

LESSON 6

QUESTIONS CONCERNING CHRIST'S IDENTITY

Mark 6:1—8:26

Introduction

The miracles and authoritative teachings of Jesus caused speculation to increase concerning the nature of His mission. Demons had recognized His supernatural power, and the crowds of men and women came to Him for healing, but apparently they had drawn no certain conclusion concerning His nature. After Jesus rebuked the wind during the storm on the sea, His disciples stated in fear and amazement, 'Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?' (Mark 4:41, RSV). The synoptic accounts of Jesus' baptism give no clear indication of whether any one other than Jesus heard the voice from heaven and saw the Spirit descending upon Him. John's Gospel states that John the Baptist beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven (1:32), but he testified that he did not recognize Him as the Messiah at first (1:31). In Mark's Gospel, the identity of Jesus is left uncertain until the confession of Peter at Caesarea of Philippi.

Jesus' Rejection in Nazareth

Mark 6:1-6

In the city of His childhood, Jesus was known as the carpenter, after the trade of His father, and as the son of Mary (Matt. 13:55). The fact that Joseph is not mentioned has led to the general conclusion that he had died. Only Mark and the parallel passage in Matthew 13:55 mention the names of His brothers and the fact that He had sisters. Nothing is known of the brothers and sisters, except James who became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and possibly was author of the Epistle of James. Judas may have been the author of the short epistle by that name.

Mark noted that Jesus returned to his own country. On the Sabbath day, He entered the synagogue and began to teach (v. 2). Luke 4:17-18 indicates that He read from Isaiah 61:1-2. It was customary for the ruler of the synagogue to invite someone to read the Scripture and then comment on it. Those present were astonished at the wisdom of Jesus' teachings and the mighty works which He performed (v. 2). Jesus had grown up among them and apparently had lived a relatively normal life (v. 3). His teachings in the synagogue, however, implied that He was chosen of God for a unique leadership role (see Luke 4:18-30). Mark does not record what Jesus read and taught. Perhaps He alluded to the mighty works wrought by His hands and related them to Isaiah 61:1, implying that the messianic Kingdom was being established through Him. Because of their familiarity with Jesus' boyhood and His family, the people of Nazareth could not believe that God was visiting His people in the person of a carpenter's son (v. 3). Jesus responded by comparing His own experience to that of the prophets (v. 4). John

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Mark's Gospel leaves the identity of Jesus as Messiah uncertain until the confession of _____ at _____ of _____.

(Peter, Caesarea, Philippi)

TRUE OR FALSE?

It is generally concluded that Joseph had died when Jesus began his ministry because he is not mentioned.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

List the names of Jesus' brothers.

(See Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55.)

READ ISAIAH 61:1. THEN WRITE WHAT JESUS IMPLIED BY READING THIS PASSAGE IN THE SYNAGOGUE.

(The messianic kingdom was being established through Him.)

summarized His situation in the words, 'He came unto his own, and his own received him not' (1:11).

Mark made the abrupt judgement that Jesus could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief (v. 5). Since the people did not believe that the Divine was intervening in history in the person of Jesus Christ, they remained under the control of the prince of this world and thus continued to suffer the results of his evil work. Mark notes that only a few sick people were healed.

The Mission of the Twelve Mark 6:7-13

Mark's account of the call and commissioning of the Twelve is amplified in Matthew 10. In addition to the sending out of the Twelve, Luke records the appointment of seventy others and the sending out of them two by two ahead of Jesus to every city (10:1ff.). The instructions given to the Seventy are similar to those given to the Twelve.

