

- this particular person enlisted to word their desire? From what point of view did the request arise?
5. In what respect did Jesus say emphatically that His Kingdom would be different from that of the rulers of the nations of the world?
 6. Quote Matthew 20:28 and Luke 19:10. What else did Jesus say at any time about the cause and purpose for which He came into the world?
 7. Did James and John prove true to their confident assertion of readiness to drink of Jesus' cup and be baptized with His baptism? If so, how or when? If not, why not?
 8. According to Jesus, are there really any chief places in the Kingdom to grant? If so, how are they to be distributed?
 9. According to Jesus, what kind of ambition must a Christian have?
 10. What does this section have to say to the larger question of power structures and hierarchical control among Jesus' disciples today?
 11. List the texts in Matthew 18 which find their practical application in this section.

Section 53

JESUS HEALS TWO BLIND MEN AT JERICHO

(Parallels: Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43)

TEXT: 20:29-34

29 And as they went out from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. 30 And behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, thou son of David. 31 And the multitude rebuked them, that they should hold their peace: but they cried out the more, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, thou son of David. 32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I should do unto you? 33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 34 And Jesus, being moved with compassion, touched their eyes; and straight-way they received their sight, and followed him.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why do you suppose Matthew would include this little miracle-story at this point? Of course, it took place at Jericho just before the Lord ascended to Jerusalem for the Final Week, and Mark and Luke both document it at this point. However, our author omits interesting details provided in the other two Gospels, as if his editorial pen intends to underline one major truth. What is it? The title by which the blind men addressed Jesus has significance in pointing out that truth. What does the title mean, and how does this help to explain why Matthew would be particularly interested in recording this scene at precisely this point in his narrative?
- b. Where did these blind men get the faith they expressed in their plea for help from Jesus?
- c. Why do you think the crowd rebuked these blind men, ordering them to be silent? There may have been several reasons.
- d. Why did the blind men ignore the scolding of the passers-by who tried to silence them?
- e. Jesus usually ordered people to silence when they addressed Him as "Son of David." Here, however, He did not do so. How do you interpret this strange change in policy?
- f. Why did Jesus ask the blind men: "What do you want me to do for you?" when the most perfectly obvious need of a blind man is SIGHT?! (or is it?)
- g. Whereas Luke concludes his narrative by stating that "immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God," and whereas Mark, too, says "he received his sight and followed him on the way, Matthew, on the other hand, simply affirms, "Immediately they received their sight, and followed him." Do you think Matthew is just giving a severely simple account, or is he pushing the reader to decide whether, on the basis of the evidence furnished that Jesus is truly the long-awaited Son of David, he too will humbly and joyfully follow Him who is the Light of the blind? Or is this reading more into the text than is there? What do you think?
- h. Why do you think the blind men followed Jesus? Where was Jesus going that would have been so interesting to these newly-healed beggars?
- i. Of what principle(s) in Jesus' sermon on personal relationships

- in Matthew 18 is this section an illustration?
 j. How does this section prepare for the events that follow in chapter 21?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

So Jesus and His disciples arrived at Jericho. As they approached the city, a blind man was sitting at the side of the road begging. When he heard the noise of a crowd going past, he began to inquire, "What is happening?" Someone told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is going by."

Later, as Jesus was going out of the city with His disciples, a vast throng surged along behind Him. Two blind men were sitting at the roadside, one of whom was named Bartimaeus (= Timaeus' son). Upon hearing that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by, they shouted out, "Jesus, Son of David, take pity on us!"

But many of those who were in the front part of the crowd sharply scolded them, telling them to shut up. But they yelled even more loudly, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

Then Jesus stopped there in the road and called them to Him, commanding others to bring them to Him, "Tell them to come here."

So they called the blind men, saying, "It's all right now. Get to your feet: He is calling you."

Bartimaeus, casting aside his overcoat, jumped up with his companion and made his way to Jesus. When they were quite close, Jesus addressed them, "What do you wish me to do for you?"

The blind men said to Him, "My dear Teacher, we want our eyes to be opened: let us see again!"

Then Jesus, deeply moved with compassion, touched their blind eyes, saying, "Begin seeing again! Go your way. Your faith in me has healed you."

Instantly they were able to see again and began following Him along the road, giving thanks and praise to God. All the others who witnessed the miracle gave praise to God too.

