

**Matthew 14:1 – 36**

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~ This report from our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God brings us to the halfway point in the Gospel of Matthew. The opposition to the Lord Jesus by the religious rulers is continuing to escalate and will soon break into a mighty crescendo. Very quickly after that we see Jesus arrested and taken to the cross. We must remember that the Lord is in complete control of every aspect of these unfolding events, as will become excruciatingly obvious from the text. In this chapter we revisit the murder of John the Baptist in Herod's prison. Of course, it occurred during an orgy of drunkenness, perversion and filth. We also see Jesus feeding a huge multitude in this section of Scripture; and we then travel with Him out on the sea with His disciples. The apostles actually start out alone and the Lord Jesus goes out to meet them.

We saw in our last report exactly how superstitious this man, Herod, really was. His entire life's philosophy was based on an illusory misunderstanding of the truth. He was a brutal, murdering coward - and nothing else. Herod murdered the forerunner of Christ because he didn't like what John the Baptist was saying; and he is prepared to murder Jesus, too - and anyone else who gets in his way. Herod was, actually, a very weak man; debased, depraved and a common drunken sod. Herod would not have cared one whit about any of this if he hadn't been afraid of something. Herod had a need to eliminate Jesus and John altogether.... because what they were SAYING was convicting his heart!

Many people think mankind is not superstitious any longer. They simply cannot recognize their own gullibility and naivety. The horoscope writers and publishers of necromancy happen to do very well, friends; and their business of perpetuating your superstitions is as alive and well as ever. The myriad pagan influences from the orient are having a tremendous influence on the whole world today. The human race is currently equally as superstitious as Herod ever was in his day. The moment you get way from

the Word of God you become completely superstitious, by the way - and that is precisely what characterizes ALL modern societies.

Even the alleged atheist is turning to religion in huge numbers. I am amazed at how otherwise intelligent and reasonable, thinking people can become so misguided and taken by this deceit. Jesus said they would reject Him; but if another came in His name then they would receive him! Well, our society will adopt the philosophy of ANY leader promising them something - anything. No, friends, human nature hasn't changed at all just because we have the internet and a phone without a wire attached that knows our position on the globe. Our modern technological gadgets are remarkably underwhelming in the big scheme of things; but they have made us more UN-civilized than we ever were before at any time in the history of the world. The following account is really a playback of the circumstances of what had happened previously and how....

***1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,***

***2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.***

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

~ Notice how influenced Herod is by other people. Here it's for "her" sake; later we'll see it was for "their" sake. Herod is motivated like a politician in every move he makes. His actions are always designed to get the approval of other people – ALL people – one way or the other. By de facto, that means some lies are going to have to be told; and Herod and his supporters had no compunction about lying, you may be sure. At this point Herod has become afraid of the crowd. John the Baptist had spoken out very strongly – and in no uncertain terms - against Herod and his family of whores. John, on the other hand, wasn't such a good politician, obviously....

***4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.***

***5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.***

***6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.***

***7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.***

~ Here we are forced to enter the disgusting, lascivious, lustful, lewd and completely debased life and mind of Herod, who was living with his brother's wife. You could not have gone any lower than the Herod household in this day in terms of immorality, deceit and unbridled arrogant, narcissistic pride and reckless sexual abandon. This young dancing thing had really won old decrepit Herod's heart over. Herod probably experienced feelings at this party that he hadn't had in decades. He expected her to ask for some material possession, you know – he had no idea she would ask for this. I think Herod expected her to ask for something within reason; which was a gross miscalculation. Most men of power are typically stricken and smitten and completely misjudge the motives in the opportunities of sex with beauty and fame. Well, an unreasonable man or woman will always give an unreasonable demand. This disgusting prostitute hated John the Baptist, of course, because John had condemned her actions....

***8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.***

***9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.***

~ Can you honestly imagine what type of man is motivated by this scenario? All Herod is really concerned with is what the others might think of him if he reneged on his promise. Herod didn't make promises that he could not make good, friends. He wasn't going to be embarrassed like that. If this chick wanted to see blood and death, by jingo, Herod was just the man who could show it to her. Here is the sadistic, sad, sorry account of

what took place. This also reveals the type of society that existed at that time. Our modern society hasn't improved from this day we're looking at, either, by the way. Candidly, our society today is WORSE than Herod's ever was. If you look honestly at our contemporary culture of lust and sex and murder, it isn't a surprise that these are the two laws Jesus expounded and expanded upon in the Sermon on the Mount. We call evil good and good evil today all day long. Swing by any courthouse and watch some of the rulings if you don't believe me. The Bible still calls this account sin....

