe that I have the power to make you see?"

"Yes, Lord," they said, "We do."

Then He touched their eyes with His fingers, saying as He did, "On the basis of your trust, the miracle will be done for you."

And suddenly their sight was restored. Then Jesus sternly warned them, "See that no one hears about this!"

But as soon as they went outside, they spread this all over the countryside!

Later, as Jesus and His group were leaving, some people brought Him a dumb man who was demon-possessed. Jesus evicted the demon and immediately the man recovered his speech. Simply amazed, the onlookers remarked, "We have never seen anything like it in Israel!"

But the Pharisees growled, "He throws out these demons by secret agreement with Satan himself, the demons' leader!"

SUMMARY

En route somewhere Jesus encountered two blind men who sought healing. Seemingly ignoring their request, Jesus entered a house. Persistently, the two came in also. Jesus challenged their faith. Receiving a positive response, Jesus healed them and ordered secrecy. However they disobeyed by telling it everywhere. On another occasion Jesus cast out the demon from a dumb man, freeing him thus to speak. The crowds responded with amazed praise; the Pharisees responded by attributing Jesus' power to Satan's permission.

NOTES

9:27 **And as Jesus passed by from thence**, i.e. coming away from Jairus' house. **Two blind men followed him** as well as men deprived of their sight can follow. Perhaps they were led by friends as they make their appeal. This is one of several such requests made of Jesus (see Mt. 12:22; 20:30; 21:14; Jn. 9) among many alluded to (Lk. 4:18; 7:21, 22). Matthew's narrative of this and the following incidents seem almost devoid of color and significance, being related only in the barest of factual detail. But his purpose is very clear when this section is viewed in the context of the entire ninth chapter, in which he describes how opposition began to mount to Jesus' ministry.

1. Jesus was accused of blasphemy (9:2-8)
2. Then He was accused of immorality for receiving as intimate friends those whom no respected person would consider as intimate companions (9:9-13)
3. Thereafter the Lord was subtly accused of not being holy enough, since His disciples apparently with His approval did not follow those forms that expressed holiness (9:14-17)
4. When He tried to comfort the mourners, family and friends in Jairus' house, telling them the little girl was not dead, but sleeping, people accused Him of madness by scorning His revelation. (9:24)
5. Here, in an accusation less obvious, and certainly more subtle than the out-spoken remarks of others, is the attitude of the two blind men, when healed, that regards Jesus as anything less than a real Lord. They disobey His clear command. (See on 9:30)
6. Last, the Pharisees take up the jealous cry, accusing Jesus of being Satan's ally. (9:34)

In each case, Matthew has shown Jesus' masterful response to the accusations, except in these last two, unless verses 35-38 be so con-

strued. In the case of the unwanted publicity created by the healed blind men, there was little Jesus could do or say to deal with it, except plunge into more vigorous work to meet the needs of the people who came to Him as a result of His fame, which, in fact, He did (Mt. 9:35-38). In the case of the calumny raised by the Pharisees, Matthew has reserved a full and final answer for a later section (12:22-37), so he did not record any answer Jesus might have given here.

Crying out and saying, Have mercy on us, thou son of David. Although **Son of David**, taken as a title, was a then-current expression for the Christ, since the Messiah was to be **THE Son of David** *par excellence* (See Notes on 1:1; 12:23; 21:9, 15; 22:41-45), it may be fairly asked why, in light of the revolution-breeding implications of its use in that particular historic period, should Jesus permit these two blind men to follow Him crying out this obvious advertisement of His true identity. It may be that Jesus half hides, half reveals the exciting truth by not rebuking these men on the spot:

1. He permits the blind men to advertise His identity for Him, so as to suggest to all who hear them the conclusion to which all His life and preaching led.
2. But since He does not publicly accept this title as pronounced by them, rather forcing them to follow into private quarters, He did not here decide the issue. As a result, those, who would have been willing to start a bloody nationalistic revolution at the drop of a suggestion that He were the long-awaited Messiah, could not move into action. This is Galilee, hot-bed of the Zealots' movement (See Josephus, *Ant.* I, 1, 1 and 6; IV, 3, 9; 5, 1; *Wars*, VII, 8, 1 and Edersheim, *Life*, I, 237-242) Jesus could accept the title openly elsewhere away from Galilee and later on, as His life and ministry had already run its course. (See Mt. 15:22; 20:29-34 and parallels; 21:9, 15 as over against 12:23).

