

Mark 8:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

Analysis

When the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven—Jesus continues the catechism, forcing disciples to recall the second feeding's details. The seven large baskets (σπυρίδες, spyrides) from the 4,000 feeding (Gentile audience) parallel the twelve kophinoi from the 5,000 feeding (Jewish audience). Both demonstrate superabundant provision—different numbers but identical principle: Christ provides more than enough for all who come to Him.

Seven signifies covenant completeness (creation week, sabbatical cycles)—Jesus' provision for Gentiles is just as complete as for Jews. The parallel interrogation (v. 19: five/five thousand/twelve; v. 20: seven/four thousand/seven) emphasizes dual testimony—two feeding miracles establish irrefutable witness to Jesus' creative power (Deuteronomy 19:15). Yet disciples worry about one loaf (v. 14). Jesus exposes the absurdity: He who made twelve baskets from five loaves and seven baskets from seven loaves can certainly sustain them with one loaf—or with no loaves at all.

Historical Context

The large baskets (spyrides) were substantial containers used for cargo transport (big enough to hold a person, Acts 9:25). This emphasizes the magnitude of surplus—not handfuls but massive quantities remained. The Gentile feeding in Decapolis (Mark 7:31-8:9) demonstrated Jesus' mission beyond Israel's borders, fulfilling

Isaiah's prophecy of Gentile inclusion (Isaiah 49:6; 56:6-7). Early church saw these two feedings as foreshadowing the gospel's proclamation to Jews first, then Gentiles (Romans 1:16).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do the two feedings (twelve and seven baskets) demonstrate that Christ's provision doesn't discriminate between ethnic or social categories?
2. What does Jesus' patient questioning teach about the process of spiritual awakening—leading people to recognize truth rather than forcing conclusions?
3. How might anxiety about present needs be revealing failure to remember and apply past experiences of God's faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

Ὅτε	δὲ	τοὺς	ἑπτὰ	εἰς	τοὺς	τετρακισχιλίους	πόσων
when	And	G3588	Seven	among	G3588	four thousand	how many
G3753	G1161		G2033	G1519		G5070	G4214
σφυρίδων	πληρώματα	κλασμάτων	ἤρατε	Οἱ	δὲ	εἶπον,	
baskets	full	of fragments	took ye up	G3588	And	they said	
G4711	G4138	G2801	G142		G1161	G2036	
ἑπτὰ							
Seven							
G2033							