

The Miracles of Christ - Feeding Five Thousand

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Date: 28 December 2020

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[0 : 00] This morning we're going to return to our subject of the miracles of our Lord and we're going to look at one that is probably one of very few of our Lord's miracles that's mentioned in all four of the Gospels and that is the feeding of the 5,000.

So we are going to select just one of the four and we're going to take Mark's Gospel, if you will turn to that please. Mark's Gospel chapter 8, it is more complete than some of the others so we will examine it to the extent of our ability.

And we may have to venture over into some of the other Gospels to pick up maybe a tidbit here and there because one of the unique things about the Gospels is that each one tends to record some details just a little bit differently than what the others do and it gives a little bit of variety.

So we'll be examining Mark chapter 8 and if need be we'll turn to some of the others also because it's mentioned in John chapter 6.

But by the way, the feeding of the 5,000 is not to be confused with the feeding of the 4,000. That's two entirely different situations, two entirely different occasions and they do have some similarities and it has caused some to think that there is some kind of an error there that the writers made a mistake or they got the numbers wrong.

[1 : 28] No, they didn't. There are two separate feedings, one for 4,000, one for 5,000. And by the way, it also needs to be clarified that in these feedings we are told there were 5,000 men.

Now how many of these men do you think were able to get away from the house without their wife and kids when they're going to see Jesus? And this crowd that had gathered was just absolutely huge and the reason of course is because the miracles that he had performed were just explosive and they were permeating the whole area everybody was talking about it.

But you've got to remember the vast majority of our Lord's ministry, vast majority of it was confined to the north.

It was in the Galilee region. It's true that he did perform miracles in Jerusalem, in Judah, greatest of course of which was his own resurrection.

But still, vast majority of his ministry was conducted in the land of Galilee. And that is something that needs to be kept in mind because all of these areas throughout Israel, and I think this was particularly true in the Galilee region, consisted of very small communities, many of them no more than a few hundred or just a couple of thousand people, residents at the most.

[3 : 00] And they were just dotted all throughout the area and kind of interconnected. And to get from one to the other, you did the only way that you could, and that was either on horseback or donkey, but for the most part, it was just walking.

These people walked miles and miles and miles and miles. And they were probably, frankly, they were probably a lot healthier than most of us because we don't even care to walk around the block if we can jump in the car and take a bus, you know.

So these people had some advantages that we wouldn't think of. We would tend to think of them as impediments, but for them, they were health-yielding in many cases.

So let's look, if we may, at Mark's Gospel, Chapter 8. We've got, no, let's do this.

Let's go to John. Let's take John. Let's go to John 8. John's Gospel, Chapter 8. And I could kick myself this morning because I picked up the wrong book.

[4 : 06] I've been... Chapter 6. What did I say? You said 8. Okay, I just wanted to see if you were really paying attention. And you were. You were.

I've got another book. It's the same size and the cover is even the same color as my book by Dr. A.T. Robertson. And he's got all four of the Gospels in them, and they're parallel.

And I was using that and have been using that on Tuesday mornings. And when I left the house this morning, I just grabbed the book and noted the cover. And actually, it was two minutes with the Bible.

And the same cover looks like it, and I just picked up the wrong one. So we'll just have to limit ourselves to this. And in John, Chapter 6, let's begin reading. After these things, Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, or Tiberias, which is just another name for it.

Sometimes it's called the Sea of Gennesaret. It's all the same place. And a great multitude was following him. And again, I just want to point out, we have never been given the definition of a multitude.

[5 : 19] What constitutes a multitude? It's a kind of a vague term. Now, it's obvious that it implies a whole bunch of people.

But we don't know if it's 150 or if it's 1,500 or even more. But it's just called a great multitude. So there's a lot of people involved. And we are told that because they were seeing the signs which he was performing on those who were sick.