Leaving the question thus unresolved, the Lord gives Himself time and opportunity to reveal what kind of "Son of David" He really intended to be.

But the fact that these two blind men, who would presumably have lived outside the general circle of public activity, should make this appeal to Jesus as Messiah, certainly strongly suggests that the public sentiment is growing that Jesus may well be the great Son of David.

How correct a concept of Jesus' Messiahship did these men have in order to dare address Him in these terms? Barclay (*Matthew*, I, 358) observes that the usual occurrences of this title within the gospels as almost always by crowds or by people "who knew Jesus only, as it were, at a distance (Mt. 15:22; 20:30, 31; Mk. 10:47; 12:35, 36, 37)" This is so strongly felt by Edersheim (*Life*, II, 48, 49) that he felt constrained to regard this incident as having taken place in Gentile territory and at a much later period. It is true that, in the popular mind, this messianic title conjured up the great commander who would bring national glory, power, wealth and freedom to Israel. And, just as deeply implanted in the national consciousness of Israel was this hope of national greatness, just so far from their popular hopes was the opinion that the Messiah was to be King over a spiritual reign in men's hearts. How far these blind men shared these views cannot be known. One thing is known from the available information recorded by Matthew: Jesus did NOT praise them for their great insight into His identity. They probably came to Him with a very inadequate concept of who He was and what He intended to tell the world, and YET He helped them. **Have mercy on us, thou Son of David**, is still their expression of trust in Him as Messiah and that He, as Christ, could restore their sight.

Have mercy on us is all that is written down of their appeal, a fact which suggests that they humbly left to Jesus the complete right to bless them as He chose, even as the leper. (8:2-4)

9:28 **And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him.** Jesus' apparently indifference to their pleas puts their faith in Him to several rigorous tests: they must, by some means, follow Him if they are to have the answer to their prayers. In forcing the blind men into a private, face-to-face confrontation with Him, the Lord made them confront a personal decision about Him they perhaps had not yet made, even though their desire for sight had already caused them to hurdle other difficulties. Barclay (*Matthew*, I, 359) comments:

It is the law of the spiritual life that sooner or later a man must confront Jesus alone. It is all very well to take a decision for Jesus on the flood tide of emotion of some great gathering, or in some little group which is charged with spiritual power. But after the crowd, a man must go home and be alone; after the fellowship he must go back to the essential isolation of every human soul; and what really

matters is not what a man does in the crowd, but what he does when he is alone with Christ.

Does Jesus foresee that they will disobey Him when once He grants their request? Their subsequent actions show that He was fully justified in testing them even further than He did.

Into the house causes us instinctively to ask, which house, since no special house has been mentioned since Jesus left that of Jairus. Why the article, **the** house? (Cf. Mk. 7:24 without the article.) Is it the house where Jesus normally resided in Capernaum when at home (Mk. 2:1)? It may be that Matthew does not regard the identification of the house as important, since his emphasis is to show the blind men's determination to get to Jesus despite the opposition of their own blindness and the obstacle of Jesus' not helping them by His not letting them catch up with Him on the road. (Cf. Mt. 20:32).

Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? Why ask a question which has so obvious an answer?

1. Because the Lord probably suspects the depth of information that represents the foundation of their acclamation of Him as Messiah. It may well be that these blind men had taken up a popular opinion about Him, simply because everyone had begun to think it. In this case, He demands that they sound the depth of their personal understanding and the genuineness of their own dependence upon Him as Messiah.
2. This question could almost be an exclamation of surprise and wonder, since these two blind men, unable to see the miracles for themselves, must necessarily depend upon the eye-witness reports of others. In a sense, then, they stand in the same relationship to the miracles of Jesus as all whom Jesus blessed who "have not seen, and yet believed." (Jn. 20:29) We stand in our own century, blinded by the intervening centuries necessarily relying upon the evidence provided us by those who saw Him. (1 Jn. 1:1-4; 2 Pe. 1:16) If these blind men believed, who had so little opportunity to know the evidence at first-hand, then this consideration, as McGarvey (*Matthew-Mark*, 85) notes, "shows, on the one hand, the abundance of the evidence, and on the other, the obduracy of those who could see and still would not believe."
3. Lenski (*Matthew*, 378) affirms another purpose behind Jesus' question:

to turn the thoughts of these blind men away from any political Messianic ideas regarding Jesus and to direct them to the divine power and grace found in him. The emphasis is not merely on "do you believe" but equally on the object clause, "that I am able to do this." One who is able to restore sight by means of a touch and a word is far greater than any national king, however grand his reign may be.

