

WEEK 37

Mark 6:31-7:37 is parallel to Mark chapter 8

(5,000)	6:31-44	Feeding of the multitude	8:1-9	(4,000)
	6:45-56	Crossing the sea and landing	8:10	
	7:1-23	Conflict with the Pharisees	8:11-13	
	7:24-30	Conversation about bread	8:14-21	
(ears)	7:31-36	Healing	8:22-26	(eyes)
	7:37	Confession of faith	8:27-30	

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

Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?

... And don't you remember?" He said to them, "Do you still not understand?" – Mark 8:16-18, 20

Healing of the Ears

Healing of the Eyes

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." – Mark 8:29

Provision of Bread in the Decapolis | 8:1-10

- *The similarity of events and language between the feeding of this 4,000 and the feeding of the 5,000 (6:34-44) have caused some to question whether they were separate events.*
- *Support for ONE feeding story reported differently over time (like “Gossip” game).*
 - *All gospels record the feeding of the 5,000. This is the only miracle recorded by all 4 gospels other than the resurrection. Only Matthew and Mark record the feeding of the 4,000.*
 - *For example, how could the disciples have forgotten the first event so soon?*
 - *And where is Dalmanutha? We don’t know as this is the only reference. Some say it’s Magadan on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. But this would place Jesus on the wrong side of the lake.*
 - *Both narratives are situated in the wilderness (6:35, 8:4).*
 - *Both note the question “How many loaves do you have?” (6:38, 8:5)*
 - *Both repeat the command to recline using the same verb (6:39, 8:6)*
 - *Both initiate the meal with the giving of thanks (6:41, 8:6).*
 - *Both observe “They ate and were filled.” (6:42, 8:8)*
 - *And both conclude with dismissing the crowd followed by a journey in a boat (6:45, 8:9).*

Provision of Bread in the Decapolis | 8:1-10

- *Support for TWO feedings reported correctly as different events.*
 - *Details, vocabulary and location are quite different. With the 5,000, there were 12 baskets of fragments picked up. With the 4,000, there were 7. Crowd stays 1 day in the wilderness with the 5,000. With the 4,000, they stay 3 days. Number of loaves and fish are different. Those present are different. Jesus challenges the disciples with the 5,000. With the 4,000, Jesus takes the initiative.*
 - *Jesus reminds the disciples of both events in 8:19.*
 - *It would have been somewhat presumptuous for the disciples to conclude Jesus was again going to miraculously feed the multitude. Jesus was again asking “What do you intend to do?” Their incredulity in vs. 4 in context makes sense.*
 - *There is a temptation to compare this event with the 3-day preparation of the Israelites to see the Lord’s glory in Ex 19:10-11.*
- *Conclusion | There is no reason not to take the feeding of the 4,000 as a separate account. Mark clearly did.*

Provision of Bread in the Decapolis | 8:1-10

- *This feeding took place around the Sea of Galilee (7:31) in the region of Decapolis (league of 10 cities). Combined area of Jews and pagans.*
- *Three days would mean intensive teaching. Provisions are exhausted, some of even fasting.*
- *Jesus' compassion is motivated by need for teaching in 6:34 but by need for food in 8:2.*
 - *The solution to the first narrative (5,000) was teaching which Jesus initiated. 6:35-36 implies that the disciples interrupted Jesus' teaching to remind him of the need for dinner. His extensive challenges to them upon this interruption make sense if teaching is the great need.*
 - *Like Martha or Screwtape recollecting to Wormwood how he kept an atheist from reasoning towards Christianity by tempting him to go to lunch, do I overemphasize physical needs and schedules to the detriment of spiritual needs?*
 - *The solution to the second narrative (4,000) was food which Jesus initiated. Little challenge to the disciples as food really was the need.*

Provision of Bread in the Decapolis | 8:1-10

- *In both narratives, Jesus involves the disciples. Because in both cases Jesus considered their understanding of feeding of the people as necessary to their understanding his person.*
- *In both cases it is Jesus alone who can act on behalf of the people.*
- *Christ's miracles are more than proof of his Messiahship. They are singular statements that the Messiah is The One, the singular anointed representative before God of all mankind.*
- *The disciples begin to get this. In 6:37 they respond to Jesus' with disrespectful irony. In 8:4 their response turns the question back to Jesus "What are you going to do?" They have not yet arrived at the cleverness and faith of the Sidonian woman but may be on their way.*
- *This compressed narrative stresses the Messiah's satisfying the people with abundance. Since Augustine the feeding of 5,000 was assigned to Jews and the feeding of 4,000 to gentiles, though it was likely a mixed crowd. Mark's emphasis on the gentiles is irrefutable.*

