

WHAT BLIND BARTIMAEUS SAW

– *JULY 19.* – *MARK 10:46-52.* –

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." – Isaiah 35:5,6.

IT WAS the Passover season, and many were journeying in the same direction with Jesus – toward Jerusalem. Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, sat by the wayside, hoping to receive charity from the passersby. An unusual commotion was created as Jesus passed, and Bartimaeus inquired the cause. The answer was that Jesus the Nazarene had just passed by.

Bartimaeus had heard that Jesus was the reputed Messiah who, according to the Scriptures, would eventually bless the whole world and do away with sin, sorrow and pain. He had heard that already Jesus was performing cures, healing the sick, casting out demons and opening the eyes of the blind. Oh, he thought, Why did not some one tell me while He was passing! He has healed others, might I not be one of the favored ones?

His faith and hope flamed up; and he shouted, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Be quiet! Make less noise! Do not interrupt the Great Teacher; He is talking with others, said the passersby. But Bartimaeus felt that it was now or never with him; he lifted his voice above that of the multitude, and shouted more loudly than ever, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus heard the voice, and ever ready to be gracious to those who call for mercy, He bade the blind man come to Him. It would show his faith: it would thus be a more important lesson to the multitude. Helped by others, Bartimaeus finally found himself in the presence of Jesus; and the Master said, "What wilt thou that I

should do unto thee?" Promptly the answer came, "O Lord, that I might receive my sight!" Jesus said unto him, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." And immediately he received his sight, and became one of the followers in the concourse, praising the Divine power and acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah.

"JESUS, THOU SON OF DAVID"

The blind man's words, "Jesus, thou Son of David," had special significance to him and to the Jews of his day, which is lost so far as the multitudes of today are concerned. The Jews knew that Messiah as the great High Priest was in a measure prefigured by Aaron; and as the great Lawgiver, was prefigured, or typified, by Moses; and as the great King was prefigured, or typified, by Solomon, David's wise, rich, influential son, his successor in the kingdom. The uniting of all these lines of prophecy is found pictorially represented in Melchizedek, who was a priest upon his throne; that is to say, he was a priest of God at the same time that he was a prince or ruler – he had a double office.

St. Paul calls our attention to this fact that Jesus is not ultimately to be a priest after the Order of Aaron – merely a sacrificing priest, without any reigning power; but that He is to be a Priest after the Order of Melchizedek. St. Paul cites the Divine declaration to this effect in the Psalms of David: "I have sworn and will not repent, Thou art a Priest forever, after the Order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4.) St. Paul bases highly important arguments upon this prophetic statement. He shows the Divine foreintention in respect to Jesus and the **[R5485 : page 188]** Messianic Kingdom, and the character of the same.

The committee arranging the order of these International Bible Studies evidently had in mind the fact that the miracles of Jesus at His First Advent were the merest fore-shadows of the greater miracles and works which He will accomplish at His Second Advent. In line with this thought, they have given us as the

Golden Text for today's lesson Isaiah's prophecy respecting Messiah's Kingdom. This agrees with the general trend of the Apostolic teaching to the effect that all the miracles which Jesus performed were foreshadows, or illustrations, of the greater work which is to be accomplished by the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom, in due time. We read, "These things did Jesus and manifested forth His glory"; that is, showed in advance His Kingdom glory and power.

We are not for a moment to think that Jesus and His disciples attempted to heal all the sick of Palestine. On the contrary, while many were healed, they were the exceptions amongst the multitudes that were sick – such as manifested special faith. In the present instance, Bartimaeus was only one of many blind beggars by the wayside, we may be sure; for Palestine, Syria and Egypt are the lands of blind beggars. The Lord had already passed Bartimaeus by, not heeding him, not offering to heal him. He had his eyesight restored because of his faith, because he cried out, because he would not listen to those who sought to still his voice and turn aside his faith.

