

**The Church of the Servant King**  
**Survey of the Bible Series**  
***The Gospel of Matthew***  
(Lesson SB-MT14)

**Matthew 14 – The Death of John the Baptist, the Feeding of the Five  
Thousand, Jesus’ Walk on the Water, & More Healing**

***John the Baptist Beheaded (Matthew 14:1-12)***

This Herod is Herod Antipas (A.D. 6 – 39) who was the son of Herod the Great. Herod the Great had at first included Antipas in his will to be king after Archelaus (4 B.C. – A.D. 6); however, he later altered his will to make Antipas only a tetrarch of Galilee (4:12) and Perea (19:1) which was only one-fourth the size of the original area. His administration was characterized by cunning and crime and he was intensely selfish and utterly destitute of principle. Antipas was first married to the daughter of an Arabian king of Petraea whose land adjoined Perea on the south. Therefore, to divorce her in favor of Herodias was politically explosive. However, he later became interested in the wife of his half-brother, Herodias, while staying in the house of his half-brother, Philip I. Antipas and Herodias eloped and married, even though both were already married. Herodias was the granddaughter of Herod the Great which meant that Antipas was her uncle.

John got into trouble with Antipas and Herodias by condemning the marriage (Matt 14:4; Mark 6:18; Luke 3:19-20). John’s ministry came under Antipas’ area of governance since John ministered in Perea (Jn 1:28). The first two gospels mention “the daughter of Herodias,” but neither gives her name. Josephus says that her name was Salome. Salome was the granddaughter of Simeon, the high priest through her mother. Herodias’ marriage to Antipas was especially aggravating to the Jews because she was a Jewess and belonged to the royal family. On top of that, Antipas had defied Jewish laws that prevented the taking of a brother’s wife (Lev 20:21).

The gathering in Matthew 14 is the birthday of Antipas. After Salome danced, Antipas promised her anything. Herodias saw the opportunity to use Salome to silence John. It is believed that John’s prison cell was beneath the banquet hall in which the nobility were entertained. The prison and the banquet hall were located near the northeastern extreme of the Dead Sea in a place now known as Mkaur. Here in the same mountains in which Israel sought for the grave of her first prophet (Moses), the last prophet (John) was entombed.

Antipas knew that John was a just man and that he was popular among the Jews, so he didn’t want to kill him. However, his actions were largely motivated by politics. Like most weak men, Antipas feared to be thought weak. His crime haunted his conscience so when he heard of the deeds done by Jesus, he suspected that John had arisen from the dead.

**The Feeding of the Five Thousand (14:13-21)**

Late Nineteenth century liberalism tried to explain this miracle by teaching that what really happened was that the people started sharing their lunches. In reality, Jesus proved that He had authority to create as the Son of God (see Ephesians 3:9). About 5,000 men were fed, so the actual number of people fed when women and children are included could have been as many as 20,000. The miracle took place at Bethsaida (Luke 9:10). This is the only miracle of Jesus that is recorded in all four gospels.

The twelve basketfuls may have significance in that there were twelve tribes and twelve apostles (cf. 19:28). The Messiah’s supply is so lavish that even the scraps of his provision are enough to supply the needs of Israel, represented by the Twelve.

Like the disciples, we are to be involved in feeding other people with spiritual food. The source of the feeding would be the Lord Himself. When their supply of spiritual nourishment ran out, they would need to return to the Lord for more. Jesus would supply them, but the feeding would be done through them.

### **Jesus Walks on the Water (14:22-33)**

Jesus sent the disciples away ahead of Him so that He could dismiss the crowd and be alone to pray. This was prompted by the crowd's desire to make Him king (John 6:15). The time was not right and Jesus knew it because the nation's spiritual leaders were deciding against Jesus (Matt 12:24). His acknowledgment of the nation's rejection as a whole was yet to come (Matt 23:37-39).

Personal observation: I have found that one of the best times to pray is immediately after having taught or learned a spiritual lesson. It reinforces the impact of the lesson or circumstance and helps me focus upon the true source of spiritual blessing.

Peter's request was actually in keeping with the authority that had been previously granted to the apostles by Jesus (10:1ff). Many times, we look at Peter in amusement and are sometimes critical of his lack of faith. However, Scripture only records two men who ever walked on the water. Only when he took his eyes off of the Lord and focused upon the adversity (wind) did he begin to sink.

Point: In the adversities of life, do we focus upon the adversity or do we focus upon the solution to adversity, i.e. Jesus? If we focus upon the adversity, we need to consider Jesus' rebuke of Peter to be Jesus' rebuke of us.

The disciples acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God; however, this does not mean that they yet understood that He would go to the Cross and die and be resurrected. They still had the Messianic ideas of Jesus as conqueror in their minds.

### **Other Healings (14:34-36)**

The people of Gennesaret, near Capernaum, were only interested in the healing ministry of Jesus. Most likely, they did not fully comprehend who Jesus really was. The stricter and legalistic types would have never rubbed shoulders in a crowd as Jesus did. One never knew what type of ceremonial uncleanness one might contract. However, Jesus could not become unclean. Instead, He made clean. This event set the stage for the confrontation over clean and unclean in 15:1-20.