Someone has said that seeing is believing. And when you witness people being healed of illnesses and maladies that they may have been contending with for years, and everybody knows they've got them and this weakness, whatever it was, and this man, this Galilean carpenter, has the powers to heal people of whatever ailment they had.

And you better believe that's going to garner a lot of attention. Everybody's going to be talking about that because nobody does that.

And the phrase is going to be said in one of the texts. I don't know if it's this one or one of the others, but it was never seen so in Israel.

[6 : 45] These things just did not happen. And Jesus of Nazareth had to have a name that had become a household word throughout all Galilee.

And whenever people heard that he was anywhere in the vicinity, they just automatically flocked to where he was. And you've got to remember, this is an agricultural kind of thing. These people didn't have to get permission from their boss to have the day off and all of that kind of stuff.

They just took off and followed, and they had a kind of a schedule that would allow for almost anything. And that's no better way that you can spend it than going and seeing and hearing this marvelous teacher, the likes of which has never been heard or seen of before.

So he's gathering huge crowds. And we are told that they were seeing the signs, and the word signs, semion, comes from our English word semaphore.

Our English word comes from semaphore. And the semaphores, what the sailors use on board ship, the flags they use to signal back and forth, and they can convey a message from one ship to another with those flags, with the semaphores.

[7 : 58] And that's from which the word is used here in the Greek. It's a semion, and that word comes from it. And it means it's something to see, something to look at. And as a result of seeing the miracles, being there, eyewitnesses to it, and people were saying things like, I'm telling you, I was there.

I saw it with my own eyes. You know, you know old so-and-so. He's been crippled. He's walked with a cane for years and years. I'm telling you, the man was walking on two good legs.

I couldn't believe it. Never seen anything like it in my life. And somebody else was there and said, isn't that right, Joe? That's right. I saw it. I was there too. Why, in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall a thing be established, the law of Moses says.

And the authentication of what Jesus was doing was never questioned. Nobody ever said, those aren't real miracles.

That's phony. All you have to know is the trick to it. Well, there were no tricks to it. And of course, everything, and I mean everything, hinges upon the identity of this person.

[9 : 10] Once you establish the identity of the miracle worker, the miracles just fall into place. Then there's no doubt. There's no question.

There's no question. Because the one who is performing these miracles is the same one who said, let there be light.

And there was light. And let the earth bring forth. And it brought forth. So once you establish the identity of the person, the miracles, piece of cake, not a problem.

Let's continue on. Verse 3. Jesus went up on the mountain. And there he sat with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

Jesus, therefore, lifting up his eyes and seeing that a great multitude was coming to him, said to Philip, Philip, where are we to buy bread that these may eat?

[10:15] And this he was saying to test him, that is to test Philip, for he himself knew what he was intending to do. Philip answered him, well, 200 denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.

Because here comes a huge crowd. And they are not thinking in terms of, and I'm sure some of these people had some sack lunches with them, you know, we'll be talking about that later. And they knew that this was going to be a lengthy thing.

And some of them probably brought some food. And that will surface later. But when you hear, when you hear about Jesus of Nazareth and the miracles that he has done, and you have people perhaps yourself or relatives or children in your own family who have a real need physically that never has been addressed, food is probably the last thing you're thinking of.

All you want to do is get to the source of this. Get to Jesus. And they just kind of laid everything aside, all responsibilities and everything else, and headed for wherever he was.

And that would be the only logical thing to do. So one of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, in verse 8, said to him, There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish.

[11:39] So as I mentioned, somebody's come prepared. And there were probably more others who did so. But what are these for so many people? Jesus said, Have the people sit down.

Now, there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down in number, about 5,000. When we were in Israel, we visited this spot that is traditionally believed to be the very site where this took place.

And there was a lot of grass there. And it would have been very comfortable because the grass was kind of tall. And you can just visualize a couple of thousand years ago what it must have been like.

A huge crowd of people. And Jesus said, Have them sit down. So they weren't sitting down on the ground. It was a ground, but it was ground that was well covered generously with grass.

