

Matthew 21-03-18b

As we pick up our study here in Matthew chapter 15, we have come to the point where Jesus has distributed bread in a seemingly limitless supply to his disciples who have then carried it out to the multitudes. And when they all ate and were filled in verse 37, it says, they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Had a good question on the break, which is how do we know that this was a largely Gentile crowd? One of the ways is that after observing the healings that Jesus does for three days, they glorify the God of Israel.

And the example I gave is in this country, when we're talking among ourselves and political things are happening and we say, well, the president did this and the president did not do that. We don't say the president of the United States because we're Americans. When we talk about the president, we're talking about our president.

And so many times in the gospels, when he is in Jerusalem or Galilee, and it says they saw what Jesus did and they glorified God. It doesn't say they glorified the God of Israel because he's their God. If we were overseas and talking in France, we might say, well, the president of the United States because France has a president, other countries have presidents.

And you have to make it clear when you're outside the land that you're talking about the God of Israel. So they are looking at the nation of Israel and that the God of that nation has obviously enabled and empowered these works. That they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven.

That's what Jesus says to his disciples. That's one clue. Another clue is we know from Mark that he went to the region of Decapolis.

This is the 10 cities. And this is a Roman district on the Eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. And you know, when you're on the East of the Sea of Galilee, you're also to the East of the Jordan.

And there were only two tribes that settled over there and they were further South, not up in this North Eastern region. So this is going to be, you know, old Canaan land, old non-settled land by Joshua and the tribes. And so it is historically non-Jewish and therefore Gentile.

The third clue comes right here. When it says, they ate and were filled and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. There are two different words.

You may remember this from previous studies, but the word used in the feeding of the 5,000 in all accounts and in Jesus' review that he is going to do in the not too distant future. Every time, anytime the feeding of the 5,000 is discussed, the 12 baskets that

were taken up, the word for baskets is the plural of kophinos, K-O-P-H-I-N-O-S. The plural in Greek is kophinoi, K-O-P-H-I-N-O-I, kophinoi.

By the way, through a long string of happenstance, this is where we get the word coffin that you bury somebody in. It starts out being a container and a sarcophagus, sarx is the flesh and a kophagus is the Latinized version, but it's a basket for the flesh, sarcophagus, sarcophanoi, sarcophanos. But these actually were relatively small baskets, substantial, but not super large.

And there are 12 of them, more about the numbers shortly, but those are smaller baskets. So you get the idea that each disciple came back with a full, this is like a very large picnic hamper. This would be maybe the size of a cooler or even a little larger, like a picnic cooler that you use, about that size, pretty, fairly large.

This is a different word. This is the word spuridos, S-P-U-R-I-D-O-S. There's about half the people in the world that study Greek and they always want to turn a U into a Y and they would say, this is spiridos.

And many times when you see, you know, hyper activity, that's huper in Greek. I continue to pronounce it with a U for clarity. And because I'm not fully convinced that the ancient Greeks said Y when they spelled it U, they had an I and some other vowel combinations they could use for that sound.

But be that as it may, this is either spuridos or spiridos. So this is spuridos, S-P-U-R-I-D-O-S. Now, what's interesting about this is this is a much larger basket.

This basket, according to sources that are referenced in Moulton and Milligan, which is one of the Greek lexical standards by which all others are measured, they go back and look at Josephus and other contemporaneous usages, including Acts 9.25. We're not gonna turn there because you'll remember this story. Remember when Paul got in such trouble that he had to hide and they let him down the city wall in a basket? The basket that they let Paul down in was a spuridos. It's big enough to hold a man.

Moulton and Milligan says, according to other sources they've gleaned from, you could put 50 loaves of bread, 50 of those giant fat tortilla breads. They look like a pizza crust, but fat, and they're about that size. Well, 50 of them would fit in this basket.

And that's a sizable amount. And remembering that Paul was said to be short, remember he was short, bald, and had his high squeaky voice. What a ideal combination to be the premier apostle for the Lord Jesus.

And that's why he said, people say that in my physical presence, I'm weak, but I'm strong in my letters. Well, God knew that it was his letters, not his physical presence, that were gonna speak down through the ages. So he made sure to give Paul wonderful training at the feet of Gamaliel and as a Pharisee.

And then from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, he went down to Mount Sinai and it was his soul and it was his mind and his intellect, writing those epistles that God has used down through the ages. So it doesn't matter what you're born with, it's what God gives us by way of experience and by way of gifting through the Holy Spirit. That's what counts.

So Paul was small enough that he could fit in one of these 50 bread loaf baskets. It's a spuridos. So we try to say, well, what is God telling us that the 5,000 Jews left uneaten 12 baskets of fragments and the 4,000 Gentiles left uneaten seven larger baskets of fragments? Which, were the Gentiles more receptive than the Jews? Well, how big is a kofinos and how big is a spuridos? And if I, can I, this is like one of those story problems you used to get in math.

