

Mark 8:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

Analysis

In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, Mark introduces the feeding of the four thousand with temporal markers indicating continuity with previous events. **In those days** (ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις, en ekeinaiis tais hēmerais) connects this miracle to Jesus' ministry in the Decapolis region (7:31)—predominantly Gentile territory east of the Sea of Galilee. **The multitude being very great** (πολλοῦ ὄχλου ὄντος, pollou ochlou ontos) emphasizes the crowd's size—later specified as four thousand men (v. 9), likely eight to twelve thousand total including women and children.

And having nothing to eat (καὶ μὴ ἐχόντων τί φάγωσιν, kai mē echontōn ti phagōsin) describes their desperate condition. They'd followed Jesus for three days (v. 2) in wilderness, exhausting food supplies. The genitive absolute construction emphasizes the circumstance prompting Jesus' action. **Jesus called his disciples** (προσκαλεσάμενος τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ, proskalesamenos tous mathētas autou)—Jesus initiates the response, demonstrating His awareness and compassion. He doesn't wait for disciples to point out the need but moves proactively.

This miracle parallels the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:30-44) but with significant differences: different location (Gentile Decapolis vs. Jewish Galilee), different crowd size, different amounts of food and leftovers. Some scholars wrongly claim these are duplicate accounts of one event, but the details are

distinct and Jesus later references both feedings separately (Mark 8:19-20). The dual feedings demonstrate Christ's compassion extends to both Jews (5,000) and Gentiles (4,000), foreshadowing the gospel going to all nations.

Historical Context

The Decapolis was a confederation of ten Greco-Roman cities east and southeast of the Sea of Galilee, predominantly Gentile with significant Jewish minorities. Jesus' ministry there (Mark 7:31) brought the kingdom to Gentile territory, anticipating the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). The wilderness setting recalls Israel's wilderness wandering when God provided manna (Exodus 16)—Jesus is the greater Moses providing bread in the desert. First-century audiences would recognize the messianic significance: prophets foretold that Messiah would bring abundant provision (Isaiah 25:6-9, 55:1-2). By feeding multitudes in the wilderness, Jesus demonstrated His messianic identity and divine power to provide. The three-day duration indicates the crowd's commitment—they prioritized hearing Jesus teach over physical needs, willing to endure hunger to receive spiritual nourishment. This challenges modern Christianity's consumer mentality that demands comfort and convenience.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' proactive compassion in recognizing the crowd's need challenge us to be attentive to others' physical and spiritual hunger?
2. What does the crowd's willingness to follow Jesus for three days without food teach about priorities and the cost of discipleship?

3. How do the two feeding miracles (Jews and Gentiles) demonstrate that Christ's saving work extends to all people, fulfilling God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham's seed?

Interlinear Text

Ἐν	ἐκείναις	ταῖς	ἡμέραις	παμπολλοῦ	ὄχλου	ὄντος
In	those	G3588	days	very great	the multitude	being
G1722	G1565		G2250	G3827	G3793	G5607
καὶ	μὴ	ἐχόντων	τί	φάγωσιν	προσκαλεσάμενος	ὁ
and	nothing	having	G5101	to eat	called	G3588
G2532	G3361	G2192		G5315	G4341	
Ἰησοῦς	τοὺς	μαθητὰς	αὐτοῖς	λέγει	αὐτοῖς	
Jesus	G3588	disciples	unto them	unto him and saith	unto them	
G2424		G3101	G846	G3004	G846	

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org