

An e-mail message that was entitled “*Things I Really Don’t Understand*” listed some questions for which there seems to be no clear-cut answer.

Here are five of them:

- * *Why do doctors and lawyers call what they do practice?*
- * *Why is “abbreviation” such a long word?*
- * *Why is it that when you’re driving and looking for an address, you turn down the volume on your radio?*
- * *Why is a boxing ring square?*
- * *How do they get the deer to cross the highway at those yellow signs?*

These questions represent a humorous reminder that there are (indeed) a lot of things in this life that we just really don’t understand. Such was the case with the Lord’s disciples. Our passage today begins with a scene – when the disciples did not understand... or comprehend the meaning of the Lord’s discussion about what was about to happen – that He would be tortured and killed... but rise again on the third day. ... The disciples just would ***not*** accept it... therefore... they did not understand His prophecy. ... We will see in verse 34 of Luke 18 (today)... that it was hid (or concealed) from them. ... They did not grasp what He was ***clearly*** telling them about suffering... dying... and then rising from the dead. ... If they were not blinded... we might think that at least one of them would ask: “*Could you say that again? What are you going to do on the third day?*” ...

Unfortunately... they had clueless sight.

When people are not willing to accept what the Bible is telling them... then they will not learn or understand its truths. The reason that multitudes in this world do not believe the Gospel is because they are unwilling to accept the truths of God’s Word. They think the Bible is a ridiculous book.

Here is what Scripture says about that...

1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Wait a minute?... How about you?... Do you understand important spiritual truth... like if you die without Christ... you will spend eternity in Hell?... Do you understand Hell is a real place... and there is no escape once you are there?... Do you also understand that Jesus Christ has died for your sins so that you can have eternal life by putting your faith in Him?... Do you realize Jesus is the only way to Heaven?... If you do not know the Lord and are not willing to trust in Him... you have been blinded and Satan is the one who has blinded you.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)

⁴ ... the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Our passage today will talk about spiritual blindness... as well as physical blindness. ... (And do you know what?) It is far better to be PHYSICALLY blind... than it is to be SPIRITUALLY blind.

I once had a discussion with some spiritually blind people who came knocking on my door. Under the pretense of OPENING my eyes to truth... they tried to “pull the wool over my eyes” to blind me. These people were from the cult called “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” When I told them that the Bible says that Jesus is God... they denied it saying, “*Jesus only claimed to be ‘the son of God – not actually God. He was only a son of God (a human) just like you and me... In fact... he most often referred to himself as the ‘Son of man’.*”

It is true that “Son of Man” is very often used in the New Testament... and that Jesus usually used this term when He spoke of Himself. He used it in our passage today. In the Gospel of John... it is used thirteen times to refer to Jesus... and it is found sixty-nine (additional) times in the other Gospels... which includes the two times we see it in our verses today.

I will admit that it used to bother me that Jesus would use this term... and used it so often. Why not be more clear Jesus... when so much truth is at stake. Don't speak in riddles that cults (like the Jehovah's Witnesses) can exploit... to keep people in their spiritual darkness.

But my feeling this way... was showing my misunderstanding of that title... and how every Jew of the 1st Century would have understood it. When they heard Jesus refer to Himself as “the Son of Man” they had absolutely NO DOUBT that Jesus was calling Himself “God.” Here is why...

In using the title “Son of Man”... Jesus derived it from the seventh chapter of Daniel... which records Daniel's vision of the sweep of world history graphically represented by a series of beasts eventuating in ultimate judgment presided over by the Ancient of Days (Who is “God the Father.”) The vision concludes with these words:

Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days” (God the Father) “...and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him” (that is - the Son of Man)... “was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” (Some versions say He will be worshiped. This says they will serve Him. And He will have an ever-lasting kingdom. – All of this describes the nature of God.)

God (the Ancient of Days) gives to another divine being (a being described here as “one like a son of man”) God gives glory... sovereignty... servive/worship... and everlasting dominion—an eternal kingdom.