If I empty 12 kofinos into seven spuridos, how much do I have left over, if any? Well, nobody really knows. It's, if anything, it's possible that the amount of leftover bread was slightly greater in the 12 small baskets than it was in the seven large baskets, or it's possible that the seven large baskets actually held more than the 12 smaller baskets. It's, I've seen commentaries all over the map on this.

The bottom line is we are not supposed to compare the level of rejection of the Jews and the Gentiles, because if we were supposed to do that, the baskets would have been the same size. So take a clue from the change, but here's the other thing. Kofinoi, this was the traditional Jewish woven basket.

This is what the Jews used all over the place, all the time. It was a signature basket that they used. The spuridos was a Greek Gentile basket.

That's what they used. That's how we know this crowd. The disciples didn't show up saying, well, you know, the Lord's gonna feed the multitudes and we're gonna need some baskets.

Somebody said, well, here, you can have my basket. I'm fixing to go home. I got plenty more where this came from.

This is like Walmart bags versus the old paper sacks. You know, which holds more? Well, it depends on what you're putting in it and how much of the handles are gonna hold and so on. So we're not invited to make a direct comparison and say, well, look, there were only seven baskets from the Gentiles and there were 12 from the Jews.

Therefore, they were more receptive. That's not the point. So it complicates the issue of, well, what is the point? Let's look at the numbers.

We've looked at the size of the baskets. Let's compare the numbers, because you know this is coming up and Jesus is gonna say to the disciples, do you remember the 5,000? Do you remember the baskets? Do you remember the 4,000? Do you remember the baskets? Do you not yet understand? I don't wanna wait until he asks that question to try

to figure it out because that's what the disciples did and they were clueless. Let's figure it out now and when we get to that question, we'll say, remember that Thursday night, March the 18th, where we figured this out? Do we still remember and do we understand? So think about it.

You got five loaves and two fish distributed to 5,000 people and you come back with 12 baskets. So five loaves, what's the number five? It's not hard. What's the number five, biblically speaking? That's the number of the law, right? The Pentateuch, that's the law.

Who is the law for? Israel, what kind of crowd have you got? They're all Jews. Five loaves and you've got the two fish. Five plus two makes seven.

That's a perfect provision. No matter how many people are sitting on the ground, if you've got the law, the prophets and the writings, and I think that's what the two fish are, that's icing on the cake. That's additional protein.

That's some flavor and some additional sustenance on the main course, which is the bread, bread and fish. Five plus two is seven. Seven, what's that the number of? That's God's perfection.

That's perfection from heaven. After it is distributed to the Jews, you get these 12 baskets of fragments taken up. Now, if, as I have suggested, and I haven't found any other really viable suggestion, if you've got one, let me know.

I believe the 12 baskets, if the perfection of God supplies exactly the right amount, if they all eat and are filled, there shouldn't be anything left over. God knows exactly how hungry each person is, knows exactly how big their tummy is, how many people there are. The Lord Jesus breaking these bread and the power of the Holy Spirit and the omniscience of God the Father.

Everybody should eat and are filled and there shouldn't be a scrap left. Instead, 12 baskets of fragments are returned. So if fragments means rejection, I've had enough and I don't want any more.

This goes all the way back to Israel at Mount Sinai, thunder and lightning on the mountain. We're running away, Moses, you go on up there and talk to the scary God and put a bag over your head when you come back down because your face is scary when you come back. Who would not want to view with unveiled face the glory of God shining in the face of Moses as we with unveiled face view the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But they were afraid they had a spirit of fear instead of a spirit of power and love and a sound mind. You know who did look at Moses' face and wasn't spooked by it? Joshua. Who went up the mountain with him? Who went up the mountain instead of away from the mountain? Yeshua, Joshua, for whom the Lord Jesus is named.

Yeshua, that's who went up. That's who was unafraid in the presence of God. That's who communed with God at the door of the tent of meeting in addition to Moses, the only other one that did.

And he is a wonderful figure of the Lord Jesus himself, a mediator between God and men, the man, Christ, Yeshua. So how many tribes fled from the mountain when God was delivering the five loaves? 12 tribes fled. The Levites fled, the Reubenites, the Levites, the Simeonites, the Judahites, Issachar, Manasseh, Ephraim, all of them.

Gad, all of them ran away. 12 baskets of fragments taken up. Every part of Israel, all 12 tribes are equally on the hook for failing when he came unto his own, his own received him not.

Everyone is accountable for what they receive, what they imbibe and what they reject. 12 is universal in Israel, right? All 12 tribes. If it had been seven baskets, you'd say, well, there must've been five tribes that consumed it all.

