

Introduction

Lesson finally learned from Speedy Jack

1. Last week we began a section of Mark's gospel that starts in 6:14 and extends to 8:30:
 - a. The over-arching theme of this section appears to center on the question, Who do people say Jesus is?
 - b. It begins with the people saying Jesus was a reincarnated John the Baptist, or Elijah, or just another prophet like those in the OT
 - c. It ends with Jesus asking Peter, "Who do you say that I am?"
 - d. Between these two bookends Mark presents us with another series of events that all serve to reflect how certain individuals respond to that question
2. Today we are going to look primarily at the two most familiar events, along with two smaller events (these two smaller ones explain the purpose of the two main events):
 - a. The first is the feeding of the 5000 and the second is the feeding of the 4000
 - b. You will notice, however, that they don't happen one after the other, but are separated by some other events that we are going to skip over today (we'll come back to them next week)
 - c. The reason we are going to address them together is because it is easier to see their purpose that way
 - d. In fact, Jesus Himself refers to them together a little later in Mark's gospel when He rebukes His disciples for not learning what they were supposed to learn from them

A. The people didn't quite know what to make of Jesus (READ Mark 6:14-16)

1. Some, like King Herod, thought He was the reincarnated John the Baptist
2. Others thought He was Elijah
3. Still other's thought He was simply another prophet
4. But what about His inner circle? Who did they think Jesus was?
 - a. They were intimately familiar with all of His teaching—not just what He taught publicly but what He taught them privately
 - b. They were with Him when He cast out demons, healed the sick and even raised the dead
 - c. They personally experienced His awesome power and authority over nature first hand!
 - d. Plus, they even experienced this power for themselves when Jesus sent them out with the power to cast out demons and heal the sick themselves
 - e. By now you would think they would know exactly who Jesus was, but as Mark reveals even they struggled with that question

B. The feeding of the 5000 (READ Mark 6:33-44)

1. This is one of the most widely recognized miracles of Jesus and is referred to as the feeding of the 5000—however, the crowd size was significantly larger:
 - a. All four of the gospels state that there were 5000 men

- b. However, Matthew adds that there were women and children in addition to the men (Matthew 14:21)
 - c. If we assume an equal number of women, and at least an equal number of children there would have been at least 15,000 people, probably significantly more
2. There are a number of unique things about this miracle:
- a. It's the first event that we've come to in Mark's gospel that is recorded in all four of the gospels
 - b. John tells us that there is also a unique purpose in this miracle—Jesus was testing the disciples (John 6:4-6): **“Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, *said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat? This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.” (MORE ON THIS BELOW)**
 - c. This leads to another unique aspect of this event, and that's the role of the 12 apostles:
 - 1) In most of the miracles, the disciples are mere observers, but here they play a prominent role
 - 2) Jesus instructed the disciples to feed the crowd (37): **“You give them something to eat!”**
 - 3) He required them to find the initial bread and fish (37): **“How many loaves do you have? Go look!”** – they ultimately found a lad with five loaves of bread and two fish
 - 4) Mark says Jesus commanded **“them all”** (38-39; e.g. the crowd) to sit down in groups of 100s and 50s, but Luke and John indicate Jesus told this to the disciples and they communicated the instructions to the crowd
 - 5) Once Jesus multiplied the bread and fish, He gave them to the disciples to distribute (41): **“And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them.”**
 - 6) Finally, He made the disciples collect all the left-over bread and fish (43): **“and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish.”**

