

8. More Loaves and Fish, Yeast of the Pharisees, His Impending Rejection, and “Take up My Cross”

Mark 8 opens with another miracle of loaves and fish. Mark recorded the first in Mark 6:33-44. It was after this first miracle, where Jesus had created enough to feed, a group of 5,000 men (Woman and children were not included.), that he had questioned the disciples’ faith. Mark 6:50-52 records the incident:

Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." 51 Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, 52 for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

In spite of being eyewitnesses to his power, they failed to believe and understand. The lesson of Mark 6 is repeated in Mark 8.

Another Miracle of the Loaves and Fish

Mark 8:1-10

8 During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 2 "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. 3 If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

4 His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

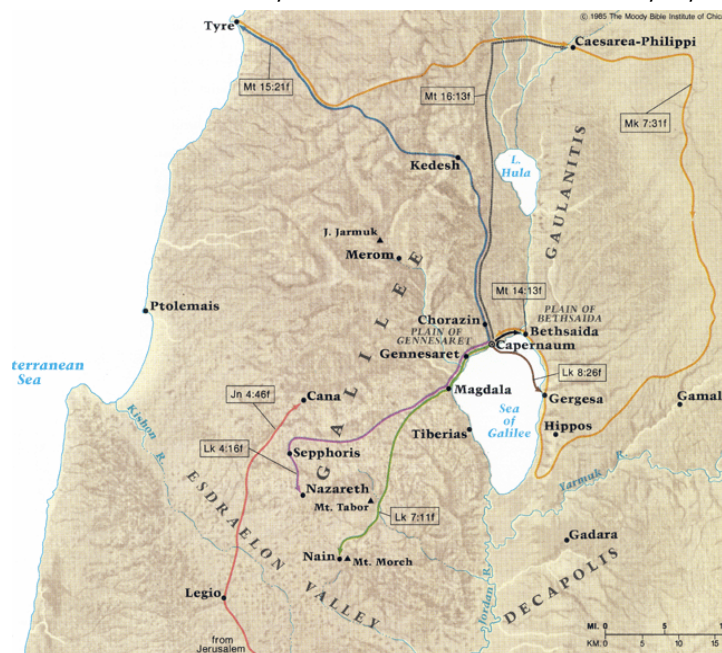
5 "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.

"Seven," they replied.

6 He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. 7 They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. 8 The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 9 About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, 10 he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

Mark uses the word *compassion* in regard to Jesus 6 times. Paul charges us to emulate Jesus and put on compassion in Col 3:12-14:

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have



against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Once again, the disciples are bewildered, as Jesus repeats the miracle, feeding a multitude which included 4,000 men. After this, they departed for the region of Dalmanutha—a region with no other historical reference. However, one might assume that this was the region on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee; for Matt 15:39—a parallel passage reports that they left for Magadan, a city on that coast: “9 After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.” Without Biblical or historical proof, some think Magadan was the home of Mary Magdalene, saying that Magadan was Magdala.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Herod

Mark 8:11-13

11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. 12 He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it." 13 Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

Jesus did not do miracles on demand. On this and other occasions, the Jews tested him asking for signs. Even at his death, Jesus did not oblige them. For example, Herod sought a sign in Luke 23:8:

8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle.

Jesus himself claimed the power to command powerful signs in Matt 26:53-54:

53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?

Those who crucified him taunted him in Matt 27:40:

40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

Of course, Christ would not ever oblige a challenge that caused him to go against the will of the Father. In 1 Cor 1:22-25, Paul wrote:

22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

To fulfill the scriptures, Jesus did nothing to avoid his humiliating destiny.

Mark 8:14-21:

14 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. 15 "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."

16 They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."

17 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many

basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"

"Twelve," they replied.

20 "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"

They answered, "Seven."

21 He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

This passage offers a contrast between the Lord's warning about the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod and the disciples being concerned for bread that they might eat. Matthew offers a more sequential account of this discussion in Matt 16:5-12:

5 When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. 6 "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

7 They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."

8 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? 9 Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 11 How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Herod is used in Mark's account because of the Herodians, a political party supporting Herod, who were seeking to kill Jesus from the beginning in Mark 3:6: "6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus." Political philosophy and false religions often will align themselves to attack Christ and his Church.

A Blind Man Healed

Mark 8:22-26

22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

24 He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village."

This miracle speaks for itself; but skeptics often use it to claim that the spit had medicinal value as they try to destroy the miraculous nature of the miracles of the Lord.

"You are the Christ"

Mark 8:27-30

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

28 *They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."*

29 *"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"*

Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

30 *Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.*

Once again, Matthew's account of this episode is more specific than Mark's account. In Matt 16:13-20:

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Jesus Teaches about His Impending Rejection

Mark 8:31-33

31 *He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.*

32 *He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.*

33 *But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."*

This is the beginning of Jesus teaching about his death, burial, and resurrection. Later, Paul will describe these events retrospectively as the very elements of the gospel (good news) about Christ. In 1 Cor 15:3-5, Paul wrote:

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

Peter, who apparently did not like the idea of the Lord's sacrifice, rebuked him. At that, Jesus rebuked Peter, calling him Satan. The power of the Lord is evident, because even archangels' did not rebuke Satan. Jude 9-10 states:

9 But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Jesus had established his power over Satan at the time of his temptations, rebuking him with scriptures three times in Matt 4.

Disciples Must Take up His Cross

Mark 8:34-38

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Mark 8 ends with Jesus giving the standard for discipleship. To go with Jesus, then and now, one must:

- Deny ones self, take up his cross, and follow him.
- Lose his life for the Lord and the Gospel.
- Not be ashamed of the Lord and his words.

Two questions should haunt ever one not a Christians: What good is it to gain the world and lose ones soul? What will a man exchange for his soul?

Finally, if we are ashamed of the Lord before the horrible generation in which we live, we will be ashamed of us before the father. An eternal principle prevails as stated in Luke 12:8-10:

8 "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. 9 But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.