

Eastern Christian Bible Class
Gospel of Jesus Christ
According to St. Mark
Chapter Eight

READ: 8:1-10

OSB (Orthodox Study Bible) Note 8:1-9; cf. Mt 15:32-39, p. 1298

OBS: This is now the second multiplication of the loaves (the first being in chapter six, v. 30-44). This one occurs in the mixed Jewish Gentile area of Decapolis. This group of dedicated followers were untiringly devoted to Him & sat listening to Him for 3 days with nothing to eat. Most likely this was according to Jewish reckoning of days (like our Lord's 3-day burial), where each part of day is counted for one day. P. 118

Either way they stand as an example for us. Are we that hungry for God's word that we put this even before our own stomachs and physical needs? The practice of fasting is one example of this.

OBS: As a result of their devotion, our Lord has "splug-xni-zo-mai" for them (v. 2, "heartfelt love," as also used in 6:34). Rather than just dismiss and send them away, what does Jesus say (v. 3)? this observation about the crowd's need is meant as an invitation to to the disciples to see if they have learned anything from the lesson they learned the last time he fed a hungry crowd.

Did they learn their lesson?

OBS: As the Gospel mentions at the end of chapter six, the apostles still suffer from "hardness of heart" (6:52). So what is their response (v. 4)? Notice our Lord's response. Rather than rebuke the Apostles for not learning from the last multiplication, what does He patiently say (v. 5)? Then the Lord has them recline on the ground as in anticipation for a feast. P. 118-119

OBS: Next the Lord gave thanks (as in 6:41), broke the loaves and gave them to His disciples to give to the crowd.

St. Mark says the crowds eat "to the full" even though all he had (as before) were the few little-fish (in Greek "ixthudion"). Remember we talked about the early Christian acronym for Jesus which was a confession of faith:

In the early Church the fish was a secret symbol which represented Jesus. The Greek word **ichthys** or ichthus, from the Greek ikhthýs (ἰχθύς, "fish"), **ΙΧΘΥΣ** (Ichthus) was an [acronym/acrostic\[5\]](#) for "Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ", (Iēsous Christos, Theou Yios, Sōtēr), which translates into English as "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour".

Iota (i) is the first letter of **Iēsous** (Ἰησοῦς), Greek for "Jesus".

Chi (ch) is the first letter of **Christos** (Χριστός), Greek for "anointed".

Theta (th) is the first letter of *Theou* (Θεου), Greek for "God's", the genitive case of Θεός, *Theos*, Greek for "God".

Upsilon (y) is the first letter of *(h)uios*^[6] (Υἱός), Greek for "Son".

Sigma (s) is the first letter of *sōtēr* (Σωτήρ), Greek for "Savior".

Notice, just as in the Gospel of John (Chp. 6), they ate as much of the fish as they wanted "and were filled" (v. 8). The meaning behind this is Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior (as ICHTHUS means), can fill our emptiness... completely.

OBS: Once again there is an abundance of left over pieces. We don't have to hoard Jesus or keep Him to ourselves. There's plenty of Him to go around for everyone.

OBS: The overtones of this passage are distinctly Eucharistic. The Church when she prays her Eucharistic prayer (known as the Anaphora) uses these distinct words of our Lord following St. Paul's description of the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:24), where he states our Lord, "took bread, and when He had given thanks [Gr. eucharisto], He broke it and gave it to them, and said, 'This is My Body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" St. Mark is showing that this miracle is a sign of the Holy Eucharist whereby Jesus would feed us with Himself, His Body and His Blood. "It would seem this was Mark's intention, especially since he not only uses the Greek word for "giving thanks" in verse 6, "eucharisto"), but also

reproduce the Eucharistic actions of thanksgiving, breaking and giving to the disciples (see 14:22).

Finally notice that it is especially stressed (v. 6), that the food was given to the crowd through His apostles. Just as in the Holy Eucharist, where God's people are fed on Christ through His clergy. Fr. Farley concludes this thought stating, "The purpose of this parallel is to show his Church audience that Christ even now is in their midst, miraculously sustaining them even as He did His devoted followers of old." P. 120

Q. Recall what the priest says when we come for the final blessing at the end of Liturgy? "Christ is among us." Our reply is: "He is and will be."

