

**Matthew**

**Chapter 14**

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## MATTHEW CHAPTER 14

There is a connection that links the first section of chapter 14 with the end of chapter 13—a wrong understanding of Jesus’ identity. As the people in Nazareth had a wrong understanding of the identity of Jesus (13:53-57), so did King Herod. He believed that Jesus was the resurrected John the Baptist.

### HEROD AND JOHN THE BAPTIST (14:1-12)

King Herod hears about the miracles of Jesus and assumes that He is John the Baptist risen from the dead. Matthew then flashes back to the story of the murder of John by Herod.

**Matt. 14:1** At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus,

**At that time** General statement of time. It has no chronological significance.

**Herod the tetrarch** Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. He was the tetrarch (ruler of part of a territory [originally a fourth part] of Galilee (cf. Luke 3:1).

**heard the reports about Jesus,** He heard of the “fame” of Jesus The same word is used in 4:24.

**Matt. 14:2** and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he himself has been raised from the dead; and that is why these miraculous powers are working in him.”

**Note on variant readings:** Some manuscripts read *This is not John the Baptist, is it? After Baptist* some manuscripts read *whom I myself beheaded*.

**and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he himself** This is emphatic in the Greek.

**has been raised from the dead;** His guilty conscious made him afraid that John the Baptist had returned from the dead. Shows not only the great respect for John but also the idea that the holy servants of God, such as the prophets, could return to the earth after their death (the same idea is contained in 16:14).

**and that is why these miraculous powers are working in him.”** This was Herod’s explanation of the power of Jesus’ miracles.

**Matt. 14:3** For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and placed him in the prison, on account of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother.

**Note on variant readings:** Some manuscripts read *then* before *Herod*. Some manuscripts do not have the word *him* after *bound*. Two manuscripts do not have the word *Philip*.

**For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and placed him in the prison,** We are now given the background for Herod’s fears. These events happened at an earlier time. Matthew had been content just to mention the arrest of John (4:12) without giving any details

**on account of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother.** The source of the arrest.

**Matt. 14:4** For John had been saying to him that, “It is not lawful for you to have her.”

**For John had been saying to him that, “It is not lawful for you to have her.”** Herod had seized John because of his opposition to Herod’s marriage to Herodias. Herod not only unjustly divorced his first wife (which provoked a war with her father—the king of Petra) in order to marry Herodias, he also broke Jewish law by marrying his half-brother’s wife (Leviticus 16:18). John’s protest would represent the orthodox Jewish opinion. John was continually saying (imperfect tense in Greek) that he was wrong in doing this. Thus we may have a continual campaign of John against Herod.

**Matt. 14:5** And though he was desiring to kill him, he feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet.

**And though he was desiring to kill him,** Herod wanted to silence John permanently.

**he feared the crowd,** The same fear will occur in attempting to arrest Jesus (21:46).

**because they regarded him as a prophet.** The crowd believed that John was God’s spokesman.

**Matt. 14:6** But when Herod’s birthday party came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and it pleased Herod.

**But when Herod’s birthday party came,** A day of merriment.

**the daughter of Herodias danced before them,** We learn that her name was Salome—the daughter of Herodias by her first marriage (Josephus *Antiquities* 18.5.4). Though the status of dancing women was low in that culture it is not difficult to imagine that a member of Herod’s household would stoop to this type of behavior. As we shall see, the morals of this court were very low.

**and it pleased Herod.** Herod was delighted with her dancing.

**Matt. 14:7** Whereupon he promised with an oath to give to her whatever she might ask.

**Where he confessed with an oath** Swore with an oath shows the strength and seriousness of the promise. Note also he said it before his guests.

**to give to her whatever she requested.** He made a reckless offer.

**Matt. 14:8** And having been prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here upon a plate the head of John the Baptist.”

**And having been prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here upon a plate the head of John the Baptist.”** The girl followed her mother’s prompting. This shows how degraded the royal court had become.

**Matt. 14:9** And although, the king was grieved, because of his oaths and because of the ones seated together with him, he commanded it to be given.

**Note on variant readings:** Some manuscripts read *And the king was grieved; but because of his oaths*. Some manuscripts read *to her* after *to be given*.

**And although, the king was grieved,** The title “king” refers to Herod as a ruler for he was not strictly a king.

**because of his oaths and because of the ones seated together with him, he commanded it to be given.** He regretted making the foolish promise but he had already given his oath to those seated with him at the banquet. “Herod’s fear of his guests overcame his scruples” (Hill, p. 244).

