

Matthew 15:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

Analysis

And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? (καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταί, Πόθεν ἡμῖν ἐν ἐρημίᾳ ἄρτοι τοσοῦτοι ὥστε χορτάσαι ὅχλον τοσοῦτον;)—The question πόθεν ('from where') expresses perceived impossibility. The phrase ἐν ἐρημίᾳ ('in wilderness, in a deserted place') emphasizes the lack of resources. Remarkably, the disciples question this despite having witnessed the feeding of 5,000 recently (14:13-21). Their forgetfulness illustrates human tendency to doubt God's provision despite past demonstrations.

The verb χορτάζω (chortazō, 'to feed, to fill, to satisfy') means complete satisfaction—they weren't asking about minimal sustenance but full satisfaction for ὅχλον τοσοῦτον ('so great a crowd'). Their question reveals both practical concern and spiritual dullness. Mark 8:17-18 shows Jesus later rebuked them for not understanding. We often resemble the disciples—experiencing God's provision yet doubting His ability to repeat it.

Historical Context

The disciples' question echoes Israel's doubt in the wilderness (Exodus 16:3; Numbers 11:4-6, 21-22). Moses asked, 'Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them?' (Numbers 11:22)—similar incredulity facing multitude-feeding. Yet Jesus is greater than Moses—He provides not by gathering existing resources but by

multiplying them. The wilderness setting deliberately recalls Israel's manna, presenting Jesus as the new Moses providing true bread.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Why do you quickly forget God's past provision when facing new challenges?
2. How does the disciples' slowness to believe encourage you when your own faith wavers?

Interlinear Text

καὶ λέγοντιν αὐτοῦ, οἱ μαθηταί αὐτοῦ, Πόθεν ἡμῖν
And say his G3588 disciples his Whence should we
G2532 G3004 G846 G3101 G846 G4159 G2254

ἐν ἐρημίᾳ ἄρτοι τοσοῦτον ὥστε χορτάσαι ὄχλον
in the wilderness bread have so much as to fill a multitude
G1722 G2047 G740 G5118 G5620 G5526 G3793

τοσοῦτον

have so much

G5118

Additional Cross-References

Mark 6:37 (Parallel theme): He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

Matthew 14:15 (Parallel theme): And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

Luke 9:13 (Parallel theme): But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

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