

The Miracle of Sight 8-22-04

Matthew 9:27-34 (NIV)

²⁷ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"²⁸ When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied.²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you";³⁰ and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this."³¹ But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.³² While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus.³³ And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."³⁴ But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."

Matthew is continuing to tell us of the miracles Jesus performed that were signs that verified His divinity. Two weeks ago I showed you how these miracles declared Jesus to be the God of the Old Testament, Jehovah. The miracles in this passage serve the same purpose. (Psalm 146:8) This is the first record of the restoration of sight in the Gospel of Matthew. Together, these miracles fulfill the promises in Isaiah 35:3-5 (NIV).³ *Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way;*⁴ *say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."*⁵ *Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.*

When John sent his disciples to Jesus to ask if He was indeed the Messiah,⁴ Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see."⁵ *The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.*⁶ *Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."* Matthew 11:4-6 (NIV) These miracles were the evidence that He was the long awaited Messiah, predicted throughout the Old Testament. But when you look closely at these predictions, they refer to the Messiah as God. "...your God will come..." Isaiah prophesied.

Let's take a look at the details of these miracles.

²⁷ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

Jesus had just come from raising to life the daughter of Jairus. (Matthew 9:24-25) As we will see in a moment, He was most likely headed to Peter's house where He stayed. On the way, two blind men followed Him. They were calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" They are the first in the New Testament to do so. We have seen how the term "Son of David" refers to Jesus as the long awaited Messiah because of the promises given to David. (Psalms 89:3-4)

Their request was for mercy. Mercy implied their understanding of their own debt toward God and the recognition that Jesus could extend the mercy of God to them. They have been physically blind, but God gave these men eyes to see spiritual truth.

Commented [notes1]: ⁸ the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous.
Psalms 146:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: ²⁴ he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him.
²⁵ After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up.
Matthew 9:24-25 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: ³ You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant,
⁴ "I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations."
Psalms 89:3-4 (NIV)

They didn't have sight, but they had insight. They knew they had a need. They knew it required mercy. They knew where to go to obtain mercy. (Psalms 51:1)

²⁸ *When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied.*

Jesus waited until they got inside. I think the reason Jesus waited until they got inside was so that He could perform this miracle secretly. This is one of the direct fulfillments of Messianic prophecy. (Isaiah 42:6-7) He would tell them not to spread it around.

This miracle is one of Matthew's doublets. Many times in Matthew, Matthew tells a story, and later on, He tells a very similar story. I call it double confirmation. The story shows us that Jesus is the Messiah, God. But so that we'd know that this wasn't a fluke, Matthew records a similar story. The other story of two blind men being healed is in Matthew 20 from verse 30. In that story, Jesus had entered His last week. It was no longer necessary to gain more time by doing these things in secret. His hour had come (John 12:23-24), and so He publicly healed them. (Matthew 20:34)

Jesus asked if they believed He was able to do it. Interesting question, don't you think? Often, when we pray, we don't expect God to answer. We aren't sure if He could really do what we are praying for. We have to be able to imagine it happening in a natural sense, as if God didn't do miracles. James 1:6 tells us that when we ask we must believe and not doubt. Jesus tells us in Matthew 21:21-22 that if we want to see results when we pray, we must believe and not doubt. I think that when we pray the Spirit of God asks the same question, "Do you believe I am able to do this?" Is your prayer just duty and obligation or wishful thinking? Or do you really believe God can answer your prayer in miraculous ways? Faith gets results and glorifies God for those results. Doubt rarely gets results, but when it does it gives the credit to natural circumstances. Jesus challenged them to express their faith clearly. They did. "Unbelief puts our circumstance between us and God, but faith puts God between us and our circumstances." -- F.B. Meyer

²⁹ *Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you";*

Now that doesn't mean you must have faith to receive a miracle. We already saw that was not the case with the Centurion's servant and with Jairus' daughter. Certainly Centurion and Jairus had faith for their request, but the recipients of the healing did not express any faith. Remember Jesus told Jairus not to fear but to believe. (Mark 5:36)

That will work for healing, but not for salvation. In salvation, you can have faith with the person, like the men that brought the paralytic to Jesus. But the one who is to be saved must have faith too. (Ephesians 2:8) These men acknowledged that Jesus was Lord and that He could heal them. "According to your faith will it be done to you", does not mean in proportion to their faith, but in response to their faith.