Herod's Estimate of Jesus and the Death of John Mark 6:14-29

Jesus' fame had spread to the extent that even rulers knew of Him and His activities. King Herod (Herod Antipas), who was not actually king but tetrarch of Galilee, had illegally married his niece Herodias, who had previously been married to her uncle Herod Philip, son of Herod the Great and Mariamne II. Herodias deserted her first husband to marry another uncle, Herod Antipas, who had divorced his first companion for her. John the Baptist had denounced publicly the sins of both (vv. 18-19). Herod Antipas was aware of his guilt and respected John for his courageous stand (v. 20). Herodias was insensate because of the public disgrace which resulted from John's accusations (v. 19). She desired to have him killed and was able to accomplish his death through her daughter Salome, after Salome had pleased her stepfather during a court feast (vv. 21-22). Herod promised her a gift of her own choosing up to half of his kingdom (v. 23). Salome's mother intrigued to have John beheaded (v. 24). The king was sorry that he had made a vow that could cause him to execute John, but he felt obligated to keep his foolish promise (vv. 26-28). Rash oaths had brought Jephthah into agony (Judg. 11:31ff.).

Why Mark gave such an extensive description of John's imprisonment and death is uncertain unless he desired to explain the origin of the rumours, mentioned at Caesarea Philippi, which identified Jesus with John the Baptist (Mark 8:28). John's experience did depict the conflict between the powers of evil and of righteousness. The kingdom over which Herod ruled could never be the Kingdom of God. Herod's actions may have been partly the result of fear that John's movement would develop into a revolution and cause him to lose favour with Rome. After John had been put to death, the threat of revolution continued.

Mark notes that, when Herod heard of Jesus, he concluded that John the Baptist was risen from the dead (Mark 6:14). Herod likely suffered deep guilt and expected punishment from God for his evil deed. He concluded that Jesus was John

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Unbelief limited Jesus' work of healing in Nazareth because, since the people did not believe that the D _____ was intervening in h _____, they remained under the control of S _____.

(Divine, history, Satan)

Which Gospel records the appointment of seventy to go out with similar instructions as those given to the Twelve? _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

List Herod's and Herodias' sins which were denounced by John the Baptist.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

How did Herodias get revenge?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

the Baptist who had risen from the dead and returned to be the rod of God's punishment against him.

Mark noted others said that Jesus was Elijah whom the prophets predicted would appear before the great and terrible Day of the Lord (v. 15; see Mal. 4:5). Others said that he was like one of the prophets of old. Because of the statement in Deuteronomy 18:18, the rabbis had taught that God would send a prophet or a teacher to guide the Jewish people into righteousness before the day of God's visitation and power. The identification of Jesus by the people reflected their strong expectancy of the arrival of the Messianic Age, but they had not definitely identified Jesus as the Anointed of God who would be the great leader. Herod probably was frustrated by the desire to retain his position and by the fear of laying hands on God's Anointed.

The Return of the Twelve and the Feeding of the Five Thousand Mark 6:30-44

Mark reveals the intensification of activities pointing towards a climax. The disciples returned and reported all that had been done (v. 30). Jesus determined to take them apart for a time of quietness, but the crowds saw them departing and followed them (vv. 31-33). Although Jesus withdrew to avoid the crowds, they appeared before Him across the lake like a shepherdless flock (v. 34). Jesus' response to the shepherdless people indicated that their spiritual leaders were without true discernment and dedication. There was no one to meet their spiritual needs.

The feeding of the five thousand recalls the experience of the children of Israel in the wilderness. In compassion, Yahweh miraculously provided manna and quail for them during their sojourn in the desolate country. Jesus' teachings had extended far beyond the time for the meal. As the day drew to a close, the disciples suggested that the crowd be dispersed to a nearby settlement where they could procure food for themselves (vv. 35-36). Jesus responded with the command for the disciples to give them something to eat (v. 37). The disciples replied that it would cost 200 denarii, the equivalent of wages for 200 days of work. Mark presented these details to reveal the magnitude of the miracle required to provide sufficient food. Only two fish and five loaves of bread were available to feed the multitudes (v. 38). Jesus commanded the people to sit down. After blessing the food, He broke it and gave it to the disciples to set before the crowd which had been organized into companies of hundreds and fifties (vv. 40-41). The five thousand men were satisfied, and twelve baskets of broken pieces were left over (vv. 42-43). The miracle indicated that God would provide for His people in the new deliverance from the power of evil as He had during the time of deliverance from Egyptian slavery and sojourn in the wilderness.