SUMMARY

Having crossed the Jordan, Jesus and His company of Passover-bound travelers arrived at Jericho. Too late a blind beggar learned

that Jesus had just passed him. Later, as Jesus left the city for Jerusalem, the blind beggar with another blind man, upon learning that the Lord's group was then departing from Jericho, began to appeal to His help, calling Him "the Son of David." Scolded by the travelers nearest them, they only shouted that much louder. Jesus mercifully halted the caravan, called them to Him, asked them what favor they sought. They asked only for sight which He instantly gave them. In gratitude, they sing praise to God and follow Jesus. Everyone else was affected the same way by the miracle, joining in to praise God too.

NOTES

III. PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION OF JESUS' TRUE MESSIAHSHIP OF SERVICE

(20:29-34; Mk. 10:46-52; Lk. 18:35-43)

A. SITUATION: Blind men appeal to Jesus for mercy as "Son of David."

20:29 **A great crowd followed him.** Because several eastern routes converged at the Jordan River just east of Jericho, this city had long been a natural stopping place for festival-bound pilgrims arriving from various directions on their way to Jerusalem. **Jericho** means that Jesus and His company will approach Jerusalem from the east, as "the city of palms" is located 25 km (15 mi.) from the capital, near the ford of the Jordan.

And as they went out from Jericho. Mark (10:46) very precisely notes their arrival at Jericho, then, in agreement with Matthew, just as clearly registers their departure and the following miracle. However, because Luke's parallel (18:35) seems to locate the healing incident "as he drew near to Jericho," rather than upon His departure, several attempts have been made to produce an intelligent harmony of the facts so as to eliminate any possible accusation of error. It should be noticed, first of all, that the presence of problems is not evidence of inauthenticity, but undesigned proof of the correctness of the facts narrated. For had the Evangelists perversely desired to foist a falsification off on the world, they would have taken more care to eliminate such a slip-up. Again, the very existence of problems in harmonizing these three Synoptic texts is proof of the independent

drafting of these Gospels. If these accounts were copied from a common source, as some affirm, how may these obvious differences be explained, especially where the divergence is so great as to cause accusations of outright contradiction? On the other hand, if we find that a reasonable explanation of the apparent contradiction can be found, what had at first seemed to be a contradiction becomes, instead, evidence of the truth of the testimony. What are the possibilities?

1. Matthew and Mark clearly agree that the miracle occurred at the departure from Jericho. Luke alone organizes his material in some other fashion. Now, if it be correctly assumed that two witnesses are sufficient to establish any fact (Dt. 19:15), the former two Synoptic writers must be judged to be relating the objective, chronological order of the facts. Further, if we may assume Luke's fundamental accuracy, we may judge that he has done some theological editorializing in the organization of his facts. This must be concluded from the fact that, following the Lucan narrative of the blind man's healing which apparently takes place "as he drew near to Jericho" (18:35), we have the continuation: "He entered Jericho and was passing through" (19:1), at which time Jesus encounters Zacchaeus. Therefore, unless we are to accuse Luke of deliberate misrepresentation of history, we must attribute to him the intention to set aside strictly chronological considerations for what may have had greater theological importance for his purpose. (See below under 4b.)
2. There is also evidence that Luke does not really locate the healing on the east entrance of Jericho:
 - a. He simply mentions that the blind man was sitting by the roadside begging as Jesus drew near to Jericho. (Lk. 18:35)

Although some writers note the possible existence of two or even three Jerichos in Jesus' day, because of its being built, destroyed and rebuilt on different sites (See Unger, *Archeology and the Old Testament*, 146-148, 243; Pfeiffer (ed.), *The Biblical World. A Dictionary of Biblical Archeology*, 305f), hence the scene of the miracle could be located between the various locations as Jesus left one Jericho and approached another Jericho, however certain questions arise:

 - (1) Would the older sites have been inhabited and called simply "old Jericho," or "old city"?