^{30a} *and their sight was restored.*

The human eye is an incredible work of the Creator. We take it so casually that our lens automatically adjusts to depth of field. My daughter is a professional photographer. She uses the most expensive cameras made for her type of work, but

Commented [notes4]: ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Psalms 51:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: ⁶ "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, ⁷ to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. Isaiah 42:6-7 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: ²³ Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. John 12:23-24 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: ³⁴ Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him. Matthew 20:34 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: ⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. James 1:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: ²¹ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. ²² If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." Matthew 21:21-22 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: ³⁶ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe." Mark 5:36 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)

they still have problems with auto focus. Your eye has an automatic aperture that lets in just enough light (the adjustment of the pupil) for optimum vision. In addition to pupil adjustment, after 30 minutes in the dark, the eye becomes 10,000 times more sensitive to light by switching to a more sensitive photo-collection system.

Unlike the lens on my daughter's camera, our lens comes with a constantly replaced outer layer so that scratches soon disappear. Not only that, but the lens is constantly washed free of dust. And the lens cap automatically opens and closes whenever you need it, cleaning the lens in the process. It is so complex that I couldn't go into it all, nor do I understand it all.

Imagine a camera that aims at any angle without the housing moving. The eye muscles themselves are an amazing work of engineering. One of the muscles even uses a pulley system. And talk about photo resolution, mega pixels are pathetic compared to the resolution of the human eye. The normal human eye has somewhere between 82 and 157 million photoreceptors. How the brain then translates the signals (combined so as to bring the number of nerve lines down to one million) and gives us the image we see is not yet understood.

In one of the Moody Science films, volunteer subjects were given lenses that turned their vision upside down. After some time of banging around as they tried to learn to walk, their brain turned their vision right side up. The poor folks had to go through it all over again when they took off the lenses. We truly are fearfully and wonderfully made! About these two blind men, the Scripture just says,
^{30a} *and their sight was restored.*

Now imagine how wonderfully complex is the creation of our spiritual eyes. The Apostle Paul calls it the eyes of your heart. (Ephesians 1:18-20) You have to be born again to have spiritual eyes created. (Philippians 1:9-10) With them, we can discern grace of God at work within our lives and in the world. With those spiritual eyes we can see what the unredeemed cannot even fathom. (1 Corinthians 2:14) We can see hope where the world sees none. We can see God at work in the family of God, where the world only sees imperfect people. We can see eternal consequences of good and evil while the world only sees the moment. Have you received the gift of spiritual eyes? Jesus told the Apostle Paul, "*I am sending you to them ¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.*" Acts 26:18 (NIV)

These two men were stirred to believe that Jesus was the Messiah and that He could have mercy on them. Their physical eyes didn't work but their ears did, and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. (Romans 10:17) *Without faith it is impossible to please God,* the author of Hebrews wrote, *for he that comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.* Hebrews 11:6 These men would not be dissuaded, discouraged, or stop short of what they knew He could do. "Son of David, promised Messiah, have mercy on us!" They wouldn't stop until, alone with Jesus in the house, Jesus prompted their profession of faith. He asked, "*Do you believe I am able to do this?*"

Commented [notes12]: ¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, Ephesians 1:18-20 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: ⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, Philippians 1:9-10 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: ¹⁴ The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17 (NIV)

Now I want you to take this situation that they were in and apply it to yourself and to the church of Sedona. Is Sedona by and large blind? Do we need rebirth and revival? How desperately do we need it? I think when we get as desperate as these men were to see, when we get that desperate for the blind to see in Sedona, when we follow after Jesus until we are alone with Him in the house, and profess our faith that He can do it, and then He will reward those who diligently seek Him.

Do you believe He is able to fill up and establish us as a solid body of believers that affect this town for the Kingdom of God? Do you believe He can do this? Well? Do you believe that God can open a door to reach out to the millions of tourists that go through this town? Can we for a moment listen to Jesus speak to us, this little band of believers in what the world considers a New Age Mecca, and hear Him ask us, "*Do you believe that I am able to do this? ...According to your faith will it be done to you.*"

I think our prayers are often as small as our faith.

