

## **Lesson #15- Matthew Chapter 14 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):**

1. Who did Herod the tetrarch mistake Jesus for and why?

### **Help for Teachers:**

Herod, having killed John the Baptist, seems to be guilt-ridden and fearful that there would be an accounting for his crime. Upon hearing of the miraculous workings of Jesus, Herod jumped to the conclusion that this miracle worker must be the risen from the dead John. Matthew continues in his narrative to provide the story of how Herod came to kill John the Baptist. It's the classic story of an arrogant man who comes to power, deciding that he is above the law, and then uses his power to retaliate against anyone that challenges his corruption. As God has made known in His Word, sin spirals downward to a predictable end (James 1:14-15). In Herod's lust for power and pleasure, he makes a promise he regrets, and to save his pride he follows through with it.

It's interesting to note how superstitious the people of Palestine were. Herod, not a Jew but very closely connected, thinks John the Baptist has come back to life. One of the next stories Matthew records in this chapter has the very disciples of Jesus believing they are seeing a ghost.

2. Hearing of the death of John the Baptist, Jesus went out into a desert place, and thousands of people from the cities follow Him on foot. Jesus had compassion for them and healed the sick among them. It became late, and the disciples had a concern that they brought to Jesus.
  - a. What was their concern and their recommendation?
  - b. What perplexing reply did Jesus have for the disciple's recommendation and what do you think it made the disciples do?
  - c. Looking at the rest of the story, what lesson(s) do you see for the disciples and for us?

### **Help for Teachers:**

- a. The disciples became aware that it was late in the day and the number of hungry people was overwhelming. Their own grumbling stomachs perhaps brought the problem into focus. They processed the options and logically determined that the people should be sent away empty to fend for themselves. The math was simple enough, we don't have the ability to feed ourselves, much less five thousand men and their families. Food in our pantry = five loaves of bread and two fishes.
- b. They came to Jesus with their recommendation, but I'm sure His reply took them by complete surprise, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." The disciples had

evaluated their ability based on the physical. With eyes of flesh, can you imagine their shock when Jesus not only says there is no reason to send the multitudes away, but you feed them. And it seems Jesus says this as if it should have been the logical and obvious thing to do anyway. Jesus' command to feed the masses yourself unfortunately caused the same reaction from the disciples that it still causes from us; let us do some quick math and present God with a spreadsheet of our finances and assets so that He can see that we can't get it done.

- c. Some lessons I think we should get from the story:
- Jesus wasn't kidding about His disciples, including us, feeding the masses (1 Cor 1:21). The commission given in Matthew 28 is the point of this lesson, "give ye them to eat."
  - Jesus prefaced the command to feed them yourselves with, "They need not depart". Even the disciples realized the futility of leaving Jesus in search of something better (John 6:28). What if we let people that have come into our path depart, without feeding them with the hope of the gospel? (Luke 10:2, Rom. 10:12-17)
  - Our abilities and resources are not found in ourselves, but in the power and resources of Jesus Christ. His power and assets are limitless (Eph 3:20-21). When presented with an open door to serve Jesus through any ministry, we should move forward based on God's provision, not our own (Phil 4:19). The disciples handed out the food that Jesus had blessed. They were privileged to pass out what they were given, but never forget that it was Jesus that provided. He takes our limited abilities and resources and multiplies them so that the mission can be accomplished (1 Cor. 1:24-29) with plenty to spare, even multiplied blessings for His laborers (a basketful extra was taken up for each of the twelve disciples!). It seems the disciples were reminded that our mission to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world is impossible through our own power, but the One that is funding the operation owns everything (Prov 16:4, Ps 50:1-15, Col 1:16-17). We can and must trust in Him.
3. While Jesus sends the multitudes away (full :-), he commands the disciples to get on a ship and "go before Him unto the other side". They didn't have such a pleasant trip.
- a. Why do you think Jesus would send them off into a storm and what do you think they learned in the storm?
  - b. When they saw Jesus walking to them on the sea, how did they react and why?
  - c. Discuss Peter's water-walking experience.
  - d. How does this night end for the disciples and what do you think they learned? What did you learn?

### Help for Teachers:

- a. Jesus sent the disciples on this voyage. Jesus knew what was going to happen. It was not coincidental that they were caught in a fierce wind that would seem, at least to the disciples, to threaten their lives. As the disciples struggled in the storm battered ship, Jesus prayed. Then He came to them in the storm and brought peace to the raging sea. One thing that comes to mind (not necessarily the only answer) is that Jesus was growing their faith. The disciples were following Jesus' command to get on the boat and cross to the other side. If they were like us, they probably expected that their obedience ensured smooth sailing, but they got anything but smooth sailing. Jesus wasn't in their physical field of vision, but circumstances certainly were. What would prevail in their heart? Fear of what their eyes were looking at or confidence that Jesus is trustworthy to follow, even when things do not look like they (we) expected. Soon Jesus would accomplish the mission He had come for. He would die, be buried, rise again, and ascend into heaven. Jesus lovingly equipped His people for what was to come. He still does. In John 20:29 Jesus says to Thomas, "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed".
- b. At least four of the disciples on the boat were seasoned fisherman. No doubt they had been through some scary storms and were pretty confident in their nautical skills. This storm, however, wasn't going away and they were losing the battle. They had been at it all night and were still "in the midst of the sea". The fourth watch was from 3:00am to 6:00am. Exhausted and terrified, they saw Jesus, walking to them on the water. Lack of faith in Jesus and self-reliance will cause problems perceiving reality every time. Their bad perception caused them to identify their salvation as a ghost; "they cried out for fear". But instead of an immediate rebuke of their weakness, Jesus "straightway" calms their hearts by saying to them, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." Notice the storm is still raging.
- c. Well known are the jabs people have taken at Peter for lacking faith. Jesus rightly identifies that Peter lacks faith and asks him why he doubts. But if Peter lacks faith, what does that say of the other disciples, none of which even stepped out onto the water? Would any of us even have a thought to ask Jesus if we could walk with Him on the sea, or would we, like the remainder of the disciples in this story, be more than happy to just be rescued from the danger? Because Peter had a little bit of faith, he had an experience that no other human, aside from Jesus, has ever had, he literally walked on the waters of a raging sea. We find in the story the classic truths that Jesus can use us in unimaginable ways when our eyes are on him, but failure begins at the point of focusing on circumstances instead of on the One that controls all circumstances. When we take our eyes off Him and start evaluating our own

abilities, we quickly become afraid. We see also that even when we fail, our King Jesus has great compassion and reaches out to lift us out of the mess when we call out to Him.

- d. “And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.” (V32-33). Mark 4 records a similar story of Jesus calming the sea, only in this case He was asleep in the ship during the storm and awakened by His terrified disciples that wanted to know, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?”. After commanding the sea to be still, there was a great calm. Jesus challenges their faith, and their response is recorded in verse 41, “And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” The disciples were Jewish, they grew up knowing about God. Their religion was engrained from their youth. Their Scripture was full of songs that they sang and memorized that spoke of a God that commanded even the elements and the weather and the seas.

- Psalms 29:3- “The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters.”
- Psalms 65:7- “Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.”
- Psalms 89:9- “Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.”
- Psalms 93:3-4- “The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.”

Their songs had taught them *about God*, now *here was Jesus doing what only God can do!* ***What manner of man is this?....***