- (2) In that day would not the Herodian Jericho have been the more famous city of that name? (Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, XV, 4, 2, 4) If so, were there two sites involved in our story, it would be thought certain that some distinction would have been made, such as "new city" (Neapolis). So, until archeological evidence demonstrates conclusively that more than one site of Jericho was inhabited in Christ's day, it is better to opt for the conclusion that only one city-site was involved in our story.
- b. Then, from the noise people were making as they passed, the blind man concluded that a multitude was going by, so he began asking what this meant. He is then told that "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." The crowd was already passing by him at the time he learned the significance of this particular multitude. Hence, some time is lost for him to start calling to Jesus for mercy. The answer of the people in the crowd who say, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by," is not fatal to this hypothesis, because they could still say it, even if Jesus had already gone by, because it would be meant in the sense that the group travelling with Jesus is passing by, Jesus being the most important personage in the entourage.
- c. The fact that the crowd's passing was already in progress at the time he first learned that "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by," taken together with the fact that, when he began to implore Jesus' help, it is surprisingly "those who were in front (who) rebuked him," points to a change of the blind man's position with respect to the crowd. For, if the ones in front had already passed him on the road to Jericho and were thus closer to the city are the ones who rebuke him, then they must have turned completely around and, inexplicably ignoring the calmness of the people at that moment passing in front of the shouting Bartimaeus, begin to rebuke him for his impertinence! On the contrary, the rebuke by "those who were in front" may be more reasonably explained by some change in the relative positions of Bartimaeus and the crowds, a fact omitted by Luke as unimportant for his purpose. But what was the change in positions? Matthew and Mark supply the missing information? Consider the following harmony:

MATTHEW 20:29-31	MARK 10:46-48	LUKE 18:35-39
		35 As he drew near to Jericho a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging;
		36 and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant.
	46 And they came to Jericho;	37 They told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."
29 And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him.	And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude.	
30 And behold, two blind men sitting by the roadside	Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside,	
When they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Have mercy on us. Son of David!"	47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"	38 And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
31 The crowd rebuked them . . .	48 And many rebuked him . . .	39 And those in front rebuked him . . .

3. The harmonization of the three accounts, reflected in the "Paraphrase/Harmony," is based on the following steps:

- a. The party in which Jesus was travelling approached Jericho. Jesus and His disciples were in the lead ahead of the others who would thus be strung out along the road behind them. (Did Jesus keep up His pace ahead of the others even after the Passion Prediction and His rebuke of the selfish ambition of the Twelve? Cf. Mk. 10:32) If so, at least Jesus and His disciples passed the blind men before the latter could react. (Lk. 18:35) As the main body of the multitude with its hubub of voices and shuffling feet began to come by, he began to make inquiry about what was happening, too late to make contact with Jesus. (Lk. 18:36f) This much is seen as a separate fact that occurred before Jesus entered into Jericho.

WEAKNESS: is it likely that a sharp-eared blind man could miss the soft tread of 26 feet as Jesus and the Twelve pass by him, when he was seated "by the roadside begging" (Lk.

18:35)? Is it likely that absolutely no one in Jesus' immediate group said a word as they approached and passed the blind man to enter Jericho? And, if the blind man heard them and asked for alms, is it likely that Jesus and His group completely ignored his appeals?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

1. Jesus may have been walking alone in silence, ahead of the group, and so was not detected by the blind man. It may have been that He knew that He could heal the man later in circumstances that would accomplish more good. He may therefore have deliberately ignored the man this time, in order to reach that higher goal.
 2. Then, when the Twelve and others passed, their noise attracted the blind man's attention and he asked the meaning of the noise. Upon learning that Jesus' group was passing, he began calling, but too late to make himself heard by Jesus personally who had already gone by. The disciples and others do not disturb Jesus to call Him back to see what the blind beggar wanted.
 3. So, Jesus and His group got clear into Jericho before the blind man could successfully make his request known.
- b. Then, while Jesus stopped in the city to be the guest of Zachaeus (Lk. 19:1-10), the blind man, who by this time had completely lost contact with Jesus' particular group, may have reasoned that they would likely rest in Jericho before the final ascent to Jerusalem. This fact would give him ample time to find his way to the west side of town where he could wait for their departure and accost them as they left Jericho for Jerusalem.
- (1) Did this blind beggar take time to locate another blind beggar he knew, to share with him the hope of recovering his sight too? This would perhaps help to explain Mark and Luke's interest in Bartimaeus; whereas Matthew mentions two blind men.
 - (2) That a blind man could "find" anything or anyone and move so deftly around a city crowded with pilgrims is no problem for a beggar who has no doubt worked that city for years, deriving his only income from begging. He would naturally have learned to make his way around this ideal place for begging, since Herod the Great had built this city as a new capital and it became the resort for the rich from Jerusalem. And, because of its ideal geographical location as the last

stopping place for pilgrims bound for Jerusalem, beggars could hope for some alms from the pious among them who accounted alms as highly meritorious. In fact, on how many other occasions had Bartimaeus met the crowds coming from the east on one day, to beg from them, and then moved around to the west gate the next day to ask alms from them again as they left?

