

Notes for Matthew –Chapter 14 (Page 1 of 6)

Introduction – The Story of Two Kings – “King” Herod and “King Jesus”

1. The first 1/3 of the chapter is about “King” Herod. The latter 2/3 is about King Jesus.
2. Herod wanted the title “king” from the Roman government but never got it.
 - a. Jesus is a true king, but with a few exceptions, nobody was willing to give him that title.
3. This Herod went down in history as one of the most immoral and despicable people who ever lived. History records he died by committing suicide.
 - a. Jesus as our true king used his power in love and service.
4. A question I asked is why did Matthew spend so much time on the story of King Herod?
 - a. My answer is my premise: Matthew wanted to show the contrast of Herod to Jesus.
 - b. There are other possible reasons as well.
 - i. Maybe Matthew was angry at the injustice of how Herod treated John the Baptist.
 - ii. Maybe Matthew just wanted to tell the story of how John the Baptist died.
 - iii. When John died, Jesus went into seclusion. Maybe it was “all one big intro”.
5. Chapter 14 is also the story of the “Feeding of the 5,000” and “Jesus walking on the water”.
 - a. The miracle of the “Feeding of the 5,000” is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels.
 - i. In this lesson, I want to discuss why this miracle is so important and why it follows after the story of the death of John the Baptist.
 - b. The last story in this chapter is “Jesus walking on the water”.
 - i. The interesting thing to contemplate is “why this story at this particular point in Jesus ministry? Why does it follow right after the “5,000 feeding”?
 - c. We will discover the sequence of events is significant in this chapter.

Chapter 14 Verses 1-2: At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus,² and he said to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

1. The first thing we have to do is to describe who this Herod is.
 - a. His father was “Herod the Great”, who killed the babies at Bethlehem. (Matthew Chap. 2)
 - b. This Herod was a governor (“tetrarch”) over the Galilee region. “Tetrarch” means “a governor of a 4th part”. Pontius Pilate was tetrarch over the area around Jerusalem.
 - c. Herod knew about Judaism, but was himself an Edomite.
The Edomites were the descendants from Jacob’s brother Esau (Genesis 36:9).
2. I believe Herod is a “religious” man, as he believed in reincarnation.
 - a. Herod thought that John was a “righteous man”, but he had John the Baptist killed in order to keep a rash oath he made at a party.
 - b. I have met many people who use the word “religious” or “spiritual” to describe their belief in God. These are people who ignore or reject the Gospel message and then make up their own substitute religion and call it “religious” or “spiritual”.
 - c. Many people will claim they believe in some sort of god, and most believe in some sort of afterlife. Unfortunately, these same people will not change their lifestyle. They are comfortable believing in a god that doesn’t require much of them.
3. Herod believed Jesus was John the Baptist reincarnated.
 - a. Herod must have heard the reports about Jesus’ miracles.
 - b. Herod had some understanding of Judaism, knew that many hoped Jesus is the Messiah.
 - c. But Herod couldn’t accept Jesus as the promised Messiah either. Therefore, he looked for other explanations. He came up with “John the Baptist reincarnated”.
 - d. I mention this is there are many misconceptions of who Jesus is.
 - i. Herod refused to go learn for himself the truth about Jesus. He came to his own false-conclusions that didn’t require any lifestyle changes.

Notes for Matthew -- Chapter 14 (Page 2 of 6)

Verses 3-5: Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, ⁴ for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." ⁵ Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet.

1. Let me give you some more background on Herod: (Source Josephus, a 1st century historian).
 - a. Herod's "original" wife was an arranged marriage from a neighboring kingdom
 - b. This is the Arabian king of the Nabateans. (You don't have to remember that! ☺)
 - c. Herod's half-brother Phillip lived in Rome.
 - d. Herod had an affair with Phillip's wife Herodias and took her away with him to Israel.
 - e. This woman, Herodias was also Herod's niece.
 - f. Herod's first wife went back to her father. There was a battle between Rome and the Arabian kingdom over this. Rome brought in extra troupes in order to defeat the Arabs.
 - g. Herod and Herodias were eventually fired as governor and exiled to Gaul (France).
 - h. History records they eventually committed suicide together.
2. Notice how Herod handled the guilt of John the Baptist saying, "What you are doing isn't right."
 - a. Herod had John the Baptist arrested and put in jail so he wouldn't have to hear him preach about what was wrong.
 - b. Also, out of fear of a people's revolt, he didn't have John killed.
 - c. Herod in many ways represents people who are neutral on Christianity.
 - i. They just want Christians to "go away and don't make me feel guilty."
 - ii. At the same time, they won't "kill Christ." They know Jesus was a righteous man, but they don't want to change their lifestyle.