**Matt. 14:10** And he sent and had John beheaded in the prison.

**And he sent and had John beheaded in the prison.** Though he sent his soldiers to do the evil deed, Matthew makes it clear the responsibility was Herod’s. John’s murder was contrary to Jewish law in at least two ways: (1) He had no trial and; (2) He was beheaded.

**Matt. 14:11** And his head was brought upon a plate and given to the young girl; and she brought it to her mother.

**And his head was brought upon a plate** The horrible request was granted.

**and given to the young girl;** Salome (born A.D. 10) would have been at least 18 or 19 at the time.

**and she brought it to her mother.** The real instigator of the murder.

**Matt. 14:12** And his disciples came and took away his body and buried it, and went and told it to Jesus.

**Note on variant readings:** The manuscripts have a different Greek words for body (*soma* and *ptoma*). Instead of *his body* some manuscripts read *body*. Instead of *buried it* some manuscripts have *buried him*.

**And his disciples came and took away his body and buried it,** For those who are buried see 27:57-61 for Jesus and Acts 8:2 for Stephen.

**and went and told it to Jesus.** This points to the close ties that John had with Jesus.

Although John the Baptist came in the role of Elijah, Scripture says, “they did to him whatever they pleased” (17:12). John was regarded as a prophet and he suffered the same fate as did the other prophets (23:31-35). Jesus described John as “greater than anyone born of woman” (11:11) yet he was murdered through a bizarre series of events. The unlawful murder of John will be followed by the unrighteous murder of the Lord Himself. These unlawful murders will continue—later with Stephen, and then thousands of other martyrs who have served the same Lord. As Jesus was soon to follow in John’s path, so His disciples must also be prepared for death (cf. 10:21-22,39; 24:9).

Though John’s murder will foreshadow the murder of Jesus (17:12) the Bible makes it clear that death is

only temporary. It is the end of physical life, but not spiritual life.

### **THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND (14:13-21)**

Jesus now performs the miracle of the multiplication of the fish and bread. Apart from the resurrection, this is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels.

**Note on a variant reading:** A couple of manuscripts do not have the words *by boat* .

**Matt. 14:13** Now when Jesus heard it, he withdrew from there by boat unto a deserted place by himself. And after the crowd heard it, they followed after him on foot from the towns.

**Now when Jesus heard it, he withdrew from there by boat** Jesus withdraws after hearing of John's death. There is no indication that Jesus is attempting to flee Herod. Chronological sequence is not exact since Jesus could hardly withdraw from Nazareth (13:53-58) by means of a boat!

**unto a deserted place by himself.** More likely He was turning His thoughts to His upcoming suffering.

**And after the crowd heard it, they followed after him on foot from the towns.** As always the crowd followed Him.

**Matt. 14:14** And when he went ashore and saw the large crowd, he was moved with compassion on them and he healed their sick.

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts have *And when Jesus went ashore.*

**And when he went ashore and saw the large crowd,** Jesus was again confronted with a large crowd.

**he was moved with compassion on them** For same idea see 9:36; 15:32.

**and he healed their sick.** Summary statement.

**Matt. 14:15** And when it was evening, his disciples came to him saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is passed. Send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

**Note on variant readings:** Some manuscripts read *disciples* rather than *His disciples*. Some manuscripts have *therefore* before *Send*. Some manuscripts read *surrounding villages* rather than merely *villages*.

**And when it was evening,** The hour was late.

**his disciples came to him saying,** They had not been previously mentioned in this story.

**"This is a deserted place and the hour is passed.** It was late and they were out in the middle of nowhere.

**Send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."** A reasonable request.

**Matt. 14:16** But Jesus said to them, “They do not have need to go away; you give them something to eat.”

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts read *He said* rather than *Jesus said*.

**And Jesus said to them, “They do not have need to go away,** Jesus says there is no need for them to leave.

**you give them something to eat.”** You is emphatic. Jesus’ answer must have been incomprehensible to them because the disciples could not give them anything to eat.

**Matt. 14:17** And they said to him, “We do not have anything here except five loaves of bread and two fish.”

**And they said to him, “We do not have anything here except five loaves of bread and two fish.”** They express their lack of resources.

**Matt. 14:18** And he said, “Bring them here to me.”

**And he said, “Bring them here to me”** Jesus requests the meager amount of food.

**Matt. 14:19** Then he commanded the crowds to sit down upon the grass. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up into heaven, he blessed it and broke the loaves and he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts read *You command the crowds* rather than *He commanded the crowds*. Instead of *taking the five loaves* one manuscript reads *He took the five loaves*.

