

Matthew 14 • A Picture of This Age

Introduction

Matthew's purpose for writing his Gospel is to prove that Jesus was the anticipated King, the Messiah to come. One of the chief characteristics of the Messiah is to be His rejection by the Jews and the coming of the age of the church consisting both of Gentile and Jew who accept Jesus as Messiah. The three major events in this chapter illustrate the characteristics of this present age when the King is rejected until His Second Coming and how the Gospel is preached in the mean time.

¹At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus, ²and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

³For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. ⁴For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

⁵Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet.

⁶But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod, ⁷so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸Having been prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." ⁹Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests. ¹⁰He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.

¹²His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.

[Read v.1-12]

A History Lesson: The name "Herod" is really a family name so it's easy to confuse the different Herods listed throughout the New Testament.

- "Herod the Great" was the Herod who slew the children (Mt. 2:16-18)
- "Herod Antipas" as a younger son of Herod the Great. He was never actually king but appointed "tetrarch" – the ruler of one-fourth of the kingdom. He's the Herod who had John the Baptist killed and before whom Jesus was silent. (Lk. 23:5-12)
- "Herod Agrippa", the grandson of "Herod the Great", is the Herod who slew James and imprisoned Peter. (Acts 12)
- "Herod "Agrippa II", the great-grandson of "Herod the Great", was the Herod before whom Paul was tried (Acts 25).

All the Herods were actually Edomites, descendants of Esau who hated their Jewish brothers descended through Jacob.. They were treacherous rulers who typify the "god of this age" and the spirit of Antichrist and, like Satan, were all liars and murderers. (Jn. 8:44) They each teach us something about the actions and character of the final Antichrist.

Q: What might be the greater significance where John is concerned? How does his end compare with his beginning and initial calling?

A: John is the forerunner, the messenger of the Messiah. However one treated and viewed John, so they treated and viewed Jesus. In other words, slaying the King's messenger is the ultimate rejection of the King Himself.

"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

Matthew 10:40

Q: What reveals the fact that Herod may have heard John's words, but that they really had no effect on him?

A: Because in biblical terms the proof of "hearing" is putting it into practice. Herod was swayed to action by everyone else – Herodias' daughter, Herodias, his guests and so on, but never put into practice anything John had to say whether it was the Gospel in general or specifically John's exhortation to quit living in sin with Herodias. (Mk. 6:18) John's was the only message Herod truly wanted to go away.

Q: So why might this make Herod's statement acknowledging miraculous powers at work even more amazing?

A: It still didn't prevent him from not merely rejecting the Word, but persecuting it! Intellectually he understood the truth, but he was so spiritually corrupt as to be incapable of doing the right thing.

Application: John's ministry was now completed, having heralded the coming of the King and faithfully preached the Truth. Any Christian who is faithful to the Word of God as John was will suffer persecution because the world which has

rejected the King will also reject His messengers.

"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17:14

[Read v.13-21]

¹³Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.

¹⁵When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

¹⁶But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!"

¹⁷They said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish."

¹⁸And He said, "Bring them here to Me."

¹⁹Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, ²⁰and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets.

²¹There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.

²²Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. ²³After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. ²⁴But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.

²⁵And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.

²⁶When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.

²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the

Q: From this, and particularly in concert with the parallel accounts of this miracle (one of the few recorded by all four Gospels), what do you know to be the greater meaning of this event?

A: The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 is a sermon in action. Christ, through His Word, is the Bread of Life on whom we feed. It is the privilege and responsibility of His servants to give this bread to the hungry multitudes. (See Jn. 6) The servants personally receive the bread from Christ then pass it on to others.

Point: Essentially we see how the role and calling of John the Baptist, while unique to his own situation, is in general taken up and carried on by all disciples of Christ who in turn become His messengers.

Q: What are some of the other lessons to be learned from this miracle?

1. Christ can take our "little" and make it "much".
2. Whatever Christ blesses, He breaks. Are you willing to be broken?
3. People in general are in the wilderness of sin (v.15) and need Christ.
4. Christ can overcome every perceived difficulty.
5. The disciples had many excuses – not enough money, the wrong place, the wrong time – but Christ took what they had and used it to meet the need.
6. Others?

Application: When we are first and foremost faithful in conveying His Word, Christ will meet every provision necessary to complete the ministry.

[Read v.22-36]

Q: In biblically typology, what do boats represent throughout Scripture?

A: They always teach something about the church. Waters represent the nations, fish are those saved out of the old life.

Q: How is this initially a picture of exactly how things are today?

A: Christ is on the mountain praying while the disciples are battling the storm on the lake. Today, Jesus is in heaven interceding for us while we fight the storms of sin on this earth. His coming seems like a long way off, yet just as the darkest hour arrives ("the fourth watch" equals 3-6 a.m.), He comes to still the storm and take His own safely to their destination.

Q: What enabled Peter to walk on the water?

A: Faith in Christ's Word, "Come".

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Romans 10:17

water.”

²⁹And He said, “Come!”

And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

³¹Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

³²When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. ³³And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “You are certainly God’s Son!”

³⁴When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. ³⁵And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent word into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; ³⁶and they implored Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were cured.

Q: When did Peter begin to sink?

A: When he forgot the source and stopped looking at Jesus exclusively.

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also **lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Hebrews 12:1-2

Point: *The ability to overcome the storm and accomplish the impossible is simply to believe the Word of God and keep steadfastly looking to the Son of God. Yet even if we fail, Jesus is gracious to help us recover.*

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:6-7

Q: Were the disciples in the storm because, like Jonah, they were disobedient?

A: No, they were actually there at the very command of Christ Himself.

Application: *If we obey the Word of God there will be suffering and persecution, but Christ is praying for us and will soon come to take us home. Ultimately we experience His protection regardless of how things temporarily appear. The issue isn’t knowledge, but faith. Just as doubt and fear always go together, so faith and peace – even in the midst of the storm – always go together.*

Overall Application

This entire chapter is a pattern for the course of this present age. Those to whom the King originally came reject Him. The King withdraws and there is persecution against His servants. Through His servants He distributes the precious Bread of Life to a hungry world. His servants go through storms and testing, but Christ returns to give them peace and to rescue them from the enemy.