4. Jesus had already given many evidences of His divine identity through His miracles, proofs upon which sturdy faith could be founded. With this progress in the development of His public image, He could begin to demand that that trust in Him be confessed.

They say unto him, Yea, Lord. They had already shown great faith and determination just to address Him as the Christ and persist in following this far. They had also shown great courage so openly to approach Him in these terms, since not everyone at this time acknowledged Jesus as Messiah and many never would. So it took great boldness of spirit to speak out and risk their future happiness with this Son of David. They may have been blind to this world, but they were not blind to spiritual reality. Now that Jesus puts this direct question to them regarding their personal conviction, they confess the persuasion of their heart.

9:29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it done unto you. Jesus is saying: "Since your confidence in my power to give you sight is unreserved, I will exert that power unreservedly and restore your vision! I will match your great faith with great power." **He touched their eyes,** not because this contact was necessary, since He had used other methods on other occasions. (Cf. Mk. 8:23, 25; Jn. 9:6, 7; sometimes on other sicknesses, He spoke a word at a distance and made no gesture whatever) These blind men, who could see no other gesture of Jesus, can feel this touch and know that the power actually came from the Lord Himself. He permitted them to feel the surge of power that His will exerted: what a wonderful revelation of His identity so well suited to blind men!

9:30 And their eyes were opened and the first person they saw was Jesus! In this splendid double blessing is revealed Jesus' mercy that removes from their hearts the effects of what had probably seemed to these men an unyielding denial of their earlier pleas. In that instant of immediate, perfect sight, these two men now see

justified all they had ever thought and said about Jesus: He is truly the Christ. But what are they to do about this new-found knowledge of which they themselves are now the witnesses? How can they show their gratitude enough?

And Jesus strictly charged them. The verb *embrimáomai*, here translated "strictly charged," is an intriguing word which conjures up a surprising picture of Jesus at this point. Arndt and Gingrich (254) discuss the word:

In Aeschylus and others in the sense "to snort." As an expression of anger and displeasure in Lucian . . . In Aquila's translation of Psa. 7:12(11); Symmachus on Is. 17:13; LXX on Lam. 2:6. With the dative of person: "to scold, censure" . . . Mk. 14:5; "warn sternly" Mk. 1:43; Mt. 9:30.

See also Hendriksen, *John* on Jn. 11:33. Since hardly anyone Jesus warned ever obeyed Him, He had good reason to be severe! Why should He begin so immediately and so vehemently to warn them? Could the Master see already rising in their breast that exuberance of praise that defied being limited?

See that no man know it. This is their only commission from Him who had restored them light and life, joy and usefulness, taken them from their dark world to revel in the color and beauty of all that pleases on this earth. Jesus could have required so much more of them, but He did not charge them a thing but their silence. (See on 8:4 and 9:27; other instances: Mt. 12:16; Mk. 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26, all of which occurred in Galilee or in Decapolis near the Lake of Galilee. As in the former instances (8:4 and 9:26), Jesus' words are directed to the persons principally involved. These men, then, are not to go around proclaiming the news of their healing. This is not a command for them to go into hiding, so that the facts could not be absolutely known, since, it is presumed, the family and immediate acquaintances would come to know what had been done for them. All that Jesus intended was the opposite of what the men eventually did!

The Lord wisely forbade them to speak openly about their marvellous cure, since He must keep His own movement well in hand. Should these healed men now begin broadcasting His excellencies, even as they had arrested attention by addressing Him as the long-expected Messiah, popular excitement could grow into a bloody uprising of nationalistic Judaism against Rome. Other reasons may have been:

1. Their ignorant concept of the Messiah, if broadcast, would stimulate others who shared that concept to try to force Him

into their mold without ever understanding what kind of Christ He was. These "busy babblers" proved how little they really knew about the Christ whose Word is law! While walking the tight-rope between the various mistaken views of His ministry held by all who knew Him, Jesus knew that this was not the moment to proclaim His Messiahship openly, nor was it the moment to explain in detail to these beginners in faith the true nature of His Messiahship. It would but bring them more confusion. Hence, silence on their part was the only alternative open to them. If they really accepted Him as the mighty Son of David, they would have to trust Him to know what He was doing by requiring silence, where they certainly felt publicity to be in order.

