

File No. 148

MARK 10:46–52

Luke 18:35–43

BLIND BARTIMAEUS

(SBS Bk 5 Story No 34)

Story Notes

For some time, Jesus had been leading his disciples towards Jerusalem in a manner that amazed them (v.32). They knew it would not be safe there and Jesus was teaching them that that was where he must die and rise. Yet they still sought places of prestige in the kingdom. So, they arrived at Jericho, little more than 20 kilometres from Jerusalem.

The word that came to the blind Bartimaeus was that 'Jesus of Nazareth' was near. His cry was to the 'Son of David'. Did he use this cry because he knew that Jesus was the Messiah? We cannot tell, but Mark shows us that it is David's great Son who is coming to Jerusalem, and this blind man proclaims that his coming has to do with mercy.

The crowd were accustomed to blind beggars, and sought to silence Bartimaeus, but to Jesus, blind beggars were symptomatic of the state of the nation (John 9:25, 39-41) and he loved to heal them. Prophecies had indicated God would come to remove the (spiritual) blindness of his people (Isa. 29:18-19; 35:5-6), or that his King would do this (Isa. 32:1-3).

The crowd changed their tune when Jesus requested to see the man. They too were learning what the priorities were in this man's kingdom.

What did Bartimaeus want? It was obvious, but then, it was important for him to ask. Being near to Jesus now, he called him 'teacher', and was healed, and healed because he believed. How important this believing was. God was giving mercy to the nation by sending their Messiah. There could be no blessing from God other than by the blessing he had already sent.

So Jesus made his way to Jerusalem, but now, Bartimaeus was not 'sitting by the roadside'(v. 46) but 'followed him by the way' (v. 52).

This is the last miracle recorded by Mark. The task of Messiah, or of God himself, was to remove the blindness of Israel, and lead them, exultant, to God. This, Jesus was doing. Before long, many would sing of Jesus coming into Jerusalem, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!' (11:9-10).

Perhaps Bartimaeus was one of the crowd. Generally, Mark does not record names, but he includes this one. It may be that Bartimaeus continued to follow Christ and was known in the community for which Mark wrote.

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