

**File No. 122**

**MATTHEW 14:13–23**

Mark 6:31–46; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–15

**FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE**

(SBS Book 4 Story no. 62)

*Story Notes*

Jesus sought to be away from public engagements after John was killed, perhaps, because he had nothing to contribute to the public debate that would be aroused by this action. But he had time and compassion in plenty for those who sought him out.

All the Gospels record the feast that followed his teaching and healing on this occasion. Obviously, Jesus fed them because they were hungry, but then, because he had compassion on them. He cared, not only that they were hungry, but that they were harassed and helpless (Mark 6:34) and unable to be about the work of the kingdom of God (I Kin. 22:17) of which he had been speaking (Luke 9:11).

So Jesus played host to this crowd (especially by asking the blessing on the meal), as had Moses and Elijah before him (John 6:14; II Kin. 4:42-44) showing that he was a prophet who could care for his people.

He has spoken already of sitting down and feasting in the coming kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:11) and he wanted to demonstrate the joy that would come to all who trusted him as their shepherd. He wanted them to have that joy right there and then as they entrusted their whole life and future to him as God's chosen King.

In John's Gospel, this feast leads on to Jesus explaining that he will give his flesh for the life of the world, and that all who eat his flesh will live forever (John 6:51, 58).

Jesus wanted his disciples to share in this demonstration of compassion and kingdom joy and abundance, so he gave them bread to share with the 5000 people. But still their hearts were hardened and they could not understand the new day of God's provision that had arrived (Mark 6:52; 8:17).

Only Jesus could care for his people at this stage. He sent the disciples on ahead of him while he dismissed the crowd. Now he had time to pray, alone.

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