According to John's account, Jesus followed the miracle with a discourse on the Bread of Life (6:5ff.). John also notes that the Jews were ready to force Jesus to be king (6:15ff.). In the teachings growing out of this miracle (an example of theological interpretation of a historical event), John reveals that Jesus made reference to the manna in the wilderness which the

READ THE ACCOUNT OF JOHN'S DEATH AT THE HANDS OF HEROD IN MARK 6:14-19.

Why did Herod say, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'

(Compare your answer with the text.)

READ JOHN 6:31-40 AS WELL AS MARK'S ACCOUNT OF THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND.

To what provision by God in the Old Testament did the feeding of the five thousand relate?

(manna and quail for the children of Israel in the wilderness)

heavenly Father had provided. John indicates that this miracle was a sign of God's new visitation to His people. The purpose of God's power being expressed through His Son was not, however, to meet physical needs alone. Jesus likened Himself to the bread which God sent down from heaven and promised that whoever came to Him would never hunger but would have everlasting life and would be raised at the last day (John 6:31-40). John shows that this miracle pointed to Christ's death and resurrection which would provide for the spiritual needs of His people and were later symbolized in the Lord's Supper.

Walking on the Sea of Galilee Mark 6:45-52

Mark does not state, as John does, that the people were at the point of making Jesus king; however, Mark points out that Jesus withdrew to the hills (vv. 45-46). Perhaps the withdrawal was to prevent the crowds from carrying out their intention which Jesus had detected. The disciples were sent away in a boat lest they should catch the 'messianic fever'. At that time, they did not fully understand His mission.

The miracle of walking on the water is difficult to understand. The explanations that He only appeared to be walking on the water and that He was merely walking in shallow water are certainly not in accord with what Mark wrote. The miracle shows that Jesus shared the power of God as the Lord of creation, and it recalls again incidents connected with the deliverance from Egypt under the first Covenant. The presence of God in the cloud provided protection for the Israelites to escape from the Egyptians; He opened the Red Sea for their safe crossing. Without the protective presence of God in Jesus, the disciples faced the danger of a turbulent sea (v. 48). Christ brought calm and safety (v. 50). The experience taught the disciples that they were dependent on their Master. It also contributed to their view of Jesus as more than human: 'They were sore amazed in themselves' (v. 51). Even after the miracle of the loaves, they had not understood fully that Jesus was divine and could be trusted to provide for their needs.

Healings at Gennesaret Mark 6:53-56

Mark gives a summary description of the positive response of the people in contrast to the opposition of the Pharisees. Jesus' popularity is implied by the statement that many brought their sick to Him for healing (v. 55). Jesus and His disciples had returned from Bethsaida, east of the point where the Jordan River flows into the Sea of Galilee, to Gennesaret, a small plain close to Capernaum.

The Nature of Cleanliness Mark 7:1-23

The controversy with the Pharisees (7:1-13)

Mark returns to incidents of conflict with the Pharisees. Upon noticing that some of Jesus' disciples were not careful to wash their hands before meals, the Pharisees from Jerusalem

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

1. John indicates that the miracle pointed to Christ's _____ and _____ which would provide for the spiritual needs of His people.
2. The feeding of the five thousand was related later to the L S _____ which symbolizes God's provision for the spiritual n _____ of His people in the n _____ deliverance.