So it was kind of a cushion, if you will. And everybody is there, and they're kind of comfortable. And the number, we are told, the men sat down in number about 5,000.

[12:52] Jesus, therefore, took the loaves, and having given thanks, he distributed to those who were seated. Likewise, also of the fish as much as they wanted.

Now, 5 loaves and 2 fish. How did he do that? I can assure you, it was not a problem.

Jesus wasn't thinking, Boy, I sure hope I can pull this off because it's going to really be embarrassing if I can't. You know, there was never any doubt.

This is the same one who brought the world into existence. Can he handle the multiplication of loaves and fishes? This is the same one who will tell Peter, Peter, you go out and throw in your line, and you'll catch fish.

And the fish that you'll catch will have a coin in its mouth. And the coin will be the exact amount that is needed to pay the temple tax for you and for me.

[14:08] How in the world? What? Are you serious? Are you serious? This is just, it sounds otherworldly because it is otherworldly.

We deal with our limitations on a day-to-day basis. And we have so many of them that are imposed upon us. But this one functions, operates without limitations.

He is the otherness. A concept that we cannot imagine. Just amazing. Absolutely amazing. When they were filled, he didn't just have a little bit.

Seconds, anybody? Thirds? Eat your fill. And when they were filled, nobody is going to be hungry.

Then he says, gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost.

And you know, I inject this not because it has any validity, but I just want to use it as an example of the lengths that some people will go to deny the person and work of our Lord, the Creator.

[15:27] And they read into this text something like this. This wasn't actually a miracle at all.

All of these people, most of these people, brought their lunch with them. They brought brown bags with them. And Jesus gave them a little sermon on generosity and sharing what you had.

And when he did that, those who brought food just for themselves were so convicted by it that they just opened up and shared with everybody else.

And everybody shared with everybody. And wonderfully, there was plenty of food to go around. First church potluck. So in essence, pardon? First church potluck. So in essence, it wasn't a real miracle at all.

Unless you want to consider those who ordinarily were kind of stingy being willing to share with everyone else because Jesus made them feel guilty for not doing so.

[16:33] You see, this is an effort of unbelief to explain away the supernatural. And I'm sorry to say that one of the chief champions of this kind of nonsense was our third president, Thomas Jefferson.

And he believed in the teaching of Jesus from the standpoint of his ethics and morals and so on. But he believed, Thomas Jefferson believed, and by the way, he was a child of the Enlightenment. This is in the late 1700s when this thing was really coming on. It was called the Age of Enlightenment and so on. And he believed that the recording of the miracles by Jesus was actually beneath him.

And that they were just made up by the writers to make Jesus look superhuman. And in fact, he took, and I passed around a copy of it a couple of months ago, the Jeffersonian Bible. He took a penknife and he actually cut out. He extracted from the New Testament the miracles that were ascribed to Jesus, thinking that they were really, that they were unworthy of him.

[17:49] And he believed in his moral teachings, etc., but not the miracles. Those were just put in there by human people, human authors who wanted to make Jesus look supernatural.

And, you know, sometimes you get the impression that fallen man will go to almost any length that is necessary to deprive Christ of the miraculous, including his resurrection for that matter.

But when the scriptures record these, it just does it. And by the way, have you ever noticed that regarding the miracles of our Lord, the Bible never attempts to defend them?

It just states them. Just matter of fact. As with creation. Genesis 1 and 2 do not contain any attempts to verify or to validate creation by fiat, ex nihilo, out of nothing.

It just states it as a fact. There it is. Take it or leave it. And that's the nature of the Word of God. It just gives forth a word without any attempt to defend or analyze.

[19:05] But man will break it down because we have difficulty getting out of our own sphere when it comes to these things.

Because we know that all of these things, including the miraculous manifestations, all the rest of it, we know that is uncommon to us. None of us have experienced that.

So the tendency is to just say, well, actually, it never was that way. It's always been the way it is.

