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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Mark 8.

(2013)

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The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises  
But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Mark 8.

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### Topics

- Feeding of the four-thousand.
- Seeking signs.
- The leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.
- Jesus heals a blind man.
- Peter confesses Jesus is the Christ.
- Denying self and taking up the cross.
- Jesus calls Peter satan.
- Take up the cross and denying self.
- What does it profit a person to gain the world and loose their life?

**The Previous Chapter:** in the previous chapter Jesus told the Pharisees that they honour God with their lips, but their heart is far from Him and taught his disciples that evil thoughts and evil action come from out of the human heart. He travelled to Tyre and healed the daughter of a Gentile Syrophoenician woman then went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee and healed a man who was deaf and also had a speech impediment.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### Feeding of the Four-Thousand.

Mark 8:1-9 ----- <sup>1</sup>In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, <sup>2</sup>"I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup>And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away." <sup>4</sup>And his disciples answered him, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?" <sup>5</sup>And he asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." <sup>6</sup>And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. <sup>7</sup>And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. <sup>8</sup>And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. <sup>9</sup>And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away.

**Jesus compassion:** these people have been in a desolate place for three days without food and some of them had come from Tyre, Sidon and the other side of the River Jordan so for many of them it would have been a few days journey before they arrived back at their home towns. In contrast to the religious leaders (chief priests, Pharisees and scribes) of Jesus generation who used God's people for their own gain Jesus is moved with compassion and concerned for the crowds well being.

### The Spiritual Symbolism of Feeding Four-Thousand People.

Jesus had the crowds sit down in an orderly fashion and the disciples take the seven loaves to them. After they had all eaten there was seven full baskets left over.

In the Old Testament when the children of Israel were in the wilderness (a desolate place) God miraculously feed them manna from heaven, now Jesus is miraculously feeding four-thousand of his followers in a desolate place symbolising that Jesus is the true bread from heaven. The disciples should have perceived the spiritual connection between the manna which sustained the people of Israel in a desolate place in the wilderness and Jesus feeding the crowd bread in a desolate place. They should have perceived from this supernatural event that Jesus was the Son of God and sent from God and understood the link between the two breads miraculously being produced, one through Moses' and the other through Christ God's Son.

Sadly they never perceived the spiritual message and the link between the two events. We know this because after this event while sailing across the Sea of Galilee Jesus said to the disciples, "Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the loaves for the five-thousand and broke the loaves for the four-thousand" (Mark 8:17-21).

**Skeptics and feeding the four-thousand and the five-thousand** feeding the five-thousand and the four-thousand are two different events we know this because Jesus asked the disciples, "Do they not remember the five loaves for the five-thousand and the seven loaves for the four-thousand?" (Matt. 16:9-10) because the feeding of the four-thousand was only a few months after the feeding of the five-thousand some skeptics disbelieve they actually happened because the disciples ask Jesus the same question that they asked in the feeding of the five-thousand, "Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?" (Matt. 15:33), because of this some skeptic's reason:, surely the disciples would have remembered how Jesus feed the previous five-thousand and expected him to do the same miracle since it appears like the disciples have totally forgotten about the previous miracle, naturally the skeptics wonder how is it possible that such an incredible miracle could be forgotten in only a few months?

There is no-doubt many various possibilities because the two stories only give the reader a limited amount of knowledge regarding both events. For this reason the following theory is a speculative answer only, firstly it needs to be noted that those reading the story only know the multitudes were all fed and satisfied because the Bible tells us, the disciples may not have realized that every single person was being fed?

Even though the Lord sat the people in fifties and there five-thousand people the crowds would have covered a vast area of land, some especially the children would have been scrambling to the food. Added to this, twelve baskets would take a long time to distribute to five-thousand men plus woman and children so Jesus probably continued to teach the disciples and heal people during this time. It is more than likely that the disciples stayed with Jesus and may not have realized the enormity of the miracle that was taking place.

It was getting dark and it is possible the disciple may have thought some of the people had brought food with them, they would have had no way of knowing that all the people were feed and satisfied, that may be why Jesus asked them how many baskets were left full that would be the only way the disciple could assume that everyone was satisfied, but it is quiet likely that they did not fully understand exactly what had happened or at least the enormity of the miracle. Nevertheless regardless of the detail of each story the spiritual message that the feeding of the five-thousand and the four-thousand is symbolising is very clear. Jesus is the true bread (manna) sent from heaven and of eternal life. Whoever comes to him will be fully satisfied because the blessings in Christ are never exhausted there is more than enough for all who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matt. 14:13-21) (Matt. 16:9-10) (Mark 6:30-54) (Luke 9:1-20) (John 6:1-58).

### Seeking Signs.

Mark 8:10-12 ----- <sup>10</sup>And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. <sup>12</sup>And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation."

After feeding the four-thousand Jesus goes to town on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee called Dalmanutha and the Pharisees there ask him for a sign, but Jesus was disappointed that his generation were always seeking for signs before they would believe in him. How thrilled the Lord must have been when he found people who believed in him without any signs.

