CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Matthew Chapter 14 — The Death of John the Baptist, the Feeding of the Five Thousand, and Jesus Walks on Water

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 13 ended with Jesus rejected in His hometown of Nazareth.

Matthew Chapter 14 begins with an even darker rejection.

John the Baptist is put to death.

The faithful prophet who prepared the way for Jesus is beheaded by a weak and sinful king.

His death came because he told the truth.

He told King Herod that his marriage was wrong.

Herod imprisoned him.

Then, at a birthday party, Herod made a foolish promise.

And John's head was brought out on a platter.

When Jesus heard the news, He withdrew to a quiet place.

But the crowds followed Him.

And instead of sending them away, Jesus had compassion on them.

He healed their sick.

Then, as evening came, He took five loaves of bread and two fish.

He gave thanks.

He broke the bread.

And more than five thousand people ate until they were full.

Twelve baskets of leftovers were picked up.

That night, the disciples were in a boat fighting the wind and the waves.

Jesus came to them walking on the water.

Peter stepped out of the boat and walked toward Jesus.

But when he looked at the wind, he began to sink.

Jesus caught him.

When they climbed into the boat, the wind stopped.

And the disciples worshiped Him, saying:

“Truly You are the Son of God.”

Matthew 14 shows two very different kings.

Herod, who threw a feast that ended in death.

And:

Jesus, who gave a feast that brought life.

The central truth of Matthew 14 is:

Jesus is the compassionate Son of God who provides for His people, rules over creation, and saves those who call on Him, even when following Him costs everything.

I. HEROD HEARS ABOUT JESUS

Matthew 14:1 — Reports About Jesus

“At that time Herod the ruler heard reports about Jesus.”

This **Herod** was **Herod Antipas.**

He was a son of Herod the Great, who had tried to kill the baby Jesus.

After his father died, Herod Antipas ruled over Galilee and Perea.

He was called a **ruler**, or **tetrarch**, which meant he ruled a part of his father's kingdom.

News about Jesus had reached his palace.

People were talking about the miracles.

Cross References

Mark 6:14

> King Herod heard about Jesus, because He was now well known.

Luke 9:7

> Herod, the ruler, heard about all the things that were happening and was confused.

Luke 3:1

> It was the fifteenth year of the rule of Tiberius Caesar... Herod was ruler of Galilee.

Spiritual Principle

The news of Jesus reaches even the palaces of the powerful.

II. A GUILTY CONSCIENCE

Matthew 14:2 — “This Is John the Baptist”

“He said to his servants, ‘This is John the Baptist. He has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in Him.’”

Herod's first thought was frightening.

“This is John the Baptist. He has risen from the dead!”

Herod had killed John.

Now he thought John had come back.

His guilty conscience would not leave him alone.

Others thought Jesus was Elijah or one of the prophets.

But Herod was haunted by the man he had murdered.

Cross References

Mark 6:16

> But when Herod heard this, he said, “I killed John by cutting off his head. Now he has been raised from the dead!”

Luke 9:9

> Herod said, “I cut off John's head. So who is this man I hear such things about?” And Herod kept trying to see Jesus.

Matthew 16:14

> They answered, “Some say You are John the Baptist. Others say You are Elijah. Still others say You are Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

Spiritual Principle

A guilty conscience cannot be silenced by power.

Key Truth

Herod could kill the prophet, but he could not kill the truth the prophet spoke.

III. JOHN ARRESTED

Matthew 14:3 — Because of Herodias

“For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.”

Matthew now goes back to explain what had happened earlier.

Herod had **arrested John.**

He had **bound him** and **put him in prison.**

Why?

Because of Herodias.

Herodias had been married to Herod's brother Philip.

Herod divorced his own wife and married Herodias while his brother was still alive.

This was a serious sin under God's law.

Cross References

Mark 6:17

> Herod himself had ordered John to be arrested, chained, and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom Herod had married.

Luke 3:19

> But John spoke against Herod the ruler because of Herodias, the wife of Herod's brother, and because of all the other evil things Herod had done.

Leviticus 20:21

> If a man marries his brother's wife, it is shameful. He has dishonored his brother.

Spiritual Principle

Sin often leads to more sin.

IV. “IT IS NOT LAWFUL”

Matthew 14:4 — John's Bold Words

“For John had been saying to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’”

John did not keep quiet.

He told the king the truth.

“It is not lawful for you to have her.”

Notice the words **“had been saying.”**

John said it again and again.

He did not soften his message because Herod was powerful.

John cared more about God's truth than about his own safety.

Cross References

Leviticus 18:16

> You must not have sexual relations with your brother's wife. That would dishonor your brother.

Mark 6:18

> John had been telling Herod, “It is not right for you to be married to your brother's wife.”