***10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.***

***11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.***

***12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.***

***13 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.***

~ Jesus departed because His hour had not come yet and He knew that Herod was likely to do something dastardly which may have jeopardized every Israelite male around. When Jesus moves here the crowd moves, too; revealing how popular He really was with them. We see that He healed the multitudes of their sicknesses. Interestingly, I can't find ANY record of results for these people that claim to be healed today. That's suspicious to me – how about you? Friends, let's be clear: its BLASPHEMY to equate yourself with the healing Jesus did. Christ's miracles are all above the board and legitimate. Today's "healers" are frauds hiding behind record money collections. NONE of them will heal in a place where they cannot take up a collection....

***14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.***

**15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.**

~ This is very interesting to me as we come to the only time Jesus asks His disciples what He should do. Do you think this was some kind of test? The advice He got from them was to send them all somewhere else! Well, Jesus isn't going to do that. Jesus is going to feed these people in an account that is recorded in all four Gospels. It's the only miracle that is so recorded. That fact alone makes this very, very important. His apostles seized on that question and suddenly appointed themselves board of directors – and they're telling Him what to do! They had no intention of forming a consensus with Jesus about this. Personally, I believe Judas Iscariot was leading this conversation, but I digress ~

**16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.**

**17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.**

~ This is certainly the sad state of the church today. The modern church is saying, "...send the multitude away!" Well, I happen to have spiritual bread to offer everyone! I really only have about five loaves and two fishes; about the same as any church – but that's all Christ needs to work through me! What the church lacks is the POWER of the Lord Jesus Christ! If the church had ANY power today it wouldn't need to send the multitudes away. Frankly, the multitudes don't even want to be fed by the church today. On the other hand, the church turns people away in droves, sending them to a psychiatrist that can't help them, either. The psychiatrist just adds to their problems, actually, by taking all of their money! When the church and the psychiatrist can't help they then look to the government. The solution is everything except Christ in our society. Our human imagination is the way things are being done today – and it isn't working....

**18 Jesus says, "Bring them hither to me."**

**19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed,**

***and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.***

~ I love how Jesus said to, – “bring them to ME.” Because these aren’t huge loaves of bread and these aren’t two monster swordfishes they had – this was a few little buns and some brim, you may be sure. What they had was one little boy’s lunch; and one person could have easily eaten every bit of it. Now, let’s notice that these people sat down according to their families. Israel always camped according to their tribes – or family. They would have had colorful, elaborate clothing; and one family probably had on red, another purple, another had on orange - and so on. To stand on the other side of the mountain and see this must have looked like a beautiful living patchwork quilt. We see here how orderly the Lord Jesus operates.

The disciples who were on the board of directors just a moment ago are now the bus boys waiting on the crowd! This shows the proper and correct function of disciples, apostles, pastors, prophets, ministers, teachers, clergy, evangelists, Christians and lay people who know the Word of God. We are to feed the multitude – not tell Jesus what to do or how to do it! Too many people today in the church want to tell others how things should be done. They’re not interested in feeding anyone, though. They say they don’t have enough. Interestingly, there are very, very, very few who are actually willing to further the cause of Christ His way! Most churches are just an offshoot of an afterthought from some religiously philosophical group that has all chiefs and no Indians. Everybody wants to lead something; a committee or a class or an outreach. They are as busy as termites and just about as effective when it comes to continuing the Gospel. What we need are more waiters to serve the Bread of Life to a hungry crowd. That bread is the Word of God. I consider it my business to just pass it out in this so called safari; but I need some help because I can’t get to all the people....

