

them, He ordered these to be served as well. 8 And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. 9 And about four thousand were there; and He sent them away. 10 And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples, and came to the district of Dalmanutha.

Here again we have another miraculous **feeding miracle**, this one known as the **feeding of the four thousand**. This time it is not primarily Jews who are fed by Jesus but **rather Gentiles**. This is yet another lesson for the disciples that Jesus' **ministry** is to **extend beyond** the borders of **Israel** to a **Gentile** audience as well. **"1 In those days again, when there was a great multitude and they had nothing to eat, He called His disciples and said to them, 2 "I feel compassion for the multitude because they have remained with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat; 3 and if I send them away hungry to their home, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a distance."** Here Jesus expresses His **compassion** toward these **Gentile** people who have **sought Him** for some three days now in a desolate place. Jesus' question no doubt puts the disciples in that place again, where shall we get enough food? **"4 And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able to find enough to satisfy these men with bread here in a desolate place?"** Obviously, their response to Jesus is meant to provoke Him to lead with a miracle of feeding as before. **"5 And He was asking them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." 6 And He directed the multitude to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the multitude. 7 They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well."** Here again Jesus does an amazing miracle to feed the people. Out of seven loaves and a few small fish, Jesus feeds **"about four thousand people."** **"8 And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. 9 And about four thousand were there; and He sent them away."** This **second feeding miracle** is obviously distinguished from the former one, being described as four thousand and not five thousand. Mark shows these distinguishing facts on purpose, as he also explains that Jesus having left the **Decapolis** on the eastern shores of Galilee, will now return to Israel. **"10 And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples, and came to the district of Dalmanutha."** Edwards comments, *"This whole section of Mark from 7:24-8:9 is meant to show that Jesus brings His saving bread to the Gentiles as He had brought it earlier to the Jews. In these three vignettes, the Gentiles are seen as surprisingly receptive to the Word of God from Jesus. The journey to Tyre, Sidon and the Decapolis has shown that although*

*the Gentiles were ostracized by the Jews, they were not ostracized by God.”* **End quote.** This truth is highlighted by the fact that **Jesus** is having **conflict** with the **religious leaders** in **Israel** and the text is **bracketed** on both sides with an argument with the **Pharisees** who are vehemently opposing Jesus. As the story moves on, the conflict will increase and in the meantime **Jesus identity** will become more and more clear. Surely, He is the Son of God!

Now we come to another **section** of the **Gospel of Mark**. Up until now Mark has been recording the story of the **life** and **ministry** of **Jesus** which has shown Him to be who Mark said He was in the beginning, “**1:1 Jesus Christ the Son of God.**” We have seen ample **evidence** of the **deity** and also the **humanity** of **Jesus** in these pages so far. What an awesome and glorious Savior He is! In the following text, **8:11-10:52**, the **disciples** will **struggle** with the **question** of **who Jesus is** and what does it **mean** for Him to be the **Christ** or **Messiah**. In this section there will be **three conversations** (8:27-38, 9:30-37, 10:32-45) between Jesus and His disciples about **Jesus’ suffering** and **death**, and this will be very **difficult** for the disciples to grasp. They are blind to the fact that He will be a **Suffering Servant**. In this section of the story, the disciples are receiving intense training about Jesus, His Kingdom, and of course His ministry as the Messiah. The Lord will need to overcome their **earthly vision** and **blindness** of who and what the Messiah is and reveal to them the glorious **mystery** of the **Gospel**, that the Messiah has come to **suffer** and **die** for the **sins** of His **people**. We will also see a scene with the **Transfiguration** (9:1-13) where God will reveal **Jesus** in His glory as the **fulfilment** of the **Law** and **Prophets** and again visit the disciples with a **spoken voice** from Heaven exclaiming that Jesus is His Son (9:7). Thus this section of Mark is focused on the disciples and revelations about **who Jesus is** and **what it means** for Him to be the **Messiah**.

