

• *Two feeding miracles*

1. Jesus gives his disciples a second chance

• *Abundant provision*

• *Miraculous provision*

2. The lesson of the feeding miracles not yet learned

3. A miracle to show the need of more spiritual understanding

• *A healing in two stages*

• *A hint to the disciples*

The two feeding miracles of the ministry of Jesus were obviously exceptionally important events. Jesus wanted His disciples to learn from them that He was abundantly capable of caring for His people.

1. **Jesus gives His disciples a second chance to learn the abundance of His care for His people.** Once again opportunity was given to the disciples to see the abundance of Jesus' provision. This time it was in an area where there were many more Gentiles. The need is even greater than before. This time they have been without food for three days^{□1}. Jesus mentions the plight of the people to the disciples^{□2}. Again they think only of the practical difficulties in the way of helping the people^{□3}. They have no expectation of another feeding miracle.

Again Jesus chooses to use the supplies which the disciples can find and multiply them miraculously^{□1}. The people are miraculously fed^{□2} and seven basketfuls of extra food are collected^{□3}. Four thousand men were involved in the feeding^{□4}.

2. **Yet shortly after that they again reveal that they have not learned the lesson of the feeding miracles.** They cross from the eastern side of the lake and reach Dalmanutha^{□1}. The precise place is unknown but it is obviously on the western side of the lake. The Pharisees request a sign from Jesus but their request is refused^{□2}. This leads shortly after to Jesus' giving His disciples a warning about the subtle influence (the 'leaven') of the Pharisees and of Herod^{□3}. Because they have forgotten to take bread for their journey the disciples do not get the point of His warning at all and think He is saying something about the forgotten bread^{□4}. But this only reveals that they have not learned the lesson of the two feeding miracles^{□5}. They still have not seen the abundance of Jesus' care for His people.

3. **Jesus works a miracle that lets them see that their spiritual understanding needs to be further healed.** The next miracle is related to their slowness to see. It is unprecedented to have a miracle that takes place in two stages. The story must not be used to prove that Jesus' miracles may be half-successful – and therefore half-successful miracles may be expected today! Surely the event is deliberately intended to give the disciples a picture of themselves. Their slowness to see the greatness of Jesus is like that of a blind man half-cured.

The man is brought to Jesus in Bethsaida^{□1}. Jesus heals him but the healing seems to be only half-successful, for the healed person sees other people like trees walking around^{□2}. Then the man gets a second touch from Jesus^{□3}, and is fully healed^{□4}. He is warned not to go into Bethsaida where he might tell of what Jesus has done^{□5}.

In the particular situation in which Jesus and His disciples find themselves, the way in which the miracle is performed is surely a hint to the disciples that they need a 'second touch' from Jesus. They have seen much of Jesus' miraculous powers, and they have His teaching, but there is much that they have not yet seen. Jesus had told them that although they 'had ears' they still needed to hear!

□1 8:1-2

□2 8:3

□3 8:4

□1 8:5

□2 8:6-8a

□3 8:8b

□4 8:9a

□1 8:9b-10

□2 8:11-13

□3 8:14-15

□4 8:16

□5 8:17-21

□1 8:22

□2 8:23-4

□3 8:25a

□4 8:25b

□5 8:26

• **Sufficiency for every situation**

They had seen and heard enough to know who Jesus was and to appreciate His great power. They should now know Him sufficiently to know that He is capable of abundantly caring for and providing for His people. Yet they are like a man who is half-healed and sees people as if they were trees walking around.

• **Jesus is always planning abundant provision**

People who have not had a 'second touch' tend not to see how sufficient God is for every situation. The disciples had been in a situation before where Jesus had fed thousands. One might expect them to be ready for Jesus to do something similar again. But people who have not had a 'second touch' (in which they see clearly the greatness and abundance of God's provision) tend to think that when God has done something amazing – like feed five thousand – it was just 'luck' and is not likely to happen again. Jesus wants His disciples to know that He is **always** planning to abundantly provide for the needs of His people.



The disciples were meant to be ready for **abundant** provision. When Jesus acts there are likely to be baskets and baskets of His supplies left over. He does not provide in a mean or stingy manner. He provides abundantly.

• **A second touch – seeing things properly brings transformation and release**

The disciple who has had a 'second touch' knows of Jesus' mercy and concern for His people. Such a disciple will not panic easily, will not struggle with God's delays, will not grumble in adversity.

Have we had a 'second touch'? It is wonderful to know that Jesus is merciful and willing to give grace and help to us. But with a 'second touch' we see much more. We see everything properly. We discover how Jesus has taken responsibility for us. We see how faithful He is. We see His compassion, His unconditional acceptance of us despite all our weaknesses. We see His abundant provision. He is the Saviour who performs miracles of abundant provision for us, in His time and in His own way. But He does it more than once. He is always an abundant provider. If God touches our eyes we shall see things properly. Despite all that Jesus has done for them the disciples have a limited perception of the goodness and the power of Jesus and the greatness of His provision for His people. They are half- healed. If they get from God a second touch and see things as they really are, they will become transformed people. They will be released into a life of total confidence because they have seen how much Jesus' abundant provision is ever at hand.

• **Total confidence**

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