

Jesus' Ministry in Tyre and Sidon/Decapolis – Part 2

Matthew 15:30-38; Mark 8:1-9

Jesus had just taught that no food was unclean, but next, it is recorded that He practiced His teaching by going into Gentile territory. We will study the casting out of a demon for a Gentile heroine of faith, read of a strange healing of a Gentile deaf and dumb man, see the reaction of the Gentiles to Jesus' healing of the masses, and then be amazed at the Feeding of the 4000. All of these to Gentiles, whom the Jews saw as unclean, but don't forget Jesus is the Savior of the world!

Jesus spent much of His ministry among the Jews. But there were a few short periods of time when He worked with Gentiles and Samaritans. This is one of those times!

The Miracle of Feeding of the 4000

Many Bible teachers practically ignore the Feeding of the 4000, like it was not amazing. I suppose if one highlights a great miracle of food creation, the one with a thousand more people would be chosen! Also, some have falsely believed this is another version of the Feeding of the 5000. But even Jesus refers to them as separate miracles in Mark 8:19-20. These are two separate events that have very different purposes and details.

Facts contrasting the two miraculous multitude feedings of Jesus:

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| 1. 5000 – <u>Jewish</u> area and multitude | 4000 – <u>Gentile</u> area and multitude |
| 2. 5000 – <u>One</u> day with Jesus | 4000 – <u>Three</u> days with Jesus |
| 3. 5000 – <u>Disciples</u> sent to find food | 4000 – <u>Disciples</u> had food |
| 4. 5000 – Jesus' compassion - <u>Spiritual</u> need | 4000 – Jesus' compassion - <u>Physical</u> need |
| 5. 5000 – 5 loaves and 2 fishes | 4000 – 7 loaves and a few fishes |
| 6. 5000 – 5000 men plus women and children | 4000 – 4000 men plus women and children |
| 7. 5000 – Disciples come to Jesus with the need | 4000 – Jesus comes to disciples with the need |
| 8. 5000 – sat on <u>Green</u> grass | 4000 – sat on the <u>ground</u> |
| 9. 5000 – 12 <u>Small</u> baskets collected | 4000 – 7 <u>Large</u> baskets collected |

“And (“very” Mark 8:1) great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: ³¹ Inasmuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.” Matthew 15:30-31

I. “they glorified the God of Israel”

Mark 7:31 tells us, “And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.” This was an area of 10 cities along an active trade route on the east side of the Jordon River. It was primarily a Gentile area. Jesus taught and healed in this area. In Mark 7:36, we are told of a particular deaf and dumb man Jesus made whole and told him to tell no one. Yet, the Bible says, “but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;” With all that declaring of Jesus' power came the great crowds to Jesus!

Now, let's review why Jesus and the disciples came to this area – rest and the opportunity to have private teaching time! But you can't hide the Light of the World! Great masses of people came to Jesus again and again; Jesus, in love and mercy, healed all that came! The center thought of the masses, "He hath done all things well!" Here, these Gentiles, "they" (v. 31), saw Christ's works and recognized the great "crumbs" being offered to them by God! And they glorified Him! It wasn't their pagan gods they honored, not idols of their own making, but they clearly understood that Jesus was doing the work of Israel's God! And they would not go home! Three days later, Jesus spoke to the disciples about it!

"Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way ("for divers of them came from far." Mark 8:3)." Matthew 15:32

II. "I have compassion on the multitude"

- "Then Jesus called his disciples unto him," – Jesus was setting up a wonderful miracle. And like all His miracles, this would have a multiple purpose. For the disciples, it was a lesson on God's love and compassion for all people, He was not a "respector of persons" and ultimately He was setting up the gift of salvation – extended **to all men**. To these dear people, it was a lesson on God's wonderful care and provision **even** for them!
- Reason for Jesus' compassion - Look at verse 32; this is the only time Jesus says of Himself that He had compassion on a physical need! Three days they had sat before Jesus...at night they did not leave...day and night, day and night, and now day and moving into the third night! All the food they might have brought with them was surely exhausted! Verse 30-31 tells us why they came, they had brought their sick and injured, and as Jesus healed and cared for them, they gave the God of Israel glory! These people would have been idol worshippers and unbelievers, but as they saw the power of God revealed in Jesus, they gave the true God of Israel glory. And they would not leave Him, not even for food! And Jesus' reaction----compassion on the hunger they ignored!

**"And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? ³⁴And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. ³⁵And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. ³⁶And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples ("to set before them;" Mark 8:6), and the disciples ("did set them before" Mark 8:6) to the multitude."
Matthew 15:33-36**

III. "Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?"

- Disciples seemed unaware of past miracles. **This just makes me mad.** The disciples seemed to live from one day to another and **become hard-hearted** to the wonders and constant miracles around them! It seems they never thought Jesus would extend to the Gentiles the same miracle of food as he had the Jews. This was actually only 6-8 weeks since the Feeding of the 5000; they certainly didn't forget, yet no one came to Jesus and suggested another great food-making miracle! Instead of coming to Jesus, as they had in the Feeding of the 5000 to primarily Jewish crowd, and suggesting to at least send them away for food, those disciples sat quietly, day after day after day! And watched the Gentile crowd become more and more needy!