**Then he commanded the crowds to sit down** They are commanded to recline as if they were eating a meal

**upon the grass.** This is a banquet on the grass.

**And taking the five loaves and the two fish,** How Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish is not explained.

**and looking up into heaven, he blessed it and broke the loaves** The traditional prayer was: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

**and he gave them to the disciples** He gave it to the disciples to distribute it.

**and the disciples gave them to the crowds.** They, in turn, handed out the food to the crowd. The sequence of the verbs and participles “take,” “bless,” “break,” and “give” is the same as in the account of the Lord’s Supper (26:26,27; see also Acts 2:46; 20:7,11; 27:35; 1 Corinthians 11:24).

**Matt. 14:20** And they all ate and were filled, and they took up from the leftovers of the fragments,

twelve baskets full.

**And they all ate and were filled,** This is the statement of the miracle. This miracle is a foretaste of the Messianic banquet. When the kingdom is established there will be no one who is hungry—everyone will be satisfied.

**and they took up from the leftovers of the fragments, twelve baskets full.** Twelve baskets probably meant to symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel although many commentators see no symbolism in the number twelve. Each disciple filled one basket with the leftovers.

**Matt. 14:21** And the ones who ate were about five thousand men, besides the women and the children.

**And the ones who ate were about five thousand men,** The number of men was in the vicinity of five thousand.

**besides the women and the children.** No attempt is made to count all who were fed. Two Old Testament passages come to mind:

(1) The miraculous provision of bread in a lonely place—the desert, reminds the reader of the manna of Exodus 16.

(2) The details of the story also echo Elisha's feeding of one hundred men with twenty loaves (2 Kings 4:42-44).

In both cases a prophet provided literal food and Jesus the great prophet did likewise (though on a vastly increased scale).

### **JESUS WALKS UPON THE WATER (14:22-33)**

After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus sends His disciples ahead to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When the boat gets into trouble, Jesus comes to them by walking upon the water.

**Matt. 14:22** And immediately he made the disciples to get into the boat, and go ahead of him unto the other side, while He dismissed the crowds.

**Note on variant readings:** Some manuscripts do not have the word *immediately*. Instead of *the disciples* several manuscripts (including *Vaticanus*) read *His disciples*. Two manuscripts do not have the words *of Him*.

**And immediately he made the disciples to get into the boat, and go ahead of him unto the other side, while He dismissed the crowds.** Jesus did not want to stay around after this miracle (see John 6:15). He sent the disciples on ahead while He dismissed the multitudes.

**Matt. 14:23** And after dismissing the crowds, he went up to the mountain by himself to pray. And when it was evening, he was there alone.

**And after dismissing the crowds, he went up to the mountain by himself to pray.** Jesus now

withdraws to pray. The idea of Jesus seeking solitude is an important theme in Matthew's gospel.

**And when it was evening,** Jesus was there until evening.

**he was there alone.** And He remained alone.

**Matt. 14:24** But the boat was already many stadia from the land, being battered about by the waves, for the wind was against them.

**Note on variant readings:** A few manuscripts do not have the word *already*. Some manuscripts have *in the midst of the sea* after *the boat was already*. Some manuscripts have *twenty five or thirty stadia* instead of *many*.

**But the boat was already many stadia from the land** The boat had left some time earlier and was about a mile or two from shore (a *stadion* was an ancient measure of distance equal to 185 meters).

**being battered about by the waves, for the wind was against them.** Because of the contrary wind and the harassing waves, they had been able to row only a relatively short distance.

**Matt. 14:25** And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them, walking upon the sea.

**Note on a variant reading:** Instead of *came* some manuscripts have *went away*.

**And in the fourth watch of the night,** This would have been from 3 A.M. to 6. A.M. The disciples had been fighting the storm all night.

**he came to them, walking upon the sea.** Jesus, again shows that He is Lord over nature.

**Matt. 14:26** And when his disciples saw him walking upon the water, they were terrified, saying, "It is a phantom!" And they cried out in fear.

**Note on a variant reading:** Instead of *His disciples* some manuscripts read *they*.

**And when his disciples saw him walking upon the water, they were terrified,** The tired and fearful disciples were even more frightened upon seeing Jesus walking among the darkness and the waves.

**saying, "It is a phantom!"** Craig Keener writes about their response:

Belief in ghosts or disembodied spirits was common on a popular level in antiquity, even though the idea of ghosts contradicted popular Jewish teachings about the resurrection from the dead (Keener, *Background*, p. 86).