Verses 6-8: On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for them and pleased Herod so much ⁷ that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸ Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."

1. The Greek term for "dance" implies a sexual, seductive dance.
2. Let's talk about Herod's new wife Herodias:
 - a. What kind of mother teaches her daughter how to dance sexually to entice her father?
 - b. This means that Herodias knew her husband has a weakness for beautiful women and was willing to use her own daughter to exploit that weakness.
 - c. She wanted John killed for proclaiming that their relationship was wrong (See Mark 6:19).
 - d. She knew her husband Herod didn't want John killed as to avoid an uprising.
 - e. Therefore, she had to go after him at a weak point and thus, the birthday party.
 - f. The application is: Satan knows our weakness and attacks us during those moments.
3. Earlier I described Herod as the type of person who wants to be "neutral" about Jesus.
 - a. His wife Herodias represents the type of person who vigorously opposes Christianity. She wanted to live her life without guilt and she would kill anyone who said otherwise.

Verses 9-11: The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted ¹⁰ and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹ His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother.

1. Let's look at Mark's Gospel of the same story. Mark adds this comment:
 - a. So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But 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. (Mark 6:19-20, NIV)
2. Herod knew in his heart John the Baptist was right. He was too weak to do anything about it.
 - a. He still had John killed out of fear of not keeping his oath.
 - b. "Like most weak men, Herod feared to be thought weak" (Plumptre).

Notes for Matthew -- Chapter 14 (Page 3 of 6)

Verses 9-11 (cont.):

3. Let's talk about Herodias daughter: We know her name was Salome (source Josephus).
 - a. What kind of daughter would dance sexually for her stepfather?
 - b. She agreed to this to whole plot in order to please her mother.
 - c. This does not make Salome any less guilty. She is not a "victim" of wanting to please her mother. She agreed out of her freewill.
 - d. There is an interesting "curse" in the Book of Exodus that fits here:
 - i. "Yet he (God) does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." (Exodus 34:7b, NIV).
 - ii. God does not punish children for the sins of their parents (see Deut. 24:16). God is saying that children and grandchildren suffer the consequences of the sins of their parents and grandparents.
4. I also wanted to consider these verses from John the Baptist's standpoint.
 - a. There are Christians out there who think, "We should never criticize other's behavior, we should just love one another." John the Baptist publicly criticized Herod's behavior.
 - b. John knew it was wrong for Herod to divorce his wife just to marry this women and he said so publicly! For speaking God's truth, it cost John his life.
 - c. "It cost him his head; but it is better to have a head like John the Baptist and lose it than to have an ordinary head and keep it." A.T. Robertson

Verse 12: John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

1. John's disciples took the headless body and gave John the Baptist a proper Jewish burial.
2. After they buried John's body, John's disciples went and told Jesus:
When you are hurting, or sorrowful, go and tell Jesus. Cast your cares upon Him (Psalm 55:22).
3. Notice that Jesus didn't call for a revolution to overthrow Herod for this action.
 - a. The action was wrong. Jesus has "bigger fish to fry". The purpose of Jesus 1st coming is to pay the price for our sins. Jesus will judge Herod for his action, it is simply not the purpose and timing of Jesus 1st coming to earth.

Verse 13a: When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.

1. Just "why" did Jesus withdraw after this incident is a matter of debate.
 - a. Maybe Jesus was saddened by the news & needed alone time with God the Father.
 - b. Maybe Jesus, who was in Herod's territory, needed to get out of his jurisdiction for safety.

Verse 13b: Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.

