

14:1

At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, 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." So in the context you can see that Jesus is in His hometown in the last part of the previous chapter. Here's Herod the Tetrarch hearing of the fame of Jesus and saying, "This is John the Baptist; he's risen from the dead." And it behooves us now to ask, "Well, how did he die?" If you're just reading Matthew all the way from chapter 1 verse 1 up to this point, you're not sure how John the Baptist died.

Matthew 4:12 [After the temptation of Christ] Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee;

Jesus hears that John the Baptist is arrested by Herod, and He goes, instead of going back into Judea or Jerusalem, into Galilee. So, now we're in chapter 14, and now we have this John the Baptist that was arrested and he's dead. Now, we're going to have a flashback into how he died. We know he's dead because Herod says Jesus is John reincarnated.

14:3-5

Herod [apparently since chapter 4,] had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

14:6-8,

When Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias, so his stepdaughter,

danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger."

14:9,

And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, or at the meal, he commanded it to be given her. Such a strange thing. "You're such a pretty girl dancing there, what could you possibly ask for?" Well, she asked for the head of a preacher, but didn't want to be known as someone who didn't keep his word. You remember a king in the Old Testament that struggled with this very thing? He made a law, someone was caught guilty that he loved, and he was sorry he made the law but he couldn't break the law? Darius.

14:10-11

And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. This ought to give you a distant understanding of what was going on in these royal families, where mom and dad aren't talking. Now what do you think? Do you suppose that this was a ring-around-the-rosie, dosey doe, square dance sort of variety? Where it's kind of a Sunday school picnic setting? Nope, probably not. Probably lots of debauchery and probably some alcohol involved, and I think it would be safe to say that Herod is lusting after his stepdaughter. And his wife probably knew.

Now where did she learn how to be a little hussy? Well, you might remember what John the Baptist is preaching about, right? Remember, what he just got done preaching to Herod about was that Herod was stealing another man's wife. And not just another man's wife, his brother's wife. So Herod is stealing his sister in law from his brother. So his niece, who is now his stepdaughter, is dancing in front of him and getting basically anything she wants, and mom had already briefed her because she knew how to get men to do things.

14:12,

And his disciples came, and took up the body, the disciples of John the Baptist. And we've seen them before. Back in chapter 9, the disciples of John the Baptist came to the disciples of Jesus and said, "How come your disciples are not fasting and dressed in mourning clothes like we are?" You might remember that; remember? They were in sackcloth and that kind of thing.

and buried it, and went and told Jesus. So now the disciples of John the Baptist are coming to Jesus and letting him know that His cousin, John the Baptist, is dead. Right?

14:13-15,

When Jesus heard of it, He departed. Now, do you see the pattern? In Matthew 4, He hears John is arrested and He changes where He is going from Judea to Galilee. Twice in this book Jesus hears something about John the Baptist and goes in a different direction because another man is involved named Herod. **When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship** We're safe in saying it's the Sea of Galilee or the Lake Tiberius or the Sea of Gennesaret, whichever Gospel writer is using it.

into a desert place. Before you think this is blowing sand and this is a desert in how we think of it, think of it more of a desert is a place that is deserted. We've taken that word and changed it to sandy place, a big sandbox. But that's not what it means in the context and you'll see why in a minute.

When the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick. And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him saying, "This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

14:16

But Jesus said unto them, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat. And so right away you know that there are some details here that are not mentioned in the other Gospels. And as is my custom I don't always mention what happens in the other Gospels unless it's pertinent to what Matthew is trying to tell us. In other words, it keeps you from making bad guesses. So, He says, "You give them something to eat." And you might remember in the book of John, Philip says, "Two hundred pennyworth is not enough to feed this crowd." Which, by today's standards is about \$38,000, about two-thirds of a year's income. The average income of a household in Fayetteville is \$54,000, so if you say two-thirds annual income, basically, John tells us that Philip was saying, "Two hundred pennyworth is not enough to feed all these people." Was that saying they didn't have two hundred pennyworth? I think there is good reason to believe that Judas was carrying two hundred pennyworth. We find out in chapter 12 he was carrying the purse, or the bag. So if you can imagine a team so large; we find out in Luke 8 that there were women following Jesus on His ministry. So, if you can imagine a team so large, so involved, having so many needs, that they would carry around multiple thousands of dollars, and the dude who betrays Jesus is carrying it all. In any case, they said, "We don't have, to give."

14:17-18

And they say unto Him, "We have here but five loaves, and two fishes." And in the book of John we find out this came from who, or what? A boy's lunch, right. All right. So, which again has different meanings for today. You pack a lunch for second shift sometimes, but lunch is usually around noon for us. Which part of the day is this? Into the evening. So words are incredibly flexible, aren't they?

So in any case, **He said, "Bring them hither to me."** Bring what? The five loaves and the two fishes.

And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass. There's your first hint we are not talking about a sandy desert, because He has them sit down on the grass. All right, is everyone with me?

