

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 ekeinaiς 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 ὅχλου 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 ἔχόντων 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 ὅχλου ὅντος
In those days very great the multitude being
G1722 G1565 G3588 G2250 G3827 G3793 G5607

καὶ μὴ ἔχόντων τί φάγωσιν προσκαλεσάμενος ὁ
and nothing having to eat called
G2532 G3361 G2192 G5101 G5315 G4341 G3588

Ἰησοῦς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῖς λέγει αὐτοῖς
Jesus disciples unto them unto him and saith unto them
G2424 G3588 G3101 G846 G3004 G846

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