

## Matthew 15

Opposition increases against Jesus as scribes and Pharisees come to the region from Jerusalem. As far as Matthew's account is concerned, the only contact Jesus has had with anyone from Jerusalem was in 4:25. As a baby Jesus was taken to Jerusalem (Luke 2:22). At 12 years old, He visited Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-52). One of His temptations occurred on a pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem (Matt. 4:5; Luke 4:9). Some Pharisees had come to Him in Luke 5:17 and others came from Jerusalem in Luke 6:17. Jesus taught in Jerusalem early in His ministry, before these events in Matthew 15, according to John 2:13, 23. He traveled again to Jerusalem, before these events of Matthew 15, in John 5:1-2.

The animosity of the Pharisees (15:1-20) is set in contrast to the belief of the non-Jewish woman whose daughter was possessed by a demon (15:21-28). Despite the distractions, Jesus continues to heal (15:29-31) and to feed the hungry (15:32-39). It is possible that the healings and the feedings were largely among Gentiles. That might explain why Matthew records two miraculous feedings: one among the Jews (14:13-21) and one, perhaps, among the Gentiles (15:32-39).

### TRANSLATION - 15:1-20:

**1** At that time, they were approaching Jesus from Jerusalem Pharisees and scribes, saying, **2** Why do your disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? For they do not wash [their] hands whenever bread they are eating. **3** After answer, He said to them, "Why also do you all transgress the commandment of God through your tradition? **4** For God said, 'Honor father and mother,' and 'The one speaking evil of father or mother to death he will be terminated.' **5** But you all say, 'Whoever may say to father or to mother, 'A gift, whatever from me you may benefit, **6** he will not honor his father. And you all revoke the word of God through your tradition. **7** Hypocrites, well prophesied concerning you Isaiah, saying, 'This people with the lips is honoring Me but their heart far it is distant from Me. **9** And in vain they are worshipping Me, teaching as instruction commandments of men.'"

**10** And after summoning the crowd, He said to them, "Hear and understand. **11** Not that entering into the mouth is defiling the man, but that coming out of the mouth, this is defiling the man.

**12** At that time, after approaching, the disciples said to Him, "Have you known that the Pharisees, after hearing the word, were offended?" **13** After answering He said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted. **14** Leave them alone; blind they are guides [blind]; and the blind, the blind they guide, both into the ditch they will fall."

**15** And after answering, Peter said to Him, "Interpret to us this parable." **16** And He said, "Yet even you all without understanding you are? **17** Do you not understand that everything entering into the mouth, into the stomach it goes and into the latrine it is expelled? **18** And the things coming out from the mouth, from the heart are coming out, even that is defiling the man. **19** For out of the heart goes out evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thievery, false witnesses, blasphemies. **20** These are the things defiling the man, but with unwashed hands to eat, does not defile the man."

### GREEK WORDS:

For more information on "Pharisees" (ver. 1), see 3:7; for "scribes," see at 2:4. "Disciples" (ver. 2) was first seen at 5:1. "To transgress" is used only here (15:2-3) and Acts 1:25. It can mean to "break" in the sense of to "violate" a law. "Traditions" is found 13 times in the NT; only in this context in Matthew (15:2-3, 6). "Elders" is used here for the first time to refer to older, influential men in the nation of Israel. The word is used 66 times in the NT, in Matthew 12 times. "To wash" was first used at 6:17.

This noun "commandment" (ver. 3) was first used at 5:19. It is used 67 times in the NT. "To honor" (ver. 4) is used in this text (15:4, 6, 8); 19:19; 27:9, out of 21 times. "To speak evil" is

a compound verb, translated literally. It is used 4 times: 15:4; Mark 7:10; 9:39; Acts 19:9. "Death" was first seen at 4:16. "To terminate" means, in this context, "to die." It was first used at 2:19; 9:18. It is used 11 times in the NT.

