

Matthew 14:1 ¶ At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

“At that time” indicates direct connection to the teaching from the last chapter. Herod the tetrarch, also known as Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great, was appointed by Rome to rule Galilee and Perea.

Matthew 14:2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Matthew 14:3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife. Matthew 14:4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. Matthew 14:5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

When Herod heard about Jesus, he concluded that He was John the Baptist risen from the dead. Herod was a man suffering from a very guilty conscience. He knew that he had murdered a man innocent of any crime—guilty only of declaring the truth about Herod’s marriage. Herod had taken his brother Philip’s wife as his own. John boldly told Herod that he had disregarded the law to have done so.

Leviticus 20:21 “And if a man shall take his brother’s wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother’s nakedness; they shall be childless.”

John’s declaration enraged Herod’s wife Herodias. She wanted John dead, but Herod refused to kill him because he knew that John was a holy man that spoke the truth and he feared the multitudes that considered John a prophet.

Mark 6:18–20 “For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”

Matthew 14:6 But when Herod’s birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Matthew 14:7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. Matthew 14:8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist’s head in a charger. Matthew 14:9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath’s sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded *it* to be given *her*. Matthew 14:10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. Matthew 14:11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought *it* to her mother.

Herodias had to bide her time, but she was ready when the opportunity to get her way presented itself. On Herod’s birthday she sent her daughter to entertain Herod and his guests with a seductive dance. He was so pleased that he promised to give her whatever she wanted—up to half his kingdom.

Mark 6:23 "And he swore unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom."

The girl immediately went to her mother to ask her what to ask for (indicating that she was probably in her teens), and her mother didn't hesitate; she told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist. Herod was backed into a corner. Though he wasn't happy about it, he gave the order to have John beheaded in order to save face before his guests. John's head was then brought to the girl on a platter, and she took it to her mom.

I am reminded of Solomon's words, "there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). We are horrified today as we see the headlines proclaiming the beheading of innocent people at the hands of ISIS, but their atrocities are nothing new under the sun. The Assyrians of old were known for beheading conquered armies.

Note the following quote found at www.bibleodyssey.org: "...in the annals of Ashurnasirpal II, in which the Neo-Assyrian king boasts about one of his victories: 'I felled 800 of their combat troops with the sword (and) cut off their heads.' Describing another conquest, he claims: 'I hung their heads on trees around the city.' Numbering and displaying heads provided a terrifying and effective means of commemorating the king's domination."

I am also reminded of the deadly power of the sin of pride; it can provoke a man to murder.

David Guzik provides some information on the fate of Herod and Herodias: "Herod had a terrible end. In order to take his brother's wife Herodias, he put away his first wife, a princess from a neighboring kingdom to the east. Her father was offended and came against Herod with an army, defeating him in battle. Then his brother Agrippa accused him of treason against Rome, and he was banished into the distant Roman province of Gaul. In Gaul, Herod and Herodias committed suicide."

Matthew 14:12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

Matthew 14:13 ¶ When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

John's disciples were allowed to take the body of John and bury it. They then proceeded to go and tell Jesus what had happened. The only thing we know from scripture is that Jesus departed the area for a desert place, a wilderness area, after hearing the news. I believe He had already spoken His eulogy for John after John's disciples had come asking Jesus to affirm that He was the Messiah. Luke records it as follows:

Luke 7:24–28 "And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto

*the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appavelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, **Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.**"*

When the people heard that Jesus had departed by boat, they followed him on foot and evidently beat Him to His destination. Luke informs us that His destination was Bethsaida.

Luke 9:10 "And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida."

Matthew 14:14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

When Jesus got off the boat, he saw the multitude and was moved with compassion toward them. Scripture records many places how Jesus responded with compassion toward the people. To be moved with compassion is to have a heart in sympathy with; Webster defines it as "suffering with another." It was that compassion that prompted Him to heal all the sick among them. I am reminded of the words of Jeremiah.

Lamentations 3:22–23 "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

Matthew 14:15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

Matthew 14:16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

Matthew 14:17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

Matthew 14:18 He said, Bring them hither to me.

The events of this section of scripture are recorded in all four gospels.

As evening approached, the Lord's disciples reminded Him that it was time to send the multitudes away to get something to eat. The Lord's response was certainly unexpected. He told the disciples that it was not necessary for the people to leave; they should feed them. Both Mark and John give us a little more information.

Mark 6:37–38 "He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? He

saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes."

John 6:4–9 "And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?"

From John we learn that Jesus first directed His comments to Philip and asked him where they could get enough bread to feed the people. John also notes that Jesus already knew what He was going to do even as He asked the question. Philip then observed that 200 pennyworth wouldn't purchase enough to give everyone even a little (implying that was the amount they had at the time)—5,000 men plus women and children (see vs. 21). A pennyworth was equivalent to a denarius, a typical day's wage for a worker of that day.

Jesus then told the disciples to find out how much food was available. After some investigation, Andrew informed Him that there was a boy there with five barley loaves and two small fishes. Andrew then threw out an interesting question—"But what are they among so many?" I believe this statement indicates the possibility that Andrew had an idea what was coming.

Jesus then told them to bring the food to Him.

