

# MIRACLES OF JESUS

## THE BLIND MAN AT BETHSAIDA (MARK 8:22–26)

While in Bethsaida of Galilee, Jesus healed a blind man. This miracle is special, for at least a couple of reasons:

1. This is one of the only incidents recorded in the Gospel of Mark that isn't found in the other three.
2. Jesus failed to heal this man on the first try. It took two attempts to heal him.

In order to understand this miracle better, we will need to take a look at the overall context. Let's start with the feeding of the 4,000.

### The Feeding of the 4,000 (Mark 8:1–10)

Jesus was preaching in the Decapolis, which was Gentile territory outside the confines of Galilee. While there, he fed a crowd of 4,000 hungry listeners. In many ways, this event mirrors the feeding of the 5,000 ([Lesson 4](#)). As before, Jesus took a small quantity of bread and fish and used it to feed thousands. Though the previous miracle was performed for the benefit of Jewish followers, the crowd of 4,000 consisted of Gentiles, many of whom came from a long distance.

And just like last time, the apostles' lack of faith was on full display. Jesus certainly hoped they would imitate him the second time around and feed the 4,000 themselves. Or, at the very least, they would request him to repeat what he had done before. Their failure to comprehend the significance of these miracles disappointed Jesus tremendously (as we shall see next).

### “Beware of the Leaven” (Mark 8:13–22)

Jesus left the Decapolis by setting sail in a boat on the Sea of Galilee and crossing it. He and his apostles traveled to Bethsaida, which was on the northeastern side of the lake. While in the boat, Jesus told his apostles to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” Failing to understand what that meant, the apostles began discussing with one another why Jesus had said this.

The answer they came up with was far off the mark. They assumed Jesus was chastising them because they had forgotten to bring bread with them (Mark 8:13, 16). Needless to say, this was *not* what Jesus



Ruins of the ancient town of Bethsaida. Look out over the plain below the town, one of the possible sites where Jesus could have fed the 5,000.

was upset with them about. He was upset with his disciples' lack of faith and understanding.

Frustrated, Jesus rebuked them by asking, "Do you not understand?" In a series of eight questions, he challenged them to grow in their faith (Mark 8:17–21). He tied in the recent feedings of the 5,000 and 4,000, trying to help them open their eyes and see Jesus for who he really was (Mark 8:19–20). "Do you not yet understand?" he asked them, frustrated by their lack of faith (Mark 8:21).

Jesus was holding out hope when he asked, "Do you not yet understand?" (Mark 8:17, 21). After all, the disciples had been with him for two years, during which they had witnessed numerous miracles and heard his powerful teaching. And then, he provided them with an object lesson. He healed a blind man in two steps, rather than one.

### Jesus Healed a Blind Man in Two Steps (Mark 8:22–26)

When they reached Bethsaida, a blind man was brought to him. Instead of healing him right then and there, Jesus led the man outside the village. He wanted to perform this miracle privately and for the benefit of his short-sighted apostles.

Jesus began the healing process by spitting on the blind man's eyes. At first, he was not able to see clearly. The verbs for "seeing" used in vv. 24–25 help us perceive the gradual healing process.

- **"He Looked Up."** At first, the man **"looked up"** (v. 24). This man's eyesight was not clear though: he said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking."
- **"He Opened His Eyes."** After his eyes were touched by Jesus a second time, "he opened his eyes" (v. 25a) and saw clearly.
- **"He Saw Everything Clearly."** A third verb for "seeing" is used in v. 25b, which means he could see distinctly and clearly.

Jesus healed the man in a two-step process *on purpose*. It wasn't because he goofed or failed the first time. Rather, he used this healing as an object lesson for his short-sighted disciples.

By partially healing the man's eyesight initially, Jesus was teaching his disciples about their spiritual blindness and lack of understanding. He was showing them how they needed time to see Jesus clearly for who he really was.

### Application

Sometimes, like the disciples, we need "a second touch," too. When we are eaten up with worry, we need to see Jesus clearly. When sins have distracted us, we need to look up and be healed.

You've received the first touch. Are you ready for the second?

### Sight Restored Gradually

<sup>24</sup> And [the blind man] **looked up** and said, "I see people, 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**.

—Mark 8:24–25