

Portraits of Jesus

A Study of the Gospel of Mark

by Gary Fisher

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Defective Spiritual Vision

Lesson 6

Jesus Feeds 4000 Men

>>> Read Mark 8:1–10. <<<

Huge crowds were constantly following Jesus. On this occasion, they had been in a wilderness area and hadn't eaten for three days. Jesus didn't want to send them home hungry for fear they would faint during the trip. So He asked for a food inventory: there were seven loaves and a few small fish. Jesus directed the multitude to sit down, and then began serving the food. Miraculously, the supply didn't dwindle. Each loaf generated a large basketful of leftovers besides feeding 4000 men. Jesus' power could not be disputed.

1 How many men did Jesus feed on this occasion? (a) 4000, (b) 5000, (c) 12, (d) none. Answer: _____.

2 How many baskets of food were taken up from the seven loaves and few fish (v8)? Answer: _____ baskets.

Warning about Leaven

>>> Read Mark 8:11–21. <<<

Despite much evidence of Jesus' power and authority, the Pharisees challenged Him to show a sign from heaven. He refused their request. They were simply blind to all evidence and no sign would ever be enough to convince them. Then Jesus and His disciples began to cross the sea by boat. The disciples were worried because they had forgotten to take enough bread with them for the trip. Jesus warned about the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Immediately, the disciples imagined that He was criticizing them for having forgotten the bread. Jesus knew what they were saying to each other and rebuked their hard-heartedness. After all, He had twice produced enough food to feed thousands with abundant leftovers. They should have known that He could handle problems with insufficient food. His warning wasn't about the leaven of bread, but about the false teaching and hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Herod. Bad attitudes spread like leaven and He was worried that the disciples might be contaminated by them.

3 What request did the Pharisees make that Jesus refused to grant? Answer: They wanted Him to perform a _____ from heaven.

4 What warning did Jesus give to His disciples? Answer: They should beware the _____ of the Pharisees.

5&6 In saying this, what did Jesus mean by "leaven" (see also Matt. 16:12; Luke 12:1)? Answer: He referred to their false _____ and their _____.

Jesus Heals a Blind Man in Two Stages

>>> Read Mark 8:22–26. <<<

Normally, Jesus' healings were complete and immediate. This case was different—He applied saliva to on the eyes of the blind man, laid His hands on him, and then asked what he saw. The man reported seeing men like trees walking around. So Jesus touched his eyes again, and his vision was perfectly restored. Why didn't Christ heal this man all at once, like He normally did? Jesus' healings were signs, symbols of spiritual truths. In this case, the two-stage healing of the blind man symbolized how men's understanding and insight is often healed in two steps. The disciples, for example, weren't totally blind, for they understood that Jesus was the Son of God (see 8:29). But, on the other hand, they still didn't perceive Jesus' complete ability and therefore had defective vision (see 8:17–18, 31–33). They needed to be touched again so they could see clearly.

Note — Don't be satisfied to see men like trees walking: Consider the situation of the blind man. While blind, he saw absolutely nothing. When Jesus first touched him, his vision improved: he saw men, though they looked like trees. To one who had been totally blind, that was fantastic progress. But Jesus could do more—He touched the man again and he began to see perfectly. Unfortunately, in the spiritual realm, some are satisfied with one touch. They see, but not clearly. Many don't even realize that they need a complete cure, that they should not be content to see men like trees walking. Consider, for example, someone whose life has been totally devastated by sin. He hears about

Jesus, begins to follow many of His teachings and his life improves. Sadly, however, He is unaware that he lacks understanding of Jesus' word in many areas and that he should not settle for distorted vision. Let's check out our own lives. Could it be that we still are not seeing clearly and that Jesus could restore our vision perfectly?

7 How did the blind man see after Jesus first touched him? Answer: He saw men that looked like _____ walking around.

8 How did he see after Jesus finished with him? Answer: He saw everything _____.

The Strength and Weakness of Peter

>>> Read Mark 8:27–33. <<<

Jesus asked what the public thought about Him. The disciples reported varying opinions: John the Baptist, Elijah, etc. When Jesus asked their own opinion, Peter boldly responded: Thou art the Christ. It was a brilliant insight. Nevertheless, when Jesus went on to warn about how He was going to be rejected and crucified, Peter was horrified. He could not imagine the Lord being killed. He began to correct Jesus telling Him that this would never happen! Jesus sternly rebuked Peter: "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." Peter was tempting Him not to suffer. Temptations are often strongest when they come through people we are close to. So Jesus flatly rejected Peter's advice. Isn't it strange that one minute Peter proclaimed Jesus to be Christ, the next he was calling Him aside to inform Him that He was mistaken! If Jesus was truly the Christ, Peter had no business arguing with Him. Nor do we.

9 Who did people consider Jesus to be? a) John the Baptist, b) Elijah, c) one of the prophets, d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

10 What did Peter confess regarding Jesus' identity? a) He was a great teacher; b) He was a sublime philosopher; c) He was the Christ; d) He was a prophet, but not Divine. Answer: _____.

11 How did Peter react to Jesus' announcement of His coming suffering? Answer: He took Jesus aside and began to _____ Him.

12&13 What did Jesus say was the reason Peter would not believe Jesus was going to die? Answer: He was not minding the things of _____ but the things of _____.