Jesus... when He came... announced, “I am **the** Son of Man... (the very One Daniel wrote about.) I am this eternal - sovereign King!” (And) Jesus first used the term “*Son of Man*” for Himself (right after) healing the paralytic in Capernaum:

Mark 2:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹ “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”

Jesus (in this way) indicated that He was consciously and purposely investing the special title to show that He was God.

Jesus claimed to be *the transcendent being of Daniel’s vision* and used “Son of Man” as a substitute for the personal pronoun “I” – multiple times (over and over again.) ... He especially used the term when He spoke of Himself to His disciples. They heard the term many times.

We also know that Jesus regularly spoke of His coming death. For example... only going (just a little way) back in Luke... after Peter’s great confession... Jesus explicitly said:

Luke 9:22 (ESV)

²² saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”

Jesus was equally clear after He healed the boy with an evil spirit (*still* in Luke chapter 9):

Luke 9:44 (ESV)

⁴⁴ *“Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.”*

(And) then in our opening verses today... as we continue our study here in Luke 18...

Luke 18:31-33

He could not have been more explicit about His being the “Son of Man” or more clear about His impending suffering... death... and resurrection. Jesus warned that success in His mission would look like failure by human standards. ... Nevertheless... He promised to rise from the dead.

Why now? Why here? Why again? ... Well... The disciples were probably thinking pretty high of themselves... when Jesus said all of this to them. Please recall from last week... in the passage immediately before this one... that Jesus had just assured them how they would receive 1,000 times more (in return) than what any of them had to give up... in order to follow Jesus. They would indeed receive far more in the kingdom of God than they had sacrificed. – However... the road to glory always runs through the valley of suffering. They needed this balance.

Boy! That is such an important principle for all of us to learn. The road to glory always runs through the valley of suffering. ... [P A U S E]

Periodically... Jesus Christ would tell the disciples about the coming event of Calvary. ... This is the third time (here in Luke)... that Jesus predicted it. The first time Jesus told of His impending death... *as He did* so... He focused on His rejection by Israel’s leaders. (We saw this in Luke 9:21–27.) ... The second time... Jesus added the element of betrayal (in Luke 9:44–

45). ...And now this third time... He graphically described His rejection by the religious leaders and being turned over to the Romans... being shamed... being killed... but also His own resurrection. ... All of which came during Jesus' journey to Jerusalem – in order to experience it all.

Mormons claim that Jesus blew His mission on earth. He mistakenly got Himself crucified. THIS... then... allows the Mormon's to claim... God had to send another prophet (who they say was Joseph Smith)... to finish what Jesus had failed to accomplish – because Jesus (astonishingly) got Himself killed.

Absolutely **FALSE!!!** Jesus predicted His Own death... and so did the Old Testament prophets. We just read that Jesus said it was necessary for Him to fulfill the Old Testament Messianic prophecies. (Here are only 3 of the many prophecies.)

FIRST - That He would be betrayed:

Psalm 41:9 (ESV)

⁹ Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

SECOND - That He would be crucified:

Isaiah 53:4-7 (ESV)

⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

THIRD - That He would be resurrected:

Psalm 16:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.

Do not let anyone tell you that Jesus mistakenly got Himself killed. ... No! He knew that He had to fulfill prophecy (such as this small sampling that I just showed you reveals.) Jesus willingly gave Himself up – as payment for yours and my sin. Jesus was not taken off guard or surprised at the events surrounding the cross. He knew what He was getting into - and willingly laid down His life for us. ... What tremendous love this shows that He has for you and I...! ... We have to ignore many clear passages of Scripture... in order **NOT** to understand this truth.

But even though there were prophecies... and Jesus predicted His Own suffering... death... and resurrection MULTIPLE times... it isn't only the Mormons of our modern-day... who missed it. So did Jesus' Own disciples!

Luke 18:34

They heard the words right from the mouth of Jesus... and saw the expression on His face... and still did not understand. ... We can never see God's truth - unless He opens our eyes.

Why didn't God open their eyes to this truth? ... Probably because they couldn't handle it yet. ... If they really knew what would happen to Jesus... and how different it would be than their own conceptions of riding the coattails of the Messiah to glory... they might have given up right then and there.