A "gift" (ver. 5) was first seen at 2:11; 5:23-24; 8:4. "To benefit" is used 15 times, three times in Matthew: 15:5; 16:26; 27:24. "To revoke" (ver. 6) or to "make void" is used three times: 15:6; Mark 7:13; Gal. 3:17. "Word" is used many times, 330 times in the NT; it was first used at 5:32, 37. "Hypocrites" (ver. 7) was first seen at 6:2, 5, 16. The verb "to prophesy" was first used at 7:22. "Isaiah" was first used at 3:3.

"People" (ver. 8) was first seen at 1:21. "Lip" is only used 7 times in the NT; only here in Matthew. "Heart" was first used at 5:8, 28. "To be distant" was first seen at 6:2, 5, 16. "In vain" (ver. 9) is used only here and Mark 7:7. "To worship" here is not the normal word we have encountered before. This word is used 10 times, 8 of which are in Acts. It is found here and Mark 7:7 outside of Acts. "To teach" was first seen at 4:23, out of 97 times in the NT. Its related noun "instruction" is found only here in Matthew, out of 21 times. "Commandments" is found only here, Mark 7:7; and Col. 2:22.

"To summon" (ver. 10) was first used at 10:1; it is the word translated "to encourage" or to "call beside." "To understand" was the key verb used in chapter 13 (13:13, 14, 15, 19, 23, 51). "Mouth" (ver. 11) was first seen at 4:4. "To defile" is used here (15:11, 18, 20); Mark 7:15, 18, 20, 23; Acts 10:15; 11:9; 21:28; Heb. 9:13. The verbs "going out" and "entering in" are different forms of the same verb, with different prefixes: "into" and "out of."

We have seen the verb "to be offended" (ver. 12) several times; it was first used at 5:29-30. "Plant" (ver. 13) is only used here. Its related verb "to plant" is used 11 times in the NT; in Matthew at 15:33; 21:33. "To uproot" was used first at 13:29. "Leave alone" (ver. 14) was first seen at 3:15. "Blind" was first seen at 9:27-28. A "guide" or "leader" is found in Matthew at 15:14; 23:16, 24; Acts 1:16; Rom. 2:19. Its related verb "to guide" is used at Matthew 15:14; Luke 6:39; John 16:13; Acts 8:31; Rev. 7:17. "Ditch" was first seen at 12:11. "To fall" was first seen at 2:11.

This is the only use of the verb "to interpret" (ver. 15). The word "parable" was first seen at 13:3, and used extensively in that chapter. "Without understanding" is the adjective "understanding," related to the verb used above "to understand." It has the negative in front of it: "without." It is used only here in Matthew; it is also found at Mark 7:18; Rom. 1:21, 31; 10:19.

"To comprehend" (ver. 17) can mean "to understand." We have translated it differently to distinguish it from the other verb. It is used 14 times; in Matthew, at 15:17; 16:9, 11; 24:15. "Stomach" was used first at 12:40. "To go" is not the normal verb for movement. This verb is used 10 times, in Matthew at 15:17; 19:11-12. "Latrine" could be translated "toilet" if we do not imagine a modern toilet. It is used here and Mark 7:19. "To expel" also means to "cast out;" it was used first at 7:4-5, 22.

"Thoughts" (ver. 19) is used only here in Matthew, out of 14 times. "Evil" was first seen at 5:11, 37, 39, 45. "Murder" is used 9 times, only here in Matthew. "Adulteries" is used here; Mark 7:21; John 8:3. It refers to sexual acts involving someone married. "Fornications" was first seen at 5:32. It involves sexual acts of all kinds. "Thieveries" is used here and Mark 7:21. "False witnesses" is used here and 26:59. "Blasphemies" was used first at 12:31. "Unwashed" (ver. 21) is used only here and Mark 7:2.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

All the sins mentioned in verse 19 are plural, showing the comprehensive nature of sin, without an exception.

#### PARALLELS:

This passage has its parallel in Mark 7:1-23.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

"Elders" were the leading men of the nation of Israel who were to teach the nation the precepts of God (Num. 11:16; Joshua 24:31). Jesus quotes Exodus 20:12 (also Deut. 5:16) and

21:17 (also Lev. 20:9). Similar teachings are found in Deut. 27:16; Prov. 20:20; 30:17. Jesus will also quote Isaiah 29:13. There are passages which portray Israel as God's "plant:" Isaiah 5:1-7; 60:21; 61:3.

