

Mark Chapter 8

Verses 1-9: Jesus again feeds a multitude. There are similarities with the account (in 6:44), but also important differences.

Mark 8:1 "In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples [unto him], and saith unto them,"

“Multitude being very great”: Probably because of the widespread report of Jesus’ healing of the deaf and mute man (7:36).

This seems like a repetition of the story (in chapter 6); but if you notice the details carefully, you will see this was two different occasions. We know this multitude was following the Lord, because of the man who was healed of deafness and had his tongue loosed so he could speak.

Mark 8:2 "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:"

“I have compassion”: Only here and in the parallel passage (Matt. 15:32), did Jesus use this word of Himself. When he fed the 5,000, Jesus expressed “compassion” for the people’s lost spiritual condition (6:34). Here, He expressed “compassion” for the people’s physical needs (Matt. 6:8, 32). Jesus could empathize with their hunger, having experienced it Himself (Matt. 4:2).

“Been with me three days”: This reflects the crowd’s eagerness to hear Jesus’ teaching and experience His healings (Matt. 15:30). That they were with Him for that time before the miraculous feeding distinguishes this event from the earlier feeding of the 5,000. In which the crowd gathered, ate, and dispersed in one day (Matt. 14:14-15, 22-23).

We could take a lesson from these followers of Jesus. They had been with Him three days listening and learning and many receiving healing. They seemed to have no regard for food or welfare, as long as they could be with the Master. It appears they could have been fasting for three days and nights. They were possibly, afraid to leave, because they might miss a blessing.

Mark 8:3 "And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far."

“Diver” means “some”.

The Lord Jesus we see, was impressed with such faithfulness and cared that they might faint along the way. It appears that the fame of Jesus was so widespread that many of these people had come from faraway places.

Mark 8:4 "And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these [men] with bread here in the wilderness?"

“Whence can a man satisfy these men with bread”: Some find the disciples’ question incredible in light of the earlier feeding of the 5,000. But it was consistent with their spiritual dullness and lack of understanding (14:21; 6:52).

“Here in the wilderness”: The Decapolis (see note on 5:20), region was not as heavily populated as Galilee.

The disciples had still not grasped the miracle of the earlier feeding (6:52). They were unable to imagine what Jesus could do now.

The disciples forgot so quickly. This was another incident. This was not the first incident with the five loaves. Possibly, the point to be made here was that God always supplies our needs (not our wants), if we are His followers. Perhaps this questioning from the disciples was to drive home a point about just how great this miracle was.

The Lord is always caring for His followers, but each of us can look back and pinpoint a time when His care was more obvious than at other times. In the prayer the Lord Jesus taught the disciples it says "Give us this day our daily bread".

You see, the miracle provision is not for just one particular time, but is always available when we are totally concentrated upon the Lord. Perhaps, the mention of this type of miracle (so close to the same miracle a few lessons back), was to show God's continued concern for our necessities.

Mark 8:5 "And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven."

“Loaves”: Flat cakes of bread which could easily be broken into smaller pieces.

It really doesn't matter how many they started with. The Lord could multiply even one into any amount He desired.

Mark 8:6 "And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before [them]; and they did set [them] before the people."

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell of the 5,000 fed with the five loaves and two fishes. Matthew and Mark tell of the 4,000 fed. These are definitely two separate times. Several things were different in detail. In the first where the 5000 men were fed, started with five loaves of bread and two fishes and wound up with leftovers of twelve baskets full.

Mark 8:7 "And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before [them]."

Not only were the fishes few, but Mark stresses that they were also small.

Mark 8:8 "So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken [meat] that was left seven baskets."

“Seven baskets”: Not the same baskets mentioned in the feeding of the 5,000 (6:43). Those were small baskets, commonly used by the Jewish people to hold one or two meals when traveling. The word here refers to large baskets (large enough to hold a man Acts 9:25), used by Gentiles. What was done with the leftover food is not mentioned. It was likely given back to the people to sustain them on their trip home, since the disciples evidently did not take it with them (verse 14).

Mark 8:9 "And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away."

“Four thousand: The number of the men only, not including the women and children (Matt. 15:38). This could indicate at least 16,000 people.

When the 4000 were fed, there were seven loaves and a few fishes and seven baskets full were left. We see that the Lord is not confined to one miracle of a kind. The amazing thing to me, is how quickly the disciples forgot.

Verses 10-13: Jesus declines to satisfy the demands for a “sign” (i.e., proof of His messiahship).

Mark 8:10 "And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha."

“Dalmanutha” This location is not mentioned in any secular literature and only mentioned here in the New Testament. The location is unknown, but clearly in the region near Magdala (Matt. 15:39, Magadan).

Recent archeological work in the area, when the water level of Galilee was at an all-time low; revealed several heretofore unknown anchorages. One small harbor has been found between Magadala and Capernaum which may be Dalmanutha.

Out of all of these disciples with Him, perhaps one had a boat standing by for just this use: when He finished ministering to the people. Many times He would go aside with the disciples. These were the times He taught the disciples about the things they did not understand.

Mark 8:11 "And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him."

“Pharisees” (see notes on 2:16; Matt. 3:7).

“Sign from heaven”: The skeptical Pharisees demanded further miraculous proof of Jesus’ messianic claims. Not content with the countless miracles He had performed on earth, they demanded some sort of astronomical miracle.

