

## **Bi132 The Gospels I**

### ***Lesson Bi132-26 Two Different Feasts***

One of the joys of life is eating, and it is always better when you can share whatever food you have with friends. In Palestine most houses were small and hot during much of the year, so eating outside always worked better. After any important meeting or event, it would be common for the people to join together for food. This lesson tells about two very different feasts, one held in a ruler's palace and one outside on a grassy hill. Each meal had a very different ending. One ended in death and the other with a miracle that brought life.

As Jesus sent out the 12 to do the same miracles he had been doing, the news of the gospel spread even more quickly. Even King Herod Antipas heard about the signs and wonders Jesus was doing. His name became well known. Some people rumored that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in this Jesus. Others said he was Elijah or a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.

When Herod Antipas heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!" Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." We know from history that Philip was still alive, so this was an act of adultery. Herodias nursed a grudge against John for his words and wanted to kill him. She was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him often.

Finally the right time came for Herodias to silence John. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials, military commanders, and the leading men of Galilee. When the young daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." The problem was that though Herod offered her half his kingdom, in reality, he was not a king at all. His authority and position came from the Romans, the real rulers in Israel. The offer was meant to show generosity, not to be taken literally.

The girl went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?"

"The head of John the Baptist," she answered.

At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The

man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. John's death happened because Herod wanted to please others, rather than to do what was right. On hearing of his death, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Meanwhile the apostles returned from their mission to preach and heal the sick. They gathered around Jesus to report all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." Jesus was very sad over the news of his cousin John's death and needed to grieve.

So they took a small boat across the Sea of Galilee to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them. They ran on foot from all the towns and got to the place ahead of the disciples. The small sea is only 20 kilometers (12 miles) long and 10 kilometers (6 miles) wide. When Jesus landed and saw the large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

Soon it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him saying, "This is a remote place, and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the nearby villages and buy something to eat."

But he answered, "You give them something to eat." Jesus was testing them. He already had in mind what he was going to do.

So they said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Go and see."

John's Gospel account adds that Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

*Think about this. Jesus told the disciples to feed the thousands of people present. They told him instead about the great cost of such an event and their very limited resources. Why do you think Jesus still asked them to do this?*

Then Jesus directed the disciples to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied (Mark 6:30-42).

Jesus said, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." The disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of men who had eaten was five thousand. There were no doubt many women and children present as well.

When the disciples realized the need of the crowd for food, they only saw the problems; how much it would cost and their limited resources. Jesus encouraged them to stretch their faith and trust Him. He told the disciples to organize the people into groups and then he looked to God and gave thanks. Only then did the miracle happen. Afterwards the disciples filled the baskets they normally carried with the leftover food. Having begun this event concerned about a scarcity of food, each one leaves with enough food for several of days. Jesus, as the shepherd over Israel, fed the people just as Moses fed them the manna in the wilderness. On that day Jesus showed his compassion and his ability to feed any who are hungry both physical and spiritual food.

This story is **important** because it shows the compassion of Jesus for the crowds and his ability to meet their needs even as he dealt with the loss of his cousin John the Baptist.

The **main truth** of this story is that Jesus gave both spiritual and physical bread to the multitudes that came to him. No matter how impossible a situation may seem, God wants us to come to him, give thanks for his provision, and then see how he will meet our needs.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. Who did King Herod think Jesus really was?  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you recalled that Herod said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!" you are correct.
2. What did the disciples say when Jesus told them to feed the crowds after he taught them by the sea?  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said the disciples told Jesus, "That would take more than half a year's wages!" you are correct.
3. Why did Herodias want to kill John the Baptist?  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said it was because John had been telling her husband Herod that it was wrong to take her as his wife, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn this story by memory and then tell it to someone who has not heard it before. After telling the story ask this question, "What do you think were the emotions and feelings of each of the main characters in the story? Contrast the reaction of Jesus and Herod after the death of John. Compare the thoughts of the disciples and the crowds after the feeding of the multitudes. How were the feelings of those who followed God different from those who did not live that way?"