Even today within the global body of Christ there are people who constantly seek signs (physical and spiritual) to confirm or support their faith. When Thomas after seeing a sign confessed his faith in Christ, Jesus said to him: -

- Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed (John 20:26-28).

Jesus absolutely loves it when people trust him to save them without any outward evidence.

### **Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees and the Leaven of Herod.**

Mark 8:13-21 ----- <sup>13</sup>And he left them (the Pharisees) got into the boat again, and went to the other side. <sup>14</sup>Now they (the disciples) had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup>And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." <sup>16</sup>And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? <sup>18</sup>Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? <sup>19</sup>When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." <sup>20</sup>"And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." <sup>21</sup>And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

Jesus leaves the Pharisees and the town of Dalmanutha and sails to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

**Pharisees:** means the separated ones, they were rulers of the Jews and the most-strict and by far the most influential sect of the three prominent societies of Judaism that were around at the time of Christ (the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essences). Pharisees loved to wear distinguishing garb so as to be easily recognised and were found everywhere in Palestine not only in Jerusalem.

They made three contributions to Judaism so that ultimately Pharisaism and Judaism became almost synonymous. The changes the Pharisees made to the Jewish faith began in earnest after the Babylonian Captivity, the temple worship and the sacrifices had ceased so the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees began to centre the activities of Judaism in Jewish law, tradition and in the religious rites of the Synagogues.

### **The three changes the Pharisees made to Judaism: -**

1. **Jewish legalism:** the Scribes who were considered experts in interpreting the Scriptures studied the traditional exegesis of the Law which resulted in it becoming a major part of Jewish thought and giving Jewish legalism a great impetus during the New Testament era. The Pharisees closely associated with the scribes organised the followers of the scribes teaching in the Synagogues thus legalism became widespread in the Jewish faith.
2. **Formalised religion:** the Pharisees formalised the religion of the scribes and their interpretation of the law they placed it into the mind of Jewish faith and the practice of it in the synagogues and religious ceremony. The reason the scribes and Pharisees are often mentioned together in the New Testament is because though the Pharisees were not practical politicians like the more liberal Sadducees, they were the religious leaders of the Jews and the highest qualification for membership into the Pharisees was strict adherence to the Law (Oral or written).

3. **Organisation of Jewish religion:** after the seventy-year Babylonian captivity and the Maccabean Revolt (165 BC) the scribes increased tradition and adapted it with the Mosaic Law, but it was the Pharisees who formulated, developed and organised the scribes' teachings into Jewish religion itself. This increased focus on law and tradition resulted in separatism and an almost new religion, because much of it was the opposite from what had been handed down in the Covenant by the prophets.

### **The Pharisees became a Closely Organised Group**

The Pharisees were very loyal to their own society and to each other, but separate from others and even their own Jewish people, they pledged themselves to obey all facets of the traditions to minutest detail and were sticklers to ceremonial purity. This developed into a feeling of superiority over other nations and people. From this superior feeling as well as religious emotion, pride found its most extreme expression.

The Pharisees were haughty and arrogant because they believed they were the only interpreters of God's word. They made life difficult for themselves and bitter for others, and despised those whom they did not consider their equals. The Pharisees cultivated a national and religious consciousness, which has hardly been equalled. Their teaching that salvation came by maintaining tradition and keeping the law had such a strong influence on the minds of their followers that God's grace was thought to come from self-effort rather than grace so it was only natural that such a religion would ultimately become a matter of externals and not a faith of the heart.

**For further information see title: -**

- Sanhedrin in, Bible Dictionary (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**Leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod:** leaven means to ferment (as if boiling up) and figuratively to be hot eager, zealous, fervent, spirited, enthusiastic or earnest it is often used as a symbol of sin, hypocrisy and malice, whereas unleavened is used as a symbol of sincerity and truth. The leaven of the Pharisees was legalism and formalism and the leaven of Herod most likely refers to sexual adultery, wealth and materialism.

### **Do you Not yet Understand? (v21).**

Jesus question to his disciples, "Do you not yet understand?" implies that when he feed the five-thousand and the four-thousand they should have understood something other than the obvious fact multitudes ate food. The thing they should have recognised was the symbolism between Jesus feeding the five-thousand and the four-thousand with bread in a desolate place and the feeding of the children of Israel in the wilderness (also a desolate place) with manna in the Old Testament.

Had the disciples made this connection they would have seen that the feeding of the five-thousand and the four-thousand was a clear sign that Jesus was the true bread sent from God. Notice with the feeding of the manna and the feeding of the five-thousand and the four-thousand there was more than enough for everyone which perfectly depicts the abundant life and spiritual blessing to be found in Christ (i.e., forgiveness of sins, favour with God, hope, contentment, inner peace and joy all climaxing in deliverance from eternal death to eternal life).

### **Jesus Heals a Blind Man.**

Mark 8:22-26 ----- <sup>22</sup>And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. <sup>23</sup>And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" <sup>24</sup>And he looked up and said, "I see men, but they look like trees, walking." <sup>25</sup>Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup>And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

Jesus and the disciples arrive in Bethsaida a city in Palestine on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was the city of Philip, Andrew, and Peter. Jesus performed many miracles here and the feeding of the five-thousand took place in Bethsaida (very close to Capernaum).

