

The Miracles of Jesus

Miracle # 21

Jesus Feeds The 4,000
(Mt 15:30-38, **Mark 8:1-9**)

Immediately we think of the miracle He has already performed where he feed the five thousand (Matt 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-14). Some would have us to believe that two different versions of the same incident. In fact some use the similarities as an excuse for unbelief, saying they are different versions of the same event, and thus assigning them both to **legend**. But this is in fact an entirely different incident. In the first case, there five thousand Jews fed with five loaves and two fish. In this case, there were four thousand, probably Gentiles, fed with seven loaves and a few small fish. But after we read both accounts we will do a contrast of the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000.

Matthew 15:30-38

"Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. (31) So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. (32) Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." (33) Then His disciples said to Him, "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?" (34) Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few little fish." (35) So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. (36) And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. (37) So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. (38) Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children."

Mark 8:1-9

"In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, (2) "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and

have nothing to eat. (3) And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar." (4) Then His disciples answered Him, "How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?" (5) He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." (6) So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. (7) They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them. (8) So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. (9) Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away,"

The miracle recorded here is should not be confused with the feeding of the 5,000 in Matthew 14:13-21.

Contrast between the feeding of the 5000 and the 4,000.

<u>5000</u>	<u>4000</u>
at Bethsaida	Decapolis
multitude from nearby	multitude from afar
Jewish audience	Gentile audience
5000 fed	4000 fed
with him 1 day	with him 3 days
5 loaves, 2 fish	7 loaves, few fish
hand baskets	big baskets
12 basketfuls remain	7 basketfuls remain
found in all 4 gospels	found - Matt & Mark

What we have then is a different miracle similar to the first but repeated for the same of teaching several important lessons. We will examine some of these important lessons at the end of our study.

The Background of the Miracle (vv. 1-3)

"In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, (2) "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. (3) And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar."

The crowd had been around Jesus for three days in a remote setting. Mark's account says that many of them had traveled some distance to hear and see Jesus (v. 3)

Now on the third day, Jesus proposes to send the people back to their homes, but he was concerned about their lack for provision for their physical needs.

This is in reality a revelation of the kind of God we serve. He is a God who gives. And He gives because He cares about our needs. His care extends to every need we could conceivably have.

Three days with nothing to eat

When it says that the people had been with Jesus for three days and had nothing to eat that does not necessarily mean that they had been 72 hours any without food. By the Jewish reckoning of time, any part of an evening, the following day, and any part of the following morning would have been counted as three days. So it could have been as little as **30** hours. But regardless of the exact amount of time that had passed this crowd was hungry and needed something to eat.

In this miracle feeding we again see the tender compassionate nature of the Lord Jesus. He is genuinely concerned for the needs of people. They had been with him for all this time without food and he would not sent them away hungry.

The Elements of the Miracle (vv. 4-7)

"Then His disciples answered Him, "How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?" (5) He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." (6) So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. (7) They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them."

How can one find enough bread to feed such a crowd in the wilderness?

Why was it that the fact that Jesus had already feed the 5,000 not remembered? Had they already forgotten what he had done, or do they doubt that Christ will do again what he has already done?

He may have divided the Red Sea for the Israelites escaping from Pharaoh's army but no sooner are they on the other side than they are complaining against Moses and crying out, "***Is the Lord among us or not?***" (Exodus 17:7)

It is pretty amazing that we so often forget what Jesus has done for us in the past, never thinking of turning to Him when for help when we are face with a new need.

Jesus sent his disciples out to find out how much was food was available. He then had the crowd seated and he gave thanks for the bread and fish and had the disciples distribute them to the crowd. The Lord here gives us a personal example of gratitude. Jesus is not ashamed to offer public thanks for earthly blessings – are we?

How many loaves do you have?

In each account of the miracle, Jesus took the little the disciples had and **multiplied** it until was enough to feed thousands. By the same token if we give Jesus the little we have, however small, he will use it to supply the deeper needs of many.

The Effects of the Miracle (vv. 8-9)

“So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. (9) Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away,”

They ate and were filled...

The four thousand counted only men. If women and children are added, the crowd would have been as **twelve** to **fifteen** thousand.

They took up seven large baskets of leftovers

The word for large baskets here is (*spuridas*) and refers to a large round basket large enough to hold a **man**. The apostle Paul was let down over the walls of Damascus in this kind of basket. (Acts 9:25)

The word basket (*kophinoi*) used in the feed of the 5,000 refers to a smaller **lunch** basket.

The Bible does not tell us the specific reactions of the people who were healed but Matthew does tell us of the general response of the crowd (Matt 15:31). “So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.”

So what lessons can we learn from this miracle?

1. Jesus wants the world to know that He is the **source** of supply for all our needs. He is teaching his disciples, and through them He is teaching us today, that we can trust Him instead of relying on human resources, or the lack thereof.

2. Jesus wants the world to know that

He was a source to **Gentiles** as well as Jews. The miracle of the 4,000 repeated the miracle already done among the Jews, this time with a Gentile audience to demonstrate that He is the **Bread of Life** to the entire world not just one group.

3. Jesus wants us to know that His supply always meets and **exceeds** our needs. In this miracle Christ multiplied the resources until there not only enough to feed the multitude, but more than enough. The seven large baskets of leftover collected are a reminder to the disciples, and to us, of the super-abundance of Christ's ability to satisfy our needs.