

Luke 9:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.

Analysis

Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven (λαβὼν δὲ τὸν πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τὸν δύο ἰχθύας ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, labōn de tous pente artous kai tous dyo ichthyas anablepsas eis ton ouranon)—Jesus's upward gaze acknowledged dependence on the Father. This gesture appears before several miracles and prayers (Luke 18:13, John 11:41, 17:1), modeling that all power flows from God. Though Jesus is divine, His incarnate ministry demonstrates perfect human dependence on the Father.

He blessed them (εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς, eulogēsen autous)—Jesus gave thanks to God, following Jewish custom of blessing God for His provision. Matthew 14:19 uses eulogeō (bless), while John 6:11 uses eucharisteō (give thanks)—both describe the same action. This blessing transforms the meal, though the miracle's mechanics remain mysterious. **And brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude** (καὶ κατέκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς παραθεῖναι τῷ ὄχλῳ, kai kateklasen kai edidou tois mathētais paratheinai tō ochlō)—The imperfect tense edidou ("kept giving") indicates continuous action. Jesus kept breaking and giving, breaking and giving, and the bread multiplied in His hands. The disciples mediated the miracle, distributing bread that supernaturally appeared. This foreshadows the Last Supper (Luke 22:19: "he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it") and the Eucharist.

Historical Context

The blessing before meals was standard Jewish practice, typically the berakah: "Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth." Jesus's use of this traditional blessing before a supernatural multiplication shows continuity with Jewish piety while transcending it. The miracle deliberately echoes Elisha's multiplication of loaves (2 Kings 4:42-44) but on a vastly greater scale—Elisha fed 100 with 20 loaves; Jesus feeds 15,000 with 5 loaves. The crowd will later seek to make Jesus king by force (John 6:15), misunderstanding the miracle's true significance—Jesus is the bread of life who gives eternal sustenance, not merely a wonder-worker who provides physical food.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does Jesus's looking to heaven and blessing the food teach about acknowledging God's provision even for miraculous supply?
2. How does Jesus's use of the disciples to distribute the multiplying bread involve them in the miracle and model collaborative ministry?
3. In what ways does this feeding miracle point forward to the Last Supper and the ongoing gift of Christ as the bread of life in the Eucharist?

Interlinear Text

λαβὼν δὲ τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας
he took Then G3588 the five loaves and G3588 the two fishes
G2983 G1161 G4002 G740 G2532 G1417 G2486

ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εὐλόγησεν αὐτοὺς καὶ
and looking up to G3588 heaven he blessed them and
G308 G1519 G3772 G2127 G846 G2532

κατέκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς παρατιθέναι τῷ
brake and gave G3588 to the disciples to set before G3588
G2622 G2532 G1325 G3101 G3908

ὅχλω

the multitude

G3793

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 14:19 (Kingdom): And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Matthew 15:36 (Parallel theme): And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Luke 24:30 (Blessing): And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

Acts 27:35 (Parallel theme): And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

Romans 14:6 (Parallel theme): He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that

eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

John 6:11 (Parallel theme): And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

John 6:23 (Parallel theme): (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)

Luke 22:19 (Parallel theme): And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

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