

**Mark 8:22–26 ESV**

And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.” Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”

**Introduction**

This passage is only found in the gospel of Mark. It has a structural parallel passage in [Mark 7:31-37](#) and it is the only two-stage miracle Jesus performed. Besides this, it is the last miracle Jesus performed before the spiritually blind disciples received their ‘sight’.

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**Bethsaida**

N/ NE of the Sea of Galilee, possible locations et-Tell or el-Araj, they found remains of what is thought to have been a Roman temple (based on an engraved lintel) and two houses, the so-called ‘house of a fisherman’ and ‘house of a winemaker’ on the site of et-Tell. However, this location is distance-wise ‘too far’ from the shore of the lake. New excavation has shed light on a more likely location in the town of EL-Araj. There they found a church with a mosaic floor which is mentioned as the church of the Chief Apostle (Peter). Churches like these were usually built over or on top of landmarks like graves, temples or houses. Therefore, they suggest this church is built on top of the former house of the apostle Peter, who lived in Bethsaida according to John 1:44. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LKnQgrrvU>

“The name is Aramaic, meaning ‘house of fishing’ (if *bêt saydâ*) or else ‘fisherman’s house’ (if *bêt sayyādâ*).”<sup>1</sup>

“It was originally only a village, called Bethsaida (Βηθσαιῶδα), but was rebuilt and enlarged by Philip the Tetrarch not long after the birth of Christ, and received the name of Julias in honour of Julia, the daughter of Augustus (Josephus, Ant. xviii, 2, 1).”<sup>2</sup>

Some propose two cities with the same name, based on [Luke 9:10](#), a place covered with grass ([John 6:3,10](#); [Mark 6:39](#) and [Matt 14:19](#)). After being at this location, the disciples were sent to ‘the other side’ [Mark 6:45](#) to ‘another’ Bethsaida. This duplicity however is unlikely since “neither Josephus nor any other ancient writer speaks of such a difference or duplication.”<sup>3</sup> Secondly, reading Luke 9:11, we

<sup>1</sup> The New Bible Dictionary, Third Edition Beth-Saida

<sup>2</sup> Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vols. I–X—A–Z Bethsai'da

<sup>3</sup> Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vols. I–X—A–Z, Bethsai'da

see they ‘followed’ Him. This is an active verb that indicates that those who ‘followed’ Him did indeed actively ‘go after’ or ‘travel behind’ Him, who, therefore, did not ‘stay’ at the same place.

Bethsaida in itself “is not mentioned in the Old Testament”<sup>4</sup>

Possibly it is Geshur in Aram ([2 Sam 15:8](#)). It is this location from which Maacah, the daughter of King Talmei of Geshur, marries David. Maacah will later become the mother of Absalom ([2 Sam 3:3](#))<sup>5 6</sup>

It is however Mentioned in the NT: [Matt 11:21](#), [Mark 6:45](#); [8:22](#), [Luke 9:10](#), [10:13](#) [John 1:44](#), [12:21](#)

### **John 1:44 ESV**

*Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.*

Jesus performed several miracles in Bethsaida, including:

- Feeding the 5,000 ([Luke 9:10–17](#))
- Healing a blind man ([Mark 8:22–26](#))
- Walking on water ([Mark 6:45–51](#))

“The Gospels portray the townspeople as fickle and narcissistic; although they saw Jesus’ miracles and received His blessings, most people did not believe in Him”<sup>7</sup> ([Matt 11:14–24](#)).

### **Would Philip, Andrew and Peter have similar characteristics in their personalities?**

When Andrew and Peter were called by Jesus to be his disciples they had a house in Capernaum [Mark 1:16](#), [21](#), [29](#). They must have been well known with the area around Capernaum & Bethsaida. In **the feeding of the 5000**, mentioned in [John 6](#), Jesus asks Philip where to buy bread [John 6:5](#). Later we see Andrew returning with the young boy who brings the five loaves and two fish [John 6:8](#), [Mark 6:38](#), explicitly connected to Simon Peter as his brother.

