



Do You Still Not Understand?

Key idea:

Even after Jesus miraculously fed a multitude a second time in the wilderness, the Pharisees refused to believe and the disciples still lacked understanding of Jesus and His ways.

Key text:

Mark 8:1-21

During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ² “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.” ⁴ His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?” ⁵ “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they replied. ⁶ He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. ⁷ They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. ⁸ The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ⁹ About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, ¹⁰ he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

¹¹ The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. ¹² He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it.” ¹³ Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. ¹⁴ The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵ “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.” ¹⁶ They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.”

¹⁷ Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don’t you remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” “Twelve,” they replied. ²⁰ “And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” They answered, “Seven.” ²¹ He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

Key points:

1. Mark 6:31-7:37 and Mark 8:1-30 are parallel in their structure, including a second feeding of a multitude in the wilderness.
2. Although there are many similarities between the two feedings of the multitude, there are also key differences, including that the first feeding was predominately to Jews, while the second one was a mixed group which was probably largely comprised of Gentiles.
3. When Jesus returned to Jewish regions, He was immediately greeted by a group of hostile Pharisees who tempted/tested Jesus by demanding a sign, which Jesus refused because it was evidence of stubborn rebellious hearts (like the wilderness generation displayed - Psalm 95:7-11).
4. When they get in the boat to leave again, the disciples utterly misunderstand Jesus' parable about bread and yeast, thinking He is chiding them about forgetting to get bread when He was actually warning them against the spirit and teaching of the Pharisees and Herod.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. What similarities do I see between the feeding of the multitude in the wilderness in Mark 6:31-44 and the feeding in Mark 8:1-9? What differences do I see?
3. Bret showed the following table of a parallel structure between Mark 6-7 and Mark 8 (adapted from William Lane). What does this teach me about God's patience in teaching the disciples? Do I ever see God working in a similar way in my life?

Mark 6-7 text	Topic	Mark 8 text
6:31-44	Feeding the Crowd	8:1-9
6:45-56	Crossing the Sea	8:10
7:1-23	Conflict with Pharisees	8:11-13
7:24-30	Parable About Bread	8:14-21
7:31-36	Healing	8:22-26
7:37	Confession of Faith	8:27-30

4. Why is Jesus so harsh with the request of the Pharisees for a sign from heaven? Why doesn't he just give some miraculous sign?
5. In the parallel account of this encounter in Matthew 16:4, Jesus says one sign will be given - the sign of Jonah. How is Jonah a sign pointing toward Jesus, His ministry, and His impending death, burial, and resurrection? Did the Pharisees believe this sign? Why or why not?
6. Why did the disciples miss the meaning of Jesus' parable of the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod? Why did they find it so hard to understand the things Jesus was trying to teach them?
7. Can I identify one or more areas where I find it difficult to understand God and His ways? Make it a priority to spend time in prayer this week, asking the Lord to soften your heart so that you might truly hear, see, and understand.
8. Who can I reach out to this week to share the Gospel or strengthen their faith?