1. The Sea of Galilee is not a very large body of water. It is 8 miles wide at its widest point.
2. The townsfolk who lived by the lake now heard of the death of John the Baptist.
3. Since the lake wasn't that wide, maybe some of them spotted Jesus in the lake.
4. The crowd started walking/jogging around the lake to see where Jesus was. Others joined them.
5. This occurred shortly before the holiday of Passover (See John 6:4)
 - a. The population in all of Israel was higher as many were "home for the holidays".

Verse 14: When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

1. Remember that Jesus left the scene to be alone. He saw the crowd walking and running around the lake. He had compassion for them and healed the sick among them.
 - a. Notice what Jesus did not say to the crowd: "Hey, can't a guy have some peace and quiet for five minutes? I'm grieving over John's death too you know, now buzz off". ☺
 - b. There are times, even when we want a break, where God calls us to serve others.

Notes for Matthew -- Chapter 14 (Page 4 of 6)

Verse 14 (cont.)

2. The Greek verb for "compassion" implies that Jesus was moved down to his most inward being. His love for helping others outweighed his need for solitude.
 - a. I admit this is difficult. There are times when I am so tired I don't want to help others. First of all, God does not give you anything you can't handle. An all-knowing and all-loving God knows when you need a break and knows when it is time for to help others.
 - b. When I'm having a "pity-party", sometimes the best remedy is to do some sort of service for others. It can re-energize you when you are emotionally and physically worn out.
 - c. Remember the expression "Where God leads, God provides". That includes the strength for you to go on when you don't feel the strength in yourself.
 - d. The balance is "boundaries". One should not help others out of a sense of guilt and martyrdom. Make sure it is God calling you to help others and not a sense of guilt.

Verse 15: As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

1. Besides the miracles, Mark 6:34 tells us that Jesus "taught them many things".
2. Now it is late in the day. The disciples are concerned about the crowd's welfare. They do the logical thing and ask Jesus to order the crowds away to the local villages to buy food.

Verse 16: Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

1. The key word is "you" as in "You give them something to eat".
2. Christian service can summed up in the idea that we, as servants of Christ draw upon Jesus for our strength and our daily instructions. Then we have the power, knowledge and wisdom (the application of knowledge) to go out and help others.
3. To paraphrase Jesus, "Hey guys, don't just tell the people to go help themselves, but I want you to help them. They will know you are Christians by your love for one another. How much "love" does it take to tell people go buy their own food? You take care of them."

Verse 17: "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

1. In John's account we learn that the food actually came from a boy (John 6:9).
 - a. I wondered if the boy voluntarily gave up the food. Imagine his jump in faith when he gave up his only meal and seeing everything multiplied!
2. Jesus just gave the command to feed the large crowd.
 - a. Remember, it was not the disciples' problem how Jesus was going to feed everyone with the five loaves and two fish! We must be obedient to Jesus no matter what the request.
 - b. "Where God leads, God provides"

Verses 18-19: "Bring them here to me," he said. ¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. 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 the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

1. Notice the model for us to follow:
 - a. The bread itself (enough to feed 5,000) came from Jesus himself.
 - b. We, as his servants, then take the bread and give it to others.
2. Getting a little mystical and trivial, I want to discuss the grass.
 - a. Matthew, Mark & John's account of this story all mention the people sitting on the grass. In fact, Mark's account said it was "green grass" (Mark 6:39). Why mention this detail?
 - b. My personal guess: To remind the reader of Psalm 23!
The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters; he restores my soul. (Psalm 23:1, NIV)

Notes for Matthew -- Chapter 14 (Page 5 of 6)

Verses 18-19: (cont.)

3. Anti-miracle people argue, "Well, the "5,000" had some food and they shared what they had".
 - a. That is nonsense! These were people, hearing that Jesus was at a specific location, stopped what they were doing and jogged around the lake to see Him.
 - b. Verse 20 says that everybody was "satisfied". The Greek word for satisfied implies "stuffed to the point you don't want to see any more food!"