2. A second reason for Jesus' prohibition so passionately expressed here was the fear, fully justified by the subsequent events, that His ministry should be hindered and frustrated by excited crowds, spiritually unable or unwilling to grasp what He must reveal to them about the REAL Kingdom of the Son of David.
3. A third reason lay in the insight of Jesus Himself into His own capacity for temptation: few men can live with success. What a truly human temptation to bow the knee before Satan, in order to be able to claim even just this one kingdom of the world, over which He could be "the Son of David" (cf. 4:10; 16:23). The indignant earnestness with which He warns these blind men, then, means "If you really respect me and appreciate what I have done for you, then do not destroy me by praising me." Praise is next to impossible to fight; accusations, yes, attacks, certainly, but sincerely meant adoration based on good evidence is useless to combat. But praise can destroy, however honestly meant, when it leads the person, who is the object of its worship, to be anything other than what is his best, his highest. Yes, Jesus had a superior character because He did not seek men's praise, but He also took pains to remove the temptation to enjoy it whenever it led Him away from that one goal, that one duty to establish David's Kingdom by way of the cross.

9:31. But they went forth and spread his fame in all that land. But they (*hoi dé*) is an express contrast to the strict prohibition of Jesus, that precedes this sentence. Matthew sees their action as contrary to what Jesus had told them to do. This action

of theirs is disobedience for which they are greatly to blame. If they had had real respect for Jesus, as much as they had faith to be healed by Him, they should have respected His will in the matter. Despite their joy and devotion and perfectly understandable desire to praise Jesus before men, yet He had strictly warned them to be silent. The seeming unreasonableness of Jesus' commands or statements, as man looks at them, can never be argued as a reason for refusing to render whole-hearted submission. That enthusiasm that bleats, "But Jesus could not have meant what He said . . ." is SIN! This is further proof of the fallacy of following the leadership of one's emotions entirely in reference to one's obedience to God. These blind men were much too exhilarated by their healing to believe Jesus had meant what He said. Joy felt because of God's gracious blessing does not ever exempt anyone from obedience. (See Ro. 2:4-6; Lk. 6:35; notes on Mt. 5:45)

The fame that spread in all that land was shallow, ignorant praise for which neither Jesus nor those who understand Him could rejoice. Edersheim sagely sees that (*Life*, II, 50)

The acclamations of an excited Jewish crowd were as incongruous to the real Character of the Christ, and as obstructive to the progress of His Kingdom, as is the outward homage of a world which has not heart-belief in His power, nor heart-experience of His ability and willingness to cleanse the leper and to open the eyes of the blind.

Even, as then, to call Jesus "the Son of David" with the inadequate or entirely wrong meaning behind those words was "damning Him with faint praise," so now, those, who praise Jesus without surrendering their hearts to Him, are but deceiving themselves, hoping to be part of His eternal kingdom, which, when viewed according to their concept, does not exist, any more than the kingdom of David as the Jews thought of it ever existed beyond the popular Jewish imagination of that era.

9:32 **And as they went forth**, i.e. just as the two formerly blind men left the house in which Jesus had healed them. **Behold, there was brought to him a dumb man possessed with a demon.** Is there any connection between this latter appeal to Jesus and the case of the blind men? It may well be that these formerly blind men began to proclaim their healing right among the people standing around in the streets (cf. 9:33b). Had the multitudes heard what the two blind men had called Jesus before their marvellous healing? Did these two men, now healed, and more convinced than ever that Jesus is truly "the Son of David," repeat this wonderful title in

their recitation of their healing? It might just well be that the solicitous friends of the dumb demoniac are among the first to begin making appeal to Jesus, having been excited to action by the joyous exclamations of the formerly blind.

