

The Gospel of *Mark*

The Servant Leadership of Jesus

The Servant's Ministry in and around Galilee (cont) (1:14 – 9:50)

A Period of Withdrawal: *Jesus Feeds Thousands* (6:30-44)

30-31 The apostles returned from their two-by-two ministry trips ^{v.6b-13} to eagerly share their stories. With many people around and so much happening, Jesus & His apostles had not even eaten ^{Mark 3:20}, so Jesus invited His weary and hungry apostles to go with Him to a “quiet place and get some rest”.

Mark is the only gospel that documents this interaction between Jesus and His apostles. ^{v.30-31}

32-34 Jesus and the Twelve went in a boat ^{Mark 5:2} some distance east to be alone, but many in the crowd followed them along the water's edge and others came to join with them. When they landed, Jesus had compassion on the many people and began to teach, in spite of His fatigue and hunger.

Jesus used an OT image (“sheep without a shepherd” ^{Numbers 27:15-17, 1 Kings 22:17, Ezekiel 34:1-6}) to describe the Jewish crowds who were following Him around ^{Matthew 9:35-38}.

35-36 It was approaching evening and they were a good distance from any town. Using their common sense (earthly wisdom), the apostles went to Jesus and told Him to send the crowd away so that they could go to the local villages and find some food for “themselves”.

37-38 In response to the apostles' “suggestion”, Jesus told them “you give them something to eat”. The Twelve replied to Jesus that it would take more than eight months of a man's wages to buy bread for them all (and even that would provide very little for each ^{John 6:7}) ^{Psalms 78:19}. Jesus asked the apostles how many loaves of bread they had, to which they responded “five – and two fish”.

The Greek translated “eight months of a man's wages” literally means “two hundred denarii”.

In John's gospel, he added that “the five small barley loaves and two small fish” came from a boy who was found in the crowd by Andrew (Peter's brother) ^{John 6:8-9}. The boy's lunch?

39-43 With order and calmness, Jesus directed the people to sit down. Jesus then held the five and two, while He thanked His Father in heaven and appealed for His blessing. Placing the divided bread and fish in some baskets, He told His disciples to distribute the food. Miraculously, God multiplied the food, so that everyone ate their fill ^{Ezekiel 34:23-31}, and there were twelve basketfuls of leftover bread.

Mark is the only account stating Jesus told them to sit down in the “green” grass ^{Psalm 23:1-2}.

Jesus also instructed them to sit in groups of hundreds & fifties – similar to Jewish festivals.

Jesus often prayed to His Father in heaven ^{Matthew 6:9} by looking up ^{Mark 7:33-35, John 11:41-42, 17:1}.

Was the number of leftover baskets being the same as the number of apostles a coincidence?

Jesus’ supernatural feedings of thousands ^{Mark 8:1-9} was foreshadowed by Elisha ^{2 Kings 4:42-44}.

44 According to all four gospels, a total of 5 thousand men had eaten ^{Matthew 14:21, Luke 9:14, John 6:10b}.

Matthew adds “besides women and children”. So the total fed was probably 10-15 thousand.

This miraculous feeding of five thousand by Jesus was undoubtedly the foundation for His famous discourse on the bread of life ^{John 6:22-71}. Within this teaching was Jesus’ assertion:

“I am the bread of life.” This was the first of His seven “I am” statements: “bread” ^{John 6:35}, “light” ^{John 8:12}, “gate” ^{John 10:9}, “good shepherd” ^{John 10:11}, “resurrection and the life” ^{John 11:25}, “the way and the truth and the life” ^{John 14:6} and “vine” ^{John 15:5}.

A Period of Withdrawal: *Jesus Walks on the Water* (6:45-52)

45-46 As soon as the miraculous meal was finished, Jesus sent His disciples in the boat ahead of Him to Bethsaida ^{Matthew 11:21}, and He went to a quiet place up on a mountainside in order to pray alone.

Jesus’ favorite place was on a mountainside when He wanted to pray ^{Matthew 26:36, Luke 6:12}, but also to teach/heal ^{Matthew 5:1-2, 15:29}, worship ^{Matthew 17:1-5} and to appoint His apostles ^{Mark 3:13-19}.

What/who do you suppose Jesus was praying about/for? John explained one thing Jesus was praying ^{John 6:14-15}. Paul ^{Romans 8:24, Hebrews 7:25} & John ^{John 17:9,20} spoke of another prayer focus.

47-51a Early in the night, Jesus walked along the shore to catch up with His apostles. After a time, Jesus spotted the apostles in the boat, and they were working hard against the wind that was blowing them out toward the center of the lake ^{Matthew 14:24}. Early the next morning, Jesus walked on the water (the Greek words imply an unhindered walk) toward the boat. At first, His disciples did not recognize Him. Thinking He was a ghost, they became terrified ^{Luke 24:37}. Jesus spoke to them with words of encouragement, got into the boat and the wind immediately became calm ^{Mark 4:39}.

The Greek word “straining” (*basanizō*) also means “tormented” ^{2 Peter 2:8} or “tortured” ^{Mark 5:7}, indicating they were not only struggling physically against the storm, but also spiritually.

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Matthew stated that Jesus' walk took place in the fourth watch of the night ^{Matthew 14:25}.

This is a Roman (Mark's main target audience) way of describing the night times, with the first watch: 6-9 pm; the second: 9-midnight; the third: midnight-3 am and the fourth: 3-6 am. Conversely, the Jews divided the night into three watches: 6-10 pm; 10 pm–2 am and 2-6 am.

Here and elsewhere, Jesus used the words "Take courage!" ^{Matthew 9:2, 22, John 16:33, Acts 23:11}

("Take heart!") or "Do not be afraid!" ^{Matthew 17:7, 28:10, Mark 5:36, Luke 5:10, Revelation 1:17} to encourage and quiet the hearts of people who were in fearful or apprehensive situations.

Jesus' statement "It is I." is literally "I am.", which clearly identified Him as the Lord ^{Exodus 3:14}.

Matthew is the only gospel writer who includes this part of the story ^{Matthew 14:28-31}:

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," [Jesus] said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately

Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

Peter was able to do a miraculous thing (walk on water) as long as his eyes were on Jesus, but when he changed his focus to the wind (situation), he began to "sink" ^{1 Kings 17:1 – 19:18}.

As mentioned in the study introduction, many scholars believe this gospel, written by Mark, was actually from the first-hand knowledge of Peter. Perhaps the story about Peter's partially successful walk on water was left out of Mark because of Peter's embarrassment (?).

51b-52 The disciples were "amazed", because their hearts/minds had not yet understood the miracles.

Had the apostles fully appreciated Jesus as God from the earlier miraculous feeding (as well as the many other miracles), then they would not have been amazed at His walking on water. Also a common problem among believers today, who many times are amazed and/or terrified when they experience a miracle even though they claim that Jesus is the Son of God.

Not only were the apostles having great trouble accepting the supernatural nature of Jesus, they were also struggling with separating themselves in heart attitude ^{Mark 8:17-21} from the stubborn hearts of the Jewish leaders ^{Mark 3:5, John 12:39-40}.

A Period of Withdrawal: *Jesus Heals Many on the Western Shore* (6:53-56)

53-56 They continued southeast down the coast of the Sea of Galilee to the town of Gennesaret.

Immediately upon going ashore, they were inundated by people hurriedly bringing the sick to Jesus for healing. Jesus healed all who were able to touch His body ^{Matthew 20:34} or His clothes ^{Mark 5:25-34}.

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