The Conditions of Discipleship

>>> Read Mark 8:34–9:1. <<<

Jesus plainly explained what was required to become His disciple. He said that you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. These requirements are demanding. A person does not naturally deny himself; rather, he usually does what he wants. Death to self is painful, but that is exactly the meaning of taking up one's cross. The cross was an instrument of death—to take it up would be to die to oneself and to one's own desires in order to serve Christ. There is no profit in gaining the entire world, only to lose one's soul in the transaction. It is worth everything to submit to God's stringent requirements for discipleship.

Note — Deceptive discipleship: *Jesus highlighted the requirements for being a disciple because it is so easy to imagine that you are a follower of Jesus when, in fact, you aren't. Discipleship is not mere church membership or moral living. It is total devotion to Jesus Christ. It is to die to self and live*

100% for the Lord. Am I really Jesus' disciple?

14 Which of the following was not given as a requirement for being a disciple? a) deny self; b) take up ones cross; c) follow Jesus; d) speak in tongues. Answer: _____.

15&16 How did Jesus teach the importance of proper priorities? Answer: He asked what profit a man would have if he could gain the whole _____ but then lose his own _____.

17&18 Jesus said some of the people standing there would not die before they saw what (9:1)? Answer: They would not die till they saw the _____ of God come with _____.

(Thought question: How can this statement be harmonized with the doctrine that says Jesus' kingdom still has not come even today?)

Jesus Is Transfigured

>>> Read Mark 9:2–13. <<<

Jesus had taken three of His closest friends with Him to a high mountain. There, he began to glow with breathtaking brilliance. Just then, Elijah and Moses appeared, talking with Jesus. The disciples were awestruck. Moses was the great Lawgiver, the one who had led Israel out of Egyptian bondage and through the wilderness. Elijah was a great prophet, one of two men in the Old Testament who went directly to heaven without dying. And there they were talking to Jesus. Peter was profoundly moved by the occasion and suggested that they build three tabernacles: one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. No doubt he felt that it would honor Jesus to receive a tabernacle alongside Moses and Elijah. But God's voice boomed from heaven: This is My beloved Son, listen to Him. Moses and Elijah vanished. Only Jesus remained. As they descended, Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone about what had happened until after He was raised from the dead.

Note — The greatness of Jesus: *God's rebuff of Peter's suggestion to construct three tabernacles teaches volumes. The problem with Peter's plan was that it put Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah. He isn't. Jesus is above everyone—in this case, above the greatest figures of the Old Testament era. Our problem is like Peter's. We often tend to build multiple tabernacles. One for Jesus and one for our parents. Or one for Jesus and another for our pastor, for our church, or for a favorite activity. This won't do. Jesus must have the only tabernacle; He must be the supreme authority in our life. Nothing else can be on a par with Him.*

19&20 What two Old Testament characters appeared on the mountain and talked with Jesus? Answer: _____ and _____.

21 What did Peter want to do on the mountain when he saw Jesus together with these men? Answer: He wanted to build three _____.

22&23 What did the Father then say about Jesus? Answer: He said that Jesus was His _____, so people should _____ to Him.

24&25 When were Peter, James and John permitted to tell about the transfiguration? Answer: They could tell about it after Jesus had _____ from the _____.

The Disciples Fail to Cast out a Demon

>>> Read Mark 9:14–29. <<<

As Jesus descended the mountain, He noticed great commotion in the valley. The crowd ran to meet Him. While Jesus had been with three of the apostles on the mountain, the others had been unable to cast a demon out of a boy. Since the apostles had normally been able to cast out demons (notice Mark 6:13), this failure puzzled them and surprised the bystanders. Jesus' enemies were taking advantage of this lapse to discredit Him. The father of the tormented lad asked Jesus to do something, if He could. The Lord turned his statement back on him: "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." The father said that he believed, but recognizing the possibility that his faith was not as strong as it needed to be, he begged Jesus to help his unbelief. With that, Christ commanded the unclean spirit to leave the boy. The demon cried out and threw the boy into convulsions, but left. Later, the disciples asked why they had been unable to cast out the demon. Jesus explained that they were not relying on God enough, but on their own power: "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer." Perhaps their prior success in expelling demons had caused them to be self-reliant, and they had neglected to pray in faith to God so that He would cast out the demon.

26 What problem did the man's son have? Answer: He was possessed by a _____ that caused him to be mute.

27 What happened when Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit (demon)? The spirit (demon): a) cried out, b) convulsed or tore him, c) came out, d) all of the preceding. Answer: _____.

Summary: Time and again the disciples demonstrated a lack of clear spiritual understanding. They saw Jesus multiply loaves and fishes, but failed to see that He could handle another food emergency. Peter affirmed that Jesus was the Christ, but thought it best to give Him some needed "advice." He believed Jesus was great, but on the same level with Moses and Elijah. The nine disciples in the valley boldly attempted to expel a demon, but without relying on the Lord. They were like those formerly blind who even now saw men like trees walking.

When you have carefully studied this lesson and written down answers to all the questions, [click on this link to submit your answers.](#)

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To contact the author, write to
Gary Fisher, 8980 Crawford Ct., New Salisbury, IN 47161

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