



Matthew 14

Matthew 14
Tape #8013
By Chuck Smith

We read,

At that time Herod the tetrarch

[the tetrarch means the ruler of a fourth part. He was also known as Herod Antipas. At that time Herod the tetrarch]

heard of the fame of Jesus, (14:1)

And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. (14:2)

So when Herod received news of Jesus, the miracles that Jesus was performing, his thought was this must be John the Baptist resurrected from the dead; that's why he was able to do these marvelous miracles. Now what you read from verse three through verse twelve is a little historic sketch that deals with the death of John the Baptist. It's just sort of a parenthesis. Verse two really picks up again in verse thirteen, this is just a little parenthetical type of insertion that deals with the death of John the Baptist. So, it should read like this. "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, (14:1) And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. (14:2) 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." (14:13)

That is when Jesus heard that King Herod had become apprised of Him, and of His ministry, is when Jesus departed to go over to the deserted area on the other side of the sea. Now, He realized that Herod, having killed John, was no friend and would perhaps seek the life of Jesus. Jesus came to give His life, but not at the edict of Herod. He was to give His life at the edict of the Father but in Jerusalem, not in the Galilee region. For the rest of the ministry of Jesus, it is now not so much concentrated around Capernaum as was His early ministry. He goes over to the other side, to a deserted area. But then we find Him going over to the coast of Tyre and Sidon, leaving the territory of Herod, the jurisdiction of Herod. Going on up to the upper area of the Galilee, Caesarea Philippi, again escaping out of the territory of Herod. Then coming back passing through the area of the sea of Galilee, but going on down to the other side of the Jordan river and ministering down towards Jericho but on the opposite side of the Jordan river, staying out of Herod jurisdiction.

Herod was wanting to see Jesus. Having heard of Him, he had a curiosity. He wanted to see some miracles. He finally met Jesus when Jesus was being tried by Pilate, and Pilate was seeking to escape making a judgment on Jesus, Herod happened to be there for the feast of the Passover, and so Pilate decided, since Jesus was from Galilee, he would send Him to Herod for judgment and let that injustice be upon Herod, rather than upon Pilate. And when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, Herod was excited, he was hoping that Jesus would perform some kind of miracle for him.

It is interesting that when Jesus met Herod, He had absolutely nothing to say to him. Not a word. And so Herod's soldiers mocked Jesus, made fun of Him and all, but Jesus didn't respond, He didn't answer, He had no word for this man at all. How tragic it is when a man is so desolate that Jesus doesn't have any word for him whatsoever. Such was the case of Herod Antipas. So, now coming back, we look at the story of the death of John the Baptist under Herod Antipas.

For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. (14:3)

Herod, at the death of his father, Herod the great, was made the tetrarch, a ruler over the Galilean region. And he went to Rome to visit his half brother, Philip. And while in Rome, he was first of all, married to the daughter of a Nabatean king. But he went to Rome and there he fell in love with his brother's wife, Herodias. And he enticed her to return with him to become really his wife, mistress for a time, but then

became his wife, as he divorced the daughter of the Nabatean king. So she was ambitious and she returned with him, but then she kept pressuring him to go to Rome in order that he might get the title of king. He was reluctant to do so but she wanted to be queen, she had great ambitions. And so she finally talked him in to going to Caligula, the Roman emperor, in order that they might bestow upon him the title of king. However, his brother had sent a message to Caligula declaring that Herod Antipas was planning to rebel against the Roman authority, Caligula believed him so that when Herod Antipas and Herodias arrived, he ordered Herod Antipas banished to Gaul, that all of the riches be taken from him, he was a very wealthy man, and to be banished to Gaul. To the credit of Herodias, Caligula said to her that she could keep her riches, could live in Rome, but she insisted that she would go with her husband into banishment and did go and that was the end of the story really of Herod Antipas and Herodias.