- c. Then, when he once again heard the movement of many people next day and asked the meaning of the sounds, he cried out to Jesus for the first time as He left the city for Jerusalem. (Mt. 20:30; Mk. 10:46b, 47; Lk. 18:38)
4. The legitimacy of Luke's reorganization of the materials need not be questioned.
- a. As a literary device his style is a procedure completely vindicated by the deliberate style of Moses in composing *Genesis*. That is, even as Moses so often completed a given person's history immediately upon mentioning him before returning to take up that of another more prominent figure, even though the former was not yet dead, so here too Luke may be thought of as desiring to complete the blind man's story after the first notice, in order to return to narrate Zacchaeus' story. He succeeded thus in preserving the unity of the story of healing by finishing it before the visit with Zacchaeus, although the healing actually occurred thereafter. Then, having disposed of the healing incident, Luke omitted any mention of it after Zacchaeus, proceeding rather to the Parable of the Pounds. (Lk. 19:11)
 - b. Why did Luke put the blind man first? This may be the wrong question. The real question may be: why did he desire to put Zacchaeus' story last? Perhaps for theological, rather than chronological considerations. (Matthew does a lot of this too. See on "The Problem of Order in Matthew's Narration," Vol. II, p. 1ff; "What is Matthew's Order or Plan of Presentation?" Vol. I, pp. 4-6) Accordingly, Luke may have wished to give particular emphasis to the salvation of Zacchaeus. However, he did not desire to ignore the healing of the blind man, because of its well-established importance for a correct understanding of Christ, and certainly because of its place in the historical information Luke had gathered from his sources. (Cf. Lk. 1:1-4) Since he alone narrates the salvation of Zacchaeus before Jesus' arrival at Bethany for the beginning of the Final Week events, and since he concludes Jesus' reaction to

Zacchaeus' decisions with the words: "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:9f), it may well be that he chose this method to underline Jesus' purpose for going to Jerusalem, even as Matthew and Mark state the death-mission of Jesus in the preceding section (20:28; Mk. 10:45). He may also have considered the salvation of Zacchaeus as illustrating, a bit more vigorously than the healing of the blind men, the astoundingly merciful condescension of Jesus. So he arranged his materials, so that, as the reader pondered the self-revelation of Jesus at Jericho, the last thing upon which his mind would linger is the amazing grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ who can so gracefully and graciously win the incredibly unworthiest of sinners, a chief tax collector!

There have been other attempts to harmonize these same details. (Cf. Plummer, *Luke*, 429f) However, the above explanations seem to be the simplest, most cohesive and least problematic.

20:30 **And behold, two blind men sitting by the way side.** Were there two, as Matthew affirms, or only one, named Bartimaeus, as Mark and Luke have it? Both, because where there are two, there is at least one! Matthew recorded the objective fact that there were two such beggars, but the names were not important for his narration, whereas Mark named one of the two and then carefully translated his Aramaic name into Greek, as if something connected with the man or his name would be important for his readership. (Was Bartimaeus and/or his father, Timaeus, a well-known disciple in Christian circles of Mark's and/or Peter's acquaintances?) Another motive for noticing this blind man may have been the high quality of his trust in Jesus (cf. Mk. 10:50), whereas the other man was perhaps less spectacular, less memorable for his expression of faith.