READ 8:11-12

OSB Note: 8:11; cf. Mt. 16:1-3, p. 1298

OSB: This testing of Jesus by the Pharisees is reminiscent of how faithless Israel tested God in the wilderness after they came out from Egypt (Ps. 94:9-10). Jesus refuses to submit to such testing because their desire does not spring from a sincere love of truth but from faithless hearts. It is this faithlessness that would lead to their final rejection of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Q. What effect does their faithlessness have on Jesus (v. 12)? A. He sighs or groans deeply in his spirit. Its the same word "anastenazo" used in the Old Testament by Susanna (v. 22 in the beginning of Daniel) when she was lamenting her inevitable doom. P. 121

OBS: Jesus' reply to their disbelief and request for a sign is a solemn oath, "Amen, I say to you..." Using such strong verbal form is Jesus' way of making it clear that they would never be given such a requested sign. P. 121

READ 8:13-21

OBS: After Jesus refuses their requested sign he then leaves them, not just as a geographical relocation but as a statement that He is repudiating their faith-less-ness. P. 121

OBS: Next our Lord is concerned that His disciples not get misled with the Pharisee's hypocrisy. So, as they travel across the lake, He ordered His Apostles (v. 15, Gr. "diastello" -a strong, emphatic word) not to fall prey to their disease.

OBS: Jesus' mention of the Pharisees along with King Herod was unusual combination b/c these two groups had little in common. The only thing they really agreed on was their opposition to Jesus (P. 122).

OSB Note: 8:15

OBS: The leaven of His enemies is, of course, their teaching and attitude. This comes out more clearly in Jesus' original language of Aramaic b/c the words for teaching (amirah) and Leaven (hamirah) are homonymns - spelled differently but sounding the same.

Though they pretended to be pious and motivated by a desire to do God's will, they are actually hypocritical and determined to do their own will.

OBS: Q. Do the Apostles understand His meaning & that He is speaking parabolic-ally? A. No, they take him literally that he's talking about leaven.

OBS: The Apostles likely thought Jesus was talking about bread b/c they had forgotten to take enough bread in their hurry to depart (v. 14). They probably began blaming each other for this oversight and so this is why they thought the Lord was speaking of leaven.

OBS: Jesus is apparently weary of their lack of insight and failure to understand His power (cf. 6:52). Had they already forgotten His power in the previous multiplication of loaves? They had eyes and ears but they could not see or hear all that He had already accomplished in their midst.

OBS: Then (v. 18 & 19) Jesus tries to jolt their memory. He concludes (v. 21) if they can remember such miracles as clearly and easily as that, how was it that they did not

yet have insight into His power and know that He could easily multiply the loaf to feed twelve men. Jesus' warning about the leaven of the Pharisees should have been understood by them that He was not concerned with their stomachs but instead with their hearts! They must not follow the Pharisees' false teaching!

[INTRO TO NEXT SECTION]

READ 8:22-26

OSB Note 8:22-26

OBS: The story of the healing of the blind man comes at a turning point to a new section. This story is told to show the blindness of Jesus' disciples, who (like the blind man) are only gradually coming to see who Jesus really is. Like the blind man from Bethsaida, the disciples also are blind to Jesus' true messianic mission.

Bethsaida is a town on the northeastern side of the sea of Galilee. The blind man is led to the Lord (v. 22) and the people beg Jesus to touch & heal him.

Jesus takes the blind man by the hand (v. 23) and leads him out of the village. His desire is only to relieve the long-suffering of the blind man and to avoid any publicity as a wonder worker.

What does Jesus use to heal the blind man (v. 23)? He again uses saliva as a form of natural anointing, since this was a recognized to have [proverbial] curative properties.

The Greek words that St. Mark uses to tell what follows have a very interesting progression:

First (v. 23), Jesus asks if he saw anything (Gr. blepo).

Secondly (v. 24), the man looks up (Gr. anablepo).

Next (v. 24), the man states, " I see men like trees... (blepo).

Then (v. 25), Jesus put His hands on his eye to complete his healing and the man then looked up which really should be "looked hard" (Gr. diablepo) to look intently to stare, to open the eyes wide.

Finally (v. 25) it states the man the man's sight was restored and He saw everybody clearly (Gr. emblepo).

So it was until his healing that he could look intently upon everything and clearly see and understand. We all need healing from sin to be able to see clearly to recognize the reality of things. This is one of the reasons we baptize infants to grant them the healing that comes only from God to help enable them to see clearly in this world right from wrong, truth from lies, light from darkness.

Q. What is the man's reaction to His healing?

Q. What is the Lord's reaction to the man's reaction?

Why? Was Jesus' real mission to bring physical healing to us all?

Jesus didn't come to take away all of our earthly crosses. He came to bring us His supernatural, divine power so that we could be able to bare & carry them.

READ 8:27-30

OSB Note: 8:27-30 cf. Mt 16:13-20, p. 1299

So this is still part of the transition point. St. Mark uses the physical enlightenment of the blind man as a segway to the spiritual enlightenment of the disciples. Their leader, Peter, finally steps forward and confesses Jesus to be the long-awaited Messiah. This is the climax of this section by St. Mark. From this point forward, Jesus begins immediately on the long road to the Cross.

