

Feeding of the 5000

1. The importance of this miracle – only one in all 4 gospels

Out of all the miracles found in the 4 gospels – the feeding of the 5000 in the wilderness is the only one written about by all 4 of the gospel writers. This would greatly enhance its importance. It contains truths for the disciples, for the multitude, for the church and for Israel in a future day.

2. The requirements for blessing

It is oversimplifying the miracle to describe it only as a miracle of feeding. It has many more sides to it than that.

2.1. Compassion

It is fair to say that compassion was the main reason for the miracle. The Lord had compassion upon the multitude because they were scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd. They were in a state of disarray.

Compassion was often the precursor to the Lord's miracles. He had compassion upon the leper, causing Him to reach out and touch him. The leper was cleansed. He had compassion upon two blind beggars, and restored their sight. He has compassion upon the widow of Nain as she followed the coffin of her only son being taken to his burial. In John chapter 11, He wept outside the grave of Lazarus. His tears were not for Lazarus for He knew what He was about to do. But when He saw Mary weeping and the Jews also weeping, it is then that we read, "Jesus wept". His miracles were not just demonstrations of His power, but rather His compassion and His power. This led Isaiah to prophesy of Him in chapter 53:4:

Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him"

He entered into the pain and suffering of all those mentioned above, unlike the disciples who told the Lord Jesus, "Send them away".

2.2. Order

Mark in particular stresses the need for order before He could bless them. He set them down in ranks, in fifties and in hundreds. There was almost military precision. This is hardly surprising when we read in the Old Testament. The Tabernacle service had to be done according to God's instructions. When Israel moved through the wilderness, each tribe had its own place in the camp. God required order. The same impositions were not imposed upon the church, yet Paul has to remind the unruly Corinthians:

God is not the author of confusion

Let all things be done decently and in order

2.3. The shepherd's care

It is Mark who tells us in his account about the green grass.

Mr 6:39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass

I used to wonder why Mark should tell us this added detail, until of course, I remembered Psalm 23:

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
It is the shepherd providing food and comfort to His sheep.

3. The blessings

3.1. Teaching

Why did the people follow Him into the wilderness in the first place? It was to hear His teaching. The people followed Him to be further taught, and the Lord did not disappoint – "He taught them many things.

There are many Christians who give scant attention to teaching. Luke chapter 10 includes three joys. Firstly we have the joy of service – the 70 returned with joy, boasting that even the demons were subject unto them. The Lord then tells them an even greater joy. "Your names are written in heaven. But then we read of the Saviour's joy.

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in Spirit saying to the Father, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes". To this end, He has given the Spirit of truth to every one of us. In Ephesians 1, we read that God has revealed to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure. It has pleased God to reveal truth to us.

3.2. Healing

Having met their spiritual needs, He met their physical needs.

He healed those amongst them who were sick and diseased among them.

3.3. Feeding

Feeding was the third action of the Lord, but before He does so, He directs a question to Philip in particular:

When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

Why does He put this question to Philip? – to see if Philip really believed His own words. Hence the question, "How are we going to feed them all? The problem is too big for us.

So where did the meal come from? It was the lunch of a small boy. It was five barley loaves and two small fishes. It was a meagre affair, yet the Lord managed to feed 5,000 were refreshed. It was an example of His omniscience.

Philip asks another question. "whence knowest Thou me". To this the Lord replies, "200 pennyworth is not sufficient for each one to eat a little.

In John chapter 1, Philip goes to meet Nathaniel with great news.

We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write."

Philip has made great claims for the Lord Jesus. He should have been able to say, "Go and ask Him".

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they

De 30:3 That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon

thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.