

man who was blind from birth. While people had found their sight restored before, there'd never been a case of a person who had never had sight given it.

BKGRND: In the Jewish mindset, to have been born blind meant that someone had done something terrible. For clearly, for God to choose to create this boy blind would be a sign of an **"incomplete creation"**—likely due to a sin foresaw in him or seen in his parents.

JN 9.3-7 ~ *Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."* ⁶ *Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.*

EX: Could Jesus have healed him without the spit, the mud, and saliva? Could He have healed him without the washing in the pool of Siloam? Surely! But He didn't. And the reason is two-fold. He worked His hands in the mud like a potter in the clay: reforming and mimicking the very creative act of God of Adam in the Garden. He sent the man on a walk down to the water to wash in mimicry of the waters of baptism. And He did both on the Sabbath.

JN 9.14-16 ~ *Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."* ¹⁶ *Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.*

AP: Jesus was not afraid to stir the pot when necessary: to say the controversial but necessary thing. And we need to be better able and willing to do that. We need to conquer our fearful heart like the man born blind: *The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."* (**JN 9.30-33**)

CONCLUSION

It strikes us as odd that Jesus would spit in these three instances. But using His spit allowed for Him to do something He wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. With the **deaf man in Decapolis**, it allowed Him to **reach him where he was**—which stands as a reminder that God calls us to do the same: find unique and available ways to reach all people with that same old Gospel story. With His spit on the **blind man in Bethsaida**, He was able to **mirror the disciples' faith**—which stands as a reminder to us of the need for our faith to grow beyond that initial contact into full understanding, belief, and faith. And with His spit on **the man born blind in Jerusalem**, He was able to **stir the pot**—teach the hard lessons even to the people who didn't want to hear it.

JN 9.39-41 ~ *Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."* ⁴⁰ *Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?"* ⁴¹ *Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.*

INVITATION

#647 [TPCL-Jesus' Spit]
07/05/2025

Why'd Jesus Spit?

PC Pchd

MK 7.31-37; MK 8.22-26; JN 9.1-41

QUESTION: Why did Jesus spit?

TRN TO MK 7

INTRODUCTION

ILL—Cross Country Customs (more than half-my-life in TN, accustomed to local customs; working with people from MI had culture shock; "ma'am" is rude) It struck me as more than a little odd: **how can something considered "polite" be counted as "rude" just a few hundred miles north?**

But in fact, that's how customs go—try offering a **"peace symbol"** in Britain, and you'll be saying something VERY different! But there are some things that are nearly universally regarded as offensive—whether in America, China, or Ethiopia. **SOCIETY/Insulting Customs/Spitting on Someone – Universal Insult**

If you've ever had anyone spit on you, you remember it. In fact, there are several parts of the United States where being spit on is considered assault or even battery.

BACKGROUND

When studying the Bible, one of the most important things for us to do is also one of the most difficult. We need to take ourselves out of the equation. When we're studying the Bible, it's not a question of how something sounds to us or how something makes us feel. When we interact with the Bible, we're interacting with the very Word of God. So, the first thing we need to do is strip our own preconceptions and prejudices and attempt to encounter the Bible not where we are, but where and when it was written.

W.B. West was known for his lessons on **RV**. Much like Brian's classes these past several Wednesday's, his goal was not a 21st Century first interpretation, but a 1st Century first one. He'd often call for us to **"put on our 1st Century glasses"**—to read the Bible in the manner and society to which it was written. And Brethren, this isn't simply a good recommendation when studying Revelation, but when studying the other 65 books of the Bible, as well! For each of them is written by men in their own culture. And that culture can impact the meaning of the events they wrote about—or, in the case of the Gospels—the things that the people written about did!

Jesus and His disciples didn't live in the American culture. They lived in the 1st Century Judeo-Roman culture—a culture that was in the midst of its own daily shocks and upheavals. And as Jesus walked Judea—from Galilee to Jerusalem—He did things that are strange and shocking to us, but would have made complete sense to the people of the time. He would travel city to city—teaching and preaching: healing the sick and casting out evil spirits. And, three separate times, He spat.

Perhaps you've come across these passages: the three times that Jesus **"spat"** in His healings. Maybe you wondered **"why"**. Maybe you just ignored it. But today, we're going to look at the three times that Jesus spat—and in doing so, we're going to seek to understand why. **Why'd Jesus spit?**

BD1: The Deaf Man in Decapolis (MK 7.31-37) – Reaching Him Where He Was

JUDEA/Decapolis/History

Earlier in **MK 7**, we read of Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees—who insisted upon ritual cleanliness to prove a spiritual cleanliness. But Christ pointed out the flaws in their reasoning—that it's not dirt and grime that defiles a person, but ungodliness. And as if in response to this, two people would appear in the coming days: a Gentile woman and a deaf man with a speech impediment—both of whom would have been looked at cross-ways by the Jewish leadership of the time. With the Gentile woman, He healed her with a word. But for the deaf man, He did something different.