**Mark 8:11-13** - 11 And the Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. 12 And sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation." 13 And leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.

As Jesus has returned from His circuit up to **Tyre, Sidon**, and down through the **Decapolis** to the **Gentiles**, He has returned again to region of Galilee, in Dalmanutha. As soon as He arrives back in **His homeland** He is **confronted** by the **religious leaders**. “**11 And the Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him.**” Unlike the Gentiles from whom Jesus has just returned who were **praising God** on His account (Matt

15:31, Mark 7:37), the Jews immediately begin to **argue** with Him and question His power, and this Mark writes is “**to test Him.**” Here we see the incredible **blindness** of the **Pharisees** and their followers as to who Jesus is. After all that has happened and all that Jesus has done, they are testing Him and arguing with Him. See here in this part of Mark’s narrative how important the matter of response to Jesus is. There is a **right way** and a **wrong way** to **respond** to Jesus. The **Gentiles** are **receptive**, curious, astounded by Him and want to know and experience more of Him. The **religious leaders** and their followers are hard hearted, sneering and **skeptical**. This will become an important part of the teaching of the book, that one responds positively to Jesus and with **true saving faith**. As Jesus returns and meets the opposition of the Pharisees (and Matt 15 tells us that the Sadducees were here too), Jesus was moved emotionally. “**12 And sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."** Jesus is apparently **grieved** and **deeply saddened** about their response. After all the Lord has done for some 2000 years to shepherd Israel, and He finally arrives to bring salvation through His anointed King and Son, and they **reject Him** and put Him to the test. Isaiah’s words come to mind.

**Isaiah 65:2** - 2 "I have spread out My hands **all day long to a rebellious people**, Who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts, NASB

Or the words of John in chapter 1.

**John 1:11-13** - 11 **He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.** 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. NASB

To this rejection by His people, Jesus was “**12 sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign?"** The **signs** were everywhere and people had been flocking to Jesus and seen Him do thousands of miracles at will, yet these His own people demand a **sign**, not realizing that Jesus the incarnate Son of God is standing in their midst, who Himself was the ultimate **sign** from heaven. It is notable that Jesus indicts not only the leaders but the **entire generation**. MacArthur comments, “*Looking beyond just the Pharisees and the Sadducees who stood before him, the Lord indicted the entire generation of Israelites who follow their apostate teaching. Like their ancestors who fell into apostasy and persecuted the prophets, the Jews of Jesus day proved similarly faithless. Their willful rejection was such that no sign would convince them to believe. When confronted by the light they ran deeper into the shrouded gloom of their self-righteous traditions. There was therefore no reason for Jesus to perform*

*another miracle since it would have only compounded their guilt.*” **End quote.** To this **“evil and adulterous generation”** (Matt 16:4), the Lord responds, **“12 Truly I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation. 13 And leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.”** The tragic reality is that after such a popular and revealing ministry in Galilee, the Lord is sadly **rejected** by most of His **own community**. From here He will begin to move toward Judea and Jerusalem. During this time will be a series of **important lessons** for His **disciples**.

**Mark 8:14-21** - 14 And they had forgotten to take bread; and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. 15 And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." 16 And they began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread. 17 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? 18 "Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember, 19 when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." 20 "And when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to Him, "Seven." 21 And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

Even though the disciples had of course **responded** to Jesus in humble **faith**, yet they still lacked much **knowledge** about Him and their **role** as His disciples. Jesus followers, including us all, are often times focused on earthly realities, when the Lord seeks to give us **spiritual** light. **“14 And they had forgotten to take bread; and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. 15 And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”** Here the Lord simply tries to explain to them about the **destructive** spiritual influence of the **Pharisees** and their **hypocrisy** and legalistic system of works, as well as the **immoral** and depraved Roman influence of **Herod**. Leaven in Scripture is often used to describe **influence** as just a little **bit** of **yeast** can permeate a **large** amount of dough and cause it to rise, it made a good example of **spiritual influences** that produce **dramatic** effects. **“16 And they began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.”** Jesus seemed to be puzzled at their inability to understand. **“17 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? 18 "Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember, 19 when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him,**

