

Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2020 1:43 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 14

"Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst!" (John 6:35)

The "news" about Jesus, including His speaking in parables to crowds of people on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, as we dealt with last week (in Matthew 13), understandably got the attention of Herod Antipas, who was the tetrarch (or ruler) of Galilee, and very concerned and sensitive about anyone "making waves" in his jurisdiction! And he was troubled, thinking (with his guilty conscience) that this could be John the Baptist, the one he had had beheaded, not so long ago, somehow coming back from the dead to once again to "make trouble" for him!

And so, Matthew uses this occasion in his narrative to "flash back" to the earlier martyrdom of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas. John had apparently rebuked Herod repeatedly for his incestuous relationship (and marriage) with Herodias, his brother's wife, leading Herod to having him imprisoned in a dungeon, and later having him beheaded at the behest of the wicked and ruthless Herodias! (Herod had made an "oath" to Herodias' daughter, Salome, to give her "whatever she asked for," after she "pleased him" with her dancing at his birthday party--and who, after conferring with her mother, asked for "the head of John the Baptist on a platter," which Herod felt obliged to provide! A fuller account of this story is provided in Mark 6:14-29)

Interestingly, Matthew's account not only gives us a "flashback" to the martyrdom of John the Baptist, who was the "forerunner" of Jesus, but also a "foreshadowing" of the crucifixion and death of Jesus, in which Herod also would have an evil hand!

So how did Jesus respond, according to Matthew, when hearing of the death of John the Baptist? Matthew 14:13 says He "withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself..." (We see other incidents, e.g., in Matthew 12:15 and 25:21, where Jesus responded in this way--apparently seeking refuge with His Father, and not ready "for the cross," and still intent on preparing His disciples for what was to come!)

The two miracles, which follow, seem designed primarily--not to "dazzle the crowds"--but to strengthen the faith of His disciples!

Matthew 14:14 records how when He "went ashore"--on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee, in a "desolate place" near Bethsaida (according to Luke 9:10). Wouldn't you know! A large crowd again had followed Him, and He again "healed their sick"! But then "evening" came, and the disciples were hopeful that Jesus would "send them away"! That was, however, not to be! Instead Jesus surprised (shocked?) His disciples by saying that "they" should "give them (perhaps up to 20,000 people) something to eat"! (How're we going to do that, they must have asked?)

You know the rest of the story! It's the only miracle that's recorded in all four gospels! How Jesus miraculously multiplied the five loaves and two fish (that John 6:9 says Andrew found a "lad" having!)? Matthew 14:20 says that after "ordering the people to sit down...He took the five loaves and two fish, and looking to heaven, blessed the food, and gave to His disciples, who gave to the crowds"--and that "they all ate and were satisfied"! And that they had "twelve full baskets" left over! Wow ! (Might the number "twelve" be sending a special message for the Jewish readers of Matthew's gospel?)

Then it was time for Jesus and His disciples to get out of there! Probably based on the reaction of the people who, according to John's account, "saw the sign" (the miracle) and wanted to make Him King! But that was not in accordance with God's plan!

The Jewish people may well have been reminded of how God provided "manna" for the children of Israel in the wilderness! The disciples may have thought of the "daily bread" which Jesus spoke of in His model prayer! But Jesus, again in John's account (John 6:32-35), speaks of the "true bread"--the "bread of God which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world"!

And then our memory verse--John 6:35--"Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and He who believes in Me will never thirst!"

We're also reminded of Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman at the well, in John 4:14: "But whosoever drinks of the water that I give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life!" (Sound like we're getting closer to the revelation to all of the real life-giving purpose for which Jesus came into the world! But more on that later!)

Well, back to Matthew 14:22 and the "great escape" from "feeding of the 5,000! Where it says that Jesus "immediately made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to other side (of the Sea of Galilee) while He sent the crowds away...and went up on the mountain to pray"!

Then another storm (and "test" for the disciples), as Jesus was "praying," and the disciples were "rowing" (to use the vernacular of Dr. Constable)!

Remember the "storm" in Matthew 8:23-27? When Jesus was "in" the boat with the disciples, sleeping, and the disciples woke Him and He "stilled the winds" and there was a great calm? (And the disciples asked: "Who is this man that even the wind and the sea obey Him?") Well, in this instance, Jesus was "out" of the boat, and they were alone--and it was the "fourth watch" (between 3 and 6 a.m.), Then Jesus appeared "walking on the water"--and they thought it was a "ghost"! Until Jesus said (in verse 27), "Take courage, it is I (the words "I am" used for "Deity"); do not be afraid"! At which point the ever-reactionary Peter jumps overboard and tries to walk on water himself, only needing to be rescued, by Jesus! And when Jesus (and Peter) were back in the boat "the wind stopped"! And Matthew says: they "worshipped Him"--and, for the first time, called Him "God's Son"! Wow! (Answering the question asked raised earlier in Matthew 8!)

So how do you deal with "fear"? Dr. Constable uses this text to say that the "answer to fear is faith--and that faith is best placed in the One who identified Himself as the great "I Am"! Also, that "courage come from knowing that Jesus is present"!

How about a favorite verse? One of mine is Isaiah 41:10--"Fear thou not for I am with you! Be not dismayed; for I am thy God! I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help you; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness!" (KJV) Yea!

Well, there's more to Matthew 14--in verses 34-36--when Jesus and the disciples "came to land at Gennesaret" and word had gotten out again, and He's surrounded by more people who bring to Him "all who were sick..." and who simply "touch the fringe of His garment and are made whole" (KJV)! And so, we see Jesus continuing to minister to the needs of the multitude, even though now committed to the cross (still a "mystery") and focused on preparing His disciples on what's to come!

For us, a closing prayer: "Lord, give us this day our daily bread"!

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