#### COMMENTS:

The animosity toward Jesus is growing in intensity. At this point in His ministry, Pharisees and scribes come up from Jerusalem, the heart of the Jewish religion. They have seen or heard about Jesus not following the traditions of the elders (cf. Luke 11:38). Rather than criticize Jesus directly, they attack His disciples: "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" "Traditions" refers to something passed from one generation to the next. It can refer to teachings handed down from Jesus to His apostles to the next generation of Christians (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6).

However, the elders of Israel, who largely were Pharisees, had taught for many years that Moses revealed "oral" traditions to the elders of Israel just as much as he had revealed the written law. Obviously, they believed they were the guardians of that oral tradition. Eventually, the oral traditions would be written down, some 200 years after Jesus returned to heaven. That written copy of the oral tradition is called the Mishnah.<sup>1</sup> But those traditions were considered on equal authority with the written law. That will be the source of the criticism Jesus offers in this event. These traditions seem to have originated as a result of the Babylonian exile, which occurred because the Jews did not take God's word seriously. Apparently, the elders started creating traditions around the Law so that the Jews would not break the Law again. This became a serious problem because those traditions were enforced as if they were the actual laws of God. That is what Jesus is dealing with here.

The OT had required priests to wash before they entered the tabernacle (Exo. 30:17-21). The tradition broadened that application and said *all* Israelites should wash their hands before they ate. They did not want to make themselves unclean. The elaborate rituals the elders had developed and required (see Mark 7:3-4) shows that their concern was more about appearance than cleanliness.

Jesus turns the question around, as rabbis often did, and asks why the Pharisees were transgressing the commands of God through their traditions. The verb "to transgress" means to "go beyond." God's commands authorize what they authorize. Man is obligated to obey God's commands and man has no authority to go beyond those commands. That is the definition of "transgress" and is synonymous with sin.

To prove His point, Jesus quotes the fifth commandment from Exodus 20:12 as well as the commandment from Exodus 21:17. Observe in verse 4 that when Jesus quotes the law of Moses, He prefaces it by saying, "God said..." To Jesus, if words were written in the OT, they were God's words. The law (God) had said: "Honor father and mother" and "the one speaking evil against father or mother should be completely put to death" (the phrase reflects the Hebrew language's emphatic construction). But, the Pharisees (the "you" is emphatic in verse 5) twisted the words of God, as they tended to do. The Pharisees had developed a tradition that if someone had sworn an oath to give to God, then they were not obligated to give to their parents. In that way, Jesus says, they were making the word of God void, pointless, worthless, through their tradition.

Then, for the first time in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus calls them "hypocrites." He quotes Isaiah 29:13 and states that Isaiah was prophesying (in broad terms) about Jesus' contemporaries. Their "commitment" to God was only superficial; it was only verbal; it was only for show. They honored God with their lips, but the spirituality only went that far; it did not touch the heart. Their hearts were far from God. In a parallel sense, in verse 9, Jesus says that

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<sup>1</sup> The commentary on the Mishnah is called the Gemara. The commentary becomes the Babylonian Talmud among the Jews living in Babylon (A. D. 500-600 A. D.) and the Palestinian Talmud (400-450 A. D.). One can see that these commentaries are quite late and might be of no or little use to understanding Jewish practice in the time of Jesus.

they worship God in vain *because* they were teaching doctrines or teachings that were the “commandments of men.” No man has a right to elevate his own thoughts and / or traditions to the same level as the teachings and commandments of God through Christ.

Due to this confrontation, Jesus took the opportunity to direct His attention to the crowds of people seeing and hearing this interaction. He calls on them to listen and to understand. It is not what enters into the mouth and stomach that makes a man unclean in the eyes of God. It is what comes out of man that makes him unclean. Jesus will elaborate on His meaning when Peter asks Him about it (verse 15). Apparently in verse 12, Jesus is in a house again and the disciples come to Him and ask if He realizes that He offended the religious leaders of the day.

