



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE®

BREAD OF LIFE

The Eucharist in Galilee

BREAD OF LIFE GROUP REFLECTION

EPISODE 4:

The Multiplication in the Decapolis

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STUDY GOALS

Jesus now travels to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The land on this shore is the region of the Decapolis, any area of ten Hellenistic cities with a majority Gentile population. Once again Jesus does a mighty deed, feeding a multitude at the hands of his disciples. When we compare this multiplication in Mark 8 with the previous multiplication in Mark 6, we see that not only is Jesus preparing for the institution of the Eucharist at next spring's Passover, but he is also anticipating that the New Covenant, including the gift of the Eucharist, will open to all, Jew and Gentile alike.

Scripture

Feeding the Four Thousand

(Mark 7:31; 8:1-10)

³¹Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of the Decapolis.

¹In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him, and said to them, ²"I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; ³and if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come a long way."

⁴And his disciples answered him, "How can one feed these men with bread here in the desert?" ⁵And he asked them, "How many loaves have you?" They said, "Seven." ⁶And he



commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. ⁷And they had a few small fish; and having blessed them, he commanded that these also should be set before them. ⁸And they ate, and were satisfied; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. ⁹And there were about four thousand people. ¹⁰And he sent them away; and immediately he got into the boat with his disciples, and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

VIEW AND DISCUSS

1. What are the similarities and differences between the multiplication on the western (in Mark 6) and on the eastern (in Mark 8) coasts of the Sea of Galilee?
2. The disciples have already seen Jesus feed a multitude on the western shore. What do you think is keeping the disciples from learning and trusting Jesus? How are we like the disciples?
3. What is the significance of the two different amounts of leftover food and the two different words used for “baskets”—twelve baskets (*kophinos*) in Mark 6:42; seven baskets (*spyris*) in Mark 8:8—in the multiplications on the western and eastern coasts of the Sea of Galilee?
4. How is Jesus clearly anticipating the Eucharist in his words (especially *eucharistias*) and actions in Mark 8:6?



REVIEW

The miracles performed by Jesus on both the western and eastern coasts of the Sea of Galilee clearly anticipate Jesus’ institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. The Eucharist is so central to Jesus’ mission that he is already foreshadowing it in his two multiplication miracles. These two multiplications also make it clear that the promise of the Eucharist is made to both Jew and Gentile, anticipating that Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross will open the New Covenant to all people. Our participation in the Eucharist knits each of us together in the one Body of Christ.

What did you find most helpful or most challenging in this teaching?

What one thing will you do differently because of this session?



Memory Verse

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. —John 6:53–56

