

**Mark 8:1-26, The Trip Against the Pharisees**  
**1-9, Opening "Teaching"**  
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**Overview**

1. Another five-part trip, after the usual pattern. This time, the disciples are along again, and there is special teaching for them in the boat.
2. The event at the destination is unusual. We find not the usual outsiders, but the Pharisees, asking a sign!
3. This week, concentrate on the initial teaching in 1-9, the feeding of the 4000.
  - a) The actual teaching is in the background; we are shown a miracle, perhaps to substitute for the one the Pharisees expect but don't get at the destination.
  - b) There are lessons here in the attitudes of the crowd, the Lord, and the Twelve. *Method*: Often these become clearer by contrast and comparison with the Feeding of the 5000 in 6:34ff.

**A. The Lord: Has compassion on the multitude (8:2)**

1. Compare 6:34.
  - a) In both cases the Lord has compassion toward the multitude.
  - b) Compassion: The English word literally means, "to suffer [passion] with [com]." Greek *splagxizomai* "to be moved regarding the *splagxna*," the inward parts, where we feel emotion. Describes a concern that arises out of feeling the other's need, rather than a purely rational motivation.
  - c) But the point and outcome of the compassion are different.
    - 1) 6:34, over their lack of leadership, so he teaches them.
    - 2) 8:2, over their physical hunger, so he feeds them.
2. Priorities:
  - a) We made the point in 6:34 that he put teaching over eating.
  - b) But this verse shows that he is not ignorant of physical needs, when they become severe. One day without food (ch.6) people can manage, but three days may result in hardship.
3. *Application*:
  - a) A hard lesson for engineers to learn. The Lord Jesus ministered to people out of sympathy and compassion, not a logical analysis of their requirements, and so should we (cf. Phil. 1:8, describing how Paul longs after them "in the bowels

of Jesus Christ," as a channel for the Lord's sympathy). This is ministry on the basis of incarnation: Heb. 4:15, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin."

- b) Cf. Jeremiah and his weeping over Jerusalem. Does not mean that the sufferings are undeserved, but that as one human being we can feel the pain that our fellows experience, and suffer with them, even when they abuse us.
- c) More generally: consider the point of contact in evangelism.
  - 1) Modern evangelical thought almost universally makes the appeal on the basis of the claim that "God loves you," a motive that the NT never presents to the unbeliever (and incidentally, that leaves the messenger out of the picture).
  - 2) The biblical content of the salvation message is not that God loves you, but that he hates you for your sin, and will judge you unless you repent.
  - 3) Many rightly feel that this message, presented baldly, would have no human appeal. But where should that appeal arise? From our compassion for the lost, feeling in ourselves something of the consequences both temporal and eternal of life without Christ. We must be willing to enter into their miseries as Christ did into ours, and on the basis of this contact to call them to repent and believe the gospel.

#### 4. *Compassion in Mark:*

- a) *splanxnisomai*
- b) *Subj always the Lord*
- c) *4x:*
  - 1) *Cleansing leper, 1:41*
  - 2) *Ministering to multitudes, 6:34; 8:2*
  - 3) *Casting demon out of boy, 9:22 (part of father's request; not asserted by the text of Jesus.)*

#### **B. The People: Sacrificially pursue the truth (8:2)**

Here and in ch.6, they have followed the Lord out into the countryside. But notice the difference in the circumstances.

- 1. 6:33,45, the meeting place was not remote from their home cities. They "ran" there in the morning, and were sent home by nightfall. The worst consequence of no food was a few tummy grumbles; the motivation for the feeding came from the Twelve, who appear to be more concerned for their own leisure than for the crowd's hunger.
- 2. 8:2, the crowd had been with the Lord for three days. Whatever provisions they may have brought are exhausted; they "have" (present tense) "nothing to eat." This becomes a serious fast.

3. Consider the love for the truth that leads them to put natural physical needs second and cleave to the Lord this way! Job 23:12, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary [food]." Cf. Ps. 19:10, comparing God's word to both food (honey) and wealth, and its echoes in 119:103, 127. Lessons for us:

a) What priority does the Word of God have in your life? Would you skip a meal for it? Get up a half-hour earlier in the morning (which might mean going to bed earlier, and missing a TV show)?

b) The Lord is not deviating from his principle of putting teaching above physical ministry. They have already shown their dedication to his teaching. Now his compassion is aroused over other needs. Our Lord's miracles do NOT support the idea of social ministry to those who reject the gospel, but they DO emphasize our responsibility to care for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

#### C. **The Twelve**

Still raising difficulties, though not the same ones that dominated their thinking in ch. 6.

1. There, the focus was "Where can we get the money?" 6:37. There were villages around where the people could find food (6:36); the issue was the limited nature of the disciples' resources (and their unwillingness to share).

2. Now the focus is on whether the food can be found at all, at any price. 8:4, where can enough bread be found in the wilderness?

3. The new problem is arguably harder than the previous one, but they have forgotten that the Lord's solution to the previous one didn't rely on the availability of food in nearby villages. We are somehow more comfortable trusting the Lord when we see other avenues of provision open; he delights in shutting us up to a miracle so that he gets all the glory.