Jesus gives His disciples a warning in verses 13-14. A plant (a “doctrine” or a “sect” or “cult”) which God Himself had not planted will be uprooted. If the teachings of the Pharisees were not consistent with the written word of God from the Law of Moses, their teachings were false teachings and their whole system of doctrine would be uprooted by the God of heaven (see Matt. 13:47-50). Jesus changes the metaphor in verse 14: “Leave them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch.” The Pharisees had their followers. The leaders (Pharisees) were blind spiritually; those who followed the Pharisees despite the teachings and miracles of Jesus, would also be blind. Eventually, they both would end in destruction. John had earlier warned the Pharisees about their shallow religion (3:10-12).

The disciples do not understand what Jesus had said, particularly in verse 11, about foods. The Law of Moses was well-known for declaring some foods clean and some unclean (Lev. 11). Faithful Jews observed those laws scrupulously (cf. Acts 10:9-16). Peter voices the question of the disciples: What does this parable mean? Observe that Peter uses the word “parable” to describe Jesus’ statement.

Jesus chastises His disciples for their lack of understanding. He wants them to understand that foods going into the mouth and stomach do not make a person unclean in the eyes of God. The reason is because foods do not touch the heart or the mind. They pass through the stomach and are expelled into the latrine, or toilet. Clarifying His teaching, in verse 18, Jesus says the things that come *out* of a man are what make him unclean in the eyes of God. The reason is because sin originates in man’s heart. In verse 19, Jesus gives a list of sins, among many in the NT, which all originate in the heart: evil thoughts (the source of all sin), murder, adultery (see on Matthew 5:31-32), fornication, thievery, false testimony (lying, especially in the court of law), and blasphemy, or speaking evil against another (cf. verse 4).

Sin makes a man unclean in the eyes of God, but eating without washing one’s hands has no relationship with sin. Sin starts in the heart (Eph. 4:29; James 3:6).

#### APPLICATION:

In Mark’s account, he makes application of Jesus’ statement that “all foods are clean” (7:19). Jesus thus laid the foundation for the removal of the food laws of the Law of Moses. In Acts 10:9-16, 34-35, Peter will learn that the removal of the food laws also illustrates the removal of the distinction between Jews and non-Jews. Paul teaches that the food laws are a shadow, predicting the coming of Christ: Col. 2:16-17. Paul will also teach in 1 Timothy 4:1-5 that any food may be consumed by Christians if it is consumed with thanksgiving. See also Romans 14:14-18; 1 Cor. 10:31; Titus 1:15; Heb. 13:9.

This paragraph should also emphasize that man does not have the right to teach doctrines that are not taught by Jesus Christ. No man has the right to add laws (traditions) to the laws that Jesus has left in His word. In effect, that would be teaching “another gospel” (see Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19). To reemphasize Jesus’ point, no man nor group of men, nor church council, has any authority to create rules or laws for Christians. That is transgressing God’s commands.

The Pharisees were willfully ignorant of the teachings of Christ. That is what made them “blind leaders.” The people had access to the Law of Moses and should have known better

than to follow the Pharisees (cf. Matt. 23:1-3). Paul criticized Jews in his day for being the same way (Rom. 2:19). Other lists of sins in the NT are found at: Rom. 1:29-31; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; 5:3-4; Col. 3:5; Rev. 9:21; 21:8; 22:15.

Paul will apply Isaiah 6:9-10 to the Jews in Acts 28:25-27. Vain worship is a characteristic of idolatry (Acts 14:15). It can characterize our worship (James 1:26) if we worship according to our own desires and not according to the commandments of Christ (Col. 2:20-23).

Jesus here shows that food does not defile a person in the eyes of God. Nothing a person eats, or does not eat, has any bearing on his soul. Physical health considerations are not taken into account anywhere in Scripture. Take a look at any passage mentioned above which lists sins and one will not find any sin related to what we eat or do not eat. Even the infamous “gluttony” is not found, at least in the NT, in a context defining it as sin: Deut. 21:20; Prov. 23:20-21; 28:7; Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34; Titus 1:12. The fact is, Paul identifies the doctrine that forbids the eating of certain foods as a doctrine “of demons:” 1 Timothy 4:1-4.

