

"1 In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and *said to them, 2 "I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. 3 "If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance." 4 And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?" 5 And He was asking them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." 6 And He *directed the people 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 people. 7 They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed 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 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." Mark 8:1-10, NAS95.

A few more exhibitions of the powers of the kingdom of God were given before Jesus decided that his disciples were ready for their final 'test'. Had they learned yet who he was? Had they learned the lesson of the feeding of the five thousand? Here was an opportunity for them to show if they had, and they failed miserably. Once again, there was a hungry crowd intent on Jesus' teaching. Once again, Jesus showed his compassion; and once again, the disciples showed their helplessness (4). Their thinking was still the thinking of this world; they had left Jesus out of their calculations. Once again Jesus patiently asked them how much bread they had, and they reported a pitifully tiny amount. Once again, he gave thanks to God and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to give to the crowd. Once again, God's provision for their needs was more than enough.

Perhaps it is not surprising that some critics have thought that this story is just a mistaken repetition of the feeding of the five thousand, but that is to miss the whole point. Mark is deliberately showing the slowness and dullness of the disciples, even when a second similar miracle was performed (see vs 17-20). In any case, the number of the loaves and of the baskets of fragments (as well as the number of people fed) is not the same as before. The eyewitness was reporting faithfully again.

What does Mark want us to understand? There is no doubt that he is claiming that this is another and different occasion from the feeding of the 5,000. Many features of the

two miracles are different; here the crowd has been with the Lord Jesus for three entire days (v.2), there are also a thousand less present and it is not said that here they were 'men', but that they were 'people' (the NIV translates it imprecisely in v.9); the number of the fish Jesus was given is unspecified here, with a different kind of fish being referred to in the Greek from the feeding of the 5,000; there are two more loaves here, while the number of baskets of fragments is five less. There is no green grass for them to sit down on, and the Lord Jesus here prays twice (vv.6 & 7). The baskets used are a different type (again according to the Greek word) - here they are large baskets that Gentiles used, the same sort of basket in which Paul was lowered from the walls of Damascus. The people here are not told to sit down in groups. The disciples do not express their scepticism about providing food for this company, just man's helplessness in finding bread in such a desert to feed so many (v.4). Even more significant is the fact that here the Saviour actually refers to the earlier miracle: "Don't you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand?" (v.19). How could such a mighty miracle in which thousands of people are fed from a handful of loaves be claimed as a fictional repetition of an earlier miracle which actually did happen? Many of the people in Galilee and Decapolis were still alive when Mark wrote this gospel, but not one person cried, "A fiction! This is a conspiracy!" when the gospel began to circulate. Someone will point out the parallels between the two incidents, but agreement between two accounts of feeding multitudes of people is no proof that the second is a fictional repetition of the first. Consider the fact that it was two planes, one after another, that flew into the Twin Towers in New York on September 11th two years ago. Planes hit and destroyed New York skyscrapers on two separate occasions on the same morning. Will anyone in two thousand years' time write a Ph.D. thesis on the theory that it only occurred once, and that a conspiracy explains why the world was led to believe that it happened twice? What nonsense! Even in our own lives coincidences occur far more frequently than we think.

The critics of the Bible have looked at the disciples' question, "Where can anyone get enough bread to feed them" (v.4), and they have retorted, "That question doesn't make sense if they had seen a few months earlier the Lord feeding five thousand." But what would Jesus have said if these men had turned on him and said, "OK, do it again!" It would have been utter presumption for them to assume that Christ would, as a matter of course, repeat what he had done earlier. He was not a vendor of miracles. He is the sovereign Lord, as they are slowly learning. The disciples couldn't fail to be aware in their months in Decapolis that there were many Gentiles amongst those 4,000 people, and Christ has expressed in their hearing some reservations about giving the children's bread to dogs. Why should he feed a multitude of Gentiles? He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. When Christ did a miracle it was breath-taking, on every occasion, to the disciples and utterly unanticipated. They never got used to them; they never began to take them in their stride. "What manner of man is this?" they would mutter to one another. It was his enemies that hankered after miracles, not the Twelve. You don't find the disciples lobbying for miracles here in Decapolis. Rather, they are perplexed: "Where can we find bread for such a crowd as this?" they ask, just as we would.

Alfred Edersheim suggests that at every transitional point in the ministry of Jesus, He gives the people a meal.

John 2, at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus turns water into wine.

In Mark 6:34-44 Jesus feeds 5000 Jews of Israel.

Here in Mark 8 Jesus feeds a mixed crowd of Jews and Gentiles.

In Mark 14:17-25 we shall read of the Lord's Supper.

And if we were to turn to John 21, we would see Jesus feeding His disciples by the sea of Galilee.

A. THE COMPASSIONATE CHRIST.

In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus

Mark 8:1-10 New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier April 1 2008, 4
called His disciples and said to them, 2 "I feel compassion for the people because they
have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat.If I send them away
hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a
great distance." (Mark 8:1-3).

Jesus was back! He had been gone on a retreat with His disciples over the past few
weeks which took them north to the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon and then
across the cedar forests of Lebanon before returning to Decapolis. But now He is back
and a crowd quickly gathers. This was a big crowd. It is called a "great multitude." They
also seem to have been a mixed crowd.

There were Jews and Gentiles. Men and women. Adults and children.

They had only one thing in common. They were hungry. They were hungry for the
teachings of Jesus - what else would keep them at that location for three days of
preaching? And because of their spiritual hunger, they were now physically hungry.

Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you are hungry for God? Where
you desire His company and His fellowship more than the basic necessities of life?

These people had come for a sermon and when the sermon went overtime, they didn't
grumble or complain or set their digital watches to start beeping. I've seen people
complain when a sermon went three minutes past noon. This sermon went on for three
days.