THE WORST OF BLINDNESS

A similar case, we remember, was at the Pool of Bethesda. Multitudes were lying there, waiting for the movement of the waters, in order to step into the pool for healing. Jesus addressed Himself to only one of these, saying, "Take up thy bed and walk." It is when we come to understand that the miracles of Jesus pictured forth coming blessings during His Messianic Kingdom that we get the proper view of matters, and may rejoice accordingly that a good, glad Day is coming for all the blind, all the lame, all the deaf, as indicated by Isaiah's prophecy. – Isaiah 35:5,6.

"Eyes have they, but they see not; ears, but they hear **[R5485 : page 189]** not." The whole world is referred to in the Bible as being blind and deaf to the things that are most interesting, most

profitable. Only an occasional one here and there, like Bartimaeus of old, grasps the possibility of relief from his blindness and deafness, and takes the proper steps to secure relief. St. Paul tells us of this blind condition, saying, "The god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." – 2 Corinthians 4:4.

Six thousand years ago, Satan started this work of blinding human understanding to the goodness of God and to those things which would make for their highest welfare. He still continues it. He began by contradicting the Almighty when he told Mother Eve that the penalty for sin, "Dying, thou shalt die," was a deception on God's part. Satan declared, "Ye shall not surely die"; and he persuaded her that this threat was merely an attempt on God's part to keep her from great blessings of knowledge, and that the true welfare of herself and her husband would be promoted by disobedience.

The question naturally arises, What motive did Satan have in misrepresenting matters to our first parents? Why should he be interested in their disobedience and alienation from God? The answer is that thus only could he make them effectually his own slaves of sin. So long as they recognized God as their wise, loving Parent and had confidence in Him, they would remain loyal to Him, and correspondingly would not be the servants of sin.

Satan has continued this work of misrepresenting God's Divine character and Plan for now six thousand years. St. Paul says that he puts light for darkness, and darkness for light, and that "we are not ignorant of his devices." After telling us that the god of this world has blinded the minds of all unbelievers, St. Paul adds the explanation that this is done lest the light of the knowledge of the glory of God should shine into their hearts – lest they should see the real goodness of God. He explains that this light of God's

goodness is reflected, to those who see it, from the face of Jesus Christ our Lord.

In this beautiful, poetic form the Apostle presents a wonderful truth which Bible students are more and more coming to appreciate. God is Love; and all the stories that we have heard to the contrary are intended to blind our minds and prejudice us against our best Friend. Hence it is that Satan has persistently propagated, not only amongst the heathen, but also amongst Christians, various doctrines which are the reverse of the Truth. St. Paul styles these "doctrines of demons." – 1 Timothy 4:1.

During the Dark Ages the Adversary worked these into our Christian creeds, had them painted upon the walls of Christian churches, and had them acted out in theatricals of a darker day. These all picture God as the worst imaginable devil. They all represent Him as knowing what He was doing when He created our race and purposed from the beginning that nearly every member of the race should suffer an eternity of torture. No wonder that during the Dark Ages the world was not drawn to God by these horrible misrepresentations! No wonder that even when the Bible came back to the reverence of the people, these doctrines of devils adhered to it, and have since hindered the world from loving it!

Now we are learning that we were all more or less blinded by the Adversary; and as we get free from his blinding influence, our hearts rejoice in the favor of Him who has brought us out of darkness into marvelous light.

ONLY THE FEW YET SEE

Writing to the Church of Ephesus, the Apostle intimates that while they had seen something, there was still much more for them to see. We quote: "Making mention of you in my prayers, that...the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His

inheritance in the saints." And again: "I bow my knees unto the Father...that ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." We still need to offer this prayer on behalf of ourselves and of all the Church.