Jesus later prophesies against the city because of unbelief. It is easy to understand why the Lord was so disappointment with his generation constantly seeking signs before they would believe (v12) because miracles no matter how great do not have the power to change a person's heart. This is the reason Jesus said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:26-28) how thrilled the Lord must be when people trust him to save them without any outward evidence.

**NOTICE:** it was not the blind man's faith that healed him but the faith of his friends, outwardly manifested in their taking the man to Jesus. Even though the blind mans friends believed Jesus could heal their friend they did not know if he would so they humbly asked him. Jesus takes the blind man out of the village and spits on his eyes then laid his hands on the man, but this only partially gave the man sight so Jesus laid his hands on the mans eyes again and he saw everything clearly.

**Jesus told the man not even to enter the village** (v26) after healing the blind man Jesus would have known if he goes back into the village and the townsfolk see him healed they will come by the multitude to Jesus to be healed. This is most likely why Jesus told the man not to enter the village (not forever but at least for that day). Jesus often told the people he had healed not to tell anyone because it was very difficult for him to get any time alone to pray and he rarely got time to rest, sleep or eat and his primary ministry wasn't to heal, but to take the Gospel to different towns villages and cities and to teach the twelve apostles.

**Peter confesses Jesus is the Christ.**

Mark 8:27-30 ----- <sup>27</sup>And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" <sup>28</sup>And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." <sup>29</sup>And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." <sup>30</sup>And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

Christ (Christos) means anointed (i.e., to consecrate to an office or religious service). Jesus left Bethsaida and while travelling to a city in the north of Palestine called Caesarea Philippi he asked Peter who does he think he is Peter's confession is so stunning because until this moment the multitudes following Jesus believed he was John the Baptist resurrected, or some great prophet like Elijah or Moses in the Old Testament. When Peter said, "You are the Christ," He was saying that Jesus is the one anointed by God, he is the one all the Old Testament Scriptures speak of and the one all the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied was to come.

**Jesus calls Peter Satan.**

Mark 8:31-33 ----- <sup>31</sup>And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Jesus clearly tells his disciples that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the Jewish elders, the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again, though the Lord told the disciples this several times they never fully understood what he meant until after the resurrection.

**Jesus rebukes Peter:** Jesus rebuked Peter saying, "Get behind me, satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." The word satan comes from the Greek word satanas and does not have a capital "S" because it simply means an opposer or one who withstands the things of God which is exactly what Peter is doing at the moment.

**For further information on satan see the title: -**

- Satan in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**Take up the Cross and Deny Your-Self.**

Mark 8:34-38 ----- <sup>34</sup>And he called to him the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? <sup>37</sup>For what can a man give in return for his life? <sup>38</sup>For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

**Take up the cross:** if anyone would come after me, let them take up their cross and follow me, Jesus has just told the disciples that he was going to suffer and be killed the focus of the statement take up your cross is eternal death and eternal life. Jesus was taking up his cross in that he allowed the religious leaders and the Romans to cruelly mock him, beat him and put him to death thus, taking up your cross in this context means be prepared to suffer for the Lord even unto death.

**Deny self:** denying self is contrasted with saving ones life in (v35). Jesus is saying whoever wants to follow him must be prepared to give up their mortal life for him if called to do so and by extension deny what self, ego and pride wants. Self does not want to be accountable, but free to do or have whatever it desires. Following Christ will mean denying self in various degrees at various times it may be family, friends, time, money, a career or worldly ambition, fame, importance, material possessions or even life itself.

**NOTE:** this does not mean that we have to give up our families and friends, but that should they put us in a position of choosing them or choosing Christ then the choice must be Christ.

**What does it profit to gain the whole world and lose life?:** the expression, "To save one's life" not only embraces the idea of denying Christ to avoid persecution or even death, but living to fulfil what self, ego and pride etc., wants. It includes building a life that gets its comfort joy and pleasure from worldly things rather than from God and spending all of our time and energy on gaining material assets or fame at the expense of giving anytime to God.

The principal of denying self and taking up your cross begins the moment a person is faced with the decision to accept or deny Christ according to their answer they will save their life or loose it, but the principal doesn't end here rather it continues throughout a persons ongoing lifestyle. Denying self and taking up your cross carries the thought of following Christ to eternal life but the path is filled with a continual denying of what self, ego and pride want.

**What can a person give in return for their Life?**

Jesus is saying if anyone is ashamed of accepting him so that they can keep their family and friends or because they want to spend their life gaining worldly wealth, material possessions and fame etc., then he will reject them when he returns as King of king and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

This group (those who have denied Christ) even if they have succeeded and gained the entire world will loose their life because it is not enough to buy them eternal life. There is no amount of money or material possession this world has that can be traded for eternal life, thus (v37) could read, "For what does the world have that a dying man can give to God in return for his life?" Jesus is contrasting the person who spends all their life chasing after the temporal things of this world to the person who is prepared to die for Christ. One will save their life for all eternity while the other will loose it to eternal death (i.e., total extinction).