(I am sure many of you have done this.) ... Sometimes I look back over my life... and I thank the Lord that He did not reveal to me (ahead of time) what He was about to do in my life. *“I am not willing to do that... Lord... That is an assignment better suited for someone else... Not me! Huh-uh! No... Sir! That’s just crazy!... Instead I am going to get on a boat and head for Tarsus... Call me Jonah!”* ... But the situations that we would have run from... are where we have grown the most... or have really seen God work in powerful ways. We can look back and see benefits that we could never suspect... from the very situations we would have tried to avoid. *“Lord... What is a ‘La Pine’?!”*

Despite His explicit and detailed prediction of events to come... the meaning of Jesus’ warning *“was hidden from them.”* ... This is written in what is called “the passive voice” - which hints at divine activity. In other words Luke is saying that God prevented them from understanding - until later.

Their ideas about Jesus and His Messianic Kingdom were FAR DIFFERENT than what Jesus was now describing to them. They certainly had no love for Christ’s announced plans. I’m sure they heard it... but they did not consider it. They refused it.

Now here’s the thing – if we are going to be completely honest. ... There are clearly expressed truths (here) in God’s word... that you and I do not see. ... We are blind to them... because we would rather hold on to our own ideas. ... If someone insults you – do you ever “turn the other cheek” and let them strike again...? If some forceful person demands your coat... will you give them your shirt as well...? Do you consider others as more important than yourself...? Do you treat others better than yourself...? Do

you forgive others JUST AS Christ has forgiven you...? Do you receive others the way Christ has received you (with tons of undeserved grace)... or must they FIRST prove themselves “worthy” before you will show them your kind attention...? ... **[P A U S E]** ...

I think that there is a principle that we need to see that is being expressed in our passage today. When you reject Divine truth - God will close your eyes to Divine truth. ... **[P A U S E]** ... When you reject Divine truth - God will close your eyes to Divine truth. The disciples were not cognizant of these events. Even though Christ informed them about these events... they preferred to remain ignorant of them. Rejecting Divine truths leaves you in the dark about the most important matters of life.

Fortunately – the predictions that Christ made were not useless. They were not said in vain. Once these events occurred... these predictions eventually came back into their minds – and strengthened their faith. So they served a great purpose.

Jesus is almost to Jerusalem and facing these events that He was telling His disciples about. There is just one more healing before He enters Jerusalem for the last time. The healing of a blind man (who is given a name in Mark’s Gospel) is the last miracle before the passion week. On his approach to Jerusalem... Jesus went through Jericho. Here a blind man - Bartimaeus... (who was a person considered *insignificant* by others) cried out for mercy and expressed his faith in Jesus as the Messiah. His bold faith was rewarded. He is contrasted with the rich young ruler (a man who was considered “significant”... that we saw in last week’s passage – just before this.)

Luke 18:35-36

Matthew tells us that there were **two** blind beggars who met Jesus at Jericho. One was on the outskirts of town before they entered Jericho... but the second one (which Luke talks about) was just as they were leaving Jericho. (Luke only speaks about one blind beggar.)

Beggars often waited along the roads near cities because that was where they were able to contact the most people. Usually disabled in some way... beggars were unable to work for a living. Medical help was not available for their problems... and people tended to ignore their obligation to care for the needy.

Little did this man realize that this particular day would not be like any other because Jesus was going to pass his way. ... As the sun awakened ... the town began to come to life. The birds were singing their morning songs of praise. ... When Bartimaeus awakened... he could feel the dampness of the dew on his cloak. He stood to his feet... and probably shook the straw... dust... and sand from his old... tattered garment. He was hungry so he tapped his way to his favorite place for begging near the gate of Jericho. Hopefully... someone might spare a piece of bread for his breakfast.

Arriving at the gate... he took his regular place with his beggar buddies. He drew his cloak tightly around him because the sun had not yet dispelled the morning chill. As he sat there... just like so many days before... he listened as Jericho revived from slumber. He recognized the familiar sounds of donkeys heading to the market with their produce. He could hear the voices of women chatting with one another as they headed to the well for water.

