

Luke 9:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.

Analysis

For they were about five thousand men (ἦσαν γὰρ ὥσει ἄνδρες πεντακισχίλιοι, ēsan gar hōsei andres pentakischilioi)—The Greek andres specifically means adult males, not just "people." Matthew 14:21 clarifies: "beside women and children." The total crowd could have been 10,000-15,000. This detail emphasizes the magnitude of the miracle—not feeding a small group but thousands with five loaves and two fish.

And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company (εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ· Κατακλίνετε αὐτοὺς κλισίας ὥσει ἀνὰ πεντήκοντα, eipen de pros tous mathētas autou: Kataklinete autous klisias hōsei ana pentēkonta)—Jesus organizes the crowd systematically. The word klisias ("groups, companies") suggests orderly arrangement. Mark 6:40 adds they sat in groups of hundreds and fifties, creating a pattern that facilitated distribution and verified the count. This organization demonstrates that Jesus's miracles aren't chaotic but orderly, reflecting the character of the God of order (1 Corinthians 14:33). It also involves the disciples actively in the miracle's unfolding.

Historical Context

The requirement to sit in organized groups echoes Israel in the wilderness, when Moses organized the people in groups for judicial matters (Exodus 18:21, 25: "rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens"). Mark 6:39 notes they sat on "green grass," indicating springtime near Passover (John 6:4)—one year before

Jesus's crucifixion. The crowd's organization allowed the disciples to serve systematically and ensured all were fed. This orderliness also enabled witnesses to testify accurately to the miracle's extent.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus organize the crowd before performing the miracle, and what does this teach about God's orderly character?
2. How does the specification of 5,000 men (plus women and children) emphasize both the miracle's magnitude and the testimony's reliability?
3. In what ways does Jesus involve the disciples in the miracle rather than acting independently, and what does this model for ministry?

Interlinear Text

ἦσαν	γὰρ	ὥσει	ἄνδρες	πεντακισχίλιοι	εἶπεν	δὲ	πρὸς
they were	For	about	men	five thousand	he said	And	to
G2258	G1063	G5616	G435	G4000	G2036	G1161	G4314
τοὺς	μαθητὰς	αὐτοὺς	Κατακλίνετε	αὐτοὺς	κλισίας	ἀνὰ	
G3588	disciples	them	Make	them	in a company	by	
	G3101	G846	G2625	G846	G2828	G303	
πεντήκοντα							
fifties							
G4004							

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 14:40 (Parallel theme): Let all things be done decently and in order.

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