

Mark 8:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

Analysis

He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town—Jesus's personal touch (ἐπιλαβόμενος, epilabomenos, 'taking hold of') demonstrates compassionate guidance, leading one who cannot see. Removing him from the town may indicate avoiding public spectacle (note verse 26's command to silence) or escaping the unbelieving atmosphere that characterized Bethsaida (Matthew 11:21).

When he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him—The use of saliva (πτύσας, ptusas) appears in only three healing miracles (here, Mark 7:33, John 9:6). In ancient Near Eastern culture, saliva was thought to have curative properties, but Jesus transcends mere folk medicine. The combination of spittle and touch creates tangible contact points for faith. His question *ei ti blepeis* (εἰ τι βλέπεις, 'Do you see anything?') is unique—the only recorded instance where Jesus checks healing progress mid-miracle, emphasizing the pedagogical nature of this two-stage restoration.

Historical Context

In the Greco-Roman world, saliva was widely believed to possess healing properties, documented in medical texts by Pliny the Elder and Tacitus. Jewish law permitted healing actions on the Sabbath when life-threatening, though spitting

could render someone unclean. Jesus's methods engaged contemporary cultural categories while demonstrating power beyond natural remedies.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why might Jesus use physical means (touch, saliva) when He could heal with a word? What does this reveal about incarnational ministry?
2. How does Jesus's patient, incremental approach here contrast with our demand for immediate results in spiritual growth?
3. In what areas of life might God be asking you, 'Do you see anything yet?'— checking on spiritual perception still in progress?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐπιλαβόμενος τῆς χεῖρας τοῦ τυφλοῦ ἐξήγαγεν
And he took by the hand the blind man and led
G2532 G1949 G3588 G5495 G3588 G5185 G1806

αὐτόν ἔξω τῆς κώμης καὶ πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὅμματα
him out of the town And when he had spit on G3588 G1519 G3588 G3659
G846 G1854 G2968 G2532 G4429 G1905

αὐτόν ἐπιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτόν ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν Εἰ
him and put by the hand him he asked him G1487
G846 G2007 G5495 G846 G1905 G846

τι βλέπει
he saw
G5100 G991

Additional Cross-References

Mark 7:33 (Parallel theme): And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

Mark 5:23 (Parallel theme): And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

Isaiah 44:2 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

Isaiah 51:18 (Parallel theme): There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up.

Acts 9:8 (Parallel theme): And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.