A dumb man possessed with a demon. It is usually assumed by most commentators that the man was speechless because the demon had made him dumb, an assumption based on the observation that when the demon was cast out, the man regained the use of his speech. This conclusion is further strengthened by the fact that the effect of demon-possession was not always the same (See on 8:28—9:1). The evidences for the reality of this demon-possession as a real, supernatural cause for the phenomenon, mentioned by Lewis and Booth (*PHC*, XXII, 236, 237), are:

1. Something in the evident sense of oppression on the part of the sufferer that could not be classed as madness;
2. Something about the strange persistency of his inability to speak inexplicable on other grounds;
3. Something in the complete absence of anything in his physical makeup that would suggest failure there;
4. Something in the utter absence of failure in his mental faculties that could account for his condition.
5. There were none present who doubted the cause as being supernatural:
 - a. The multitudes accepted it as demon-possession, since they are recorded as being so greatly impressed with the casting out of the demon by Jesus.
 - b. These critical cynics, the Pharisees, did not doubt it, rather, they would have been only too glad to have been able to ascribe the poor victim's condition to anything else than demonic possession, had they thought that they could have sustained their case. Rather than deny by superior evidence what the people commonly regarded as demon-possession, the Pharisees could only admit the facts as stated and deny the implication that Jesus was Master of Satan.
 - c. So all eye-witnesses concur that this was a true, significant case of demon-possession.

9:33 **And when the demon was cast out, the dumb man spake.** It is easy to imagine the tension as Jesus commanded the demon to depart. All ears would be listening for the first words of this victim. Perhaps as he began talking, he alone spoke, since all would be listening to hear that voice so long silent. It was not long,

however, that all remained silent, as their surprise, wonder and conviction drew forth from them shouts of praise and admiration for Jesus.

And the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never seen in Israel. This was probably not all that they were saying either. Were the crowds beginning to echo the words of the former blind men: "Can this be the Son of David" (Cf. 12:23 and the notes there; Jn. 7:31) Or are these words, the only ones written down, merely the reflection of discretion felt necessary by the multitudes in view of the menacing presence of the Pharisees? It would not do, after all, to offend these august gentlemen! But, as Matthew notes below, no discretion could hide this honest admiration nor prevent offense to the religious leaders.

It was never so seen in Israel. This was literally true, since there had never been in Israel's long history such a vast collection of wonderful evidences of the presence of God with His people. This appraisal of this continuous succession of miracles is not only that of the crowds: it is the conclusion of Matthew too. He has been patiently recording one striking miracle after another (chapters 8, 9). But rather than cumber or mar his writing with his own views, he lets the spontaneous praise of these bystanders express the joy of HIS heart and pride in His Savior.

But even with this remarkable expression of astonishment of the multitudes, let it not be forgotten that even they too grew accustomed to them. McGarvey (*Matthew-Mark*, 86) is right to point out that

With every new variety of miracles there came fresh surprise among the people. After seeing a few sick persons cured, they naturally ceased being surprised at cures of sickness; but when they saw this dumb man restored to speech, they were almost as much surprised as if they had seen no previous miracles. The range of fresh miracles, however, necessarily had a limit, and therefore miracle working, as a means of impressing men, had to be of temporary duration. A permanent continuation of miracles would have robbed them of their value by making them common.

9:34 **But the Pharisees said, By the prince of the demons casteth he out demons. But the Pharisees** as a phrase, stands in direct opposition to the response of the multitudes. Is it possible that Matthew is summarizing the general effect of these miracles of chapters eight and nine, and not merely the immediate effect wrought by the casting out of the demon? The striking similarity between the report of these two responses and the report

later given (12:22-24) would lead us to think that Matthew's inclusion here refers only to this last section and not to the whole of the larger section. Be that as it may, it is nevertheless interesting that our author should conclude these two chapters with the polarizing of opinions into two fundamental groups: the multitudes of common people and those pillars of Jewish orthodoxy, the Pharisees. Why he should single out these latter, over against all other sects or groups in Judaism, is explicable since:

1. The Pharisees' attitude toward Jesus was more pronounced: they busied themselves the most to frustrate the progress of His movement.
2. The Herodians could not be too excited about Jesus, since He had deliberately ignored the Herods, neither praising nor censuring them.
3. The Sadducees were too much interested in political maneuverings at Jerusalem to disturb themselves greatly about the spiritual emphasis of Jesus.
4. Why not the Zealots? Perhaps, they hoped yet to find in Jesus their revolutionary hero and leader, hence they too would not so accuse Him.

By the prince of demons casteth he out demons. This charge is almost funny, since it represents the best efforts of the concentrated attention of the Pharisees to arrive at an answer regarding Jesus' miracles. These frustrated sectarians answered only the miracles connected with demon-possession, since they could not reply to any of the others. This charge arises out of sheer spite and jealousy. It had probably been years since multitudes of people had ever gotten this stirred up about a Rabbi and THIS Rabbi was no Pharisee!

