

Recap of 8/20/23 (Mark 8:1-13):

- 1. When studying the Bible, it is helpful to pull back from the individual verses, paragraphs, and chapters to remind ourselves of the book's overall flow of reasoning. As we near the half-way point in Mark, we remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit uses Mark to show us how special Jesus is. In fact, He is so special that He is unique in all of history. Jesus is God incarnate; He is worthy to be followed. Not even death can hold Him; His tomb is empty (Mk 16:6-7). Jesus is alive!*
- 2. As we study Mark, we are on a journey of discovery with the people that lived with Jesus. Jesus starts His ministry preaching the gospel of God (from God, about God) by declaring that "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mk 1:14-15). In other words, this is the expected time, the time Israel has been waiting for; the kingdom of God (God's power and presence) is near. Like the disciples, we don't know fully what that means at the beginning of Mark. We get to learn about Jesus along with the disciples; our destination is belief. Whatever we believed at the beginning, we need to change our minds (repent) and believe in Jesus (the gospel). Mark shows us that Jesus is special because He is the Son of God; He is heralded by man and by God; He has power over evil spirits and those spirits know who He is; heals all manner of sickness, disease and physical maladies, can forgive sins, commands even the wind and waves, teaches with authority, is Lord of the Sabbath, walks on water, is able to give His power to others, has these powers even in gentile territory, miraculously feeds multitudes, and can even raise the dead. People respond to Jesus with amazement, astonishment, marvel, and anger. They wonder who He is.*
- 3. This brings us to the first part of chapter eight. We see Jesus once again having compassion on the people and displaying His uniqueness by miraculously feeding the 4,000. Jesus lets His disciples see their inability to fix the problem (feeding all these people) in their own strength and then displays His power by multiplying seven loaves and a few fish to feed them. His provision is abundant; there is more food after all have eaten than He started with. He also asks the disciples to help; He wants His followers to join in His work.*
- 4. After all this evidence that Jesus is God, the Jewish leaders ask Him for a sign from heaven. Mark tells us that this is not an honest request, instead they are testing or tempting Jesus. In this request, they are rejecting all that Jesus has done. He refuses their request. We learn from the parallel passage in Matthew 16:1-4 that He refuses because the things He has already done are sufficient evidence to prove who He is. As Royce Gordon Gruenler put it "The issue at hand is Jesus' authority, which they reject. Therefore, the unbelieving generation they represent will receive no more than the sufficient evidence Jesus is presenting. Faith perceives it, unbelief rejects it." How do we respond to the evidence, with faith or unbelief?*