Verse 20: They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

1. There were 12 basketfuls left, one for each disciple. The idea is to show, if you use your time, talent and God given abilities to serve others, there will be enough for yourself.
 - a. You have to wonder if the disciples were tempted to each a few loaves while they were passing out the food. If I haven't eaten all day, it would tempt me. ☺
2. Here was enough food for 5,000 men, plus women and children. (Total crowd est.: 10,000-15,000)
3. It wasn't enough food to cover everybody's needs for the rest of their lives, just enough to cover the moment for each of them. That is why we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."
4. In Chapter 15, we will read of a similar miracle where Jesus feeds 4,000 people including women and children. In that case "7" baskets are filled.
5. Some commentators believe the "4,000" miracle ties to Gentile believers while the "5,000" ties to Jewish believers. More on this theory when we get to Chapter 15.

Verse 21: The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

1. Mark 6:40 says that Jesus commanded the group to sit in groups of fifties and one hundred's.
2. In this culture, the men always sat and ate separately from the women & children.
3. That is how all the disciples knew that 5,000 were fed. They just counted groups!

Verse 22: Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

1. Let's read John's account of this story: "After the people saw the miraculous sign (feeding of the 5,000) that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. (John 6:14-15).
2. Therefore, if the crowd wanted to make Jesus king, the disciples may have wanted to encourage the idea. Jesus ordered the disciples to get on the boat probably to avoid this confrontation.
3. Notice the crowd obeyed Jesus. It shows Jesus power over all of nature, including non-believers.

Verse 23: After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.

When evening came, he was there alone,

1. Here is the second time we read of Jesus' desire to be alone to pray to God.
2. We know that after this prayer is we read of Jesus is that he is walking on water.

Verse 24: but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

1. The geographical location of the Sea of Galilee has warm desert winds mixing with coastal cooler winds to causing violent storms at times.

Verse 25: During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

1. The "fourth watch" is a Roman term that simply means between 3am and 6am.
2. "He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them." (Mark 6:48)
3. Notice the disciples were not calling out to Jesus for help.
4. Jesus is always waiting on "stand by" wanting to help us, waiting for us to call out to him.

Notes for Matthew -- Chapter 14 (Page 6 of 6)

Verses 26-27: When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. ²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

1. We all go through "rough sea" moments. We have to remember that no matter what the circumstance, Jesus is there wanting to help us.
2. Here comes Jesus walking by, as if it were no big deal. ☺
3. Seeing the power of Jesus got the disciples minds off the storm and onto Jesus.

Verse 28: "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

1. Give Peter credit for asking Jesus for permission, as opposed to trying it himself.
2. When God gives you a command, he gives you the ability to perform that command.

Vs. 29-30: "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

1. How many words can you get out of your mouth before you sink?
 - a. If it were not for Jesus intervention, Peter would have said, "Lord glub glub glub" instead of "Lord, save me". ☺
 - b. The point is Jesus was in control of the whole situation, including how fast Peter was sinking!
 - c. Notice Jesus is more than willing to help a man who cries out "Lord save me".
 - d. Jesus knew the speed at which Peter was sinking and saved Peter when he cried out.
 - e. He may not pull you back in the boat immediately, but Jesus always answers the cry of Lord save me and is there to comfort us through the worst of our trials.

Verse 31: Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

1. There is often a pattern in Christian service where God tests us after moments of great triumph.
 - a. Remember the disciples, a few hours earlier, saw Jesus feed 5,000 people.
 - b. Now, a few hours later, they get this test.
 - c. It is as if God is saying, "I don't want you to get too big of an ego. It's me working and I choose you as to work through you. Don't let it get to your head". ☺

Verses 32-33: And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

1. Sometimes it takes a miracle to get us to worship Jesus as God.
2. Others think, "OK, if only I could see Jesus "walk on water", then I would believe in Him.
 - a. The disciple Thomas thought the same thing after the resurrection. He wouldn't believe unless he saw the nail prints (Ref. John 20:25).
 - b. Jesus response, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29b, NIV).
 - c. God calls us "more blessed" as we believe by faith, and not by miracles.

Vs. 34-36: When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵ And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him ³⁶ and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

1. You can almost hear the local crowd say, "Look, Jesus is here. Quick get the sick and crippled people out here. We're going to have some healing!"
2. It makes you wish we as Christians had the same attitude
 - a. We don't look at the sick and lame and say, "Hey, Jesus is here, let's bring them to Jesus so he can heal them." We're too afraid of failure.
 - b. If we bring 1,000 people to Jesus and one gets healed or saved, was it worth the effort?