

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Matthew: Jesus As Israel's Messiah And His Kingdom

Part XV: Christ As Israel's Messiah Seen By The Opposition To His Ministry, Matthew 11:2-16:12

O. Christ As Israel's Messiah By His Compassionate Feeding Of Four Thousand Gentiles

(Matthew 15:29-39)

I. Introduction

- A. A major theme in Matthew's Gospel is God's purpose to include believing Gentiles in the future Messianic Kingdom even upon Israel's rejection of Jesus as her Messiah, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1337.
- B. Christ's ministry to a believing Gentile woman and her demon-possessed child in Matthew 15:21-28 was just a sample of His heart's intent to reach the entire world for His Kingdom, and this ministry was thus followed by the events recorded in Matthew 15:29-39 where Jesus compassionately fed four thousand **predominantly Gentile** people, with great application for us in the Church era today (as follows):

II. Christ As Israel's Messiah By His Compassionate Feeding Of Four Thousand Gentiles, Matt. 15:29-39.

- A. We know from Mark 7:31-8:1 that Jesus' ministry in the feeding of the four thousand in Matthew 15:29-39 occurred east of the Sea of Galilee in the region of Decapolis, an area of ten towns that consisted chiefly of Gentiles, Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1972, ii, p. 44-45.
- B. Upon reaching this area following His trek from far northern Israel where He had ministered to the Gentile woman's demon-possessed child, Jesus went up into a mountain and sat down there presumably for much-needed repose. However, multitudes of people in the surrounding towns who heard of His arrival ascended up the mountain, seeking Him out and bringing up their lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others to cast them at Jesus' feet for healing, Matthew 15:29-30b. Jesus compassionately healed them all, Matthew 15:30c.
- C. This led the multitude to marvel, and they glorified "the God of Israel," Matthew 15:31. This phrase would be unusual were the people Jewish, for they would have known that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whose given name was "Israel," was the true God. However, these crowds east of the Sea of Galilee were mainly Gentiles who had worshipped false Gentile gods, so their note that the God of *Israel* was the God to be exalted in Jesus is a remarkable confession of faith to be reflected in the Messianic Kingdom! (cf. Isaiah 45:22)
- D. Not willing to limit His compassion just to the nation Israel in His having fed the five thousand back in Matthew 14:14-21, Jesus (1) told His disciples that He felt compassion on this Gentile multitude, (2) for they had been with Him for three days with nothing to eat, and (3) He would not send them away lest they fainted in the way, Matthew 15:32.
- E. Accordingly, the disciples asked Jesus where they could get enough food in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude (Matthew 15:33), and following the pattern of the feeding of the Hebrew five thousand, Jesus asked the disciples how many loaves they possessed, Matthew 15:34a with 14:17.
- F. Jesus' Hebrew disciples responded that they had seven loaves and a few fishes, Matthew 15:34b, so Jesus chose to work with this small amount of food as He had with the five loaves and two fish in the feeding of the five thousand Hebrew people, Matthew 15:35-36 with 14:18-19.
- G. Jesus thanked God and broke the loaves and fishes, distributing them to the disciples, and the disciples in turn to the crowds to where all present ate and were filled with the fragments, Matthew 15:36-37a.
- H. After everyone was filled, the disciples gathered up what was left over of the broken fishes and loaves, and filled seven "baskets" full, Matthew 15:37b. The word for "basket" in this passage is *spuris*, a large woven basket with a handle distinct from the smaller *kophinos* basket that had been used in collecting the leftovers in the feeding of the five thousand Hebrews, Zon. Pict. Ency. of the Bible, v. One, p. 488. As there were seven large *spuris* baskets of fragments left over in this feeding of the four thousand Gentiles (Matthew 15:38) versus the twelve smaller *kophinos* baskets in the feeding of the five thousand Hebrews, the **grace** of Jesus to the **Gentiles** was seen as being *equal* to what He had shown to the **Hebrew** throngs in the former feeding!

Lesson: *Jesus expressed the same compassion on the Gentile throngs who sought His ministry as He had to the Hebrew throngs who sought His ministry, and He exhibited the same degree of gracious provisions for both groups in His miraculous feeding of them both.*

Application: *(1) May we as Gentiles believe on Christ as our Savior like the Jewish people were expected of God to believe on Christ as their Savior, John 3:16. (2) May we like Jesus have compassion on all men (3) and so take the Gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth, the will of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, Matthew 28:19-20.*