#### TRANSLATION - 15:21-28:

**21** And after going out from there Jesus withdrew into the region of Tyre and Sidon. **22** And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region, after going out was crying, saying, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter severely is demon-possessed.” **23** But He did not answer her a word. And after approaching, His disciples were asking Him saying, “Send her away, because she cries after us.” **24** After answering He said, “I was not sent except unto the sheep, the lost ones, of the house of Israel.” **25** But she, after coming, was worshipping Him saying, “Lord, help me!” **26** And after answering, He said, “It is not good to take bread from the children and to cast [it] to the dogs.” **27** Then she said, “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs are eating from the crumbs falling from the table of their lord.” **28** At that time, after answering, Jesus said to her, “O woman! Great [is] your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And she was healed, her daughter, from that hour.

#### GREEK WORDS:

“To withdraw” (ver. 21) was first seen at 2:12-14, 22. “Tyre” and “Sidon” are both mentioned first at 11:21-22. This is the only use (ver. 22) of the noun “Canaanite.” “To cry out” was first seen at 8:29. “To have mercy” was first seen at 5:7. “Daughter” was first seen at 9:18, 22. To be “demon-possessed” was first seen at 4:24; 8:16, 28, 33; 9:32; 12:22. “Son of David” was a phrase introduced at 1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23.

“To ask” (ver. 23) is used 63 times in the NT; in Matthew at 15:23; 16:13; 19:17; 21:24. “To send away” was first seen at 1:19; 5:31-32. “To send” (ver. 24) was first seen at 2:16; 8:31; 10:5, 16, 40. “Sheep” was first seen at 7:15; 9:36; 10:6, 16. “Lost” was first seen at 2:13; 5:29-30. “Israel” is used 68 times, first in Matthew at 2:6. The phrase “house of Israel” is used 145 times in the OT, only 6 times in the NT, first at Matthew 10:6. It is also found here; Acts 2:36; 7:42; Heb. 8:8, 10.

“To worship” (ver. 25) is the normal word to worship, or to “bow down in respect.” It was first used at 2:2, 8, 11. We do not know exactly how this woman intended the action to be interpreted. “Help” is a cry for assistance. It is used only here in Matthew, out of eight uses: Mark 9:22, 24; Acts 16:9; 21:28; 2 Cor. 6:2; Heb. 2:18; Rev. 12:16. “Dogs” (ver. 26) is found here (15:26-27) and Mark 7:27-28. “Crumbs” (ver. 27) is used here and Mark 7:28. “To fall” was first seen at 2:11. “Table” is used 15 times, twice in Matthew (15:27; 21:12). “Faith” (ver. 28) is used 243 times in the NT, making it one of the most “biblical” words in the Bible! It is used first at 8:10; 9:2, 22, 29. “To heal” was first seen at 8:8, 13; 13:15.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

“To cry” (ver. 22), “to ask” (ver. 23) and “to worship” (ver. 25) are in the verbal tense imperfect, showing that it was continuous action in the past.

### PARALLELS:

This event has its parallel at Mark 7:24-30.

### ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Tyre” and “Sidon” were seen back in 11:21-22. They were cities located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Sidon was about 25 miles north of Tyre.

### COMMENTS:

After His interaction and exchange with the Pharisees from Jerusalem, Jesus withdraws into a region inhabited primarily by Gentiles, the region of Tyre and Sidon (whom He subtly praised in 11:21-22). This is the only time, on record, when Jesus left the area traditionally inhabited by Jews. It was there that a Canaanite woman came crying to Him about her daughter. Matthew’s use of the word “Canaanite” recalls the wicked enemies of Israel from the OT times. “Canaanite” is found in the Bible, primarily the OT, 71 times. The important point is that she is a non-Jew, but she knows much about Jewish expectations or has actually become a Jew in her religious practices. She calls Him “Son of David.” That suggests some knowledge of Jewish beliefs; we presume she *believes* Jesus is the Son of David. She calls Him “lord,” which likely simply is a term of respect. However, her worship of Jesus might suggest she sees something divine in Him.

