

Mark chapter 8

The first half of Mark tells the story of Jesus' public ministry. It ends with 8:27-30, which is Peter's confession.

Beginning with verse 31 and following until chapter 10:47 Mark will be showing us the suffering Christ. Within these verses are three cycles –

- 1) Verses 8:31-9:29
- 2) Verses 9:30 – 10:31
- 3) Verses 10:53-52

Vs. 1-26

Vs. 1-9 Miracle number 14 – feeding the 4000

This miracle like the feeding of the 5000 is a classic miracle story.

The disciples' question is strange in the least since they have apparently just witnessed the answer to their question in the feeding of the 5000.

The two feedings though similar are considered to be two separate stories since later in chapter 8 the disciples will be called to remember each of them in detail.

It is generally agreed that the purpose of this second feeding is to spotlight the incredible dullness – one might even say the thick - headedness – of the disciples.

The area, Dalmanutha, to which Jesus and the disciples go is unknown.

Vs. 11 through 13

The Pharisees probably did not witness the feeding miracle since Jesus is now in a different area, but they have certainly seen the of Jesus' mighty works,

Yet they still ask for a sign.

Jesus sigh is to be understood as one of sadness and frustration that those who should know who he is, don't.

Jesus refuses their demand and leaves them.

Vs 14-21 discussion about bread

Leaven here has the usual Jewish sense of something evil. As in Lev. 2:11; 1st Cor. 5: 6-8 and Galatians 5:9.

The disciples continue not to understand and Jesus loses patience with them.

Vs. 22-26 the blind man of Bethsaida

Matthew and Luke leave this story out – possibly because it seems Jesus needs two tries to heal the man.

However, as Mark presents it the cure and the evidence of it are doubled.

Saliva was common as a home remedy and in Hellenistic healing stories. Jesus used his spittle on the man's eyes and laid his hand over them. Then, oddly instead of a healing word he asks a

question. It is true the man can see but his vision is still fuzzy. A second touch clears the man's vision completely.

Taken in context this story speaks about seeing on two levels – certainly the physical seeing but also the inner perception or understanding. Jesus has just confronted his disciples' apparent inability to understand who Jesus is – despite his wonders.

Vs. 27-38 the first passion prediction

This is the mid-point in Mark's gospel. The public ministry in Galilee is essentially finished.

From this point on the action is directed toward Jerusalem.

Peter answers the question of Jesus' identity – You are the Christ. Mark now shifts to what it means for Jesus to be the Christ.

This passage is also the opening of Mark's section on discipleship in which the way of Jesus is set forth as the way of the Christian.

Mark 8:27 – 9:1 is the heart of the way to live the Christian life.

Vs. 27-34

Jesus invites the disciples to look back on the Galilean ministry and reflect on who he is – then to look forward and understand where they are headed and why.

Understanding who he is – however imperfectly is to understand where they will go and why.

Jesus begins to teach them - this is Mark's signal that we are entering a new phase of the narrative. Until now the accent has been on the power and authority of Jesus. From now on the story will be about his rejection and death.

We move from the fact of his Messiahship to its meaning.

Jesus speaks of himself using the term Son of man – Mark that is the only title he uses to speak of himself.

Peter tells Jesus NO! that cannot happen as if he were the one in charge. Greek implies that.

Jesus takes charge and tells Peter to stop tempting him.

Disciples are not called to guide, protect or possess Jesus. They are called to follow him.

So are we.