C. The feeding of the 4000 (READ Mark 8:1-10)

- 1. Unlike the feeding of the 5000 which was recorded in all four gospels, the feeding of the 4000 is only recorded in Matthew and Mark
- 2. We see some similarities to the feeding of the 5000:
 - a. Once again, the 4000 refers to men only, and Matthew indicates there are women and children present—so the crowd size was likely at least 12,000 or more
 - b. We also see the twelve again playing a major role in the miracle:
 - 1) Jesus involves the disciples immediately by suggesting they cannot send the crowds away without eating first
 - 2) And, just like before, He asks the disciples to provide the initial bread and fish (5): **“How many loaves do you have? And they said, ‘Seven.’”**
 - 3) He again, after multiplying the bread and fish He gives them to the disciples to distribute
 - 4) Finally, He again has the 12 gather up the left-overs (8): **“And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces.”**

D. So, what is the main purpose of these two events?

1. Mark gives us our first clue as to the purpose of these miracles in another event that happened immediately after the feeding of the 5000 (READ Mark 6:45-52):
 - a. Jesus sends the disciples away to the opposite side of the sea, but stays behind and disperses the crowd and then spend some time praying
 - b. Sometime around 3am (the fourth watch of the night), the disciples were still trying to get to the other side, but were prevented because of the strong winds
 - c. As Jesus walks on the water and begins to approach the boat, the disciples cry out in fear thinking they were seeing a ghost
 - d. After climbing into the boat and calming their fears, the wind immediately stops
 - e. Mark then makes a remarkable statement (6:51b-52): **“and they were utterly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.”**
 - 1) Just like the crowds—who thought Jesus was just another prophet, or Elijah, or maybe even the reincarnated John the Baptist--, the disciples were astonished by what they saw
 - 2) However, Mark specifically states that they hadn’t learned anything (**“gained any insight”**) from the feeding of the 5000
 - 3) Hold on to that thought
2. Mark gives us another clue as to the purpose of these two miracles in yet another event that happened after the feeding of the 4000 (READ Mark 8:11-26):
 - a. Jesus has another confrontation with the Pharisees and afterwards when He’s back in the boat with the twelve, He’s trying to warn the twelve to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (e.g. false teaching?)
 - b. This reminds the disciples that they had forgotten to bring along food which caused them some concern
 - c. Jesus then rebukes them for this with a series of questions:
 - 1) Why do you discuss your lack of bread?
 - 2) Don’t you understand?
 - 3) Do you have hard hearts (e.g. a lack of faith)
 - 4) Don’t you see or hear?
 - 5) Don’t you remember how much bread and fish you collected after I fed the 5000, and then again the 4000?
 - 6) He finished with the most direct question of all (21): **“Do you not yet understand?”**
3. So, what was it that the disciples were supposed to learn from these two miracles?
 - a. Consider this:
 - 1) When God led the Israelites through the wilderness He multiplied manna from heaven and meat from quails to sustain them (Exodus 16)
 - 2) In 1st Kings 17:7-16 when the widow and her son faced imminent death due to famine, yet gave Elijah the last of her oil and flour, God miraculously multiplied them both over and over and over to feed them until the famine was gone
 - 3) When the poor widow in 2 Kings 4:1-7 approached Elisha for help because the creditors were about to take away her two children and make them slaves to pay off her debt, God miraculously multiplied the only thing she had—one small jar of oil—so abundantly that they ran out of jars to hold it and were able to sell it, pay off the debt and live off of the remaining proceeds

- 4) Finally, in 2 Kings 4:42-44 when Elisha's 100 prophets were suffering through the famine, a man brings 20 loaves as part of his offering, but that wasn't nearly enough to feed 100 men—but God miraculously multiplies the bread so that the men ate and were not only satisfied, but there was more left over
- b. According to John, Jesus fed the 5000 and then the 4000 as a test for the disciples:
- 1) They were designed specifically to give the disciples insight into who Jesus was
 - 2) In light of the four examples above, these two miracles revealed Jesus as God—Like His Father, He is the One Who miraculously provides for His people
 - 3) The disciples should have made the connection, but because their hearts were still hard they failed to “**gain any insight**” from the two events as Mark said
 - 4) So, even after all that they had seen, they still were unable to adequately answer the question, Who is Jesus?

Conclusion