And yeah, Joe? Back in Jesus' time when he was on earth, though, in the Old Testament times, wasn't supernatural occurrences something that wasn't necessarily out of the ordinary?

Didn't supernatural things happen back then in the Old Testament times? Oh yeah, the Old Testament. Yeah, well, it started with Egypt, really. Excuse me.

There were miraculous manifestations that began with Egypt and bringing them out and the plagues and the Red Sea crossing and the manna from heaven, the water out of the rock. A whole bunch of things.

[20:12] And these were never back then disputed because why? Because they saw them.

They drank the water that came from that rock. They ate the manna that came from heaven. And there was no disputing that. But when you get many years removed from it and we look back on it, they say, well, you know, that's kind of a stretch.

That's the way they wanted it to be and they wanted to believe that and so on. And really, you know, there is a thing that we're all familiar with called mythology.

And there are all kinds of myths, things that are reported and handed down generation after generation that have no factuality to them at all.

And there is a tendency on the part of some, especially who are looking for reasons not to believe, to associate the biblical miracles with the myths. And myths like King Midas.

[21:20] Everything he touched turned to gold, you know. Well, we look at that and we say, well, that's crazy. How could that be? Well, that's just the way it is in the Bible, too. You know, you just can't put any stock in that stuff.

That's what their imaginations conveyed. And, of course, the whole issue is designed to undermine divine authority.

And how many times have we told you the issue is authority? Always has been, always will be.

That's the issue.

What is your authority? And if you undermine the authority, then everything that comes from the supposed authority comes crashing down with it. And that's where unbelief lives.

That's the basis of it. So let's get on and then we'll open up for some questions. I'm struck by this when he said, gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost.

[22 : 21] Now, I want to ask you a question. Someone who has the ability and has exercised it in numerous cases to create food out of nothing, why does he care about the leftovers?

I mean, after all, you know, there are some people who won't eat leftovers. I remember hearing about some demanding husbands and their wife couldn't feed them leftovers.

They just wouldn't eat leftovers. That was beneath them. It had to be some fresh preparation from the get-go. Frankly, there are some leftovers that are actually better than some first-overs.

Because they have a little bit of seasoning, a little bit of age to them or whatever. I don't know what the dynamic is that makes them that way. But I've tasted some very delicious leftovers.

And I'm sure you have too. So why do you suppose Jesus is concerned about this? And why says, forget the fragments. Throw them away. I'll create more if they're needed.

[23 : 30] What do you see here? Anything? John? Waste not, want not. Well, yeah. Yeah. Waste not, want not. It's a conservancy of what you have.

And it is also a respect for what you have and what has been provided. In that you care for it and you are attempting to make the best use of it.

And I think there is something really valid here and really spiritual about conservation of material and not wasting things.

And I've even found that. And I'm sure a lot of woodworkers have done the same thing. I've even found myself adhering to this principle in my wood shop with the stuff I'm making and the scrap wood left over.

And so much of it, you know, you just pitch it. Well, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait. You might be able to use that for thus and so and thus and so. Keep it, you know.

[24 : 40] So as a result, I got run out of my shop by leftover wood, you know. All kinds of stuff. And it's not enough to do something big with, but you just can't bring yourself to throw it away because it's something that has been provided and you want to make the best use of it.

And haven't you many times gone to one of those pieces? Yeah. To help you feel it. I have. I've gone to that piece and it's come in handy. I've learned that in the wood shop and I've learned it in my writing and everything and stuff comes across my desk.

And sometimes I'll pick up an article or something and I'll say, you know, I've been hanging on to this thing for six months and I'm probably never going to use it. I'm just cluttering up my desk. And if you've ever seen my desk, you know.

So I'm going to pitch it. And sure enough, I pitch it. And three weeks later, I'm saying, you know, what did I do? Oh, no. I think I threw that away. I told myself at the time I'd never need it again.