Were there five tribes that didn't run away at Sinai? Was there one tribe that did? The Levites stood fast? No, they all skedaddled. So, have we accounted for all the numbers in the feeding of the 5,000? Five loaves, law of Moses, two fish, law and the prophets, add them together, you get seven, the number of perfection, right? 5,000 are fed. Once again, this is the representation of Israel who are five loaves for 5,000 ought to be just right with the fish as garnish and additional supplement.

But 12 baskets come back, come to the feeding of the 4,000. You've got 4,000 people. What is four the number of, biblically? Think North, East, South and West.

It's the number of universality. What did Jesus say to the Pharisees? Many will come in the days of the kingdom from the North, East, South and West. Sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom.

You are gonna find yourself thrust out. Many will come from the four corners of the earth. Atheists love to poke fun at the Bible and say they thought the earth had corners.

No, they didn't. North, East, South and West. We still use that phrase today and we're not scientifically ignorant.

We say from the four corners of the globe. A globe doesn't have corners. But what are we saying? Four directions, universally from everywhere, 4,000 people.

These are the Gentiles. They're from everywhere. We don't know the, it doesn't say they were Syrophoenician.

It doesn't say they were Greek or Roman or from Phrygia or Cappadocia. We don't know where they're from. They're from everywhere, 4,000.

Now, how many fish are there? How many, well, how many loaves are there? There were five the first time. How many loaves are there the second time? Seven. Now, why would there be seven loaves this time and only five loaves the first time? More loaves means more revelation.

More than just the law. There's additional truth on hand. There is more manna than is contained in the law.

For the Gentiles, they're not restricted to the law, the prophets and the writings. There is more bread and there is more fish. More bread and more fish.

So everything that the 5,000 got and more, there is additional bread and there is additional fish. That much is clear, right? What is seven the number of? God's perfection, heavenly perfect provision. Heavenly manna.

All the revelation that we need as Gentiles is available now. This is a harbinger. This is a portent.

This is a prophetic picture of things to come. When the opportunity widens to include the Gentiles, all things are yours. Remember, Paul is going to say, don't say I am of Paul.

I'm of Apollos. I am of Cephas. I am of Christ.

All things are yours. You have everything. You're not a Seventh-day Adventist.

You're not restricted to part of the Bible. You've got the whole thing. So seven loaves, multiple fish, multiple little fish, more prophecies, more writings.

You've got didactic. You've got narrative. You've got poetic.

You've got apocalyptic. You've got all these things in the New Testament that augment and complement what was in the Old Testament by way of writings and prophecy, right? So seven loaves, multiple little fish. Take it in smaller bites.

Look at the 27 books of the New Testament. Much smaller bites in some cases than you have in the major and minor prophets. Remember the Hebrews kept these minor prophets on big scrolls.

They didn't have a separate little tiny scroll for each prophet. They would have a scroll of the prophets. That's why every once in a while you see an attribution that looks like it comes from the wrong book.

It's the scroll that that was on, not the individual book. They would say, you know, this happens in Matthew. So seven loaves, small fish.

This is more available for these Gentiles. There's 4,000 of them from the Northeast,

South and West. They eat and are filled.

And there are seven baskets of fragments taken up. Seven Greek baskets, right? Now, what does that mean? If uneaten fragments indicates a level of rejection, what does that say? How long is Jerusalem going to be trodden underfoot by the Gentiles? Until their iniquity is full. Until those seven baskets fill up to the top, big baskets.

When those baskets are full to the brim, that's just how long Jerusalem is going to be trodden underfoot by the Gentiles. Until the iniquity of the Gentiles is full. That's what Jesus said.

We're going to see it in this gospel later on. It does speak of rejection. And it is not a comparative rejection.

Well, they're less rejectful than the Jews. No, the Gentiles are going to end up being as full of rejection. Because it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Greek.

It doesn't matter if you're a slave or free. It doesn't matter if you are male or female. What matters is what think ye of Christ.

And what do you think of the word of God? What do you think of the provision of God? What do you think of the plan and purpose of God? And at the point that God has had enough of the collective measure of individual rejection. What can you say about these baskets? This is what I say. It is a collective measure of individual rejection.

The individuals in the crowd are not scrutinized. There's not a roster made. Well, Eliab ate this much and Elihu ate this much.

And you know, it's not an individual reckoning. It is a, but it is the sum of individuals. It is a corporate accounting of individual rejection.

12 baskets for the Jews. That's a full basket for every tribe. For the Gentile crowd, there is a full basket in a perfect accounting for everybody that came from the Northeast, South and West.

I don't think it's the seven seas. I don't think it's the seven continents. I think it is simply God's perfect measure of everybody.

And when that is full, the day is over. The judgment is complete. So what can we say by way of conclusion? This distinction of baskets holds when Jesus reviews this, it holds when you go to the gospel of Mark.