14:19-21,

He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and looking up to heaven He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples. "Well, where's my proof text for 'bow your head and pray before you eat'?" Here it is. The Son of God is blessing the food before He eats it. That's pretty simple stuff. I figure if the Son of God can do it, Bill Sturm can do it. I'm not too spiritual to praise and thank God for my food and ask Him to bless it.

Nothing mystical is going to happen if you're shoving a brownie down your throat and you're asking God to bless it to your body. Don't expect that to turn into something nutritious on the way down. No, you may as well hold your prayers.

And they did all eat, and were filled, and they took up the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children. Well I don't think it's a bad guess to say that there were probably at least 15,000 people there, right? I mean, for all the single people that were there you probably had a married person that was there with two or three kids. So I don't think 15,000 is a bad guess.

2 Kings 4:38-44 And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, "Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets. And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not. So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot." And they could not eat thereof. But he said, "Then bring meal." And he cast it into the pot; and he said, "Pour out for the people, that they may eat." And there was no harm in the pot. And there came a man from Baalshalisha,

Now it's probably pronounced differently, but remember the key to getting through big words is to do it quickly and before all the experts tell you how to pronounce it. And so a man from there,

brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, "Give unto the people, that they may eat." And his servitor said, "What, should I set this before an hundred men?" And he said again, "Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, "They shall eat, and shall leave thereof." So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord.

Now that's interesting, isn't it? You might not even remember that from your Bible reading. But here's Elisha the prophet, who's feeding a hundred people with twenty loaves of bread. And then we look over at Matthew 14.

You have the reality that everything in this book is for two purposes. To show us:

Matthew 1:1 That Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham and,

Matthew 1:21 His name is Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.

We know we have this theme going on where Matthew is showing us all these things Jesus outclasses from the Old Testament. Matthew, written by a Hebrew, to Hebrews, has a specific purpose in this regard. Well, we also know it has something to do with Jesus being the fulfillment of the Son of

David/Son of Abraham promises, and it has something to do with Him being a savior from sin. Saving His people from their sin.

Maybe this is talking about that you need to care for people's physical needs before they will listen to spiritual instruction. Often the "social Gospel" is coined by, "Make sure that you feed the hungry and shelter the homeless, because Jesus met physical needs before He taught." But, that's not true. These people were fed after Jesus was done teaching. So we're not interested in making planet Earth a better place from which people can go to hell. It's still doctrine that's the big deal. I'm glad that you will go to bed with a full stomach, if that happens for you. Sometimes, I think hunger is a great motivator, but I will do my best to keep people around me from going to bed hungry. But know this! That is not the point of this passage. Jesus is not about this philosophy that says, "Meet people's needs so you earn the right to teach them." Because that doesn't happen in the passage. He teaches them and then He feeds them.

I think the reason that this passage is here, is all about the baskets. You say, "Why?" Well, here's why, two reasons basically:

If Mark, Luke, and John are correct, the multitudes sat down in companies of fifties and hundreds. Let's say they sat down in groups of fifty within the groups of hundred, and let's say there really were just 15,000 people in attendance, how many groups of 100 is that? 150. Don't you think it was an extra bit of work to collect up all the scraps? They didn't have to do that. What's the point of doing that?

"Well, the lesson is we're not supposed to waste." Seriously? If they didn't have to collect up the baskets, but they did, that's unusual. But it gets even weirder, about the baskets.

14:22

And straightway, Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship. How many disciples were there? And there's a basket, twelve, right? Do you suppose that every one of them took their basket and got into the ship? They are about to see a crazy storm in verse 24. Now are you trying to tell me that they went through all that trouble to take their baskets into a ship so it could get rained on? And they got fish and soggy bread in twelve baskets on a ship? Probably not.

So I believe there's a big deal here with the baskets. For who? Well, if it's for the multitude, Jesus failed in every way, because in John chapter 6 they want to make Him king and He avoids them. It says they wanted to make Him king and He fled. If the message was for the multitude, Jesus failed, because He didn't stay with them. They didn't have a visitation program; He didn't go knock on their doors. Nothing. He leaves them. And what they want to do for Him, He doesn't want. He doesn't want the kingdom. So apparently, the message was not for the multitude.

I believe the message was for the disciples, and here's why: Everything in the book of Matthew it seems is done for the disciples. For example, you might think the Sermon on the Mount was for the crowd. No.

*Matthew 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, **His disciples** came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them.*

The multitudes followed, as usual, but the lesson of the Sermon on the Mount was for the disciples.

*Matthew 8:23 And when He was entered into a ship, **His disciples** followed Him...25 And **His disciples** came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us: we perish."*

The storm on the sea. Who would was it for? The multitudes? Nope. They experienced the sleeping Jesus, on a stormy sea, for them.