(death, resurrection, Lord's Supper, needs, new)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Jesus dispersed the crowd and sent the disciples away because:

1. The people were at the point of making Him _____.
2. He did not want His disciples to catch the '_____ fever'.

(1. king, 2. messianic)

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Jesus only appeared to be walking on the water. _____
2. Without the protective presence of God in Jesus, the disciples faced the danger of a turbulent sea. _____
3. The experience taught the disciples that they were dependent on their Master. _____

(1. false, 2. true, 3. true)

raised the question of religious purity (v. 2). They contended that religious impurity was caught from external contacts. The question of hand washing did not centre in hygiene but in religious purity. Laws regulating purity were based on the oral traditions: 'Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?' (v. 5). The rabbis taught that Moses received the tradition on Mount Sinai, and it had been passed down orally by the prophets to the men of the Great Synagogue. The oral tradition, or 'tradition of the elders', was as binding as the written Law of the Old Testament.

To defile means to make common, to profane, or to make impure. It is the opposite of holy which means to separate to the worship and service of God. The practices of the Pharisees transformed every meal into a religious rite.

Since Mark was writing to Gentile readers, he explained the Pharisees' custom of not eating unless they carefully washed their hands (vv. 3-4). In the market places, they necessarily handled and touched items which idolatrous Gentiles had contacted. To protect themselves from the idolatry and sins of Gentiles, they performed ritual washings. Jesus gave the following answers to their complaints concerning His disciples:

1. With reference to Isaiah 29:13, He pointed out the denunciation by the prophet of those who worshipped God with their lips (externally) but not with their hearts (see v. 6). His implication was that the Pharisees were doing the same.
2. Jesus accused the Pharisees of setting aside God's law in order to keep their own traditions (vv. 7-13). He illustrated this accusation by referring to the Fifth Commandment which stated that a man was to honour his father and mother. Pharisaical tradition permitted a man with property to say 'corban' (dedicated to God) which meant that he would will his possessions to the Temple, thus justifying by a 'noble' act his refusal to support his aging parents. Jesus pointed out that the policy of dedicating possessions to the Temple indicated a lack of love and concern for parents and thus broke the Fifth Commandment. The act itself grew out of pride and greed: it was designed to bring the praise of men. The possessions, however, did not fall under the control of the Temple until the death of the donor.
3. Spiritual defilement is not based on contact with evil people or profane things. Spiritual defilement is concerned with the inner man—his attitude, his motives, and his desires which determine his relation to God and his fellow-man. Real purity is purity of the heart.

The source of defilement (7:14-23)

As previously stated, the real defilement comes from man's wrong attitudes and motives—from within. The Jews believed that certain foods defiled or made them unclean. Mark states that, according to Jesus, all foods are clean. It is not the food which goes into a man's body that defiles him, but the evil of his heart which proceeds from him in words and actions (v. 15). A man is alienated from God and from his fellow-man

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Neglect by some of Jesus' disciples to wash their hands before meals raised the question of r _____ p _____.

(religious purity)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Jesus used Isaiah's denunciation of those who worshipped God with their _____ but not with their _____ to imply that pharisaical washings were superficial.

(lips, hearts)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Jesus accused the Pharisees of setting aside God's _____ in order to keep their own _____.

(law, traditions)

UNDERLINE THE CORRECT WORD OR WORDS.

Spiritual defilement is based on (*outer contacts with evil, attitudes of the heart*).

(*attitudes of the heart*)

READ MARK 7:15.

Christians are released from the ritual law of purification because this verse tells us that it is not what goes _____ the _____ that _____ but the evil of the _____.

(*into, body, defiles, heart*)

by his attitudes, not by what he eats. A man's evil thoughts lead to evil actions. Mark notes that Jesus used a parable, actually a figurative teaching, to illustrate the teaching (v. 17). He added the interpretative statement, 'Thus he declared all foods clean', to explain why Gentile Christians did not observe ceremonial laws (v. 19, RSV).

Jesus' teaching in this section challenged the authority of the oral Law and revealed His attitude towards parts of the written Law. Christians follow the example of Christ by accepting only the written Old Testament Law and disregarding the ceremonial law concerning clean and unclean animals. The Christian understanding is that parts of the Old Testament have been fulfilled and the ritual in them should no longer be followed. The question of which parts of the Old Testament Canon continue to be binding on Christians is not easily answered. Many Christians give emphasis to Old Testament teachings which prepare for and point to Jesus Christ.

