

Commentary Resource
Matthew 9:27–34
The New American Commentary
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(2) Giving Sight to the Blind: Hints of Danger (9:27–31)

9:27 Matthew illustrates yet another category of illness Jesus can overcome. Isaiah 35:5–6 predicts the healing of the blind and deaf mutes in the messianic age. This passage is unparalleled in Mark and Luke but closely parallel to Matt 20:29–34, which is paralleled in the other Synoptics. Matthew’s account here is thus often viewed as a “doublet,” created by Matthew to reinforce the theme of the more well-attested episode. But Jesus frequently healed the blind (11:5); it would be natural for Matthew as a storyteller to use similar wording where events were similar, and there are significant differences between 9:27–31 and 20:29–34. So the two accounts should be taken to reflect distinct events in Jesus’ ministry. The blind men appeal for Jesus’ compassion by addressing him with the uniquely Jewish title “Son of David” (see comments under 1:1). It is interesting, though, that in Matthew such recognition comes primarily from blind people and Gentiles (viewed by many as spiritually blind).⁷² Matthew’s twin themes of Jesus’ rejection by official Judaism and acceptance by outcasts (see comments under 2:1–12) reappear here and set the stage for an increasing polarization of response to Christ.

9:28 As in vv. 23–25, Jesus performs a healing in private, away from the crowds. As in v. 22, he initiates a conversation designed to stretch the faith of these men. As he has in 8:2, Matthew centers attention on Jesus’ “ability” to heal.

9:29–31 “According to your faith” means *in response to not in proportion to their faith*. The blind men receive their sight. At this point Matthew retains the messianic secret motif (or at least Jesus’ injunction to silence), which is probably explained by and prepares the reader for the hostility Jesus will experience in v. 34. But his warning goes unheeded, and, as in v. 26, the news spreads. “Warned ... sternly,” from *embrimaomai*, could almost be rendered *snorted* and suggests an emotional outburst, probably stemming from “the intensity of Jesus’ desire to avoid winning an inadequate or falsely based loyalty.”⁷³

(3) Giving Speech to the Mute: Sharp Division (9:32–34)

9:32–33 The third miracle in this final series of healings involves a demonization causing a particular malady. *Kophos* (“A man who ... could not talk”) can refer to one who is either deaf or dumb or both. As noted under 4:24, such language does not imply that all similar illnesses were believed to be caused by demon possession. The passage is another uniquely Matthean “doublet” of similar material (cf. 12:22–24) but again most likely reflects a separate incident from the life of Christ. As at the end of the first series of miracles (8:14–17), this final narrative is so abbreviated as to focus more on Matthew’s conclusion than on the miracle itself. This particular kind of exorcism leads the crowd to marvel at the uniqueness of Jesus’ authority (v. 33b). For Matthew this marveling could just as easily refer to all of the miracles of chaps. 8–9 and could be parallel to the crowd’s marveling at Jesus’ authoritative teaching after his Sermon on the Mount (7:28–29).

9:34 An ominous countercharge mars Jesus’ reception. This charge will be elaborated and Jesus will respond to it in 12:24–37. Lines are beginning to be drawn. The majority still side with Christ at least superficially. By the end of Matthew’s Gospel, the majority will oppose him. Two possible relationships between faith and miracles have been illustrated. Sometimes faith can produce a miracle. Sometimes a miracle can produce faith. Verse 34 proves that no one can predict what will happen in any given situation.¹

⁷² See esp. J. M. Gibbs, “Purpose and Pattern in Matthew’s Use of the Title ‘Son of David,’ ” *NTS* 10 (1963–64): 446–64.

⁷³ Hill, *Matthew*, 180–81. Cf. also A. Sand, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1986), 204, who sees the rationale as one of avoiding turning the person of Jesus into a spectacle instead of service for a suffering people.

¹ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 162–164.