**And they cried out in fear.** Their reaction is how we would expect anyone to react in a similar situation.

**Matt. 14:27** But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I myself; do not be afraid."

**Note on a variant reading:** Instead of *Jesus spoke* some manuscripts read *He spoke*.

**But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage,** Jesus calms their fears by identifying Himself.

**it is I myself; do not be afraid.”** This phrase has a deeper meaning than the simple self-identification of Jesus. The words “I am” in Greek are the very same used in Exodus 3:14 when God identified Himself to Moses by telling him His name. Jesus used this same phrase elsewhere to identify Himself (John 8:58).

**Matt. 14:28** Peter answered and said to him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

**Peter answered and said to him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”** Why Peter requested this is unknown. Peter is a main focus in Matthew’s gospel (16:16-19; 17:24-27).

**Matt. 14:29** And he said to him, “Come!” And Peter came out of the boat, and walked upon the water, and came toward Jesus.

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts read *to come to Jesus* instead of *and came toward Jesus*.

**And he said to him, “Come!”** Jesus permits His request.

**And Peter came out of the boat, and walked upon the water, and came toward Jesus.** Peter is an example of both faith and failure.

**Matt. 14:30** But seeing the mighty wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out saying, “Lord, save me.”

**Note on variant readings:** Some manuscripts do not have the word *mighty*. One manuscript has *exceedingly mighty*.

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts do not have *mighty* before *wind*.

**But seeing the mighty wind, he became afraid,** His lack of concentration upon Jesus is what led to his lack of faith.

**and beginning to sink, he cried out saying, “Lord, save me.”** Note that his prayer is right to the point.

**Matt. 14:31** And immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

**And immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him,** The help of Jesus is immediate. Peter was saved even though he lacked faith.

**and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”** The Lord promises to take care of His own.

**Matt. 14:32** And when they got into the boat the wind ceased.

**Note on a variant reading:** Instead of *got into* some manuscripts read *went up into*.

**And when they got into the boat the wind ceased.** Note the miracle of the storm ceasing as soon as Jesus enters the boat.

**Matt. 14:33** And the ones in the boat worshipped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts have *they came* or *they cam toward* before *worshipped Him*.

**And the ones in the boat worshipped him,** They worship the One whom the wind and sea obey.

**saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”** They make a confession of faith. At this point in their spiritual understanding, the phrase “Son of God” probably meant that Jesus a unique messenger of God. Later the church will understand that Jesus was actual God in human flesh. This confession anticipates the answer given to the direct question as to the identity of Jesus in 16:16.

#### **JESUS HEALS IN GENNESARET (14:34-36)**

When they reach the other side of the Sea, Jesus heals the multitudes.

**Matt. 14:34** And when they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret.

**Note on a variant reading:** *Gennesaret* is spelled a number of different ways in the manuscripts.

**And when they had crossed over,** They are now on the other side.

**they came to the land of Gennesaret.** Gennesaret was a village that was on the shore of the sea of Galilee, a couple of miles southwest of Capernaum.

**Matt. 14:35** And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent out into all of that surrounding region, and they brought to Him all the ones who were sick.

**And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent out into all of that surrounding region,** Since this was close to His headquarters at Capernaum the people recognized Him.

**and they brought to him all the ones who were sick.** They knew His ability to heal.

**Matt. 14:36** And they were begging him that they might only touch the edge of his outer garment. And as many as touched it were healed.

**Note on a variant reading:** A few manuscripts (including *Vaticanus*) do not have *Him*.

**And they were begging him that they might only touch the edge of his outer garment.** No mention is made of the size of the crowds but presumably it was very large.

**And as many as touched it were healed.** The power of Jesus was such that those who merely touched His clothing were healed.

### SUMMARY TO CHAPTER 14

Chapter 14 starts with a flashback with the story of Herod and John the Baptist. Jesus' miracles catch the attention of Herod who superstitiously assumes that Jesus is the reincarnated John.

Matthew records the sordid details of John's murder by Herod.

Jesus withdrew from that area after hearing of the death of John—His time had not yet come and possibly He was avoiding any premature conflict with the powers that be.

Next Matthew records the only miracle (apart from the resurrection) that is listed in all four gospels—the feeding of the five thousand.

Jesus sends His disciples ahead while He remains behind. As they find themselves in trouble on the Sea of Galilee Jesus comes to them walking upon the water.

When they reach the other side Jesus heals the multitudes in Gennesaret.