Matthew 14:19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Matthew 14:20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

Matthew 14:21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

Mark again supplies a bit more information: *Mark 6:39–40 "And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties."*

They brought the food to Jesus, and He commanded them to have the people sit down in groups of fifty each. I wonder what was going through the people's minds as they followed these instructions.

Jesus then looked up to heaven and thanked the Father as He began to break the food into pieces that He then gave to His disciples who gave to the people. I have in my mind a picture of each disciple holding a piece of bread and fish that never gets smaller or bigger as He gives food to each person. The point is made that everyone ate their fill, and the disciples gathered twelve baskets of

leftovers—one for each disciple. Many commentators speculate that the crowd numbered 15-20,000. The number doesn't really matter; it is no less a miracle whether the crowd was 6,000 or 20,000.

The Jewish New Testament Commentary adds some possible insight: "Although the text does not say so specifically, it is reasonable to suppose that he recited the customary *b'rakhah* which Jews have said for more than two thousand years before meals that include bread: *Barukh attah, Adonai Eloheynu, Melekh-ha'olam, haMotzi lechem min ha'aretz* ("Praised be you, Adonai our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth")."

With this miracle Jesus demonstrated not only His power and authority over creation, but also His ability to abundantly provide for us. It also provides a beautiful example of His desire to allow His followers to be a part of such provision.

Matthew 14:22 ¶ And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

Matthew 14:23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

"Straightway" – Right after the miracle just recorded

Once more John adds a bit more information: *John 6:14–17* "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them."

Jesus realized what the people were thinking, so He ordered His disciples go get into a ship and head toward Capernaum while He sent the people away. He then went up the mountain alone to pray.

Matthew 14:24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

Matthew 14:25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

Matthew 14:26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

Matthew 14:27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

Mark 6:48 "And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, **and would have passed by them.**"

The Sea of Galilee is known for its sudden storms due to the difference in temperatures between the coast and the mountains around it. The coast is 680 feet below sea level, and the mountains around it reach up to 2000 feet high. Also, the sea is only 200 feet deep at its deepest point and is more susceptible to the forces of the wind. (Source: Donald DeYoung at www.christiananswers.net)

A sudden storm arose in the fourth watch of the night (between 3 and 6 a.m.), and Jesus went to the disciples walking on the sea. It is at this point that Mark makes an interesting observation—Jesus “would have passed by them.” Implied qualifier—If they had not called out for Him to help them. That reminds me of some other scripture.

James 4:2 “...ye have not, because ye ask not.”

Though their first response to seeing a man walking on the stormy waters was to conclude that it was a ghost and to scream in fear, it soon changed once Jesus identified Himself and calmly told them not to be afraid.

Matthew 14:28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

Matthew 14:29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

Matthew 14:30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Matthew 14:31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Peter, ever ready with a hasty reaction, told the Lord to tell him to come to Him on the water—and without hesitation the Lord called for him to come. I couldn't help but think of another scripture at this point.

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

The Lord will never deny us the opportunity to grow in our faith in Him.

Amazingly, Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. It only took a few steps, however, for him to realize what he had done. He took his eyes off Jesus and focused on the stormy sea. He became afraid and began to sink. He quickly called out for the Lord to save him. Immediately, the Lord stretched out His hand and caught Peter. I think it was with sadness that He questioned Peter why he had doubted and revealed his faith to be so small (implied—in light of all you have seen Me do).

I like this quote from Spurgeon: “Our doubts are unreasonable: ‘*Wherefore didst thou doubt?*’ If there be reason for little faith, there is evidently reason for great confidence. If it be right to trust Jesus at all, why not trust him altogether?”

Just like Peter, if we take our eyes off Jesus and focus on all the effects of sin

around us, we will find ourselves sinking with doubt as we try to navigate the storms of this life. Thankfully, just like Peter, the Lord is ever ready to reach out and carry us through those storms if we but ask. Again, some of my favorite verses in scripture come to mind.

*Isaiah 26:3 "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: **because he trusteth in thee.**"*

*Romans 8:31–32 "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, **how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?**"*

Matthew 9:29 "...According to your faith be it unto you."

1 John 5:14–15 "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

Hebrews 13:5 "... I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

**Matthew 14:32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.
Matthew 14:33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.**

Once again both Mark and John add bits of information.

Mark 6:51–52 "And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened."

John 6:21 "Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."

It seems that as soon as Jesus and Peter got into the ship, the wind stopped blowing; and immediately they found themselves at their destination. The disciples were still in awe and amazement. How quickly they had forgotten the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. They voiced a unified conclusion concerning Jesus, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

Matthew 14:34 ¶ And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

Matthew 14:35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

Matthew 14:36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

The town of Capernaum was located in the land area known as Gennesaret, a fertile plain that was one of the most prosperous areas of Israel in Jesus' day.

Mark 6:53–56 “And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.”

Mark tells us that they were recognized as soon as they got out of the ship and the news traveled quickly that Jesus was there. People from all over began bringing those that needed healing believing that if they could but touch the hem of His garment they would be made whole—and they were.

Can't help but think this response was a result of the testimony of the woman with the issue of blood (see chapter 9).

This again is an example of the power of faith in the Lord Jesus. I think it is also important to note that each person seeking healing was made “perfectly whole.”