JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND

John 6:11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

Setting

John 6:4 The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

Matthew 14:12&13a John’s disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus. When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew privately to a solitary place.

Mark 6:30-32 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet palace and get some rest.”

John 6: Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),

Mark 6:33&34 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

Matthew 14:14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

The Problem

Mark 6:35&36 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him, “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

Mark 6:37a But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

Deuteronomy 7:1 “When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations – the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you” (See also Deuteronomy 4:38; 9:1; 11:23)

Deuteronomy 7:17-19 “You may say to yourselves, ‘These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?’ But do not be afraid of them; remember what the LORD your God did to Pharoah and to all Egypt. You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the people you now fear.”

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Mark 6:37b&38 They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them?” “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

John 6:8&9 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

The Solution

Mark 6:39&40 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

Notice that Jesus had the disciples do all the things they could do.

Mark 6:41&41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all.

Jesus did what they could not, but had the disciples do what they could.

The Result

Mark 6:42-44 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve baskets of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Some Lessons to Be Learned

When God wants to do something, He wants His people to be involved in the process. In Deuteronomy 1:8, 21, 39; 2:24; 3:20; 9:23 and Joshua 1:15; 8:7 and 18:3 we find this concept: “Take the land I am giving you.”

Jesus told His disciples to feed 5,000 men plus women and children with five barley loaves and two fish. It was a clearly impossible task. Then He did what they could not do and told them to do what they could do, have the people sit down in groups and distribute the loaves and fishes and pick up the loaves and fish that were left over. And the clearly impossible task was done.

Jesus told His disciples to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey everything He commanded them, another impossible task. But He also told them first in Luke 24:49 “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Every person on earth has a sin problem they cannot fix. God sent Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross, be buried and rise again and give us not only forgiveness for our sins, but the power to live in victory and the right to spend eternity in heaven with God. But what Jesus did is of no benefit to anyone unless they take what God is offering to give them.

God told the Israelites to take the land of Canaan from seven nations larger and stronger than they were. Humanly speaking, it was an impossible task. But God also told them He was giving them the land, they just had to take it, and then He did for them the things they could not do.

I hear a lot of talk about the mess our country is in and how things are just going to get worse and worse. Do any of us individually or all Christians collectively have the power to fix these problems? No! Does God have the power to fix any and all problems? Of course He does. Will He do it without the Body of Christ following His instructions as to what our part should be? I very much doubt it.

Is it God’s will that those who know Christ should follow Him completely? Of course it is. Romans 12:1&2 Does God want people to be saved. God doesn’t want anyone to perish, but to come to salvation. 2 Peter 3:9

The Israelites spent forty years in the wilderness because they were afraid to commit themselves to doing something they thought was impossible. Not working to revive the church and bring the lost to salvation will bring the same kind of barren spiritual experience to the Christian.

When Jesus was asked the next day about how He got across the lake without a boat, He used the feeding of the five thousand as a metaphor of His relationship to those who would follow Him. He is the bread of life. We must choose to partake of Him.

The Lord’s Table is a metaphor, a symbol of our relationship with Christ. He has offered Himself for our sins, but we must choose to partake. The bread symbolizes His body, broken for us. The grape juice symbolizes His blood shed for us.