OBS: Next Jesus & His disciples go out to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. This was about 25 miles north of Bethsaida and Hellenistic in culture. It was an area where He could avoid those Jews who wanted to make Him an earthly king. Next (v. 27) Jesus uses this opportunity to ask His disciples what the public opinion is of Him. Then (v. 29) He asks the disciples, at this point, who they think He is (and the You is emphatic). Q. What's their answer?

OBS: Peter acting as spokesman for the group answers: "You are the Christ." Finally... the Twelve Disciples get it! The entire Gospel up to this point has been showing how they didn't get it. But now their faith in Him is becoming

real. They still must learn what kind of messiah He is (a messiah that would die in agony, v. 31), but at least now they believe He is the Messiah. P. 128-129

Fr. Lawrence Farley concludes this section stating: "For us today, such a confession seems too self-evident to be so momentous. but that's because our understanding of messiahship has been shaped by Peter's confession and the Church's faith. [Hindsight is 20/20]. In Israel at that time, the Messiah was popularly thought to be a military figure -one who would come on the clouds with heavenly glory, to smite the enemies of God and shed the blood of roman occupiers and exalt Israel to international prominence. To see in the humble and peaceful Nazarene the glorious Messiah of God and Deliverer of Israel was indeed a momentous revelation. Merely human insight and guess work could not reveal (or explain) this -but only God in heaven" (Matt 16:17).

READ 8:31-33

OSB Note: 8:31-33; cf. Mt 16:21-23, p. 1300

OBS: This journey Jesus is on now to Jerusalem to be crucified is marked by three separate predictions of the Passion (8:31f, 9:31f; 10:32). Each one of these predictions is coupled with a lapse in faith by the Apostles: Peter rebukes Jesus when He teaches that He is to die (8:32, 33), all of the Twelve argue over worldly greatness (9:34, 35); and John and James try to secure the first place in the Kingdom through favoritism (10:35f).

OBS: This shows that although they have confessed Him as messiah, they still have a ways to go in understanding what the true mission of the messiah involves. So Jesus had to explain to them that although the popular idea of the messiah was that He would be a great military leader, The Scriptures teach something quite opposite (cf. Mk 8:31). Jesus taught this Word of God to them quite openly & boldly (v. 32).

In Greek it is: παρρησία parrhēsia, par-rhay-see'-ah; from [G3956](#) and a derivative of [G4483](#); all out-spokenness, i.e. frankness, bluntness, publicity; by implication, assurance:—bold (X -ly, -ness, -ness of speech), confidence, x freely, x openly, x plainly(-ness).

OBS: Peter, however, is horrified. Not only did such thinkgs flyiin the face of popular Jewish expectations, but they were also a dagger through his heart, because Peter loved his Lord and could not bear the thought of Him suffereing humiliation and crucifixion. So, He takes the Lord aside and begins rebuking Him -but this is probably out of sheer horror (Mt 16:22).

OBS: Despite Jesus' great love for His chief Apostle, He recognizes how fatal Peter's attitude is to His entire messianic mission and the mission of His Church. Its similar attitude in the hearts of the crowd who tried to make Him King (John 6:15); Is the same attitude which would eventyally lead the crowd to disowning Him when

they realized He wasn't bringing them military victory over the Romans (15:11-14).

As Jesus states (v. 33) it's an attitude mindful of the "things of men" rather than the "things of God." Therefore Peter, as a result of harboring such worldly attitudes gets called what? "Satan" which means adversary in Hebrew. Not only is Peter an adversary but he is scandal to Jesus.

σκάνδαλον skándalon, skan'-dal-on; ("scandal"); probably from a derivative of [G2578](#); a trap-stick (bent sapling), i.e. snare (figuratively, cause of displeasure or sin):—occasion to fall (of stumbling), offence, thing that offends, stumblingblock.

Since Peter is a direct stumbling block influence by the evil one to trip up Jesus on His road to the Cross for our salvation: Where does Jesus tell this stumbling block, named Peter (which means what??? -Rock)? He tells Peter to go behind Him.

Jesus is telling Peter that he has become His adversary by embodying these attitudes. Rather than presume to be Jesus' teacher, Peter must return to his place of being the disciple; he must get behind Jesus and return to being His follower, rather than His leader.

This is something we all must beware of. Are we following God's will for our life? Are we obeying His law of truth and love and putting this before our will? Or are we living how we like and allowing Jesus to follow us along a little in our lives?

The way to follow Jesus is explained to us by the Lord Himself in v. 34-38. Let's close on these words which speak (very well) all by themselves:

READ 8:34-38

OSB Note 8:34-38, cf. Mt 16:24-26, p. 1300

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"With God all things are possible... We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us... Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel!"