You can look, we'll be seeing it here in the upcoming chapter, chapter 16, that Spuridos and Cofanos are distinguished by the Lord Jesus himself. How many small baskets did you take up from the 5,000? How many large baskets did you take up from the 4,000? Do you not yet understand? It is time for a change in dispensation. It is time for a change

in the purposes of God when the rejection in Israel came to a head, he came to his own and his own received him not.

When, at that time, Jesus came and was rejected by the Jews, by Israel, by his own people, by the 12 tribes, the dispensation changed. In this age, with the gospel being preached to the Gentiles and to the whole world, remember Jesus is going to say in an upcoming chapter, this gospel of the kingdom must be preached in the whole world, and then the end will come. Well, this globe has been circumnavigated with the gospel.

It has been translated into every language. And when it says the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of the kingdom was a specific kingdom for Israel and it is a specific kingdom for the Gentiles. It is the kingdom of the father that is preached to us.

We are preparing not for the millennial kingdom, which is the fulfillment to Israel, but the kingdom of the father, which follows it and into which all individuals either will or will not enter. Well, how full do you think those seven baskets are today? Rejection, dismissal, the wave started in the Middle East, spread across Europe and Africa and spanned the distance across the Atlantic Ocean and came to North America and South America and has traveled across this land and spread across the Pacific Ocean to Asia, to Korea, to China, to Japan, to the Philippines, to India, to China's large, vast expanse and even Russia and has spanned all the way across and has returned, it has now circumnavigated the globe. And as I've mentioned before, Korea is sending missionaries to the Middle East.

They are sending missionaries to Israel and to Saudi Arabia and to the Emirates and to other places in the Middle East. This gospel must be preached in the whole world and then the end will come. Well, that time is now.

Those baskets are full now. The time is short. It's as short as our last heartbeat, our last breath.

And what should we be doing? We should be doing what the disciples did. The disciples learned from the first feeding to watch for the leading of the Lord, the instructions of the Lord and follow them to the letter. When they were told to distribute, they distributed.

When they were told to retrieve, they retrieved. There's a time for scattering and there's a time for gathering. Remember that in Ecclesiastes? To know the signs of the times.

When is it time to launch out, to reach out, to be outward looking? When is it a time to pull in, to circle the wagons, to conserve when spring is near and it is time to plant and cultivate and reap a harvest? We do that. When winter comes, darkness comes, the time comes when no man can work, you're living off what you put in the barn in the summer. Observe the signs of the times.

The disciples amazingly, this is a gold star next to the disciples. There is no rebuke of the

disciples here whatsoever. Jesus doesn't even say, you give them something to eat here, does he? They have learned and he can see that they've learned and he engages them and has them participate in this figure looking to the Gentiles.

How did Gentiles get the gospel? Who's the first generation of the church? It's all Jewish apostles. It is all Jewish preachers in that first generation. And this is the picture here.

And the time of gathering and evaluating, corporate evaluation of individual rejection, now is that time. You look around the world where we can say with the, is it the psalmist who said, I think the faithful man is perishing off the earth. We, I'm sure that there are 7,000 that haven't bowed the knee to Baal, but it sure is depressing and discouraging and somewhat dismal looking around, trying to find.

Now there are many, and I meet them all the time in this part of the country. We're blessed to live here. And there are many solid God-fearing reward anticipating believers right now.

But the number is diminishing. The environment is increasingly hostile. The principalities and powers that we wrestle against are gaining strength, gaining provenance all around us.

And it's a great time to be alive. It's a great time to make sure we've got the full armor strapped on. And by the way, don't miss a piece of armor.

Think of Achilles. Don't miss a piece, run through the inventory. We need every single piece of that spiritual armor and we need it now.

We need it today. The conflict is accelerating. We are rapidly approaching the climactic time.

The baskets are full. So what an exciting time to be alive. What a great time to get that armor on, gird your armor on, stand firm, everyone.

Remember the hymn, onward, forward. Christ is captain of the mighty throne. But when you look at this evaluation of the Gentiles, what does Jesus do once he sees those seven baskets? Look at it.

He sent away the multitude, verse 39, got into the boat. Remember in verse 29, I said, we're gonna find out how Jesus got there. He came in a boat because he didn't get into a boat.

He got into the boat and he departed to the region of Magadan, not Magdala. Scratch it out. This is not where Mary Magdalene was from.

This is Magadan. It's in the region of Dalmanutha. And we'll take a look at that when we pick up our study next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how thoroughly it equips us for every good work. We pray that we can be unconformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can understand your good and acceptable and perfect will and have it fulfilled in our lives by the light that shines from your word and the strength that is imparted to us by your Holy Spirit.

The example as always, the author and finisher of our faith, the Lord Jesus himself. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.