Twelve." 20 "And when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to Him, "Seven." 21 And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?" Right before the disciples is Jesus who had just created meals for 4000 and 5000 people, and His disciples are concerned about where they will get bread to eat! See here a **valuable lesson** in following Christ and living in the **spiritual** and heavenly **Kingdom** of God. The true substance of our life and service to God is essentially **spiritual by nature** and we must concern ourselves with the more important and fundamental **spiritual realities** before we concern ourselves with the natural earthly situation. These things we **gradually learn** the importance of as we follow Jesus and learn His ways. The next part of the story, where Jesus **gradually heals** a blind man, will serve to illustrate how our growth in the knowledge and revelation of Jesus happens as He **personally** deals with each **one** of us.

**Mark 8:22-26** - 22 And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Him, and entreated Him to touch him. 23 And taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes, and laying His hands upon him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I am seeing them like trees, walking about." 25 Then again He laid His hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. 26 And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

Here we have a **miracle** by Jesus that gives **sight** to a **blind man**. Notice some important issues here. **First**, it happens between the narrative of the **blindness** of the **Pharisees** (8:11-13), the disciples not getting the **spiritual** lesson of **leaven** (8:14-21), and the hugely important text that follows about **Peter's revelation** and **confession** of Jesus as the **Messiah** and His **suffering, death** and **resurrection** (8:27-38). **Second**, it is a miracle that occurs in **stages**, that is his blindness is only **partially healed** at first and later completely restored. "**22 And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Him, and entreated Him to touch him.**" One important fact about Jesus' healing power, it was frequently delivered with a **personal touch** and we learn that the Lord did not keep His distance from hurting people but would frequently give them a personal touch and even **personal attention**. "**23 And taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes, and laying His hands upon him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?"**" Notice He brings the man out of the village for a **personal encounter**. Obviously, Jesus could have completely restored the man's blindness **immediately**, yet He doesn't and even stops to ask, "**do you see anything.**" Here we see an emphasis by the Holy Spirit in the text that this miracle

is **gradual** and causes us to ponder the meaning of it. When viewed in the **larger narrative** of the text it becomes clear that it is about Jesus giving **spiritual sight** and **revelation** to His **followers** about **who He is** and what it means for Him to be the **Messiah**. Every one of us Christians gains insight personally from Jesus and only gradually overtime do we come to a fuller meaning of the importance of **who He is** and the profoundly important issues of our eternal life in His Kingdom. Even as our **partial spiritual blindness** is gradually lifted overtime, so it is with this healing of the blind man. **“24 And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I am seeing them like trees, walking about." 25 Then again He laid His hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. 26 And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village.”** It really is a curious encounter and miracle indeed. Notice again Jesus tells the man not to even enter the village, obviously managing His popularity among the Jews until the **right time** has come for Him to be revealed in Jerusalem.

In the text that follows we see the **first conversation** that Jesus will have with the disciples as He **gradually reveals** to them what it truly means that He is the Christ and Son of God. This begins with the very important text about Peter’s confession.

**Mark 8:27-30** - 27 And Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." 29 And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "Thou art the Christ." 30 And He warned them to tell no one about Him.

**Caesarea Philippi** was north of Galilee and was primarily a **Gentile place** and here the disciples could learn important things without the distractions of the Jews and the religious leaders. It is here that Jesus will ask them a very important question as they come to **know Him** for **who He truly is**, and what that will mean for their life and relationship with Him. And so He brings them to consider this all important matter by first asking about the human opinion of who He is. **“27 And Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.”** Consider that up until now the disciples really haven’t realized that He is the **Anointed One**, the Promised Jewish **Messiah** of the **Old Testament** Scriptures. They have primarily known Jesus as a Rabbi and very powerful miracle worker, but it has yet to have really sunk in. People realize that **Jesus is more** than just a **Rabbi**, for no one could do the

miraculous things He does except the **prophets** of old. But Jesus now asks about the disciples own **personal knowledge** of who He is. **“29 And He continued by questioning them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to Him, “Thou art the Christ.”** The same account is given in Matthew 16:16-17.