Two blind men sitting by the way side. Because Jericho was the winter palace of Herod and resort for the rich from Jerusalem, it is more than understandable that any one should place themselves by the roadside to beg. Moreover they could especially hope for alms during this period, because of the heavy traffic of Passover pilgrims on their way up to Jerusalem via Jericho. Their deplorable situation, arising as it does out of their physical handicap, is the more pitiable, since they had to depend upon the capricious generosity of passers-by. It is remarkable that neither Matthew nor Mark affirm that they were now begging. If the above-suggested harmonization of the

Synoptics' data is correct, the two blind men, convinced that Jesus' coming would bring them sight and relief from all future begging, calmly await His arrival, whereas Luke, the only Evangelist to affirm that Bartimaeus was begging, only affirms this *before* the blind man learned that Jesus was in the neighborhood. No longer begging, their entire attention is directed toward regaining their sight. The single-mindedness of their straining to learn of the near approach of the Messiah rebukes those fools who, although their only Source of spiritual light and life is passing by as the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed, divide their attention between the immortal value of their soul and their busy collecting a few pennies by the wayside! These blind beggars, customary objects of public charity, knew when to sacrifice temporal, material gain for grander blessings. O my soul, are you really earnest about receiving the blessing of Christ that you will consider it so important and so urgent that every other problem must wait until you have settled this momentous question?

When they heard that Jesus was passing by. They could determine that a multitude was passing by the growing murmur of voices talking and laughing and by the scuffle of feet. From some passerby they learned that their only Hope was drawing near. **They cried out, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, thou son of David.** That they understood what we do by the title, *Lord*, is doubtful. Since *Lord* (*kurie*) is also the standard form of respectful address for persons with whom one is not familiar (= "Sir, Mister"), it may not indicate special faith in Jesus as Lord of all. What can be affirmed is that their understanding is greater than those who think of Jesus as "John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Mt. 16:13f). Others might refer to the Son of David as merely "Jesus of Nazareth" (Mk. 10:47; Lk. 18:37), a man differing from others only in hometown. But the bold faith of these blind men asserts itself when they unashamedly entitle Him *Son of David*, the Messiah. (See on 1:1-17, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22.)

By now, Jesus' Davidic lineage is known, but more significantly, His ample qualifications for this Messianic title are common knowledge among disciples. Even these isolated beggars in a city where Jesus had probably never before preached, know His name and fame. How significantly is this event placed! Jesus is ascending to Jerusalem to suffer and die, to be defeated—as men deem it (20:17-19; Lk. 18:34; Mt. 20:28)—and yet He is the Son of David, the Messiah of the prophets. Even though He is about to face the decisive suffering that would complete His earthly mission, He does not hesitate to

stop to help these blind men who address Him as *Son of David*. He does not forget to serve men by healing their bodies nor to do the far more important things, such as dying for them too, because both are at the heart of His true mission, two facets of the same loving obsession.

20:31 **And the multitude**, i.e. "those who were in front" of the crowd moving toward the beggars, **bebuked them, that they should hold their peace**. What motives could have produced this reaction? Did they suppose that this raucous shouting was out of character for the high dignity of Jesus? Were they irked that these tatter-demalian mendicants were using inflammatory language loaded with embarrassing, political implications that could lead to trouble with the Jerusalem authorities who regularly vacationed at Jericho? In their own blindness to Jesus' mercifulness and true Messianic dignity, did they merely suppose that the blind beggars, by this piteous yelling, were only asking that the great Rabbi accord them alms? Or are they merely angry that their shouting interrupted their own conversations? If so, the people are far less concerned about the needs of these unfortunates than they are about their own comfort. Are there some slit-eyed enemies of Jesus in this crowd, who resent anyone's attributing Messianic dignity to Jesus by the use of such titles? Were there friends who, hoping to stage a Messianic demonstration in Jerusalem, hurriedly shush up this premature acclamation? Were there disciples crowding around Jesus, even now straining to pick up His every word, who resented this vigorously noisy interruption of their concentration? Whatever the cause, these cold-hearted, presumptuous people have more concern that everything operate smoothly than that two suffering human beings should receive the blessing of their lives! Some might have growled, "The participation of ragged beggars lowers the spiritual tone of our pilgrimage! We're on our way up to Jerusalem to worship God; neither we nor Jesus can be bothered with your problems now. We have our schedule to meet and our program to follow. Perhaps the Teacher could work you into His schedule when and if He returns this way sometime after the Passover. Don't call us—we'll call you!" These pitiless patrons of orthodoxy were despising "little ones who believe in me" (18:10), forbidding and blocking their way to Jesus. (Cf. 18:6-9; Mk. 9:38f)

