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THE HEAVEN-PROVIDED BREAD

- *MAY 29.* - MATTHEW 14:13-21; 15:29-39. -

Golden Text: - "I am the bread of life." - John 6:35.

THE GOSPELS give us two distinctly different miracles of feeding the multitude in the wilderness places. On one occasion the number fed was five thousand and in the other four thousand. In the one case it was a lad who provided five small barley cakes and two fishes; in the other the disciples themselves had seven loaves and a few fishes. In one instance twelve baskets full of fragments were gathered after the repast; in the other seven baskets full. St. Matthew's Gospel records both of these miracles. In each instance there was a seeming necessity for the miracle, and the necessity prompted our Lord's compassion and the use of the Divine power. It will be noticed that in these instances the Master used for the benefit of others the special powers communicated to him at the time of his baptism through the descent of the holy Spirit; but we recall that Jesus refused to use this same power selfishly for his own comfort, even when he hungered after having spent forty days in the wilderness at the outstart of his work, studying the Scriptures to know the mind of the Lord, how he should suffer and become the Mediator of the New Covenant.

"BUT SOME DOUBTED"

Not all, even of those who associated with our Lord, understood, appreciated, believed in his wonderful miracles. Where there is a desire to disbelieve there is also a possibility. Indeed, the Scriptures are evidently quite true in their assurances that faith is a difficult matter at the present time; and that for this

very reason it is specially appreciated of the Lord in those who profess to be his followers. The Scriptures intimate that faith is a gift of God, while at the same time it is a matter of our own exercise. It is for God to set forth the facts and bring them to our attention. It is for us to be able to appreciate those facts and to exercise the corresponding faith. As the Scriptures declare, "All men have not faith"; "Without faith it is not possible to please God"; "According to thy faith be it unto thee."

God has not made faith equally possible to all, in that he has not given mankind the same opportunities for exercising faith by not giving all the same degree of knowledge upon which to base faith. And even amongst those who have the necessary knowledge, faith must depend considerably upon the structure of the brain. Some people have scarcely anything of faith; others with a different structure of brain, are inclined to believe too much – to be credulous and easily hoaxed.

While God declares that none can be of his Church now being called unless they have faith, including the necessary knowledge as a basis for it, yet he does not say that those who have not the knowledge and have not the faith will, on that account, be turned over to demons for eternal torture. On the contrary such already suffer a measure of deprivation of joy and of blessing. Failure on their part to exercise faith should not bring upon them any additional disadvantages. God has decreed that faith shall "come by hearing and hearing by the Word of God;" that none can believe except they hear, and that none but the believing will have part in the Church's salvation **[R4617 : page 169]** now being effected. But he has equally decreed and arranged for the great mass of mankind who have never had the sufficiency of knowledge and of faith, that all may yet come to a salvable condition. Indeed, God has specially made the way of faith in this age a "narrow" one, that thereby he may select a very special class. But these selected or elected ones, as the Scriptures show,

are to be the Royal Priests of the next age, who will enlighten and instruct all the families of the earth. Then "all the blind eyes shall be opened and the deaf ears shall be unstopped." (Isa. 35:5.) Then everything in the Divine arrangement connected with mankind will be openly revealed, plain to be understood; as the Scriptures say of that time – then the way-faring man, though simple, need not err as respects the way of righteousness. Let us, however, rejoice if we are amongst the blessed, the favored ones of the present time to whom the things of God are not obscure – of those whose hearts are so in tune with the Infinite One that the things of faith revealed to us in the Scriptures do not seem unreasonable.

THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH

Approached from the Bible standpoint, these miracles are most rational, but not from any other standpoint. The power of God, which produces, in the recently discovered "miracle-wheat," as much as two hundred and fifty grains from one kernel, is surely sufficient to produce many times as much if the necessity occurred. Are we not surrounded by miracles continually? Out of the same ground and growing side by side we get blue, red, white, yellow and purple flowers from seeds which we could not tell apart; similarly with animal life – the oats which constitute the breakfast of so many humans, help to produce human heads and faces and hands and feet, hair and nails for black and white and yellow races. Similar oats fed to horses, mules and donkeys sustain very different organisms of very different shapes and qualities. The same oats fed to birds and chickens produce feathers, claws, etc. Are not these miracles which we do not understand?

If the wisest and most skillful man in the world cannot produce a flea nor the very smallest germinating grain, how great must be the Creator who formed all things and who gave to man all that he possesses! How can we limit the powers of such a

Creator when once we have recognized him? He that made the eyes, can he not see? He that made the arm, has he no strength? He that made the human brain and stamped it what it is, has he not infinitely greater wisdom and power? This, then, is the lesson to us of the loaves and fishes.

It is the lesson of Divine power; a lesson also that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, through whom that Divine power was exercised. This lesson leads us onward to the thought that this same Jesus is appointed of the Father to be the Savior of the world. Thus far merely the Church, the elect, his Bride, has been selected, along lines of faith. Shortly the new dispensation will usher in the reign of knowledge and glorious opportunities for the opening of the eyes of all to see, to know, to appreciate, things Divine and to come, if they will, into the condition in which they may enjoy "the gift of God, eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

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