Request for a Sign | 8:11-13

- This brief passage appears abruptly. Presence of the Pharisees indicates the western shore.
- Text implies an earlier discussion of signs which is here extended to “a sign from heaven.” It appears Mark intends to continue the controversy from 3:22-30.
- Here the Pharisees resume the debate which leads to a request for a sign.
 - The context for a sign is understandable from the OT (Duet 13:2-6, 18:18-22).
 - A “sign” seeks to guarantee the truthfulness of a prophet’s claim to speak for God. Here it would be a further prophecy to be fulfilled in a short period of time.
 - The same question is asked of the source of Jesus’ authority by the Jerusalem high priest, teachers and elders in 11:27-28.
 - It is not a request for a miracle. They had seen Christ’s miracles but regarded them as ambiguous without a validating prophetic sign fulfilled.
 - Hence the request for “a sign from heaven” not of miracles on earth. And hence the statement “To test him” or “To prove his prophetic credentials.”

The sighs of Jesus in Mark

1:41 “Jesus was indignant” OR “Jesus, filled with compassion”	σπλαγχνίζομαι <i>splanchnízomai</i> ; to have the bowels yearn, be moved with compassion (Mark 6:34, 8:2, 9:22 – only in gospels)
3:5 “Looked around in anger”	ὀργή <i>orgḗ</i> ; desire, violent passion; by implication punishment – indignation, vengeance (Rom 1:18, 2:5, Rev 19:15)
3:5 “And deeply distressed”	συλλυπέω <i>syllypéō</i> ; to afflict jointly, sorrow (on account of) someone; to affect with grief together; (only here)
7:34 “With a deep sigh”	στενάζω <i>stenázō</i> ; to be in straits, to sigh, murmur, pray inaudibly with grief (Rom 8:23, 2 Cor 5:2-4, Heb 13:17, James 5:9)
8:12 “He sighed deeply”	ἀναστενάζω <i>anastenázō</i> ; to draw sighs up from the bottom of the breast, to sigh deeply. (only here)
14:33 “Began to be deeply distressed”	ἐκθαμβέω <i>ekthambéō</i> ; to astonish utterly – affright, greatly (sore) amaze. (Mark 9:15, 16:5-6)
14:33 “And troubled”	ἀδημονέω <i>adēmonéō</i> ; to be overwhelmed to the point of loathing; to be in distress of mind, full of heaviness (Phil 2:26)
14:34 “Overwhelmed with sorrow”	περίλυπος <i>perilypos</i> ; grieved all around, intensely sad – exceeding sorrowful (Mark 6:26, Luke 18:23-24)

Request for a Sign | 8:11-13

- *Behind the demand for a sign was the prior conviction that Jesus' authority was demonic in origin and his works an expression of black magic.*
- *Hence the exasperation in Jesus' question "Why does this generation seek a sign?" which reflects the perverse unbelief of those who oppose God's grace (8:38, 9:19). Just like Moses experienced in the wilderness (Duet 32:5-20), Jesus experienced in his day.*
- *Jesus' absolute rejection of a sign is abbreviated in Mark but properly expanded in meaning to OT formula "May God do so to me and more if ever a sign is given to this generation!"*
- *Do not miss the violence of Christ against unbelief!*
 - *Christ is always ready to receive sinners on grounds of humility and belief. But his unrelenting opposition and judgment of unbelief is equal on the emotional scale.*
 - *This statement from Christ is more than resistance. It expresses Jesus' authority to judge.*

Request for a Sign | 8:11-13

- *To provide a sign would have been for Jesus to accept to be judged by scribal interpretation. Had he done so, the scribes would have invoked the sanctions of Duet 13:2-5 on the basis of their interpretations. The scribes' attempts to represent Christ within the confines and categories of their interpretations were wholly inadequate to contain his reality.*
- *Jesus was acting on the authority of the Spirit of God, not on the authority of man's interpretations. He had already declared such interpretations decayed and sterile (7:1-23). The call for a sign was to deny the summons to radical faith required by the gospel call.*
- *Jesus' abrupt departure gave visible expression to his indignation.*
- *The Pharisees had demonstrated the gospel remained hidden to them because of their rejection of the tokens of the Kingdom visible to them in Jesus' words and actions.*