*Matthew 9:10 It came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and **His disciples**.*

*Matthew 9:19 And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did **His disciples**.*

Matthew 9:37, 10:1 *Then saith He unto **His disciples**, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few... and when He had called unto Him **His twelve disciples**, He gave them power...*

Matthew 12:1-2 *At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and **His disciples** were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. Verse 2: But when the Pharisees saw, it they said unto him, "Behold, **thy disciples** do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day.*

Matthew 12:49 *And He stretched forth His hand toward **His disciples**, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren!*

Matthew 13:10 *And **the disciples** came, and said unto Him, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?"*

Matthew 13:36 *Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and **His disciples** came unto Him, saying, "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.*

The multitude didn't get the interpretation of the parables, the disciples did.

Everything Jesus has done in the book of Matthew, up to this point, has been for the disciples. So it seems that this miracle has something to do with the baskets primarily, and secondarily it has something to do with the disciples.

Also, I think it's for the disciples is because in verse 16 He gives them an absolutely impossible task. You think Jesus needed to count the people? The One who spoke the world into existence is about to speak fish and bread into existence. He didn't need anyone's help counting the people and He also didn't need anyone to count the money in the purse. So if that's true, why is He giving the disciples something they can't do? The lesson must be for them. Why would He give them a command that they cannot do, so that 15,000 people can learn? No. They wouldn't have known what was being said up there.

Then, in verse number 20, I would say the last hint that this is for the disciples is because there are twelve baskets remaining and there are twelve disciples. So, perhaps this is why He uses what they have. So that He can share the reward of His feeding the multitude.

Jesus has a basket for every one of them and He provided them the fish and the bread to start it off with. You see, they have five loaves and two fish. And He commands them to do something impossible, and gets what they have from them, and we find out from John it wasn't theirs. Now there were 15,000 people there and they look over here and they see a boy. They could have picked any boy. What was it about this company of 50 within that company of 100, and that boy right there? What was it about that lad that decided to offer up his lunch to Philip, and later to Andrew? It was God providing a lunch for the disciples to give to God, so that God could give them a basket.

He gives disciples the wherewithal to find the fish and bread, and then asks for it back, to bring them an ultimate reward. Let me say that again. God is the ultimate broker. A normal broker will take things that you provide, and try to get something back for you, and get a fee. God is much better than that. He gives you the wherewithal to find precious little. It seems like a letdown. And then He lets you down again and tells you to do something impossible with what you barely found. And He asks for it anyway. And then He says, "Here's your basket."

Now, did they get a basket? Yes. But was it a prelude to a later reward? Yes. I am now going to show you two things in the book of Matthew that do not occur Mark, or Luke, or John, to prove, I believe, Matthew's point here is that God requires impossible things out of His disciples. They give Him their meagerness and He rewards them.

*Matthew 19:27-28 Then answered Peter and said unto Him, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" And Jesus said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, **in the regeneration**,*

Or the "new beginning"

*When the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon **twelve thrones**, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

It doesn't say that in Mark, or Luke, or John. Not in those words. So, I don't think it's a stretch, I'm leaning in the direction, when I see that Matthew gives a basket after the miracle to all the disciples, or at least there's enough for all the disciples, and then in chapter 19 he says that in the world to come every one of them will get a throne. Now, please understand, this is not some kind of spooky doctrine where he says Judas is going to come back from hell a saved man. So He says, "You will have a place next to me, on your own throne, in the kingdom."

Matthew 26:52-53 Then said Jesus unto him, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Now friends, let us now understand that this is significant if you think about what Jesus didn't say. He didn't say eleven; He didn't say thirteen; He didn't say ten; He didn't say one hundred. He said twelve. Here's what we know: We know there are twelve disciples. We know there are twelve baskets after the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. We know that there are twelve thrones in the new age, and we know that apparently there are so many angels that each of the disciples, who are angry about the arrest of Jesus, could each have a legion. Interesting. Because Mark doesn't say that. Luke doesn't say that. John doesn't say that.

So what I'm trying to say, is if we're back in Matthew 14, the miracle is about disciples knowing this: You use your meagerness and God rewards you, not in this life, but in the life to come. I'm not saying He won't reward you in this life. I'm saying that this miracle does not promise you that He will reward you in this life.

I don't know what the disciples were thinking. They didn't even bring their own lunches, right? That's weird. And Jesus provides them the strength, the energy, the little boy, whatever it is in Matthew's scope, and they get a lunch. They give it to Jesus. Jesus multiplies it by speaking it into existence. For the first time since day five of creation week He creates fish. Very strange. At least it seems that way. And, oh, the bread. That must have been pretty tasty bread. In any case, they each have a basket.

*Matthew 6:19-21 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

*2 Timothy 2:12 If we suffer, **we shall also reign** with Him: If we deny Him, He also will deny us.*

In Revelation 20:6 they sat on thrones surrounding the king, those who were beheaded for their witness of Jesus.

So I guess I'm just trying to say, "Payday is coming." One day we're going to be looking up at the Master, after He's fed the multitudes, and we'll see our basket. Here's the sobering thing, though, about the multitude: some of those people are in hell today. You don't see in the passage anywhere where all 15,000 people got born again, do you? And I'm afraid sometimes we forget, while the Master is meeting needs, people's souls need to be saved.

*Matthew 7:13...Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and **many** there be which go in thereat.*