John Newton had received from the Lord some almost unbelievable answers to his petitions, and so he often engaged in "large asking." In support of this practice he would frequently tell the story of a man who asked Alexander the Great to give him a huge sum of money in exchange for his daughter's hand in marriage. The ruler consented and told him to request of his treasurer whatever he wanted. So he went and asked for an enormous amount. The keeper to the funds was startled and said he couldn't give him that much without a direct order. Going to Alexander, the treasurer argued that even a small fraction of the money requested would more than serve the purpose. "No," replied Alexander, "let him have it all. I like that fellow. He does me honor. He treats me like a king and proves by what he asks that he believes me to be both rich and generous." Newton concluded the story by saying, "In the same way, we should go to the throne of God's grace and present petitions that express honorable views of the love, riches, and bounty of our King!" ---Sermon Central Quote

I like Newton's thinking. I want to glorify God by doing some "large asking". I want the New Age centers to be a beacon of light to glorify Jesus Christ! I want the city of Sedona to have eyes to see that Jesus is the Lord of life and become known as a Christian Center. When people see the Red Rocks, I want them to think of the Creator, not an imaginary vortex. That is why I'm doing some "large asking". I believe He is able to do this! Will you join me in asking our great God to open our eyes, mature and strengthen the body of Christ in Sedona, and to give us the city for the glory of God? It only took a generation to turn this town's image one way. Why can't one more generation turn it into a town that gives glory to Jesus Christ?

When Jesus restored the two men's physical sight,

^{30b} *Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." ³¹ But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.*

Jesus' warning was expressed in a very emphatic way. The Greek is almost harsh. As much faith as they had, you'd think they'd have realized it was urgent to keep it quiet. They have a problem many of us have. We just can't keep quiet. Some of us won't speak up for the Lord. Others say too much. God grant us the fruit of the Spirit, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) We have some exciting ideas about what God may

Commented [notes16]: ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

be leading us to do, but we should not share them with everyone. We need the self-control that tempers our excitement so as to not stir up unnecessary opposition.

³² *While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus.*

The KJV gives an equally valid translation that suggests the men whose sight was restored brought the blind man to Jesus. (Matthew 9:32 KJV) MacArthur leans toward this translation. It would certainly be possible. The mute man may have guided them while they spoke for him. In receiving wholeness, they wanted to bring anyone else in need to the One who could do something about their condition.

Commented [notes17]: ³² As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.
Matthew 9:32 (KJV)

The source of this man's inability to speak was demonic. We don't read how Jesus cast the spirit out. The passage simply says,

³³ *And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."*

There was no physical reason he could not speak. The demonic force kept him from speaking. That force could not abide the presence of Christ. As God answers our prayers and the power of the Holy Spirit is free to work in our lives, we'll be bringing those who can't see or can't hear spiritually into the presence of Christ. He'll set them free from their self-promoting philosophies to worship the true and living God. Those doctrines of devils will fall away as they face the truth and reality of Jesus Christ. (1 Timothy 4:1) And just like in this story, people will be amazed.

Commented [notes18]: ¹ Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;
1 Timothy 4:1 (KJV)

The crowds knew this was a miracle the likes of which had never been witnessed before.

³⁴ *But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."*

This is their third attack. First they accused Him of blasphemy when He forgave the sins of the paralytic. (Matthew 9:3) Next they insinuated impropriety when they asked why He ate with tax collectors and "sinners". (Matthew 9:11) Now they are telling the crowds that this is not the power of God but that of Satan.

Commented [notes19]: ³ At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"
Matthew 9:3 (NIV)

When God works in the world, the enemy responds. He usually accuses the saints of what he is guilty of himself. As God begins to really move in Sedona, we will face accusations and lies as the enemy tries to counter the work of the Spirit. We've seen it before. We've seen people become ill and move away or fall morally, right when they were beginning to have an impact. But it doesn't need to be that way. (1 John 4:4) If we will believe He is able to do this, if we will pray "large prayers" and follow Him until He answers, God will respond to our faith. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. He will act! And the people will be amazed. The Lord Jesus will be exalted here, in the body of Christ in Sedona, in the city of Sedona. "Do you believe Jesus is able to do this?"

Commented [notes20]: ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"
Matthew 9:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: ⁴ You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.
1 John 4:4 (NIV)