A key distinction between Judaism and Christianity is dealt with in these verses. Judaism conceives of righteousness as being the result of man's adhering to moral laws and the breaking of them is to be expiated through religious ceremonies—both are accomplishments of man. Christianity sees man's heart as being so depraved that he cannot achieve righteousness. Therefore, he must depend on God for a new birth or regeneration by the Spirit of power and for cleansing through the blood of Christ. Man's evil actions come from an evil heart; man is evil in nature. His nature defiles his actions rather than his actions defiling his nature (vv. 21-23).

Ministering in Gentile Territory

Mark 7:24—8:9

Healing a Gentile girl (7:24-30)

The ministry of Jesus was threatened by the misguided enthusiasm of His friends, the opposition of the Pharisees, and the suspicion of the tetrarch Herod. Jesus withdrew for quiet rest, but Mark does not suggest that it was flight from the dangers of Herod (v. 24). Perhaps He was looking for some respite from the pressures of the crowd. Although Jesus had commanded silence concerning His mighty works and identity, His fame had spread, and He could not find seclusion. Jesus withdrew to Tyre and Sidon in the region north of Galilee.

After Mark reveals that food does not determine a man's status with God, he then shows that neither nationality nor race are determining factors. Mark identifies the woman who brought her daughter to Jesus as being Syro-Phoenician: her race was Phoenician, and she lived in the province of Syria. Mark referred to her as a Greek because of her language and probably because of her religion (v. 26). Upon beseeching Jesus to heal her daughter, the woman received the answer that salvation belonged first to the Jews (v. 27). Jesus' statement to the woman seems rather harsh. The 'children' is a reference to Israel and 'the dogs' is a reference to Gentiles. Jesus did use the term for domesticated or household dogs rather than stray curs. The woman rose to the occasion, responding in humility and faith. She replied that even the household dogs eat the children's crumbs (v. 28). Her response teaches that no Gentile

FILL IN THE BLANK.

Mark 7:19 says, 'Thus he declared all _____ clean.'

(Compare your answer with the text.)

LIST THREE THREATS TO THE MINISTRY OF JESUS.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(1. misguided enthusiasm of His friends, 2. opposition of the Pharisees, 3. suspicion of the tetrarch Herod)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

By relating the account of the healing of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter, Mark reveals that just as food does not determine man's status with God neither are n _____ and r _____ determining factors. Thus the gospel is for _____ as well as Jews.

(nationality, race, Gentiles)

should be offended that God in His own mysterious way chose to make Himself known in history through the Jewish nation. Because of the woman's faith, Jesus healed her daughter (vv. 29-30).

Healing the deaf and dumb man (7:31-37)

After Jesus returned from the region in the northwest to the area east of the Sea of Galilee, He healed a deaf and dumb man (vv. 31-32). Decapolis was predominantly Gentile territory. After Jesus healed the man privately (apart from the crowds but in the presence of His disciples and the man's friends), He charged the man and the disciples to remain silent about the miracle (vv. 33-36). His command to silence was not obeyed (v. 36). Such a significant event as the coming of the Messiah could not be kept secret.

Physical contact in healing is frequently noted by Mark to emphasize the passing of power from Jesus to the afflicted organ of the sick. Jesus placed His finger in the ear of the deaf mute and touched His own saliva to his tongue (v. 33). He commanded the ears to be opened.