However, when Herod Antipas came back with Herodias, John the Baptist spoke out against it. Herod had a fascination with John. He called John many times and would sit and talk with John. And he was in a interesting way attracted to John the Baptist. But now when he came back with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, John the Baptist rebuked him. He said that's not right, you should not have her as your wife, and this made Herodias angry. She saw red. She wanted his blood spilled because he had spoken against this adulterous relationship. And so "Herod had laid hold on John, bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake." She was pressuring her husband to "put that guy in jail,"

For John had said unto him, It is not lawful for you to have her. (14:4)

And when he would have put him to death, [at her insistence] he feared the multitude, because the people all looked at John the Baptist as a prophet. (14:5)

But Herod's birthday came, and the daughter of Herodias danced before them,

[that is, before Herod and the company of people that he had invited, the important people of the province, and the dance, no doubt—those oriental dances were very sensual, very seductive type of dances and first of all, for her position, it was an unthought of thing, usually dances done more or less by the prostitute--but on his birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced before them]

and pleased Herod. (14:6)

Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. (14:7)

No doubt, drunken party, she comes out, dances this very seductive dance and he is moved, he is under the influence of the alcohol, and he takes an oath, "I swear by heaven, ask whatever you want I'll give it to you."

And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, I want John the Baptist's head on a plate. (14:8)

And the king was sorry:[he realized the folly of the oath] nevertheless because of the oath, he ordered that the head of John the Baptist be given to her. (14:9)

And he sent to the prison, and beheaded John in the prison. (14:10)

There are those who object that the Bible is not reliable because Jesus, as an important person as He was and all, surely there would be some historic records of Jesus and of these events that are spoken of in the New Testament. And there are those that make that kind of a lame, Jesus never really existed, He was just a fictional character, something that was made up by the apostles, that He never really existed, you don't find any historic records of Jesus. Those that make such claims only are announcing their own ignorance of historic records. Josephus makes mention of Jesus, one of the greatest historians of that time, not only does he make mention of Jesus but in his book on the antiquities of the Jews, he has quite a section on John the Baptist, and also on Herod putting John the Baptist to death. And so it is a part of the historic records of that day.

John the Baptist's head was brought in a plate, given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. (14:11)

Can you imagine, here you are, Mom, the head of the man you want?

John's disciples came, and they took up the body, and they buried it, and they came and told Jesus. (14:12)

Now when Jesus heard of it,

[not of the death of John the Baptist, but He heard of Herod's theorizing that He is John come back from

the dead,]

he departed from there by ship to a deserted place apart:

This happened actually at the time that the disciples had returned from their first, I wouldn't say missionary journey, but from their first going forth. You remember Jesus commissioned them to go out, heal the sick, cast out devils and so forth, they returned to Jesus telling Him all the glorious things that had happened, and this is when Jesus suggested that they go over to the other side of the sea and Mark's gospel tells us that it was to rest, to just have some time together, to sort of sit down and more or less, just go over what's going on and perhaps, to just reflect on what's happening and to lay out plans for the future. And so they were going to go to the deserted area across the sea. In the Galilee region which the whole region was about fifty miles long and twenty-five miles wide, according to Josephus there were 204 villages with a population of 15,000 or more. So at the time of Christ, it was a heavily populated area. And to get to a deserted place was not really easy. But Jesus suggested they go over to the other side of the sea, there near Bethsaida, between Bethsaida and Gadara, it seems that there was sort of a deserted area. Now don't read this "desert" because that isn't desert. It's really very beautiful, very lush kind of an area there by the sea of Galilee, it is not desert, it is deserted though and was deserted.

And so they went over to this other side to this deserted area,

and when the people had heard of it, they followed him on foot out of their cities. (14:13)

At the upper end of the sea of Galilee from the area of Capernaum, it's just about as fast to go around the upper end of the sea as it is to go across on a ship. In fact, it's probably faster if you are having to row across in the ship. The distance isn't that great, maybe only three miles or so, four at the most, from Capernaum going on over to the area near Bethsaida. So the people saw Jesus and the disciples getting in a ship, multitudes had come bringing their sick and all, and it was easy to determine from the course they were taking where they would land. And of course, at that point, you can see across the sea of Galilee, anywhere is easy to just see across, the whole sea is eight miles wide at the widest point. And that isn't the widest point up at the upper end. And so they could see where He was going, they could watch Him as they were going across, it wasn't hard to figure where they were going to land.

And so the people began to jog around the upper part of the sea of Galilee. As they were jogging around, people going through the villages, they say, What's happening, where are you going? Jesus is going to land over here. And so more and more people joined them. So by the time Jesus landed with His disciples, there were 5,000 men beside women and children waiting for Him. Now when you're trying to get a rest and get alone away, that isn't too pleasant a thing to have 5,000 men plus the women and children waiting for you to arrive.