The clip clop of camel's hooves was a common sound. This day was pretty much like all other days.

But as the day progressed... something happened that was not in the ordinary. The beggar's fine-tuned hearing heard in the distance the commotion of a crowd approaching. He could tell it was a large crowd by the sound of the many voices. Is it a fight? No... that's not it. Then he hears the swift pitter-patter of a boy running by him... crying out in a loud excited voice to his friend to come and see what was happening.

Large groups passed the beggar every day. But this crowd seemed different. This group traveled with the Messiah to Jerusalem... excited to see what He would do to establish the kingdom of God on earth. This group was a messianic procession... and the man with no sight could feel their energy.

The blind man... perhaps brushed by someone's elbow... reached out and asked: "*Friend, what is happening? What is going on?*"

Luke 18:37

Imagine what Bartimaeus felt when he heard this news. (As we are about to see)... he HAD to have been familiar with Jesus. ... He must have heard the stories about the miracles that had been performed by the Lord. The lame walked... the deaf heard... the lepers were cured... the dead were raised... and the blind had their sight restored. ... Only the Messiah could do these things. ... He had to be God!

So... Bartimaeus' heart must have shifted into race-car speed... beating rapidly from excitement. He realized that a great opportunity for his life to be changed was within reach. Jesus was passing by!

Let me stop here for a moment. If you do not know the Lord... you have (right now) an opportunity for your life to be changed. Jesus is passing by! You have an opportunity for your eternal destiny to be changed from Hell to Heaven. ... Your sins can be forgiven by asking Christ to forgive you and by putting your faith in Him. ... Realize you won't always have this opportunity. When you die... (or Jesus returns) it will be gone. This is why Paul urged the lost to trust in the Lord now.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (ESV)

² For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

... **[P A U S E]** ... Bartimaeus was not going to blow this opportunity. He may have been blind... but not for long. He may have been blind... but he could clearly see the truth. ... You could say that he had blind comprehension. Notice what he did next.

Luke 18:38

When he heard the name "Jesus of Nazareth" he immediately called Him by His messianic title: "*Son of David*," heir to the throne of Israel. The title (Son of David) refers to God's promise to King David that he would have a descendant who would have an eternal throne and be the Messiah King. Bartimaeus believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

This man had good theology... in fact... better than most of the religious leaders of Israel... because “*Son of David*” meant that Jesus was the promised Messiah. - Bartimaeus was making a blatant messianic assertion.

Someone once bluntly asked blind and deaf Helen Keller: “*Isn’t it terrible to be blind?*” To which she responded: “*Better to be blind and see with your heart, than to have two good eyes and see nothing.*” ... So it was with Bartimaeus. ... Sometimes blindness has its benefits. ... He had a lot of time to think without visual distractions — time to develop the interior life and a contemplative spirit and to see with his heart. ... He thought about Christ and came to an exalted Biblical view of Him... realizing his own darkness and need and who Jesus was.

(Ironically) this blind man sees - in contrast to the disciples’ blindness.

Luke 18:39

The blind man is *desperate* for Jesus; he won’t be embarrassed... and he won’t be shut up. He knows who Jesus is and he wants Jesus!

Like a stubborn child... that will not obey his mother... the beggar did not quiet down. He got louder and cried the more. The word “**cried**” in this verse is from the word ***krazo {krad’-zo}***. This word is used to describe the cry of a raven. It means “to cry aloud, to shout or scream in an excited way.” ... It is in the imperfect tense... which means he screamed continually... “*Son of David - have mercy upon me!*” ... Jesus would never pass this way again. It was NOW or NEVER for Bartimaeus. So he kept on shouting... with a loud shrill voice that annoyed those who were around him.

When you get excited about seeking Jesus... there will always be some around who will try to discourage your enthusiasm for the Lord. ... (Can I get an “amen!” to that? Has it ever happened to anyone here...?) ... Buy the blind man did not let the hostile attitude of the crowd stop him.