MK 7.31-33 ~ *Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³² And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue.*

EX: Jesus took this man off to the side, put His fingers into his ears, spit on His hands, and then touched his tongue. This seems more than a bit gross. **Why didn't He just speak the word like He did for the Gentile woman? Why didn't He just touch him like people were asking Him to? Why all the extra theatrics?**

Look back a bit at the Gentile woman. He spoke with her. He engaged with her. And from this, she showed sign of her faith. **How was the Decapolis man supposed to engage with Him?** He could see Him, but to the best of my knowledge, ASL was a few Millennia away. And so, Jesus **reaches him where he is**. He steps up and touches his broken ears; He spits and rests His hand within his tongue-tied mouth. He reached him how he could to help connect with the man and create the faith he needed to have in the Messiah kneeling in front of him.

MK 7.34 ~ *And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."* ³⁵ *And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.*

EX: In this small, private space, Jesus spoke a single Aramaic word: **"Ephphatha"—"be opened"**. I like to believe that this was the first word this man had heard in years—**"be opened"**. And his ears were opened. **"Be opened"**, and his mouth was opened. And once they were opened, he couldn't shut them again (despite Christ's call for them to keep it to themselves).

AP: Why'd Jesus spit? From the context, I believe it was because it allowed a man who could not otherwise encounter the message of the Messiah to experience it. Jesus spat because it allowed him to **reach the man where he was**. And Brethren, we're called to do the same, too! That's why we cannot just sit in our comfy pews and preach from our air-conditioned lecterns. Jesus took whatever opportunity he could have when he could to engage with people. And so did Paul!

ICR 9.19-23 ~ *For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.*

BD2: The Blind Man in Bethsaida (MK 8.22-26) – A Mirror of the Disciples Faith

Interestingly, Jesus performs two miracles that are recorded in Mark and nowhere else: one is the one we just read. And the other is one chapter later: *And they came to*

Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. (MK 8.22) Bethsaida doesn't exactly have the best reputation in Scripture. In fact, in **MT 11.21-24**, we see it's one of the cities spoke against in Jesus' **"Woes"** to the unrepentant cities. Perhaps that's the reason why we see that Jesus takes the man out of the city in the very next verse. But notice, again: we see Jesus spitting!

MK 8.23-24 ~ *And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴ And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking."*

EX: This passage is the cause of all manner of questions. At first glance, it sounds like Jesus' healing wasn't fully effective. After all, after Jesus spat on his eyes, his vision only appears to be partially restored. Some have argued that it was due to the incomplete faith of the man. Others have argued it was due to the influence of Bethsaida making the healing only partial. But this misses the context of the passage.

B.III.—Leaven of the Pharisees—MK 8.14-16 (forgot to bring bread; Jesus told them to be wary of the leaven of the Pharisees; they thought He was mad about the bread) *And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? (MK 8.17-18)* His frustration is that, despite His action on them, they were still not seeing Him for who He was. Their vision was not fully restored. Then, they come to Bethsaida, and Jesus sees a perfect illustration. Like the man in Bethsaida, they were blinded, spiritually. Then, Christ came and touched them and shared with them in the physical—and they began to see a bit, but still not perfectly.

MK 8.25-26 ~ *Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."*

If you have any doubt, look at the next section: Jesus asks the disciples if they truly see Him for who He is: *And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." (MK 8.28-29)*

AP: The disciples (or at least, Peter) took the lesson. Jesus had been performing works unknown and unseen before. And as He spat, He interacted in a real and physical way in a real and physical world. But they hadn't quite awoken to full vision despite all that He'd done. But that would begin to change here. And many of us are like that blind man and the disciples: only partly healed—only partly seeing. He was taken from Bethsaida and encouraged not to return. The disciples were encouraged something similar! For there is danger when young faith is exposed to disbelief. But Peter would come to encourage the disciples to grow in faith—to fully open their eyes!

2PT 3.17-18 ~ *You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

BD3: The Man Born Blind in Jerusalem (JN 9.1-41) – Stirring the Pot

We skip over to JN's gospel for our third and final example of the Lord spitting, and we find a very different (but no less powerful) example. In this case, we find Jesus coming up against the power of faulty philosophies. For, there, they find a