But they cried out the more. This frustrating hindrance only increased the intensity of their determination to receive help. Unlike the rich young ruler, these undiscourageable believers would not be

rebuffed by setbacks and baffling handicaps. Their persistence evidences their conviction that *the Son of David* is their only hope and help. What spirit: the greater the resistance encountered, the more they throttle their rising despair and struggle to overcome it and gain their goal! They feared that the opportunity of a lifetime was slipping through their fingers, so they grasped it the tighter lest it be forever lost. (Cf. the Syrophoenician woman's pluck and persistence, 15:21-28)

B. RESPONSE: A miracle of mercy proves Jesus to be the Messiah.

20:32 And Jesus stood still. Whereinsofar He was the central figure in the westbound caravan now, when Jesus stopped, He drew instant attention to Himself and what He is about to do. By this single action, He halted the thoughtless crowd plunging sightlessly past two blind men who need help. Despite the din and hubbub of people's voices, He too heard the passionate cry of human need over there on the edge of the road. A person can hear what he is listening for!

Jesus stood still, and called them, but, because of the crowd noise ("What are we stopping for?"), He apparently could not make Himself sufficiently heard by the blind men themselves, so He gave two quick orders: "Call him!" (Mk. 10:49), or better yet, "Bring him to me!" (Lk. 18:40). The reason Jesus did not personally leave His place in a merciful gesture to save the blind men the effort of having to feel their way forward to Him, may have been to let their anticipation grow into confidence in His power to heal them. At this point people in the crowd encourage the blind men: "Take heart; rise, He is calling you." (Mk. 10:49) What a rebuke is thus handed to those who had rebuked the blind men!

Mark (10:50) provides a vivid touch of human realism to Bartimaeus' faith: "Throwing off his mantle, he sprang up and came to Jesus." His mantle is the long overcoat so essential to the protection and comfort of the inhabitant of the Middle East. Why he threw it off is a mystery, but the eloquence of the fact that he did is not. If this blind man casts aside his most precious article of clothing (cf. Dt. 24:13; Ex. 22:26, 27) and risks disorientation in a crowd of strangers, he has only one solid hope of refinding it later: he can go looking for it afterwards; after David's Son has given him his sight! If Jesus should fail, his one hope of breaking out of his dark

world would be gone anyhow, so what comfort could an old overcoat offer against the chilling disappointment of a world in which the one Man who had seemed to be gifted with God's power had suddenly failed in this case? But He would not fail! What is an old, dusty overcoat to a man with EYES who can SEE to work and earn a thousand suits of clothes? But why did he throw it off? Could he not have worn it? Did he consider it a hindrance in reaching Jesus through the crowd? More likely, since an overcoat might be laid aside when the wearer must begin strenuous exercise, such as walking or running, his casting it aside here may suggest his hurry and earnestness to get to Jesus as quickly as possible.

And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I should do unto you? There is no partiality with Jesus. Note how He turns His full attention equally to blind beggars or wealthy rulers. (19:16ff) **What will ye?** The men had asked for an unspecified expression of His mercy. "The Lord therefore in His royal majesty asked Bartimaeus to name the mercy, thus suggesting to him the fulness of the treasury of power and grace to which he came." (McGarvey, *Fourfold Gospel*, 561) **What will ye?** What a question! And yet, Jesus needs to ask it, for even though it is roughly the same request made by the mother of James and John (cf. 20:21; Mk. 10:36), He has no fear that these blind men will abuse His generosity. They would not ask for gold and glory, honor and positions of power in the Kingdom. Rather, they will shame the Apostles by paring away from their request all those superficialities, and seize upon the one essential that will bless their life more than any other.

Because His intelligent question is not intended to seek information from men so obviously in need of sight, it is clear that He means to imply, "What do you believe that the Messiah can do for you?" The Lord's query, rather than elicit information, aims to draw public attention to what He, who has just been repeatedly addressed publicly as *Son of David*, is about to do. Whereas these men had been beggars asking alms earlier (Lk. 18:35), is that the extent of their asking pity of Him? Let the crowd pause for their answer and witness His reaction.