We can learn a couple of things from what we read here.

First of all... (what we have just acknowledged) he reminds us that some people will hinder us from seeking the Lord’s help. They will try to get in our way. When you get excited about seeking Jesus... there will always be some folks around you who will try to discourage your enthusiasm for the Lord. The world tends to distance themselves from those folks who are seeking help from Christ. Society may talk much about compassion and love for their fellow man... but when Jesus enters the picture (or when His name is mentioned) they tend to get irritated and hostile.

Secondly... in spite of the opposition we face... we need to be persistent in crying out to the Lord for help. The beggar was not ashamed to seek Christ’s help and neither should we. We are to be dedicated in seeking the Lord in our life in spite of any opposition we may face. He may have been blind... but he could see. He had blind comprehension.

Thirdly... this beggar had a sense of urgency. He did not want to lose the opportunity to receive Christ’s help and blessings. Don’t waste your opportunities to get close to the Lord.

Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV)

¹³ You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Luke 18:40-41

Jesus heard maniacal shrieking in the distance and commanded his assistants to bring the beggar to Him. He could have walked to the man Himself, but perhaps Jesus wanted to use this opportunity to instruct His followers. By commanding them to bring the man... He gently rebuked their attempt to silence the needy. He probably told the very people who tried to silence him... to bring Bartimaeus over to Him.

Jesus reveals Himself throughout the Gospels to be not only very powerful but also very merciful. His heart is constantly going out to people in need. So also here... *even though He Himself is approaching the cross!* He takes the time to be interrupted... stands still... and interacts with him.

(Now)... if you were in the adult Sunday School class last week... you already know *why* Jesus asked such an obvious question. Jesus – and everyone else who was there – knew what the blind man wanted? He's blind! What do you THINK he would want? ... So why did Jesus ask what may seem like such an **unnecessary** question?

Because Bartimaeus' response would reveal his heart. Would he ask for money (just like he would do all day long to everybody)? If so... then Bartimaeus would show that he saw Jesus as nothing more than having the ability to provide him with a temporary comfort (to satisfy an immediate hunger... which he will have again tomorrow.)

But Bartimaeus allowed Jesus to arouse *in him* a faith that saw Jesus as able to do much more than that. ... Jesus wanted him to express his need. He wanted Bartimaeus to articulate his need – because when we do that... our faith is aroused. God knows what you and I are going to ask Him for – **before we ever ask it**... But our faith is developed when we express it to

Him. Do you have a big God... or a little God. Do you ask Him for big things... or are you in the habit of asking Him only for smaller and more ordinary things that you can expect?

Luke 18:42-43

The sight of Bartimaeus was restored immediately. ... Meanwhile — let us not forget — the rich ruler that we looked at last week (who we are to contrast with Bartimaeus) - sat in his palace... counting his coins... contemplating the kingdom of God.

The contrast is obvious. One was poor and became rich... while the other was rich... and became eternally poor. One claimed no special merit and openly admitted his need. The other man lied about himself and bragged about his character. One man would not believe and went away very sad. The other believed in Jesus and followed Him with joy-filled songs of praise.

THREE FINAL TAKE-AWAYS and then we are done for today:

First... we must see our need. The man knew he was blind... and he articulated it—“Lord, I want to see.” Are you honest about your need? Are you blind to your sin? Are there truths in God’s Word that you don’t want to accept? Perhaps you are a Christian... and God has cauterized your eyes because you don’t like some of the hard passages of Scripture. You need to ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart.

Second... once you see your need... you need to see Who Jesus is. Are you asking too little from Him? He is “*the* Son of Man”... the awesome... glorious sovereign whom all peoples and all nations will worship and whose kingdom and dominion will never end.

Third... you need to PERSIST in crying out: "*Jesus... Son of David... have mercy on me!*" Seeing your need... seeing who Jesus really is... now cry out in faith: "*Have mercy on me!*"

Do you see yourself? ... Do you see Jesus? ... Do you call out to Him: "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me*"?