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

Going away for rest, it didn't work. They beat Him there. They met Him when He arrived. And rather than being upset, irritated, angry, grumbling like we might, when we arrive on our vacation site and found thousands of people waiting for us there, Jesus was moved with compassion. Mark's gospel said He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. His heart was moved. He saw their hunger. He saw their need. And so He began to minister to them, healing the sick that they had brought with them. Oh, the tender love and compassion of the Lord. I look at important evangelists today and I see so many of them how they are out of reach, out of touch. Too busy, too important to take time with common people, but not Jesus. Moved with compassion, healed their sick.

When it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a deserted place, the time is now past; [it's getting late, Lord] send them away, [get rid of them, Lord, send them away] that they might go into the villages [probably Bethsaida nearby], and buy themselves some food. (14:15)

But Jesus said unto them, They don't need to depart; give them something to eat. (14:16)

Can you imagine what they must have felt at that point? Five thousand men plus the woman and children which were not numbered, feed them, Jesus said.

And they said unto him, We only have five rolls, and two fish. (14:17)

He said, Bring them to me. (14:18)

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and then He broke [the bread, the loaves and the fish], and He gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. (14:19)

An interesting picture here. He gives to the disciples and the disciples in turn give to the multitude and that's the way it seems that God has provided bread for His children. Paul the apostle said, "That which I have received from the Lord, I also give unto you." And I like to, in my own heart, preface that everytime I stand before you, having been waiting upon the Lord, opening my heart to the Spirit and the instruction of the Spirit to my heart of the Word, to say that which I have received from the Lord I also deliver unto you. He gave to His disciples and they distribute it to the people.

And they did all eat, and were filled:

The word "filled" there in Greek is gluttoned, like when you push yourself away from the Thanksgiving table, wishing you hadn't taken that desert, had waited till later. You're so full, you're miserable. Ate and were filled,

and then they gathered up the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. (14:20)

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

A remarkable miracle. In another gospel, John's gospel, we are told that because of this miracle, the people sought by force to make Jesus king. He had fed them. Satisfied their material needs. And they are wanting on that basis to make Him king, but He passed through them. So here was Herod looking for Him, here the people wanting to make Him king, and so it is a critical time because this is premature. His being presented to the nation as their king was down the road a little ways. And this was a premature attempt by the people, and probably hoping to claim Him as the king and just start moving towards Jerusalem, wiping out the Romans and establishing the kingdom. But He would not allow it, it was trying to make Him the king on the wrong basis, the basis of material things rather than spiritual things. He has to be king in our hearts, in our spirits.

And so, Jesus immediately constrained his disciples [He insisted that His disciples] get into a ship, and go before him unto the other side, (14:22)

You do that, I'm going to send the multitude away, but you fellows take off, get in the ship and go over to the other side, and I'll dismiss the multitude.

So the disciples took off in the ship to go back over to the other side, to the area of Capernaum, Magdala, that area is called Gennesaret on the other side.

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. (14:23)

Solitude with the Father. Things are beginning to come to a head. His fame has now reached Herod, Herod is wanting to see Him, wanting to meet Him. Jesus had sent a message to Herod through the Pharisees, "Go tell that fox that I'm going to do my work today and tomorrow," and yet here's the crowds, the multitudes, their premature attempt to make Him the king. Been a busy day, how does He spend the night? In prayer. Praying. For us, we'd probably say, Man, let's get to bed early and just release. Sack down because it's been a tough day. But instead, He is there gaining strength as He communes with the Father. There alone.

But the ship was now in the middle of the sea, it was tossed with the waves: for the wind was contrary. (14:24)

The wind usually comes from the coastal area to the Dead Sea there, you have a situation much like you have here where you have Palm Springs, Indio, a low area, Indio's 212 feet below sea level, and the heat there... as the heat rises, the cool coastal air comes filling... the heat rises and the cold air comes from the coastal to fill in the vacuum that's made by the air that is rising, and that is why through the Banning Pass you always have winds going. That's why they set up all those wind machines there in the Banning Pass because you have a consistent kind of a wind blowing through there. And you have much the same kind of geographical situation over there where you have the warm desert air rising and the coastal cool air come pouring down the canyon on into the area of the sea of Galilee which is 600 feet below sea level. And so going from Bethsaida over to Capernaum, you would be going against the prevailing winds. And when the