The woman’s problem is that her daughter is wickedly persecuted by demons. At first, Jesus does not answer her. He is assuredly testing her convictions. Accordingly, she persisted, which annoyed the disciples. They call on Jesus to send her away because she “is crying behind us.” The woman was persistent! Jesus’ response echoes His words to His apostles earlier in Matthew 10:5-6. His ministry was to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

In verse 25, the woman came to Jesus, worshiping Him, and entreating Him again to help her. In verse 26, Jesus utters a proverb which was commonly accepted among the Jews and, apparently, understood by the non-Jews: You don’t take the children’s bread and give it to dogs. Many scholars have tried to defend Jesus using such an offensive expression to this hurting woman. There is no indication she was offended; if she was, she did not let it show. In fact, her next statement of faith shows that she was willing to accept the thrust of the proverb: “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs falling from their master’s table.” She was willing to allow the Jews to receive the main blessings from the God of heaven; she just wanted the “scraps” of those blessings - just heal the daughter!

Just as He did with the earlier non-Jew He healed in Matthew 8:5-13, Jesus marveled at her faith. It stands in stark contrast to the Pharisees earlier in the chapter. Jesus decided to heal her daughter, from a distance, without entering the house or touching the daughter (as He did in Matthew 8). Matthew writes that the daughter was healed at that specific hour.

### APPLICATION:

Jesus clearly wants non-Jews to be a part of His new covenant community. In 28:18-20, He will send His followers into all the nations of the world to preach His gospel. That call is fulfilled in the book of Acts. In Acts 13:45-48, Paul tells Jews that since they consider themselves unworthy of the gospel message, he will direct his energies to preaching to the non-Jews.

### TRANSLATION - 15:29-31:

**29** And going up from there, Jesus went by the Sea of Galilee, and going up into the mountain, He sat down there. **30** And they brought to Him many crowds, having with them lame, blind, crippled, deaf, and many others and they laid them by His feet and He healed them. **31** So that the crowds marveled, seeing the deaf speaking, crippled healthy, and lame walking and blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

### GREEK WORDS:

“Lame” (ver. 30) was first seen at 11:5. “Blind” was first seen at 9:27-28. “Crippled” is first used here: 15:30-31; also at 18:8; Mark 9:43. “Deaf” was first seen at 9:32-33. The verb “to heal” was used at 4:23-24. “To marvel” (ver. 31) was first seen at 8:10, 27. “Healthy” or “sound” was first seen at 12:13. “To glorify” was first used at 5:16; 6:2. The phrase “God of Israel” is used 203 times in the Bible; only twice in the NT: here and Luke 1:68.

#### COMMENTS:

This paragraph is another summary of the healing miracles Jesus performed on a regular basis. It seems everywhere Jesus went (except His hometown; 13:53-58), He healed multitudes of the sick. In this case, the crowds glorified God, as they did at 9:8. Some suggest the crowd’s use of the term “God of Israel” indicates the crowd was non-Jew. As we point out above, under “Words,” the phrase is used hundreds of times in the OT so that it is not a distinctively, or even likely, non-Jewish term for God.

#### APPLICATION:

Jesus spent much time healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, and serving the poor and needy. He directed all glory to the Father and taught the crowds the same teachings Matthew has presented up to this point.

#### TRANSLATION - 15:32-39:

**32** And Jesus, after calling His disciples, said, “I have compassion on the crowd, because already three days they are remaining to Me and they do not have what they may eat; and to send them away hunger I do not desire; lest they might collapse in the way. **33** And the disciples said to Him, “From whence to us in the desert, bread sufficient so that to be satisfied such a crowd?” **34** And He said to them, “How much bread do you have?” And they said, “Seven and a few little fish.”

**35** And He commanded the crowd to recline on the ground. **36** He took the seven loaves of bread and the fish and, after giving thanks, broke [them] and was giving to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowd. **37** And they ate, all, and were satisfied. And the leftovers of the broken fragments they took up seven baskets full. **38** And those eating were four thousand men, without women and children. **39** And after sending away the crowds, He embarked into the boat and He came into the region of Magadan.

