

## **Handout - Deeper Implications of Matthews Multiplication Accounts.**

While Matthew's account points backward to the Elisha story, it also is worded in such a way as to point forward to Jesus' Last Supper and to the Christian celebration of the Eucharist. This motif is clearest in Matt 14:19: "... took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven and blessed, and broke, and gave to his disciples the loaves." On the one hand, this wording prepares the reader for Matt 26:26: "Jesus took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to his disciples ...". On the other hand, the Christians in close contact with Matthew were most likely familiar with the content of Matt 26:26 from their Eucharistic celebrations and were therefore sensitive to the Eucharistic dimension of the multiplication story.

The main emphasis of the Matthean multiplication account does not stop with the Last Supper and the Eucharist. Rather it points beyond to the kingdom of God pictured in Jewish and Christian piety as a banquet. A familiar O.T. example of this motif is Isa 25:6: "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined." The motif seems to have been the presupposition on which the ritual meals of the Qumran community were based (see 1 QS 6:4–5; 1QS<sup>a</sup> 2:17–22); those meals were understood to be anticipations of the heavenly banquet in God's kingdom. The banquet saying in Matt 8:11–12 ("many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven") and the banquet parable in Matt 22:1–10 ("The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son ...") are obvious Matthean examples of this motif.

Nevertheless, the central theme of Matt 14:13–21 is the banquet over which Jesus presides. Matthew is careful to place the wilderness banquet in line with the Last Supper and the Church's Eucharist. The way in which the story is told also relates it to God's feeding of Israel in the wilderness (*erēmos*) and to

Elisha's miraculous feeding of one hundred men. Other developments of the banquet theme in Matthew (8:11–12; 22:1–10) take the reader beyond the confines of past and present experience and looks forward to the banquet that celebrates the fullness of God's kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Harrington, D. J. (2007). [\*The Gospel of Matthew\*](#) (D. J. Harrington, Ed.; Vol. 1, pp. 220–223). Liturgical Press.