And here I am needing it. So that can make for a pretty untidy desk. I'll say. And an untidy wood shop too. But there's something about all material.

[25 : 56] It's something that God has in one way or another provided. Whether it's through the growing of a tree or whatever. And I think we ought to be resourceful and we ought to use up to its fullest extent whatever has been provided.

I think it's good management, good stewardship. And I think we have an obligation to do that. And just because there's plenty more where that came from doesn't mean that we can treat something with contempt.

And you know something? That applies to people too. That applies to human beings. There are human beings who bear the image and likeness of God.

And we may think they're of little value and they have little to offer. In fact, we may even consider them to be a drag on society. Living at the taxpayer's expense.

But in that person, there remains the image and likeness of God. And just because of that, in fact, fellas, that's what gives us value.

[27 : 05] That is our intrinsic value. And when you don't have that, when you look at something like the concept of evolution, where there is no overarching intelligence behind life at all.

It is just something that has miraculously evolved, caused by no one. It affects the way you look at it and the way you treat it.

And the way you value it. And when you put all of this together, abortion is no big deal. Euthanasia is no big deal.

No big deal. Well, it is a big deal. And it goes all the way back to Genesis, where the Lord established the principle, that whosoever sheds man's life, by man shall his life be taken.

Why? It seems like a contradiction. You're going to take another life because someone took a life? You're going to take another life?

[28 : 20] Why would you do that? And the whole principle is, in the image and likeness of God, that person was made and someone wantonly took that life. We call it murder. And the naturalists and the environmentalists look at that and they say, well, it would be a terrible thing to take another human life for taking a life so we just lock him up and put him in prison for the rest of his life and so on at the taxpayer's expense.

Listen, there is real value in capital punishment. Why do you think, why do you think people who are accused of murder go into a courtroom and plea bargain and they will do and say anything to avoid execution?

They will barter and bargain and plea bargain for a life sentence instead of being executed. Why? Why?

Because they value their life and they're scared to death to die and, well, they should be. So, the principle that God has built into this way back in Genesis 9, even before the law of Moses was given, substantiates capital punishment.

And I can't tell you how critical it is to an orderly society and it's pretty much gone by a wayside now and it has in a lot of countries too. And you see what effect it's had.

[29 : 50] It's had a very negative effect. And the bleeding hearts can only look at it as, well, you're supposed to value life and here you're willing to take the life of it. Listen, you have to associate the sentence with the crime and that's what we're not doing.

Someone said that the United States of America has become a nation where you get the best justice that money can buy. And that's pretty sad. That's pretty sad. What, Joe?

I just said there has to be consequences. Well, absolutely. There has to be consequences and that's what we're trying to do away with. The society is trying to do away with consequences. And they're having a great deal of success too, by the way.

Well, anyway, I've got to stray here. Let's get back to our miracle, shall we? And Jesus said, gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost.

So they gathered them up and filled, this is amazing, twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

[30 : 57] And when therefore the people saw the sign which he had performed, they said, this is of a truth, the prophet who is to come into the world.

And what are they thinking of? Anybody? What are they thinking of? Who is that prophet? Isn't that Deuteronomy?

Deuteronomy 18? Alright, let's look at that. Way back in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy chapter 18. Moses is speaking.

Deuteronomy 18 and verse 14. Moses says, For those nations which you shall dispossess, and he's talking about when they come into the promised land, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so.

That is to listen to the witchcraft and the diviners. The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me.

[32 : 15] That is Moses speaking. Like me, the leader of the country. From among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.

Well, that's the one obviously that the people have in mind when they are talking in reference to Jesus. And they're saying, could he be that prophet?

Sure, this must be that prophet, the one that Moses spoke of. And Moses spoke of that probably, what, 800 to 1,000 years ago prior to that time.

This is the prophet who is to come into the world. Jesus therefore, and this is quite significant, verse 15, perceiving that they were intending to come and take him by force, that is actually against his will, to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself alone.

