



Matthew 15:29-39
"The Compassionate King"

29 Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there.

30 Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them.

31 So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

32 Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

33 Then His disciples said to Him, "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?"

34 Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few little fish."

35 So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

36 And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude.

37 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left.

38 Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

39 And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala.

You can certainly be forgiven if you are wondering, "wait a minute, didn't we hear about the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes before?" because Jesus performed a very similar miracle in chapter 14. You'll remember that after a time of healing and teaching in the wilderness, Jesus had fed the five thousand who were there with five loaves and two fishes and the food he created was so abundant that there were 12 baskets of fragments left over.

Now, after a time of healing and teaching again in the wilderness (i.e. a deserted place) Jesus again is moved with compassion and feeds the four thousand who had come out to Him by multiplying seven

loaves and some fish. This time there are seven baskets of fragments left over when the people are done eating.

So here we have the same kind of miracle done twice, Jesus will mention both of them in Matthew 16:9-10. So apart from the numbers and the later date, what's really the difference between them? Why did God choose to have Matthew record both miraculous feedings when they were so similar. Well obviously to show that the first time was no fluke and not just an instance of persuading people to share the food they were hiding. This time the people had been with Jesus for three days, any food they had brought had run out and Jesus specifically says in verse 32 they now "have NOTHING to eat" So we see that Jesus has the power to provide food for his people whenever they have need. Which is not only a great reassurance, it's a wonderful proof of his deity. This kind of Creation is something that only God can do. But there is another great difference between the two miracles. The first miracle was done for crowds of Jews who had followed Him, but this time as Mark records in Mark 7:31 Jesus is performing this miracle in the midst of the region of the Decapolis, the ten Hellenistic, that is culturally Greek cities on the East side of the Sea of Galilee. These weren't Jewish cities, they were Gentile cities and so we can presume that the multitudes who came out to Jesus this time, were mostly made up of Gentiles, non-Jews. And in fact there are wonderful clues in the text that make that clear. Now Jesus had already ministered to Gentiles, he just healed the daughter of a Caananitish woman, before he'd driven demons out of two demon possessed men from the Gentile city of Gadara, he'd even healed the servant of a Roman Centurion. But this is the first time in the gospel that we see large numbers of Gentiles being ministered to by Jesus.

Now keep in mind that Matthew was writing his gospel account, telling us about the things that he saw and heard and learned while he was with Jesus, many years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ in 33 AD. He was writing at a time roughly around 58-68 AD when Paul and the other witnesses were carrying the gospel to the Gentile nations and it was spreading like wildfire. **But Matthew wants us to know that the gospel going out to the Gentiles was no accident, it was always God's intention to build a church made up of both Jews and Gentiles and that Jesus was sent by God the Father to be the Savior not just of the Jews, but of Gentiles as well.** And so Matthew, who is always so careful to point us back to the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled, shows us in this passage how Jesus fulfilled several of the prophecies that concerned the salvation of the Gentiles.

Let me show you some of those prophecies in Isaiah, a book written roughly 700 years before Jesus fed the multitudes, again and again Isaiah prophesied regarding the coming of the Christ, God's anointed Redeemer, the one referred to as the Servant who would save his people and not only take their punishment but give them the God's own righteousness. Matthew has already identified Jesus as the Servant of the Lord spoken of by Isaiah in

Matthew 12:17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

18 "Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.

What would be the sign of His coming? Well Isaiah told us that as well, in Isaiah 7:14 we read, ***"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."*** And Matthew immediately after telling us about the virgin birth of Jesus in Matthew 1, sums up his miraculous birth by saying, ***"22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:***

23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us.""

So turn with me now to Isaiah 49:5 and as we begin to read note how the Servant says I was formed in the womb, incarnated for this task, and this is what God the Father appointed me to do:

Isa 49:5 " And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, And My God shall be My strength),

6 Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' "

God says that even though salvation is impossible for men, it's too easy for Christ just to be the Redeemer of Israel, instead he will ALSO be the light of the Gentiles and bring salvation to the ends of the earth. redeemer of the Gentiles. But lets go on.

7 Thus says the LORD, The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, To Him whom man despises, To Him whom the nation abhors, To the Servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship, Because of the LORD who is faithful, The Holy One of Israel; And He has chosen You."

8 Thus says the LORD: "In an acceptable time I have heard You, And in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You As a covenant to the people, To restore the earth, To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages;

9 That You may say to the prisoners, 'Go forth,' To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' "They shall feed along the roads, And their pastures shall be on all desolate heights.

10 They shall neither hunger nor thirst, Neither heat nor sun shall strike them; For He who has mercy on them will lead them, Even by the springs of water He will guide them.

A sign of his coming would be that those who had dwelt in darkness would see the light, and in desolate heights, they would be fed by the Shepherd of Israel so that they neither hungered nor thirsted. Now the primary reference here is to the feeding that comes by the gospel, but here we see this literally fulfilled, in the midst of desolate heights. Matthew doesn't even record that there was grass for them to sit on in this feeding, just hard ground. And yet in that place, they were given bread by the merciful servant.

Now turn with me to Isa. 42:6 here again God the Father is speaking to His Servant about this mission

He will send Him on: *"I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles,*

7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

8 I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.

9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them."

10 Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise from the ends of the earth, You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, You coastlands and you inhabitants of them!

11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, The villages that Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, Let them shout from the top of the mountains.

12 Let them give glory to the LORD, And declare His praise in the coastlands.

The servant was sent to bring light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, here Jesus literally did that. And one of the singular things about Christ, is that the Father reserved that particular miracle, the miracle of healing the blind, specifically for Him. No other prophet or Apostle was allowed to do this that all men might know that Jesus was the one spoken about here.

And then note this, God says he is sending the Righteous Servant so that the Gentiles might no more give praise to their carved images. That all the earth might sing the praises of God in new songs, even the wilderness and the cities would lift up their voices. And do what? Verse 12 - Give glory to JEHOVAH (Yahweh).

Now these Greeks who came out to Christ from the cities of the Decapolis, would have spent their lives bowing down before carved images of Zeus and Diana. Whenever something good had happened to them before, they had given their thanks to their carved images. They'd lived their entire lives in spiritual darkness. Now when they see the miracles that Jesus is doing in their midst giving sight to the blind, whom do they praise. What does Matthew say in Verse 31, **"and they glorified the God of Israel."** Just as God said they would, they gave glory to Jehovah. They had seen the light. And like Naaman the Syrian and Nebuchadnezzar before them they had learned "Indeed, now I know that *there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel*" and "there is no other God who can deliver like this."

So what was Jesus doing in the wilderness? He was doing what His Father had sent Him into the world to do, saving His people, both Jew and Gentile, from their sins. Both were equally in need for while the Jews the privilege of having the oracles of God given to them first, they too needed a Savior and the fact that so many failed to recognize Him when he came tells us that the worst kind of blindness is not physical it is spiritual. Oh for the grace to the Savior and believe in Him, as Simeon did! Do you remember Simeon – Shortly after the birth of Christ Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to the Temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord and there

Luke 2:5 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law,

28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word;

30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation

31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

My only application today is this question, if you were about to depart from this mortal life as Simeon was, would you have his peace? To have his peace, you must have his faith to see the savior Jesus Christ when He is before you. You may be a Gentile have you seen the Light? Have your eyes been opened or are you still blind? Have you given glory to God? Do you know Christ the Servant of God, the compassionate king of kings and Lord of Lords?