As for the world, it still lies in darkness, in the Wicked One, as the Apostle declares, under the bondage of the superstitions which Satan has prospered. Only the few now get their eyes open, as did Bartimaeus. They are people of special character, who see special opportunities and who so greatly long for the light of the knowledge of God that they are willing to ignore the general sentiment of those who bid them be quiet and continue in ignorance – blindness. It is those who hunger and thirst after righteousness that have the promise of being filled, and those who are longing for sight that may hope to have it, in the present time.

But, thank God, a glorious change is promised! Satan, the Prince of Darkness, is to give place to the glorious Prince of Light, the same One who healed Bartimaeus in a typical way more than eighteen centuries ago. He is to take the Kingdom. Divine Power is back of the Program by which Satan is to be bound for a thousand years and all his works of darkness to be undone. Instead of misrepresentation of God's true character and loving plans, the reverse will be given to mankind. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God will fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep – until no one shall need to say to his neighbor, Know thou the Lord; for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest. – Isaiah 11:9; Jeremiah 31:34.

"ALL THE BLIND EYES SHALL BE OPENED"

Whoever in reading this prophecy thinks merely of the natural sight, and of the fact that all natural blindness will be done away in Messiah's Kingdom, sees only a small portion of the glorious work to be accomplished. The blindness of ignorance and

superstition with which Satan has afflicted the race is far worse than the physical blindness. And the assurance is given us by the Lord that all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped. The Scriptural declaration, "Every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him," has undoubtedly special reference to the eyes of understanding. Jesus declared to His disciples, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye shall see Me." Yea, the Apostle John says, "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

By the miraculous change of the First Resurrection the Church class shall be made spirit beings like unto the angels, and will then see the Master face to face, because spirit beings like Him. But the world will never see Him in this manner. They will see Him with the eyes of their understanding opened, just as believers now see the Father and see Jesus by the eyes of faith and the eyes of understanding; just as we see the things which "eye hath not seen, neither have entered into the heart of man" – the things which God has in reservation for them that love Him, the things which God has revealed unto us by His Spirit, the things which we see with our spiritual vision.

Similarly, during the Millennial period, all blinded eyes will be opened to the goodness, the greatness, the love, the power, of God. Thus the world will come to know God, **[R5486 : page 190]** being helped to that knowledge through the Messianic Kingdom; and all who avail themselves of the privileges then extended may attain to that glorious degree of knowledge mentioned by Jesus when He said: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

HELPERS, NOT HINDERERS

In the type, the people first of all bade Bartimaeus keep quiet; but when Jesus called him, they joined in giving words of

encouragement and in helping the blind man to the Savior. The latter action should represent the course of all who are the Lord's people. They should encourage the blind, the superstitious – all who are out of the way – to come to the Savior, to realize that He is indeed gracious and willing to save them from their blindness.

We might extend these observations to various affairs of life, and say that many are blind as respects the beauties of the Bible, and that all who have gotten their eyes of understanding opened to see the beauties of its real teachings should be on the alert to assist others to the same blessing. We might extend the lesson to the use of the natural sight. Some are so deeply engrossed in business or in pleasure-seeking that they never lift their eyes to the glorious beauties of nature. The shining stars are telling of a Divine Wisdom and of an omnipotent Creator, yet the blinded ones fail to get a blessing from the message, because they fail to see. "Eyes have they, but they see not."

All nature is speaking of a great, eternal God, and telling us that humanity is His chief earthly handiwork, and that our highest aim should be to seek to know Him and to serve Him. But how many are born blind and deaf to the lessons of the stars, of which the Prophet declares, "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard"! There are some so blind mentally that they see not that the unhappiness which they feel is largely the result of their own selfishness. They see not that their homes might be more beautiful, might be places of comfort and happiness, instead of places of selfish grasping, upbraidings, discontent.

All who realize these conditions to be prevailing in themselves or others should be crying out, "O Lord, that I might receive my sight!" and should be rejoicing also to the extent that they are learning that the time is coming, yea, is near at hand, when

Messiah's Kingdom will grant the blessing of the opening of the eyes of understanding to all of Adam's race.