winds really kick up, they can kick up wind waves on the sea of Galilee. And it can become quite choppy. Thus, to row against the wind, against that sea chop and all, can be a very difficult thing, especially if there is any intensity in the wind. And this night, that was the case. Now it was probably a time of full moon because we read in another gospel that from where Jesus was sitting there on the mountainside, He could see them out there in the middle of the sea toiling. Full bright moon and you could see the choppy seas and the silhouette of the little boat as it was bouncing. And of course, at that time of the morning, when Jesus came to them, it was three o'clock in the morning, the fourth watch. First watch is from six to nine in the evening, second from nine to twelve, the third watch is from twelve to three, the fourth watch is from three to six. And so your four watches during the night. He came to them in the fourth watch, so sometime after three o'clock. And so the moon would have been moving across and would be coming across the sea so that the reflection of the moon you could see the little boat out there in the midst of the sea.

And so they were tossed with the waves, the wind was contrary,

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

And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, [NIV says terrified, and that's really a little closer to the Greek, they were terrified] And they said, It's a ghost; and they cried out for fear. (14:26)

Now here are seasoned seamen, mature men but they've been struggling, it's been a hard day, it's been a long night, and they're not getting anywhere and suddenly they see someone walking on the water to their ship. And their assumption is that it's a ghost,

And Jesus immediately answered and said unto them, Be of good cheer; it's me; don't be afraid. (14:27)

And so dispelling their fear. Don't be afraid, it's I, it is I, He said.

And Peter answering him and said, Lord, if it is you, bid me to come to you on the water. (14:28)

Interesting. Peter, here he goes again, a great guy. I love it when a person is daring. Willing to do anything. A go-for-it kind of guy. Bid me to come to you on the water. So many times there are pastors, sermon expositors, that find fault with Peter. I love him. There's a lot in Peter that I can identify with. I admire Peter for stepping out. There are people who are afraid to do anything. They are the people that never accomplish anything. If you're afraid of failure, you'll never do anything. If you're afraid of taking risks, you'll never do anything. Life is risky, but we're taking risks all the time. Why not take a risk for Jesus? Peter was willing to do that. Lord, if it's you, bid me come to you on the water.

And he said, Come. And so Peter got down out of the ship, and he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. (14:29)

I love it. Stepping out in faith. He's doing it, he's walking on the water to go to Jesus. But then something happened.

When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid;

He got his eyes off of Jesus, he got his eyes on the boisterous seas, on the wind. Getting his eyes off of Jesus, on to the circumstances, he began to sink. What a lesson that is for us. How Satan loves to focus our attention on our problems. And when we get our eyes off of Jesus and begin to look at our situation, look at our problems, fear grips our hearts and we begin to sink.

Paul the apostle was talking of the problems of the ministry, his ministry. All of the things that were laid upon him, all of the responsibilities, all of the things he had gone through, and then he said, beside all of these, the care that is laid upon me daily of all the churches, getting messages everyday of problems in this church, problems in that church, having to write letters, having to straighten out situations, and all of this stuff that was on Paul, and he said, Who is sufficient for these things? Who in the world can handle these things? And then he said, But our sufficiency is not of ourselves, our sufficiency is of Christ. The key is just keeping your eyes on Jesus.

In Hebrews we are exhorted to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of the faith." So, Peter was doing fine until he got his eyes off the Lord and he began to sink when he began to look at the circumstances. But he knew who to call on.

He cried out, Lord, save me. (14:30)

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him,

I love it, the Lord is close. When you feel yourself beginning to sink, all you have to do is just say, Lord, save me, and you'll find He's right there. Immediately, the Lord stretched out His hand and lifted him up. Feel like you're going down? Feel like the pressures are too much? You're sort of overwhelmed with the whole situation, the Lord is so near. Just cry to Him and say, Lord, save me. And you'll find He is right there, help is close at hand. All you have to do is call.

And then, Jesus said, O thou of little faith, why did you doubt? (14:31)

I do believe that Jesus said that sort of just with a chuckle. Just, Hey what happened, man? You're doing pretty good, Peter, what went wrong? And I believe that the question was to cause Peter to analyze, to learn from this. Now learn a lesson, Peter. You were doing okay but something went wrong. What went wrong, Peter? Why did you doubt? And so as Peter would go back over the situation, he would realize that he doubted because he got his eyes off of Jesus, began to look at the problem and fear gripped his heart. He was afraid, he was that wave coming towards him and he was afraid. And Jesus wanted Peter to realize that when he got his eyes off of the Lord and onto the situation, fear took over and faith fled. Because faith and fear cannot co-exist at the same place. Fear will dispel your faith and faith will dispel your fear. If you have faith, you will not have fear. If you have fear, you do not have faith. And so Jesus said, "O ye of little faith. Why did you doubt?" What happened that caused you to doubt? You had a little faith, you were able to start, but you weren't able to continue.