***20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.***

~ I used to feel like these “fragments” were some half-eaten sandwiches or something; but not anymore. I believe that these are fish sandwiches

that weren't even touched. Oh, we have a tremendous lesson here as we live amongst supermarkets and grocery stores on every corner. Do you realize MOST – MOST – MOST people in this world went to bed hungry last night? Well, the earth produces enough food to feed all of its inhabitants every day; in fact, man throws away enough food to feed all of the inhabitants of the world every day! Do you care? This was the first fulfilling meal many of these people had eaten in a long, long time out there sitting in the grass with their family. I think these people – all fifteen to twenty-five thousand – yes, you read that right - were full - and some of them had probably over-eaten....

***21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.***

***22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.***

***23 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.***

***24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.***

***25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.***

~ Our picture here begins with Jesus up in a mountain in a place of prayer while the disciples are out being tossed around in darkness on a boat in a storm. Jesus is in His government and the disciples are in a place of torment and danger! This is another picture of our world today. Jesus has gone ahead of us to the Father's right hand in Heaven. We are down here functioning and living on a storm tossed sea in a place of peril! It doesn't get any more accurate than that, my beloved; and I do love this part because the fourth watch was from three in the morning until about daybreak. It's always darkest before the dawn and in that darkest hour is when Jesus shows up! I love that, friends – very much! When He does

arrive He is the bright and morning star for the church. That's when He calms the sea and takes the church out of the world....

***26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.***

~ There are many men that know a whole lot more than I know about the Bible, I'm sure you will all agree with that; but I still can't say with definite certainty when Jesus is going to return; because we just don't know. I don't know why they all think they know? What I do know is that we are in the fourth watch of the night! Mark will describe them as "....toiling and rowing." We're going to go so in-depth with this in that Gospel you may get sea sick! When they saw Him they were afraid and they cried out for fear. This would seem to indicate some superstition in the disciples and I think there is a degree of superstition in all of us. What would you think? Nobody believes in a ghost until they see one! That's the position of these disciples; they had never seen a spirit before and they had certainly never seen anyone walk on water – but they're seeing it now....

***27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.***

***28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou; bid me come unto thee on the water.***

~ Peter has certainly been criticized for this comment. I admire Peter, personally. Many would say he shouldn't have asked this thing of Jesus because they say Peter was tempting the Lord thy God. John Wesley said, "....expect great things of God!" Well, I think too many of us are satisfied sitting safely in the boat while Jesus works it all out for us. Peter wanted to go beyond that. Most never challenge God so they never see any real power of movement in their lives. When you get out of the boat and walk on water, you're going to get a whole other perspective of the brothers back in the boat, too, by the way. Jesus didn't rebuke Simon Peter - He told him to come to Him! I simply don't understand – although not for lack of trying – the argument that Peter failed here. I don't see a failure at all. I see Peter walking on water to go to Jesus as Jesus bid him. Peter walked on the



water - it says it right here. No wonder God could use Peter in such a wonderful way after this; it's no wonder Peter was chosen to preach the sermon on the Day of Pentecost....

***29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.***

***30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.***

~ Peter walked on water until he took his eyes off of the Lord Jesus; and this prayer of Peter's is the shortest prayer in the Bible. So much prayer is so long and winded today that Peter would have been twenty thousand leagues under the sea before he asked the Lord to help him - if he prayed like most people pray! Peter's prayer was all business, as you can see; and this is the prayer life we need today – all business. Peter got his eyes off of Jesus and looked at those rolling waves and became aware of the fact that he was (a) actually walking on the sea and (b) was in great danger – and that's when he started to go down! You and I can easily see the waves rolling on our seas today – at least, I can! It's easy to focus on them and not Him. That is the time we need to keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus. It's all important, my beloved. When you're focused on Him – you will walk on water....

***31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?***

***32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.***

***33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.***

***34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.***

***35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;***

***36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.***

~ THIS miracle did Jesus perform that His disciples might be brought into the place of faith in Him. When Peter walked on water he should have been encouraged - but he wasn't. Let's not criticize Peter, though, because we have all stepped out in faith many times and sank because we took our eyes off of Jesus. That is the tragedy of the hour, friends. We end this leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God by observing the multitudes He healed that day. This should be impressive enough for us to keep our eyes on Him. Let's keep our eyes on the peace and safety that only our Blessed Hope can give us as we cry out, "...Lord, save me!" - and as we travel on through Scripture ~

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