Feeding of the Four Thousand (8:1-9)

Many scholars consider this to be a variant account of the feeding of the five thousand in Mark 6, and others consider it to be a separate incident. Mark's notation of time and place is indefinite: 'In those days' and 'in the wilderness' (vv. 1, 4). Mark left the impression that the story took place in Gentile territory, but he did not give specific information. This story differs from the previous in the number of people present, the length of time the people were with Jesus, the number of loaves and fishes, and the amount of food left over. Mark presented the two stories as referring to two incidents. The lack of messianic excitement on the part of the people may indicate that the miracle was among Gentiles. They would share in the blessings of the messianic Kingdom, but they would not have had the background of Jewish messianic hope, resulting in the excitement which existed among the Jews. Their response to His healing and teaching ministries would cause them to follow Him. The number '7' is used frequently to refer to completeness (v. 5). Mark may have been indicating by the seven baskets of food that all nations were included in the Kingdom. The previous number of twelve baskets probably symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Return to Galilee
Mark 8:10-26

Mark appears to have been repeating the cycle of events which was begun in 6:32. In each cycle, he first speaks of the miracle of feeding the multitudes, next the crossing of the lake in a boat followed by an encounter with the Pharisees, and then miracles of healing. The Syro-Phoenician woman's response served as a transition from ministering only to Jews to both Jews and Gentiles (see 7:27).

UNDERLINE THE CORRECT ENDING TO THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE.

Jesus healed the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter because *(she was a Gentile, of the woman's faith).*

(Compare your answer with the text.)

READ THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND IN MARK 6:35-44 AND THE FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND IN MARK 8:1-9.

NOW COMPARE THE TWO ACCOUNTS BY DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

	<u>6:35-44</u>	<u>8:1-9</u>
Number of people	_____	_____
Length of time people were there	_____	_____
Number of loaves and fishes	_____	_____
Number of baskets left over	_____	_____

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

- The number '7' means _____.
- Mark may have used seven baskets to indicate that all nations are included in the _____.

(completeness, Kingdom)

The demand for a sign (8:11-13)

The Pharisees were confused by the activities of Jesus. His miraculous power gave some indication that He might be the Messiah, but His attitudes of humility, submissiveness, and condemnation of Pharisaical legal religion were not what they expected in the Messiah. They came to Jesus requesting a sign from heaven in order to solve the question one way or the other (v. 11). Jesus did not use the power of God to perform signs only as proofs (v. 12). The power of God did work through Him in defeating the works of evil, and the resulting miracles were evidences of the breaking into history of God's Kingdom. That power of God was only operative in the context of faith—the belief that God's Kingdom was present in Jesus and His power had been bestowed on the Messiah to enable Him to defeat the power of evil.

A warning to the disciples (8:14-21)

Mark continued to emphasize the dullness of the disciples to understand the teachings of Jesus. Perhaps they had so many presuppositions concerning a political kingdom that they were unable to understand the new concepts presented by Jesus. The thinking of the disciples was similar to that of the Pharisees and the Herodians. The movement for the establishment of a political kingdom resulted in ambitions to conquer by force, in attitudes of superiority and pride, and in desires for honour, wealth, and power over others. The Kingdom of which Jesus spoke included the power to heal and to help others. It provided power to control one's own life in order that he might not be overcome with the sinful attitudes of selfishness, pride, lustfulness, and desire to dominate others.

Jesus used the occasion of the disciples' failure to take bread along to warn them concerning the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod (v. 15), whose attitudes were characteristic of this evil world and whose teachings perverted the ways of God. In this case, leaven represents an evil influence that can spread rapidly. The disciples did not understand His analogy (v. 16). Perhaps Mark desired to convey the fact that the disciples did not understand Jesus' teaching concerning the nature of the Kingdom and how it differed from the views of the Pharisees. Having eyes but being unable to see indicates their inability to shift from physical to spiritual reality (v. 18).

Jesus made reference to the two miracles of feeding the multitudes as object lessons for His disciples; yet, they did not understand (vv. 19-20). He made specific reference to the twelve and seven basketfuls of broken pieces as if the numbers had some special significance. Perhaps He was saying that the Kingdom of God includes both Jews and Gentiles in contrast to the concept of the Pharisees who understood the Kingdom of God to be the Jewish nation using the power of God to conquer Gentiles. The miracles of the loaves themselves pointed to a new deliverance which would overshadow the deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

Healing a blind man (8:22-26)

As in the case of healing the deaf and dumb man, Jesus took

Why did Jesus refuse to give the Pharisees a sign?