Failure to Understand | 8:14-21

- *The reference to the one loaf in the boat ties these verses together with the prior account where Jesus returned to the lake leaving the Pharisees standing on the shore. In the abrupt departure, the disciples had forgotten to take bread.*
- *Jesus chose this opportunity to caution the disciples against “the leaven of the Pharisees” while the impact of the recent encounter was still fresh.*
- *The disciples only heard a reference to bread and began arguing. Their arguing indicated how completely absorbed they were in their temporal preoccupations.*
- *This earned Jesus’ sharp condemnation regarding a lack of understanding in men whose privileged position should have led them to perceive the truth of Jesus’ person.*
- *The Pharisees had asked for a sign with which to judge Jesus, when in fact their judgment had already been decided by God.*

Failure to Understand | 8:14-21

- *Jesus’ rebuke is a series of sober questions on the persistent blindness of the 12 (4:13, 40, 6:52, 7:18, 8:14-21). Repeated exposure to Jesus’ teaching and works had not led to reflection on their significance. The rebuke is not because they missed the leaven analogy, but because they failed to perceive the meaning of Jesus presence with them.*
- *The indignant questions concerning hardness of heart and blindness of spirit echo Israel in Isaiah 6:9-10 and refer to the distinction between the crowd and the disciples in 4:11-12.*
- *By Q&A Jesus leads disciples back to the two feedings. The disciples remember the precise facts perfectly. Nevertheless they fail to understand what had taken place.*
- *The feeding of the two multitudes as Jesus’ other miracles and, indeed, his teachings are all parables in the sense that they point to something beyond themselves to the secret that Jesus was the Messiah.*

Failure to Understand | 8:14-21

- *The yeast of the Pharisees was their desire to compartmentalize Jesus, to place him into traditional categories that they can manage.*
- *The two feedings were signs that pointed to Jesus as the Christ. But no traditional categories can grasp or account for the feedings. So the feedings did not meet the Pharisees “test” for prophetic authority.*
- *The scribes had reduced the Law to a formula (7:11-12). And now they sought to reduce Christ to a sign. This brought the indignation of Jesus with the Pharisees and his frustration with his disciples to a new pitch.*
- *Do I reduce Christ to a formula? To a sign? Do I need Jesus to “show up in my life” in order to answer the call to radical faith in him as the Messiah? Do I need an experience like [The Shack](#) to validate my faith? Will some temporal sign elevate my faith? There is a reason Abraham noted “though one rise from the dead, they will not believe!”*

Opening of Blind Eyes | 8:22-26

- *The crossing of 8:13 brought Jesus and the 12 to Bethsaida, which had the size of a city but the organization of a village. There a number of friends brought a blind man to Jesus.*
- *Jesus takes the blind man away by himself out of the village.*
 - *This was not Jesus’ usual custom as he normally did his miracles publicly.*
 - *Establishing a personal relationship with the man beyond the customary leading was important for the man to exercise faith in Jesus.*
 - *Jesus sought to avoid the false verification that Jesus was only a miracle worker. (1:35-39, 45, 3:7-9, 6:45, 8:26).*
- *The personal touch points of using spittle and the laying on of hands were culturally expected.*

Opening of Blind Eyes | 8:22-26

- *Three unexpected elements unique only to this miracle –*
 - *Jesus questions if his action had been effective?*
 - *The explicit reference to partial healing.*
 - *The laying on of hands a second time to complete the healing.*

- *This parallels the disciples' recovery of sight. They remained blind but somewhere throughout their time with Jesus, their understanding began to deepen as to who their Master really was and what that meant for him. Like this healing –*
 - *Jesus questions his disciples as to whether they heard and saw and understood correctly? This is especially true in the following question where Peter proves his understanding is correct (though he had yet to learn what being the Messiah meant).*
 - *The disciples seemed to grow in small steps in partial understanding.*
 - *The work of Christ through his Spirit would not leave the disciples with a half-way understanding and faith. The work would be completed.*