**Matthew 16:16-17 - 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.** NASB

Now this is a substantial **confession** indeed, for Peter adds the important statement about Christ’s Deity, **“the Son of the living God.”** This was something that Jesus tells us doesn’t happen naturally by **“flesh and blood”** but rather is a divine revelation that is given by God, **“because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”** Of course, we know that such knowledge about Jesus is something that happens in **regeneration** and is a revelation given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:10-14, Eph 2:6-10). People only come to know the **true identity** of Christ and **believe** the Gospel with the **gift of saving faith** in regeneration, and this by the **Sovereign grace** of God in divine revelation.

**Ephesians 2:8-9 - 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast.** NASB

You see here that **God** Himself is **healing** the **blindness** of the disciples by **revealing** to them the reality of Christ’s **true identity**. Now that they have made the good confession, Jesus now **strictly warns** them not to go about publicly talking about Him as the Messiah but rather, **“30 And He warned them to tell no one about Him.”** One thing that would surely bring Jesus to the **forefront** of publicity and skepticism among the religious leaders was a **claim** to be the **Messiah**. This would also surely **speed up** the process of them **conspiring** to kill Him, He therefore sternly warns them **“tell no one about Him.”** Even though God has **healed** their **blindness** about His **identity**, some things will be harder to swallow, and for sure, **very hard to hear and see**. Remember His questions to them in 8:17-18, **“17 Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? 18 “Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?”**

**Mark 8:31-33 - 31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. 33 But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter, and said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.”**

Now of all the things that the **disciples thought** about the **Messiah**, the **last thing** they would have considered was that He would **suffer** and **die**. Like **all** the **Jews** of their day they were raised thinking the Messiah would come and **destroy** their **enemies**, establish His **global rule** in **Jerusalem**, **exalt** the nation of **Israel** above **all nations**, and bring them to **eternal prosperity**. Messiah was their champion, their deliverer, their mighty warrior and Divine King! And this of course was because the **Old Testament promises** all those things about the **Kingdom** of the **[Christ] Messiah**. Therefore, what Jesus has to tell them now is not only devastating but absolutely **bewildering** and **unbelievable**. “**31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And He was stating the matter plainly.**” Mark states, “**He began to teach them,**” obviously pointing to the fact that this would be a theme in His teaching moving forward. And how important it is, for the **death** and **resurrection** of the **Christ** is the most important matter of God’s work of **redemption** in human history. The “**Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.**” These things said Jesus “**must**” happen, they are not optional, that is, they are an **essential** part of the **divine plan**, the “**Christ must suffer... and be killed... and rise again!**” Surely this was horrifying for the disciples to hear and it didn’t fit into their understanding of the Messiah at all, but Jesus was, “**32 stating the matter plainly.**” So **startling** was this **idea** and these **words** from their beloved Rabbi, the One who heals all disease, calms the winds and the waves, and shows divine and sublime compassion to the hurting and oppressed, that Peter could **not swallow it**. Peter has just **identified** Jesus as the **Christ** and the very **Son of God**, but now he felt the great need to **correct** the **Master**, this could not happen. “**32 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.**” Peter’s **emotional attachment** to his **beloved Jesus** overtook his better sense of the situation. Mathew’s account gives us a little more insight.

**Matthew 16:21-22** - 21 From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. 22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, **"God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You."** NASB

Peter was **shocked** and **horrified** to hear it, and surely the **others** felt a similar way! But the **blindness** were going to have to **come off**, their **eyes** must be **opened**, and they must **accept** this important matter if they are going to be faithful disciples of Christ. But Peter’s rebuke of Jesus was a **serious transgression** indeed, even a possible temptation for **Jesus the Man**, who firmly tells Peter to get out of His