20:33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. This simple request is the result of countless hours of sightless meditation upon the meaning of life. All that is extraneous and superfluous has been eliminated: this is rigorous reduction to the essential. It goes straight to the point: nothing less than sight will do! Were the Lord to ask us what we need specifically when we pray for His

grace, would our answer readily reflect our self-knowledge, our real needs and our long-range goals? Or is there much vagueness and unreality to our requests? If so, it may be that we receive not specifically, because we ask not specifically. (Jas. 4:2c) Let us learn to answer with true insight the Lord's question: "What will ye that I should do for you?"

Matthew eliminates many interesting details in this story which are included by Mark and Luke. May we not ask if it is his point to lay the essential facts before his reader, as if to ask, "Dear Jewish reader, as you contemplate Him whom these sightless men hail as the Messiah, *the Son of David*, Him who not only accepts this high title, but majestically proves His right to wear it by answering their prayer, cannot their prayer become yours? — **Lord, that our eyes may be opened!**?"

20:34 **And Jesus, being moved with compassion, touched their eyes.** The warmth of Jesus' compassion for these blind men stands out in marked contrast with the cold, heartless hindering by the crowds. He heard their piteous cry, felt deeply their need, suffered with them their hurt, was thrilled by their persistence that pushed their abilities to the limit, and was touched by their irrepressible, unembarrassed faith in Him. No wonder He willingly showed Himself to be the Rewarder of those who by faith diligently seek Him! (Heb. 11:6) Mark (10:52) and Luke (18:42) record His words: "Receive your sight; go your way; your faith has made you well." Absent from His words is any order to be silent. He does not bother to recommend circumspection now. Since the final hour is about to strike, the earlier concern about ill-timed, wrong-headed publicity now has little if any reason to exist. In fact, the entrance into Jerusalem which will occur shortly, will be nothing but the most public proclamation possible that He is indeed the Son of David. (See on chapter 21.)

As He touched their eyes, straightway they received their sight. With this single, majestic, yet warmly human, act, He fully justified their confidence in Him and the appropriateness of their use of the glorious Messianic title, "Son of David." Without any direct word and by His own tacit acknowledgement, He let the full impact of this miracle ripple over the multitude. Naturally, this sign of Jesus' true Messiahship would not be lost on people sensitive to Isa. 29:18 and 35:5 in their relative contexts. (See notes on 11:5.)

Although Jesus had said, "Go (your way)," Matthew says they followed him. Naturally enough, they chose His way. This is not

disobedience, but grateful loyalty, because their reaction means: "Lord, your way is now our way!" These two blind men who had formerly had little hope of traveling clear to Jerusalem, except with someone patiently guiding them the 25 km (15 mi.) uphill trip, now march spiritedly along with every other pilgrim on the way to worship God. No wonder their exuberant joy pours itself out in unabashed praise to God! (Lk. 18:43) Their infectious enthusiasm and the exciting effect of the miracle opened the mouths of their fellow travellers who also took up God's praise for the miracle they had witnessed. These penniless beggars, rather than seek first a stable income to care for their creaturely necessities, seek first the Kingdom of God in the personal discipleship of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.

Matthew concludes the final section of Jesus' public ministry before the Last Week with this significant tag line: **They received their sight and followed him**, almost as if to nudge the reader: "And you, does this miracle by the Son of David say anything to you? If so, let it be written of you, as it is of them: They received their sight and followed Him!"

FACT QUESTIONS

1. Who called Jesus "Son of David"? What others in Christ's ministry also called Him this?
2. Why did they call Jesus this? What did they mean by it?
3. What difficulties did Bartimaeus have in making his request known and in coming to Jesus?
4. What difficulties are there in the accounts about the blind men?
5. How did Jesus perform the miracle of healing their blindness, i.e. with words, acts, clay, etc.?
6. What text(s) in Jesus' sermon on personal relationships in Matthew 18 find their practical application or illustration in this section?

DO YOU HAVE THE WORD IN YOUR HEART?

Matthew 19, 20

Who said the following? To whom? Why? Under what circumstances? Be sure to give all various forms in different gospel accounts, all possible manuscript readings, translations and interpretations.

What do you think is the true meaning?

1. "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister."
2. "So the last shall be first, and the first last."
3. "Lord, have mercy on us, thou son of David."
4. "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."
5. "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good: . . ."
6. "There are eunuchs, that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."
7. ". . . for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven."
8. "If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."
9. "Who then can be saved?"
10. "Whoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery."
11. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
12. "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments."
13. "Ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."