All three were from the same place, a place that dealt with scepticism and unrepentant behaviour ([Matt 11:14-24](#)). Precisely these disciples are now seen in [John 6](#) as sceptical and doubtful about the provision available to feed such a huge crowd. A true test of faith for Philip as mentioned in [John 6:6](#). It is in this region, surrounded by sceptics and doubters, that the disciples next to Jesus behave in a similar way

Unfortunately, is the Czech nation not known for its optimism and repentant behaviour. It rather appears to be more ingrained with scepticism and pessimism, just like the people from the Bethsaida and Chorazin regions.

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<sup>4</sup> A Biblical and Theological Dictionary; Bethsaida

<sup>5</sup> Kris J. Udd and Melton B. Winstead, “Bethsaida,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Charles H. Dyer and Gregory A. Hatteberg, *The Christian Traveler’s Guide to the Holy Land* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2023), 68.

<sup>7</sup> The Lexham Bible Dictionary [Biblical Relevance](#)

## Exposition

### Mark 8:22 ESV

*And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him.*

#### Brought & Begged

- similar as [Mark 7:32](#) *They brought, they begged*
- Brought > *Phero* = To take something or someone with oneself somewhere
- Begged > *Parakaleo* = urge, implore, exhort. Also used in [Mark 1:40](#), [Mark 5:10](#), [Mark 5:17](#), [Mark 5:18](#), [Mark 5:23](#), [Mark 6:56](#), [Mark 7:32](#)

**Do we *parakaleo* (urge, implore or exhort) our need for healing, both physically, mentally as well as spiritually?**

#### Touch

- similar as [Mark 7:32](#) begged Him *to put his hands on him*
- Touch > *Hapto* = touch, grasp, to make physical contact with, come in contact with.
  - [Mark 1:41](#), [Mark 3:10](#), [Mark 5:27](#), [28](#), [30](#), [31](#), [Mark 6:56](#), [Mark 7:33](#), [Mark 8:22](#), [Mark 10:13](#)

Similar as with *Parakleo* (begging), *Hapto* (touching) is seen in the gospel of Mark in settings of healing. Cole writes “Touch means more than sound to a blind man, and only by touch could the Lord’s meaning be conveyed. There must be an understanding by him of the Lord’s act before that act could become revelation: unexplained miracle, unrelated to God’s loving purpose, is too close to magic, and of such we have no instance in the Bible”<sup>8</sup>

### Mark 8:23 ESV

*And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?”*

#### Took him by the hand and led him

- Jesus himself takes the man and sets him apart
- [1 Peter 2:5](#), [Rom 11:16](#)
- Holy > *Hagios* = set apart, consecrated, dedicated
- In public [Mark 1:23-28](#), [32-34](#), [3:1-12](#), [6:53-56](#), [9:14-27](#), [10:46-52](#)
- In “private” [Mark 5:35-43](#) [Mark 7:31-37](#) and Mark 8:22-26

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<sup>8</sup> Holman New testament Commentary Mark C. A Two-Stage Miracle (8:22–26) p. 132

## He

- Jesus himself makes clear that **He** is doing the healing
- Building trust, expectation, and faith ([Heb 11:1](#)).

## Do you see anything?

- Jesus deliberately asks the man a question. It is not an “accident” or “failed first attempt”. **The man’s reply is intently and not because of a lack of faith!**
  - Looking at **the context** this becomes clear, [Mark 8:17-21](#) Shows Jesus rebuking the disciples for “not yet” [Mark 8:17](#) perceiving. Jesus asking them “*Having eyes, do you not see?*” And “*Having ears, do you not hear?*” [Mark 8:18](#)) He seriously was wondering “*How you do not understand?*” ([Mark 8:21](#))

## Do You See?

### Mark 8:24 ESV

*And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.”*

- Only mentioned in the gospel of Mark, healing in two stages
- Purposely mentioned and recorded in this specific context.
  - Just before the eyes of the disciples are opened to the fact that Jesus is God [Mark 8:29, 9:2-13](#).
  - Jesus both the Lion and the Lamb, God and Suffering servant [Mark 8:27-30](#) - [Mark 8:31-33](#)  
The structural centre of the Gospel of Mark.
- “Jesus does not lack the power to heal him in an instant; he is making a point about spiritual growth happening in stages”<sup>9</sup>