#### GREEK WORDS:

The verb “to call” (ver. 32) was seen first at 10:1; it suggests the idea of “summon.” “To have compassion,” or to “be moved (emotionally)” was first used at 9:36; 14:14. “To send away” was first seen at 1:19; 5:31-32. “Hungry” is the adjective form of the related verb; the adjective is only used here and Mark 8:3. “To collapse” can also mean to “grow weary” or to “give out;” it is used only here in Matthew (see also Mark 8:3; Gal. 6:9; Heb. 12:3, 5). “Way” is used first at 2:12; 3:3.

“Bread” (ver. 33) was first seen at 4:3-4. It was a basic part of the first century diet. The Greek word can translate “bread” or “loaves of bread.” “To be satisfied” was first seen at 5:6; 14:20. “Little fish” (ver. 34) is only used here and Mark 8:7. “To command” (ver. 35) was first used at 10:5. “To recline” is used here only in Matthew, out of 12 times in the NT. “To give thanks” (ver. 36) is used 38 times in the NT, in Matthew only here and 26:27. The Greek verb gives us the word *Eucharist*.

“Leftovers” (ver. 37) was first seen at 5:20; 13:12; 14:20. “Broken fragments” was used first at 14:20; this is its last use by Matthew. This “basket” is used here; 16:10; Mark 8:8, 20; Acts 9:25. This particular basket was more closely associated with Greek usage as opposed to the basket in chapter 14, which was used by the Jews. The latter passage (Acts 9:25) indicates the basket was large enough for a grown man (Paul) to enter. That might explain why this event only recorded seven baskets of leftovers instead of the twelve of the previous miracle.

### PARALLELS:

Jesus, of course, fed 5,000 on a different occasion, recorded in the prior chapter. This event has its parallel in Mark 8:1-10.

### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

See comments under 14:13-21. There were miraculous feedings in the time of Moses (Exo. 16; Num. 11:4-9), and Elisha (2 Kings 4:1-7, 42-44).

### ARCHAEOLOGY:

The location of "Magadan" (ver. 39), used only here, is not known. Some suggest it refers to the town of Magdala, the town of Mary of Magdala, but there is not much support for this view.

### COMMENTS:

While Jesus performed healings on a regular basis, it is also possible that Jesus fed multitudes on a regular basis. Matthew has already recorded one feeding miracle in 14:13-21. Some scholars suggest this miracle is just a repetition of that miracle, but the details are sufficiently different to argue for a second feeding.

On this occasion, Jesus felt compassion on the crowds (cf. 9:36) because they had been with Him for three days and likely had consumed all their food supplies. Jesus did not want to send them home under those conditions lest they collapse from hunger on the way home, yet the disciples (apparently forgetting the earlier miracle!) wonder where they would get enough food to feed all those people.

Inquiring, Jesus learned they had seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. That question served to emphasize to the disciples that the miracle is going to be in the hands of Jesus, their Lord. Jesus commanded the crowd to sit. He then took the bread and the fish and, after thanking God for the gifts He had provided, Jesus broke the bread and distributed the food to His disciples who then distributed the food to the crowds.

Verse 37 emphasizes the power of the miracle. Everyone ate and was satisfied. Then the disciples took up the fragments, as they had done before (cf. 14:20), and they filled seven baskets with those fragments. God always has an abundance of blessings to bestow and never depletes His storehouse of treasures! There were 4,000 men, not counting the assembled women and children in the audience.

From there, Jesus embarked on a boat on the Sea of Galilee and came to the region of Magadan to continue His ministry.

### APPLICATION:

The compassion of Jesus is mentioned more than any other emotion He felt or expressed while He was here on earth. Christians are to imitate the compassion of Christ (see Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Col. 3:12; 1 John 3:17). The word is found three times in Philemon (verses 7, 12, 20). The multiplication of the loaves shows that Jesus cares about our physical needs just as He does our spiritual needs (see Matt. 6:8). It also shows that Jesus has the ability to provide more abundantly for us than we could expect (see Phil. 4:19; Eph. 3:20).