

# 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 a Second Crowd of Thousands* (8:1-9a)

All 4 Gospels record the feeding of 5,000, but only Matthew <sup>15:32-38</sup> and Mark record this event.

**1-3** For a second time <sup>Mark 6:34-44</sup>, the thousands who came to Jesus were eventually out of food.

Jesus told the disciples of His "compassion for the people", because they were hungry. He did not send them away, because many traveled a long way to see Him and they would not make it home.

Jesus had cured a deaf-mute in the region of the Decapolis <sup>Mark 7:31-37</sup>. In Matthew's account, he stated that Jesus then went up on a mountainside, where He healed many <sup>Matthew 15:29b-31</sup>; therefore, it seems clear they were still in the mainly Gentile area east of the Sea of Galilee.

While Jesus was clearly very compassionate and often spoke of His compassion for both spiritual and physical healing <sup>Matthew 9:36, 14:14, 20:34, Mark 1:41, 6:34</sup>. This situation <sup>v.2 and Matthew 15:32</sup> is the only time His compassion for people's physical need for food was recorded in Scripture. Perhaps His empathy for their hunger resulted from remembering His own hunger <sup>Matthew 4:2</sup>.

Jesus' healings and teachings excited the people so much <sup>Matthew 15:31</sup> they lost track of time (3 days) and their hunger. In the previous feeding, they gathered, ate and left all in one day.

**4-9a** The disciples again responded to Jesus with: there is no place to get food <sup>Mark 6:35</sup>. Jesus asked the disciples how many loaves they had. After they responded, Jesus "gave thanks" for the "seven loaves" as well as a "few small fish", and instructed His disciples to "distribute them". The people "ate and were satisfied". Afterward, the disciples gathered seven basketfuls of broken pieces.

The baskets referred to here <sup>v.8, 20, Matthew 15:37, 16:10</sup> were very large baskets (big enough to hold a man <sup>Acts 9:25</sup>); whereas, the baskets in the previous story <sup>Mark 6:43, 8:19, Matthew 14:20, 16:9</sup> were much smaller baskets, used by the Jews to hold one or two meals when traveling.

As in the earlier miracle feeding <sup>Mark 6:44</sup>, only the number of men was noted: about 4000 <sup>v.9</sup>.

The first abundant food miracle was in a Jewish area <sup>Luke 9:10</sup>, this one was in Gentile region. Perhaps the two miracle feedings by Jesus <sup>Matthew 14:15-21, Mark 6:34-44 and Matthew 15:32-38, v.1-9a</sup> were done to illustrate He is the Bread of Life <sup>John 6:48-51</sup> for both the Jews and the Gentiles.

**A Period of Withdrawal: *Jesus Rebukes the Pharisees*** (8:9b-12)

**9b-10** Jesus sent the people home, then He and the disciples sailed across Galilee to Dalmanutha.

Matthew stated they went to Magadan <sup>Matthew 15:39</sup> (Magdala) (west shore of the Sea of Galilee). It is assumed that Dalmanutha, Magadan and Magdala are the same place or in the same area.

**11-12** In another example of their spiritual blindness, the Pharisees asked Jesus for a “heavenly” sign. Exasperated with the Jewish ‘scholars’, Jesus sighed <sup>Mark 7:34</sup> and refused to yield to their request.

Not satisfied with the innumerable miracles already performed by Jesus, the Pharisees asked for an astronomical “sign” to prove the Messianic ‘claims’ of Jesus. However, Jesus rejected their appeal, because of the spiritual blindness (unbelief) of the Jewish leaders <sup>Matthew 23:13-33</sup>.

Matthew’s account has several aspects that added substance for His Jewish target audience. Matthew mentioned (1) Sadducees came with the Pharisees <sup>Matthew 16:1</sup>, (2) Jesus said they had more weather insight than spiritual discernment <sup>Matthew 16:2-3</sup>, (3) Jesus used the modifiers “wicked and adulterous” to more clearly describe “generation” <sup>Matthew 16:4</sup> and (4) He added: no sign will be given “except the sign of Jonah” <sup>Matthew 16:4</sup> speaking of 3 days, then resurrection.