And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. (14:32)

Now those that were in the ship they came and they worshipped him, acknowledging now, Truly you are the Son of God. (14:33)

This was a consciousness that didn't come upon them immediately, it wasn't something that was just, Hooo! He's the Son of God. It was something that was a growing consciousness. It was a growing consciousness. It's not until a little later we get to chapter sixteen, when they're at Caesarea, Philippi, that Jesus said, Who do people think I am? And they tell Him all of these things that people were saying and He said, Who do you say that I am? And Peter said, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said, Blessed are thou, Simon son of Jonah, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but My Father which is in heaven.

At this point, though, with this miracle, His walking on the water, He had just fed the 5,000, somehow that didn't penetrate. In the next chapter, He's going to feed 4,000 with a little... you say, but yeah, He's got more food there though. He has seven loaves and a few fish. But somehow this didn't sink in. Later on when He says, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, they look to each other and said, you forget the bread? And Jesus said, no, no, no, where were you when I took... how many loaves did you have when we fed the 5,000? We had five loaves and two fish. Don't you realize? But seeing Him walk on the water and seeing when He gets in the ship with Peter, that suddenly the winds ceased, it was calm, there came this consciousness, this awareness, this must be the Son of God.

But it was a growing awareness. A growing consciousness. "Of a truth, thou art the Son of God."

And when they were gone over, [that is, the sea] they came into the land of Gennesaret [over near Magdala from whence came Mary Magdalene]. (14:34)

And when the men of that place [where they had landed] had knowledge of him, [morning had come and they saw Him and the disciples, they broadcast throughout all the villages, Jesus is over here], and they sent out into all that country round about, and they brought unto him all that were diseased; (14:35)

And they besought him [or begged Him] that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole. (14:36)

Our mighty Lord. It is interesting that the gospels are recording so much of the ministry of Jesus through healing. It tells us some of the things He said but constantly, it is actually just sharing the fact that He was healing so many people. In healing them, He was showing to them what He was telling them. He was telling them that God is love. And that God is concerned with His creation. And that God desires to touch those who are weak and to make them strong. To touch those who are sick and to make them whole. Paul the apostle when he was talking to the elders of Ephesus said, You know how that for the space of two years I was with you, teaching you and showing you. The ministry of Jesus was a show and tell. It wasn't just

telling them the truths of God, but it was showing them the truths of God, as He was healing all manner of sicknesses and diseases and manifesting to them the power of God. And they were coming just wanting to touch the hem of His garment and whoever would touch, they were made perfectly whole.

That by faith tonight we will but reach out and touch the hem of His garment. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." As we said earlier, help is very close. All you have to do is call out. No matter what your need is tonight, help is very close. If you're in need of salvation tonight, help is very close. If you'll just confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you'll be saved. Salvation is very close. If you're in need of a touch in your body tonight, help is very close. Just ask Jesus, He's nearby. Lord, help me. Going through financial problems, help is very close. Jesus is very near to you. Just call on Him. Reach out, touch Him, let Him touch you. I love it. Immediately, He stretched forth His hand and took hold of Peter, lifted him up. He'll take hold of your hand, He'll lift you up.

Shall we pray:

Father, we thank You for the revelation of Your love for us through Jesus Christ, that You have spoken to us in these last days through Your own dear Son, who has become the manifested outshining of Your glory. And Lord we're so thankful that He has shown to us the Father, the love of the Father, the compassion of the Father, the care and the concern of the Father for His children. And we thank You that we are Your children. When we were sinking Lord, in sin, You reached out, You took us by the hand, You lifted us. Thank You, Lord. And now, Father, we pray that You'll be with us and go before us. Guide us through this week, take us by the hand and lead us in Your path of righteousness. May we walk in fellowship with You, Lord, being led by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit. May we be Your witnesses, Lord, in this dark world. Father, our heart's desire is to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. To that end, we yield ourselves to the working of the Holy Spirit in us, conforming us into the image of Jesus Christ, to Your glory, for Your praise, Amen.