(Jesus did not use the power of God to perform signs only as proofs.)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The disciples were slow to understand the teachings of Jesus perhaps because they had so many presuppositions concerning a p_____ kingdom that they were unable to understand the new concepts presented by J_____. The disciples' thinking was similar to that of the P_____ and H_____.

(political, Jesus, Pharisees, Herodians)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Jesus may have made reference to the baskets of fragments in order to show that the Kingdom of God includes both _____ and _____.

(Jews, Gentiles)

the blind man aside from the multitude and used saliva on the affected organ (v. 23). The blindness was lifted in stages. First, he could see only dim images—they were men whose features were obscure; therefore, they looked like trees moving (v. 24). After a second laying on of hands, the man's sight was restored (v. 25). The healing miracle served as a parable for those with spiritual dullness. The disciples had been unable to perceive the spiritual truths of Jesus' teachings. They were beginning to see dimly what He meant in His teachings concerning the Kingdom of God; later they would see everything clearly.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Jesus used the healing of the blind man as a p_____ for the s_____ dull, including the d_____.

(parable, spiritually, disciples)

Home Study Exercise

Basic assignment (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. Give the names of Jesus' brothers, and state why His father is assumed to have been dead when Jesus began His ministry.

2. What Scripture did Jesus use in the synagogue at Nazareth, and why did He choose it?

3. Why did unbelief limit Jesus' work of healing in Nazareth?

4. What sins of Herod and Herodias were denounced by John the Baptist, and how did Herodias get revenge?

5. Why did Herod think that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead?

6. What does the miracle of feeding the five thousand symbolize? How is the Lord's Supper related to it?

7. After the meal, why did Jesus disperse the crowd and send the disciples away?

8. What was Jesus' answer to the Pharisees who criticized the disciples for failing to wash their hands before eating?

9. What New Testament teachings release Christians from the ritual laws of purification?

10. What indications does Mark give to show that the gospel is also for Gentiles?

11. List the differences between the accounts of the feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand.

12. Give a possible explanation for why Mark emphasized the number of baskets of fragments left over from each.

13. Explain the 'dullness of the disciples'.

14. What was the reason for the reference to the baskets of fragments in Jesus' response to the disciples?

15. What was the relation of the healing of a blind man to the 'dullness of the disciples'?

Supplementary assignment (*Levels 2 and 3*)

1. Explain the meaning of the Lord's Supper with reference to the miracle of feeding the five thousand.
2. List the occasions on which Jesus' identity, or true nature, is emphasized in the Scripture for this lesson.
3. Give a full account of the feeding of the five thousand (as presented in Mark 6). What difficulties does this story present for modern readers?

Advanced assignment (*Level 3*)

1. Give two interpretations which deny that Jesus' brothers, mentioned in Mark 6:3, were sons of Mary.
2. What happened when Jesus went to Nazareth and expounded the Scriptures? What light does the incident throw on His ministry? (Consult all three Synoptics.)
3. Give four different interpretations of the feeding of the five thousand (cf. *The Broadman Commentary*).

Seminar Discussion

1. From the healing acts of Jesus recorded in the Synoptics, what do you conclude about His view of suffering and disease?
2. What was Jesus' attitude towards Gentiles? How did it differ from that of the Pharisees? What parallels are found in today's world?
3. How well did the disciples understand the nature of Jesus' messiahship at this time?
4. Why do Christians not keep the ceremonial laws of clean and unclean meats?
5. In what ways is the deliverance from Egyptian bondage recalled in Mark 6—8?
6. What do the seven and twelve baskets of bread symbolize with regard to the Kingdom?