1 Corinthians 5:1

> It is actually being reported that there is sexual sin among you... A man there has his father's wife.

Spiritual Principle

God's servants must speak the truth, even to the powerful.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

John lost his head, but he never lost his integrity.

V. AFRAID OF THE PEOPLE

Matthew 14:5 — They Considered John a Prophet

“Herod wanted to kill John but was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet.”

Herod **wanted to kill John.**

But he was **afraid of the people.**

The crowds believed John was a prophet.

Killing him could cause a revolt.

Mark tells us Herod also feared John and liked to listen to him, even though John's words troubled him.

Herod was a divided man.

He wanted to get rid of John, but he was afraid to.

He was not ruled by God's will.

He was ruled by fear.

Cross References

Mark 6:19

> So Herodias hated John and wanted to kill him. But she couldn't.

Matthew 21:26

> But if we say, “It was from people,” we are afraid of the crowd, because they all believe John was a prophet.

Matthew 11:9

> So what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, and I tell you, John is more than a prophet.

Spiritual Warning

Fear of people leads to poor and sinful decisions.

VI. HEROD'S BIRTHDAY

Matthew 14:6 — The Daughter of Herodias Danced

“On Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod.”

Herod threw a great birthday party.

Mark tells us important officials, army commanders, and leaders of Galilee were there.

The **daughter of Herodias** danced.

History tells us her name was **Salome.**

Her dance **pleased Herod.**

It was likely an immoral dance, the kind usually done by paid entertainers.

Herod was probably drunk.

This was a party full of pride, lust, and foolishness.

Cross References

Mark 6:21

> Then the perfect time came for Herodias to cause John's death. On Herod's birthday, he gave a dinner party for the most important government leaders, the commanders of his army, and the most important people in Galilee.

Judges 11:34

> When Jephthah came home to Mizpah, his daughter was the first one to come out to meet him. She was playing a tambourine and dancing.

Genesis 40:20

> Three days later it was Pharaoh's birthday, so he gave a feast for all his officers.

Spiritual Warning

Pride and pleasure can set a trap for foolish decisions.

VII. A FOOLISH OATH

Matthew 14:7 — Whatever She Asked

“He promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.”

Herod made a reckless promise.

Whatever she asked.

Mark says he offered her up to half his kingdom.

He made this promise in front of all his guests.

He spoke without thinking.

And he swore an oath to make it binding.

Cross References

Mark 6:23

> He promised her, “Anything you ask for I will give to you — up to half of my kingdom.”

Judges 11:30

> Jephthah made a promise to the LORD. He said, “If You will let me defeat the Ammonites...”

Ecclesiastes 5:2

> Think before you speak, and be careful about what you promise God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so say only a few words.

Spiritual Principle

Words spoken quickly can lead to great regret.

VIII. THE HEAD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Matthew 14:8 — Prompted by Her Mother

“Prompted by her mother, she said, ‘Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.’”

The girl went to her mother.

Herodias did not hesitate.

She hated John.

He had exposed her sin.

Now she had her chance.

The girl came back and said:

“Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.”

She asked for it **here**, right away.

Herodias was like Jezebel, the wicked queen who tried to kill the prophet Elijah.

Cross References

Mark 6:24

> The girl went to her mother and asked, “What should I ask for?” Her mother answered, “Ask for the head of John the Baptist.”

1 Kings 19:2

> So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “May the gods punish me terribly if by this time tomorrow I don't kill you just as you killed those prophets.”

1 Kings 21:25

> There was no one like Ahab who had sold himself to do so much evil in the LORD's sight, because his wife Jezebel influenced him to do evil.

Spiritual Warning

Hatred of the truth can lead to terrible cruelty.

IX. THE KING WAS DISTRESSED

Matthew 14:9 — Because of His Oath and His Guests

“The king was distressed, but because of his oath and his guests, he ordered it to be given to her.”

Herod was **distressed.**

He knew this was wrong.

But he gave the order anyway.

Why?

Because of his oath.

Because of his guests.

He was more afraid of looking weak in front of others than of doing evil.

He could have broken a sinful oath.

A promise to do evil should never be kept.

But Herod chose his pride over righteousness.

Cross References

Mark 6:26

> Although the king was very sad, he had made a promise, and his dinner guests had heard it. So he did not want to refuse what she asked.

Judges 11:35

> When Jephthah saw his daughter, he tore his clothes to show his sadness. He said, “My daughter! You have made me so sad... I made a promise to the LORD, and I cannot break it.”

Numbers 30:2

> When a man makes a promise to the LORD or swears an oath to do something, he must not break his word.

Spiritual Principle

A promise to do evil should never be kept.

Spiritual Warning

Caring what people think can lead us to do what we know is wrong.

