

Matthew 15:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

Analysis

And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children (οἱ δὲ ἐσθίουντες ἦσαν τετρακισχίλιοι ἄνδρες χωρὶς γυναικῶν καὶ παιδίων)—The enumeration follows ancient Near Eastern custom of counting ἄνδρες (men, adult males) separately. The phrase χωρὶς γυναικῶν καὶ παιδίων ('besides women and children') indicates the total crowd was likely 10,000-15,000. Four thousand men alone makes this a massive gathering. The number four symbolizes the earth (four corners, four winds)—suggesting gospel provision extends to all the earth, not just Israel.

The participial ἐσθίουντες ('the ones eating') emphasizes actual participation—everyone ate, none merely watched. God's provision requires reception—the bread must be taken and eaten. Faith isn't passive observation but active participation in God's gifts. This foreshadows the Lord's Supper where Christ's provision (His body and blood) must be personally received by faith to nourish the soul.

Historical Context

This predominantly Gentile crowd (Decapolis region, Mark 7:31) receiving Jesus's provision parallels the Syrophoenician woman receiving healing (Matthew 15:21-28). Together these events show the gospel breaking ethnic barriers—Gentiles receiving Israel's Messiah. This transition from Jewish exclusivity to universal availability anticipates the Great Commission (28:19-20). Paul later

theologizes this pattern: salvation came 'to the Jew first, and also to the Greek' (Romans 1:16).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the inclusion of women and children in divine provision challenge cultures that devalue these groups?
2. In what ways must you move from observing Christ's provision to personally receiving and consuming it?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	δὲ	ἐσθίοντες	ἦσαν	τετρακισχίλιοι	ἄνδρες	χωρὶς
G3588	And	they that did eat	were	four thousand	men	beside
G1161		G2068	G2258	G5070	G435	G5565
γυναικῶν	καὶ	παιδίων				
women	and	children				
G1135	G2532	G3813				

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