Having already given them more than enough proof, Jesus refused to accommodate their spiritual blindness. The supreme sign verifying His claim to be Son of God and Messiah was to be His resurrection (Matt. 12:39-40).

These Pharisees were evidently not interested in Jesus' message. They sought rather to satisfy their own curiosity, or perhaps to gather further evidence against Him on the supposition that His work was of demonic origin (3:22).

We see by this that the miracles Jesus had done throughout the land were still not proof enough for these Pharisees to make them believe He was the Son of God. Whatever He had done would not have been enough, no matter how great the miracle.

Mark 8:12 "And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation."

"Generation" refers to those Jews living at that time. "This generation" carries a derogatory sense because this particular generation of Jews has rejected Jesus as their Messiah; despite all the evidence provide them.

In (Matthew 16:4), they were not only called wicked, but adulterous, as well. It grieved Jesus deeply that they did not believe Him. There had already been signs enough. Jesus told them again that no other sign would be given.

Mark 8:13 "And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side."

"The other side": To the northeast shore, where Bethsaida was located (verse 22).

There was no need to stay there and argue with these people who would never believe, so He left.

Verses 14-21: Jesus challenges the "disciples" to deeper discernment. The disciples apparently failed to realize from the feeding of the "five thousand" (6:30-44), and from the feeding of the "four thousand" that Jesus can certainly provide for their needs.

Mark 8:14-15 "Now [the disciples] had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf." "And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and [of] the leaven of Herod."

"Charged" means "ordered" (see also 5:43; 7:36; 9:9).

"Leaven of the Pharisees and ... Herod": "Leaven" in the New Testament is an illustration of influence (see note on Matt. 13:33), and most often symbolizes the evil influence of sin. The "leaven" of the Pharisees included both their false teaching (Matt. 16:12), and their hypocritical behavior (Luke 12:1); the "leaven of Herod Antipas was his immoral, corrupt conduct (6:17-29).

The Pharisees and the Herodians were allied against Christ (3:6).

Crossing by ship would take a good little while, and the disciples would, perhaps, become hungry in the crossing. There was no major food problem, however, because they would be able to get food on the other side. The Lord was not warning about food, but not to get involved in the false doctrine of the Pharisees.

Mark 8:16 "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, [It is] because we have no bread."

The disciples miss the point totally.

Can you believe that they could ever be concerned about lack of bread again when they had seen the miracle of the multiplied bread twice already?

Verses 17-21: Jesus is often portrayed as the gentle, patient Teacher. Here He barrages His followers with a battery of queries worthy of a prosecuting attorney.

Mark 8:17 "And when Jesus knew [it], he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?"

“Why reason ye ... no bread?” Jesus’ question rebuked the disciples for completely missing His point (see note on verse 15). He was concerned with spiritual truth, not mundane physical matters.

“Heart yet hardened”: I.e., they were rebellious, spiritually insensitive, and unable to understand spiritual truth 3:5; 6:52).

This was actually a scold from Jesus. He knew what they were thinking. They were worried about feeding their own bodies. He said; will you ever realize that I will provide your needs?

Verses 18-21: Jesus’ 5 questions further rebuked the disciples for their hardness of heart, and also reminded them of His ability to provide anything they might lack.

Mark 8:18-21 "Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?" "When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve." "And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven." "And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?"

If there ever was a doubt that Jesus miraculously fed two different groups, there should be no doubt after verses 19 and 20. This was a very good question He asked them in verse 21. It is

almost unbelievable that they were there for both miracles and still did not believe that He would take care of their needs.

They had their eyes so fixed on their physical needs that they mistook the leaven of the Pharisees for bread that had yeast. The physical meaning of leaven is yeast, but the spiritual meaning is evil doctrine. The Pharisees had not been worried about the needs of the disciples up to this point. My question is; why did the disciples think these Pharisees would give them bread now?

We, like the disciples, must look for and understand the spiritual, and not be so concerned about the physical.

Mark Chapter 8 Questions

1. In verse 1, Jesus saw that the multitude was great and that they had no _____.
2. Why was this multitude following Jesus?
3. How many days had they been there?
4. Why did Jesus not send them to their own homes?
5. What lesson can Christians today learn from this?
6. What impressed Jesus about these people?
7. What ridiculous question did the disciples ask Jesus?
8. If we are followers of the Lord Jesus, He will supply our _____ not our _____.
9. How many loaves did they have?
10. What two things did Jesus do before passing the food to the disciples?
11. How many baskets of leftovers did they pick up?
12. How many were fed?
13. Which Gospels tell of feeding the 5000?
14. Which Gospels tell of feeding the 4000?
15. What was the same area as Dalmanutha?

16. How did Jesus get there?
17. Who came forth and began to question Jesus?
18. What did they want?
19. How did Jesus feel about this?
20. Did He grant their wish?
21. What were these Pharisees called besides wicked?
22. What had the disciples forgotten to take with them?
23. What did Jesus tell the disciples to beware of?
24. What is leaven in this Scripture?
25. What did the disciples reason among themselves?
26. What did Jesus say had happened to their hearts?
27. What question did Jesus ask that we might ask, also?
28. Why did they not understand?
29. What is the author's question about the bread?
30. What must we learn to concentrate more on?