In this age of scientific inquiry, it is well to ask why Jesus' ministry appealed to a couple of old blind men, a few infirm people, some fishermen, tax-collectors and harlots, but was not received by the great body of religious authorities and acknowledged scholars in Israel, especially the Pharisees. Was it because His evidence did not meet the critical investigation of these erudite and reverend doctors? On the contrary, for in their own words of this text, they confess: **He casts out demons.** The FACT they could not deny upon the most minute investigation. Their only objection lay in the INTERPRETATION of the meaning of the phenomenon observed as fact. Why did they then attribute a different interpretation to the facts than did the common people?

They had a philosophical system that boxed God into dimensions they could control by manipulation of their theology. But Jesus brought Israel a picture of God that was larger than their system, unhampered by their theology, free of their prejudices. And worse yet, for them, His credentials were impeccable—just a little too perfect, since if He were right about God—if His religion were the only real one—then they were wrong and had been wrong for centuries. There could be only one who could produce such wonderful signs whereby "the very elect themselves" could be deceived into leaving the carefully handed-down traditions: Satan. These Pharisees could see clearly, as many church members unfortunately have never learned, that to come to God through Jesus Christ meant to confess their sins, their false theology, their selfish pride, their hypocrisy exactly as Jesus exposes them for what they really are. If Jesus is right, then all their righteousness is sin, their theology false, their pride unwarranted and their hypocrisy exposed. But these men had not the slightest intention to change or be changed: it was much easier to retaliate than repent!

The great guilt of this accusation lies in its typically Pharisaic attitude: there is no evidence here of any sympathy for the freed victim, no word of praise or thankfulness to God. We see only a determination not to admit the true force of Jesus' miracles, if possible, even while admitting the facts of the case. Any conclusion is better than that which would glorify Jesus or support His movement!

Matthew, whose Gospel contains one of the finest refutations of this slander, must have included this incident without comment here to show how early the storm-clouds began to gather on the horizon of Jesus' career. Jesus' refusal to answer this calumny on this occasion may be interpreted as a tactic whereby He chose not to dignify their lie to the level of a serious charge that even needed refutation. Instead of accepting the obvious implications of His divine credentials, the Pharisees, emboldened by His meekness in refusing to defend Himself against defamation of this charge, and having nothing of real substance to urge against Him, repeated this libel until He had to answer it or default to them. For that fuller discussion of this charge and Jesus' answers, see on 12:22-37.

This amazed wonder on the part of the common people, as well as the maliciousness of the Pharisees, is not so surprising, after all. This difference in reactions towards Jesus is perfectly to be expected due to the measurable difference in their sense of need. The deeper this sense of need is felt, the more appreciative the people felt toward Jesus. The more self-sufficient the beholder, the less Jesus would

be needed or wanted. Woe to him who no longer feels his need for Jesus!

Matthew's report of this contrast (9:33, 34) throws into crisis OUR conscience. As we serve Him our wills remain free, since even His message carried no conviction to the prejudiced mind. With Morgan (*Matthew*, 98) let us zealously inquire with what attitude we listen and study Jesus' word, for it is very possible for prejudice and pride to blind us to the meaning of our King.

FACT QUESTIONS

1. In what general area did these two blind men live? Connect this section with what immediately precedes, showing where they probably lived.
2. What did the blind men call Jesus? Why use this term?
3. Describe Jesus' method in dealing with these two blind men.
4. What had made the man, who appears in the second part of the text, dumb?
5. State what the Bible actually reveals about demon-possession.
6. What was the reaction of the crowds when Jesus evicted the demon? What were their actual words?
7. What explanation did the religious leaders give for Jesus' power to cast demons out?
8. Although Jesus later gave full, detailed rebuttal of this charge made by the Pharisees, how did Jesus respond to the slander at the time?
9. What kind of opposition had the Pharisees brought Jesus during His ministry up to this time?
10. What is proved about Jesus by the fact that He can heal the sick and cast out demons?
11. State at least two good reasons why Jesus required the blind men to be silent about their healing.

Section 22

JESUS EVANGELIZES GALILEE AND SHARES HIS VISION WITH HIS DISCIPLES

(Parallel; Mark 6:6b)

TEXT: 9:35-38