### Looked up

- Looked up > *anablepo* = regain sight, to direct one’s gaze upwards.
- Text could be rendered as “*Regaining his sight he said,*”

### I see people, but they look like trees walking.

- but > *hoti* = *that, because*
- Better rendered as: *I see people that look like trees walking*

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<sup>9</sup> Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament The Healing’s First Stage (8:22–24)

### Mark 8:24 NLT

*The man looked around. “Yes,” he said, “I see people, but I can’t see them very clearly. They look like trees walking around.”*

- “The overall idea is “I see men, because (though they are) like trees, I see (them) walking.”<sup>10</sup>
- “I see men; for I see [them] as trees walking”—that is, he could distinguish them from trees only by their motion”<sup>11</sup>
- “following the amended text, I see men, for (ὄτι) I behold (ὄρω) them as trees, walking.”<sup>12</sup>

### Mark 8:25 ESV

*Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again, and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.*

#### Again

- Jesus touches him twice, similar to the deaf-mute in [Mark 7:33](#)

### Mark 7:33 ESV

*And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue.*

- **A touch of Jesus is needed** in order to be healed, in order to see who He really is “In both cases, they need the touch of Jesus in order to be healed. And this is the primary meaning of this scene—that Jesus’s touch is vital for deaf ears to start hearing and blind eyes to start seeing.”<sup>13</sup>

#### Opened, sight restored, saw clearly

- 3 different but similar ways to explain what Jesus did. Leaving no room for mistake

#### clearly

- This healing reflects the situation in which the disciples find themselves.
- Jesus will not stop half way, he will finish the good work that he has begun

### Philippians 1:6 ESV

*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

“This healing in two stages reflects the disciples’ situation. Just as the blind man regained his vision gradually, so the disciples’ understanding developed slowly. After the first touch, the person could see but could not focus (8:24). After the second touch, he saw with clarity (8:25). At this point in the Gospel

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<sup>10</sup> SBL Greek New Testament Sentence Diagrams: Notes Chapter 8

<sup>11</sup> Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible Chapter 8

<sup>12</sup> Word Studies in the New Testament Chapter 8

<sup>13</sup> Central and Eastern European Bible Commentary 8:11–26 The Redefinition of Spiritual Understanding

of Mark, the disciples are metaphorically between two touches. They have seen the feeding miracles but they cannot understand their significance. In the next section, they will confess Jesus as the Christ but again, without fully understanding. Their perplexity and inability to understand features prominently in the narrative. But Mark shows that their confusion will not be permanent.<sup>14</sup>

### **Mark 8:26 ESV**

*And he sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.” sent him home*

- Instead of going back to **a village filled with sceptic and narcissistic** people, Jesus sends him home. Forbidding him to even *enter the village* “The man was warned to go straight home without going back to the village, where people who saw him might be tempted to follow Jesus only as a healer, not as a saviour. There is always a danger where healing miracles take place in the preaching of the gospel that people will come to Christ for the wrong reasons”<sup>15</sup>

It is only after this healing miracle that the once sceptical Peter now professes “**You are the Christ**” in [Mark 8:29](#). It is after this moment that God tells Peter, James and John, that Jesus is “My beloved Son” (Mark 9:7) Like Peter, Andrew and Philip we are urged to drop our scepticism, repent, profess Christ and beg Him to heal us, our land and our church. Let Him take us by the hand and set us apart. Let Him heal us and open our eyes so we can see!

Make sure to check out the [Taste and See](#) Bible study method for your own in-depth Bible study and incorporate it into the next Study Session.

Check [www.czalive.com](http://www.czalive.com) to learn more about the ministry or become a financial partner.

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<sup>14</sup> Central and Eastern European Bible Commentary 8:11–26 The Redefinition of Spiritual Understanding

<sup>15</sup> The New Bible Commentary 4:35–8:26 Powers of the Kingdom of God