Can you understand the rationale of these people who are doing this? Boy, I sure can. It seemed to be the only logical thing to do. And we are going to, you know, sometimes when a candidate is

prevailed upon to run for office and he declines at first and then he starts getting pressure from different people and different groups and encouraged to run and do this and so.

[33 : 49] And we are told that he was drafted. He was drafted. He was brought into that. And here, what they are trying to do is draft Jesus and make him king even against his will.

And there is an irony to this because he is king. He was king and he is king. But, his kingship has no worth if it has not been purchased by the cross.

It is the cross that will authenticate and give him the right to be the king of Israel. and one day that is the way it is going to be.

And Jesus in Matthew and Luke 12, Luke 12, 32. You can turn there if you want but you need it. Luke 12, 32, Jesus made a very significant statement and Luke is the only place that mentions this. And he is talking to the disciples and he said, fear not little flock, meaning the twelve, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

[35 : 15] And in Matthew 16, hard on the heels of the confession that Peter makes at Caesarea Philippi and shortly after he had talked to the rich young ruler who went away sorrowful because he had many possessions and Jesus made the statement that those who serve him and minister with him are going to receive a reward and Peter asked the question, well, we've been doing that.

We left everything. We left our fishing business. We left our families. We left everything to follow you. What's the payoff? What are we going to get out of this?

Twelve thrones. Twelve thrones. And it was a perfectly legitimate question. What's the payoff? When are we going? And Jesus said, Verily I say unto you that you who have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of Man, I, comes into his kingdom, you, twelve, shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

That's going to be your payoff. And David the king, by the way, is going to be there also and Jesus is going to be ruling and reigning so that's all part of the picture. What, Joe?

And that's why the first fifteen days after the ascension, they had to get busy and get a twelfth one because they expected him to come back soon and there should be twelve rainy. Exactly.

[36 : 54] And he only had eleven because Judas had done away with himself. It's necessary to appoint a successor to Judas. Don? Mark, I think it's you need to tell him that they said there weren't prophets.

They didn't say Savior, they said prophet. Yeah. So they assumed he was one of the former prophets to come back and make them but in other words Jesus was not accepted in this relative term as being the Savior in the whole country.

Well, that's true but the text in other places makes it clear that he was the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost. In fact, Jesus was the only one in all of the economy of Israel that was authenticated to function as prophet, priest, and king.

And there is no separation of powers there which is really unusual because if you don't have a separation of powers you're going to have an abuse.

And our forefathers understood that when they established the three branches of government legislative, executive, and judicial. And they did that for a very good reason.

[38 : 07] They were biblically attuned to the fact that man cannot be trusted with unlimited power. You can't trust him. They knew that. They understood that.

And that's why they instituted a check and balance even in our government. But Jesus was a prophet. He was a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek and he was a king. And by the way the kingly line that came from Judah started with David. Started with David and came through David was a descendant of Judah.

And the line that the what's the word I'm looking for? The dynasty. The dynasty began with David the king and then the bloodline was established there and maintained all the way down through several succeeding kings until it came to Jesus of Nazareth and guess what?

The line stopped there. Because there is no succession to him and after him. And to this day the nation of Israel does not have a monarchy.

[39 : 24] but if they were to establish a monarchy there would be only one person who would be eligible to sit on that throne and that's Yeshua HaMashiach Jesus inside.

Yes Don? Back up to John 5 19 when Jesus says he can't do nothing he in other words follows his father and so forth and so forth it bothers me because God can do anything he wants did he say God can do anything he wants?

Absolutely absolutely absolutely well we didn't get to another passage but it buttresses this and it's in Colossians 1 we'll look at it next time because as I've said before regarding the miracles that Christ performed absolutely everything hinges on just one issue who is he? who is he? once you answer that question the miracles are a piece of cake not a problem at all so we'll look at that hey enjoy your breakfast in the day ahead thank you all for being here thank you sir yes please thank you yeah