- Jesus asks them how many loaves they had. Here, I get even madder! Jesus asked how much bread the disciples had in their food stash---7 loaves and a few fish! The loaves would have been flat cakes, larger and more sustaining than the lad's loaves of the Feeding of the 5000. Admittedly, their cooler of food had probably dwindled over the last few days, and seven loaves and a few fish would not last long for 12 disciples. But ---those selfish followers of Jesus sat with their supply while men, women, and children went hungry! Jesus made them verbalize the statistic—He was setting up another wonderful miracle. And this time, He would use their food to fulfill it!
- Jesus took the loaves and fishes. Again, in an organized manner, He had the multitude sit on the “ground.” In the Feeding of the 5000, the crowd sat on “green grass.” But now the spring green grasses have turned brown and dry. Here, we see they are told to simply sit on the ground. And then Jesus did as He always did before a meal: He gave thanks! Over and over in the Gospels, we see Jesus giving thanks before eating. This was His pattern. And then the miracle begins to happen in His hands. He breaks and tears the bread and fish, and they never seem to run out! We are told Jesus gave the food to the disciples to distribute. And just as they served the crowds weeks before, the disciples went back and forth from Jesus to the people, back and forth from Jesus' hands creating the food they served the crowds, but this time mostly Gentiles!

“And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat (food) that was left seven baskets (large storage baskets) full. ³⁸And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children (“and he sent them away.” Mark 8:9).” Matthew 15:37-38

IV. So they did eat, and were filled:”

- Seven baskets were gathered by the disciples. In both feeding events, the Greek is very specific about the size of the baskets. In the 5000 Feeding, the baskets were small, individual-size kosher food hand baskets---12, one for each of the disciples! But here in the 4000 Feeding, the baskets are different! These seven are large cargo, perhaps we could say industrial baskets. In Acts 9:25, we see Paul lowered over the Damascus city wall in one of these strong, storage, moving baskets. So, really, more food was left over at the 4000 Feeding, and again, don't miss the fact that they had more leftovers than what was started with! Here among the faithful, eager Gentile crowd, Jesus not only fed them once, but we can easily say He created enough food to feed many of them again, for they were hungrier than the 5000 crowd and had farther to travel home!
- 4000 were feed and Jesus sent them away. Matthew, the former tax collector and numbers guy, tells us there were 4000 men plus women and children. And once they were satisfied with food, Jesus sent them on their long journey back home!

Jesus has another important lesson for His disciples:

“What is accomplished among the Jews will be duplicated among Gentiles!”

The disciples saw that what Jesus had done among the Jews was now being done among the Gentiles. Healings, compassion, mercy, and a wonderful mass miracle. They saw the wonderful, powerful, loving, merciful Christ working among the society they referred to as “dogs.” It was a lesson they would need to remember in the days after Jesus' ascension, as the Gospel was being spread and the church was being created!

Believers Application:

1. What is your attitude toward people outside of your circle or culture? Jesus lived with compassion toward the physical and spiritual needs of the world. The disciples saw only the physical needs of the people inside their comfort group and culture. Who are you most like, the disciples or Jesus? [James 2:1-18](#)

2. What is your attitude toward Bible study, prayer, and worship? How much inconvenience are you willing to endure? These Gentiles probably didn't know the words of Job 23:12, but it certainly is true of them. "...I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." Jesus saw their devotion, sacrifice, and time. They had life set aside, comfort set aside, convenience set aside to be with Jesus. He knew they were at the end of their energy and near faint! Jesus stepped in to meet their physical need!

What priority do you put on getting to know Jesus? Do you find yourself excited to learn more? Disappointed when your time is disrupted? Do you inconvenience yourself to learn about Christ? How much do we put ourselves out to hear Bible preaching? Or are we easily talked out going to church or sitting in a service? Do we set ourselves up to be good, engaged hearers and studiers? Is our heart ready to receive and obey God's Word?

Not long ago, I had the privilege to teach a five day block class in a large Christian school here in Wisconsin. Our group learned the beginning principles of how to study, write, and deliver a Bible lesson from the life of Jesus and present it the last day!

Our first time together, we laid the foundation for studying a Bible passage, we spent part of our class time reading four events in Jesus' life. We searched out word meanings, looked at dialogues, major and small details, the objectives and truths of Jesus' words, and the principles within the passage. After time spent on getting a good foundation to the passage, we then apply those thoughts to our daily lives! We went around our table and found that though we were at different times in our lives, and had very different backgrounds, those passages had much to say to each of us! I can confidently say we were all blessed and spiritually encouraged!

I am not a fan of simply reading long passages of Scripture, like reading a novel. The Bible was written to be studied, considered, pondered, and prayed over! Ps. 119:15, "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways." God desires us to learn from His word and how can we learn if we don't study? The writer of Hebrews had to scold his readers quit severely. He felt they should have spiritually grown enough to be leaders and teachers among believers, but he had found that their knowledge of God and His truth was seriously lacking! Listen as I **read Hebrews 5:11-14**. Please realize, careful reading and studying of the Bible can train you to discern, understand, and perceive good verse evil! It will help you to live right, live godly! This is taught in the whole Bible, **listen to Psalm 119:9-11!**

My challenge to each of you is to determine to read your Bible carefully! Don't power through it like some undesirable job you have to complete before the end of the day. Instead, take your time. If you don't understand something, search it out! Look for details; don't let the little words get past you. Consider the main principles and then ask God to apply them to your life! Reading your Bible like that will change your life from the inside out! Determine that you will slow down in your Bible reading, study more, and let God speak to you! Be challenged by the mixed Gentile group that sat with Jesus for three days with nothing to eat! Don't be afraid to sacrifice to hear from God, seek Him with your whole heart and He will reward you for it!

Psalm 119:2, 10, 34, 58