What is more, the crowd had not come prepared for a three day sermon. They had not
brought with them three days worth of provisions. And this brought about a problem. It
was a very practical problem. There were those who were now so hungry that they
might not be able to safely make their way back home.

And so, Jesus calls His disciples together to explain to them the problem. Notice how
He begins.

"I feel compassion for the multitude..."

Why does He say this? He says it because He feels compassion for the multitude. He

CARES. But that is not all. He tells His disciples of this compassion because He wants them to feel compassion for the multitude, too.

You see, it is one thing to feel compassion for a demon-possessed daughter or a deaf mute or even for a disciple's mother-in-law. But it is hard to feel compassion for an entire multitude. They are the faceless masses. The unknown. The little people. But not to Jesus. To Him there are no little people. He knows each and every one. And He cares.

And so, He turns to His disciples. He speaks to them in such a way so that they will begin to see the crowd through His eyes.

There is a principle here. When the Lord begins to move to meet a need, He often does it by moving His people. He could have bypassed the disciples. He could have merely caused it to rain bread and fish - or even literal cats and dogs. But he used the disciples. His method was MEN. It still is.

Do you see a need in someone's life? Perhaps the Lord is showing you that need so that you can be His instrument in meeting that need.

B. THE PERPLEXITY OF THE DISCIPLES.

And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?" (Mark 8:4).

This is simply incredible! These same disciples had recently seen Jesus feed a bigger crowd - a crowd numbering 5,000 (Mark 6:34-44). The scene had been very much the same.

A hungry multitude.

Jesus had been there.

There had been the 12 disciples.

There had been a handful of loaves and fishes.

It is now several months later. There is a slightly smaller crowd, a few more loaves and a few more fish than the last time. What makes the disciples think that Jesus is going

But before we come down too hard on the disciples, perhaps we ought to examine our own lives. We have the record of all of the great works of God. We have the witness of the Scriptures that God is faithful to meet the needs of His people. We have the test of time to see that this is not just a passing fancy. And yet, how often do we fail to come to Him in our need? How often do we hit the panic button and run and yell and scream and forget to turn to the One who is able to meet all of our needs?

All too often, we think of prayer only as a "last resort." When everything else has failed, we turn to the Lord. What we ought to be doing is turning to Him FIRST.

C. THE PERFORMANCE OF A MIRACLE.

And He was asking them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." And He directed the people 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 people.

They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. (Mark 8:5-7).

Once again, Jesus calls for the resources of the disciples. Once again, what they have is not enough to meet the need at hand. There is an interesting contrast to be seen between this feeding and the one which took place in chapter 6.

Feeding of the 5,000 Mark 6:34-44

The multitude was mostly Jewish.

Took place after the multitude had been with Jesus for one day.

Took place near Bethsaida Julias on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus used 5 loaves and 2 fish.

There were 12 small baskets of leftovers.

Feeding of the 4,000 Mark 8:1-9 Our text

The multitude would have been mostly Gentile.

Took place in the Decapolis on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus used 7 loaves and a few small fish.

There were 7 large baskets of leftovers.

In spite of the differences between the two miracles, I am certain that the disciples were struck by the sense of the familiar. What Jesus had done near Bethsaida Julius, He is now doing here in the Decapolis. What He had formerly done among the Jews, He is now doing among the Gentiles.

D. A PRINCIPLE ILLUSTRATED.

And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. About four thousand were there; and He sent them away. And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha. (Mark 8:8-10).

In the feeding of the 5000, there were 12 baskets filled with leftovers. In the description of that first feeding, the word used to describe the "baskets" describes one of the small baskets in which the Jews would have carried food so that they would not have to eat food which had been touched by Gentile hands.

But now a different word is used to describe the basket. This time we see the use of a word that describes a "large basket" which was used for a variety of purposes. It is the same word to describe the basket which was used to lower Paul over the city wall of Damascus in Acts 9:25).

Perhaps Jesus is showing the disciples something in addition to the obvious lesson of His power and His faithfulness and His sufficiency. Perhaps He is teaching them that the ceremonial uncleanness with which the Jews were so preoccupied is not supposed to be an issue in the Kingdom.

They are going to gather up bread that has been touched by Gentile hands. This bread

is no longer kosher. It is ceremonially unclean. What are they going to do with this bread? They are going to eat it!

Jesus is setting the stage for what is to come. In several years, the newborn church will be faced with the question of whether Gentiles can become Christians. And these disciples will remember the principles that Jesus is teaching them - with a little prodding from a heavenly vision.

You see, Jesus is feeding a lot more than the 4000 Gentiles who had gathered from the Decapolis. He is also feeding you and me. He is demonstrating His compassion toward us. And He is showing that, even to unclean Gentiles, He is the accessible Jesus.

All his wondrous miracles are signs that point us to the Lord Jesus himself, telling us who he is. He is not just a healer or a teacher, or a tender loving man. Here in Mark we have two very similar miracles that give us an extraordinary perspective on Christ. I remember as a teenager seeing one of the first three-dimensional films. How exciting was the opening sequence as the camera went through a door into a room where a party was taking place and down fell the balloons from the ceiling and you felt you could stretch out your hand and touch them. You went past people and towards the table where all the food was laid. Later you shut your eyes during a car chase, and you ducked as a bucket of water was thrown at you. There were bursts of scary vividness. A 3D effect can be achieved with two lenses having shot the scene, giving two slightly different perspectives, and by the aid of special glasses the projections are brought together, and so a sense of depth is gained. Thus Mark gives us these accounts of two works of Christ when he fed thousands of men, and so we are able to see these scenes very fully. The camera zooms in on the Lord who is at the very heart of it all, in control and revealing his glory. Who is he?