**A Period of Withdrawal: *Jesus Rebukes the Disciples*** (8:13-21)

**13-18** They sailed across the sea (toward Bethsaida <sup>v.22</sup>), with only one loaf of bread. The disciples thought Jesus was referring to this when He warned about the yeast of the Pharisees <sup>Luke 12:1</sup>, Herod. Knowing what the disciples were thinking, Jesus angrily asked them a series of 5 rhetorical questions.

Jesus confronted His disciples with queries indicating they had missed His message <sup>Isaiah 6:9</sup>. He was concerned with deeply important spiritual truths, not mundane physical matters. Jesus wanted the disciples to seriously think about who He really was/is in light of His having provided for every spiritual and physical need that had ever been brought before Him.

They only brought one loaf on their trip. What happened to the 7 huge baskets of bread <sup>v.8</sup>? Perhaps Jesus had His disciples give most of it to the people for their long journey home. <sup>v.2-3</sup>

Being devout Jews, the disciples knew yeast was symbolic for sin <sup>Exodus 12:15, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8</sup>. At times, Jesus used yeast to define specific sins (e.g., Pharisees’ yeast = hypocrisy <sup>Luke 12:1</sup>).

**19-21** Jesus continued with two more questions, but now expected His disciples to answer Him.

These inquiries were designed by Jesus to remind His disciples <sup>v.18</sup> about His two miraculous feedings of thousands of people, which not only provided enough for everyone to be satisfied, but also food above and beyond what was required <sup>Mark 6:42-43, 8:8, Matthew 14:20, 15:37</sup>. Jesus concluded with a final question to His disciples (and to Christians today) about whether or not they finally understood.

Jesus teaching compared His wonderful miracles, proving He was the Messiah, with the Pharisees' and Herod's desire to get rid of Jesus <sup>Mark 3:6</sup>, because of their sin (yeast) of false teaching <sup>Matthew 16:12</sup>, hypocritical behavior <sup>Luke 12:1</sup> and immoral, corrupt conduct <sup>Mark 6:17-29</sup>.

Thankfully, the conclusion of Matthew's version indicates the disciples were beginning to understand: "*Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*" <sup>Matthew 16:12</sup>.

Life is not just simply about bread for food (physical needs) <sup>Matthew 4:4 (Deuteronomy 8:3)</sup>, but has a much deeper significance in the the Bread of Life (spiritual needs) <sup>John 6:48-51, 1 Corinthians 11:23-24</sup>.

One final lesson: Jesus was emphasizing He is the provider God, not only does He meet every need <sup>Genesis 22:14, Deuteronomy 11:13-15, Jeremiah 33:9, Acts 14:15-17, Philippians 4:19</sup>, but He provides an over-abundance <sup>Job 36:31, Corinthians 9:8</sup> (as David proclaimed it: "my cup overflows" <sup>Psalms 23:5b</sup>).

### **A Period of Withdrawal: *Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida* (8:22-26)**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 miracles recorded only in Mark <sup>7:31-37</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 blind men healed <sup>Mark 10:46-52</sup>.

**22-24** At Bethsaida, "some people" brought a blind man and "begged Jesus to touch" <sup>Mark 5:23</sup> him.

He took the man outside the village, spit <sup>Mark 7:33</sup> on his eyes, touched him and asked what he saw.

The man could see images of moving "trees" ("people"), which indicated he was only partially healed.

Why did Jesus take the man "outside the village"? ...the hard hearts of Bethsaida? <sup>Luke 10:13-15</sup>

**25-26** Following the partial healing <sup>v.22-24</sup>, Jesus touched the man's eyes once more, and the man's sight was completely restored. Jesus instructed the man to not return to the village of Bethsaida.

Perhaps the 2-stage healing resulted from the step-wise growth of the man's faith <sup>Matthew 25:29</sup>.

Jesus' directive for the man to stay away from Bethsaida was possibly an example of His earlier command: "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces." <sup>Matthew 7:6</sup>

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