

Handout 1: Mark Lesson 6

Jesus' earlier miracle feeding of the more than five thousand would have recalled for His disciples and the Jewish crowd other feeding miracles of God's holy prophets:

1. The feeding miracles associated with Moses in the Exodus journey to the Promised Land in the unending supply of manna and the two times it rained quail (Ex 16:4-13, 35; Num 11:31-33).
2. The prophet Elijah's miracle for the widow of Zarephath whose nearly empty jar of meal and her depleted supply of oil provided food throughout an extended famine (1 Kng 17:8-16).
3. The prophet Elisha's miracle of the plentiful jug of oil for the poor widow of a guild prophet (2 Kng 4:1-7).
4. The prophet Elisha's feeding miracle in multiplying twenty loaves of barley bread to feed one hundred men (2 Kng 4:42-44).

The comparison between Elisha and Jesus and their feeding miracles in the multiplication of the loaves in 2 Kings 4:42-44 and Mark 6:34-44. Note that in John 6:9 we are told the bread provided for Jesus' feeding miracle was made of barley.

Elisha's Feeding Miracle (2 Kng 4:42-44)	Jesus' Feeding Miracle (Mk 6:34-44)
Elisha was greater than the prophet he succeeded (Elijah).	Jesus was greater than the prophet He succeeded (John the Baptist who came in the spirit of Elijah).
In Elisha's miracle there was only a small amount of food (20 loaves of barley bread).	In Jesus' miracle there was only a small amount of food (5 loaves of barley bread and 2 fishes).
Elisha's servants protested that there was not enough food to feed so many men.	Jesus' disciples protested that there was not enough food to feed so many men.
The small amount of food became enough to feed 100 men.	The small amount of food became enough to feed 5 thousand men.
There was food left over.	There was food left over.

The similarities between the two miracle feedings of the 5 thousand and 4 thousand in Mark 6:32-45 and 8:1-10 and the significance of the connection of the two miracle feedings to the third miracle feeding in 14:22-25:

1. Both feeding miracles take place in a deserted place (Mk 6:32; 8:4).
2. In both miracles Jesus feeds a large crowd with a small quantity of bread and fish (Mk 6:38, 43-44; 8:5, 9).
3. In both miracles Jesus challenges the disciples who respond with a lack of faith (Mk 6:37; 8:4).
4. In both miracles Jesus acts as the host of the meal (Mk 6:41; 8:6-7).
5. At the end of each meal all the people are satisfied and there is an abundance of leftover food (Mk 6:42-43; 8:8).
6. At the end of each meal Jesus dismisses the crowd and departs in a boat to another place (Mk 6:45; 8:10).
7. Both feeding miracles prefigure the third miracle feeding of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (14:22).

Handout 2: Mark Lesson 6

The differences between the two miracle feedings:

1. In the second feeding, the crowd has been with Jesus for three days.
2. In the first feeding miracle, there were 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes for a total of 7. In the second feeding miracle, there were 7 loaves and a few fish (not counted).
3. There are two blessings in the second miracle feeding (Mk 8:6, 7).
4. In the first miracle, more than 5 thousand men were fed with 12 baskets of food left over. In the second miracle there was a total of four thousand fed and there were 7 large baskets of collected food.
5. The first miracle feeding was in the Galilee and the second in Gentile territory.

St. Augustine saw the 12 baskets of leftover food in the first miracle feeding on Israelite soil as a symbolic restoration the 12 tribes of old Israel to be transformed into the “new Israel” of the New Covenant Church. He saw the 7 baskets of leftover food in the second miracle feeding in Gentile territory as the promise of the Messianic blessings extended to the Gentile nations of the earth, as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah (e.g., Is 56:1-7; 66:18), including those seven Gentile peoples dispossessed of the land in the conquest of Canaan (Dt 7:1; Josh 3:10; 24:11). The extension of the covenantal blessings to the Gentiles can be seen as being symbolized by the granting of the request of the Gentile woman whose daughter was possessed by a demon in Mark 7:24-30.

Jesus’ harsh words to the disciples in Mark 8:18 is another reference to the failure to “see and hear” from Isaiah 6:9-10 that includes the promise of divine judgment (Is 6:11-13). It is repeated by Jeremiah and Ezekiel using the same wording: Yahweh instructed Jeremiah to tell the Jews when they ask, “*Why has Yahweh our God done all this to us?*” (Jer 5:19) to answer: “*As you abandon me to serve alien gods in your own country, so you must serve aliens in a country not your own.*” “*Announce this in the House of Jacob, proclaim it in Judah, and say, “Now listen to this, stupid, brainless people who have eyes and do not see, who have ears and do not hear! Have you no fear of me?”*” (Jer 5:19b-21 NJB). Yahweh gave similar instructions to Jeremiah’s contemporary, the prophet Ezekiel who was already living in exile with the first group of Judahite exiles: *The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, “Son of man, you are living among a tribe of rebels who have eyes and never see, they have ears and never hear, because they are a tribe of rebels”* (Ez 12:2 NJB) As Yahweh’s premier prophet, Jesus also gives a warning of impending judgment to the Jews of His generation (Mt 23:33-24:25; Mk 13:1-13:23; Lk 21:5-24).

In Mark 8:34-38 Jesus says that true discipleship is based on:

1. The willingness “to deny” selfish desires by daily dying to oneself in order to live for Christ.
2. Being willingly “to take” and endure those struggles/crosses that are necessary in order ...
3. “To follow” Jesus’ teachings faithfully and obediently in service to Christ and His Kingdom.

This means completely identifying with Christ’s message by disowning one’s self interest to the point of being willing to die for faith in Jesus Christ. But the promise is whoever loses his life for the sake of Christ will live eternally in His heavenly Kingdom.

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