X. JOHN BEHEADED

Matthew 14:10 — In the Prison

“He sent and had John beheaded in the prison.”

Herod sent a soldier to the prison.

And **John was beheaded.**

There was no trial.

No defense.

No justice.

The greatest prophet born of a woman was killed to satisfy a party guest's request and an angry woman's hatred.

John died as a martyr.

He died for speaking the truth.

Cross References

Mark 6:27

> So the king immediately sent a soldier to bring John's head. The soldier went and cut off John's head in the prison.

Revelation 20:4

> And I saw the souls of those who had been killed because they were faithful to the message of Jesus and the message from God.

Matthew 17:12

> But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and people did not recognize him. They did to him whatever they wanted.

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness to God may cost us our lives.

Key Truth

John's death was not the end of his story.

He went into the presence of the God he served.

XI. ON A PLATTER

Matthew 14:11 — Carried to Her Mother

“His head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother.”

This is one of the most shocking scenes in the Bible.

In the middle of a party, a man's head was brought out **on a platter.**

Like another dish of food.

The girl **carried it to her mother.**

Herodias got what she wanted.

But God sees.

History records that Herod later lost his kingdom.

He and Herodias were sent away into exile.

Cross References

Mark 6:28

> The soldier brought it back on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.

1 Kings 21:19

Tell him, “This is what the LORD says: In the same place where the dogs licked up Naboth's blood, they will also lick up your blood!”

2 Kings 9:33

Jehu said, “Throw her down.” So they threw Jezebel down.

Spiritual Warning

The wicked may seem to win for a moment, but God's justice will come.

XII. JOHN'S DISCIPLES BURIED HIM

Matthew 14:12 — Then They Told Jesus

“John's disciples came, took his body, and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.”

John's disciples showed love and courage.

They **came** and **took his body.**

They **buried it** with honor.

Then they did the best thing they could do.

They went and told Jesus.

In their grief, they went to the One John had pointed to.

Cross References

Mark 6:29

When John's followers heard this, they came and got John's body and put it in a tomb.

Acts 8:2

And some believers who worshiped God buried Stephen and cried loudly for him.

John 19:38

Later, Joseph from Arimathea asked Pilate if he could take the body of Jesus... So Joseph came and took Jesus' body away.

Spiritual Principle

When grief comes, take it to Jesus.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

John's disciples did in his death what John taught them in his life — go to Jesus.

XIII. JESUS WITHDREW

Matthew 14:13 — The Crowds Followed

“When Jesus heard what had happened, He withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. But the crowds heard about it and followed Him on foot from the towns.”

When Jesus heard about John's death, **He withdrew.**

He went by boat to **a solitary place.**

John was His relative.

John had baptized Him.

Jesus was grieving.

He also may have known that Herod's attention was now turning to Him.

But the crowds would not leave Him alone.

They **followed Him on foot** around the lake.

Cross References

Mark 6:32

> So they went in a boat by themselves to a lonely place.

John 6:1

> After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias.

Matthew 4:12

> When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He went back to Galilee.

Spiritual Principle

Even Jesus took time to be alone when He was grieving.

XIV. HE HAD COMPASSION

Matthew 14:14 — He Healed Their Sick

“When Jesus landed and saw the large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick.”

Jesus wanted to be alone.

But when He landed, a huge crowd was waiting.

Most people would have been frustrated.

Jesus **had compassion on them.**

He set aside His own grief.

And **He healed their sick.**

Even in His sorrow, Jesus cared for others.

Cross References

Mark 6:34

> When He arrived, He saw a great crowd waiting. He felt sorry for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.

Luke 9:11

> But the people learned where Jesus went and followed Him. He welcomed them and talked with them about God's kingdom. He healed those who needed to be healed.

Matthew 9:36

> When He saw the crowds, He felt sorry for them because they were hurting and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Spiritual Principle

True compassion serves others even in times of personal pain.

Key Truth

Jesus' compassion is greater than His need for rest.

XV. SEND THE CROWDS AWAY

Matthew 14:15 — This Is a Remote Place

“As evening approached, the disciples came to Him and said, ‘This is a remote place, and it's already late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy themselves food.’”

The day was ending.

The disciples saw a problem.

They were in **a remote place.**

It was **late.**

There was no food.

Their solution was simple.

“Send the crowds away.”

It seemed like the responsible thing to do.

But Jesus had a different plan.

Cross References

Mark 6:35

> When it was late in the day, His followers came to Him and said, “No one lives in this place, and it is already very late.”

Luke 9:12

> Late in the afternoon, the twelve apostles came to Jesus and said, “Send the people away. They need to find food and places to sleep in the nearby towns and countryside.”

John 6:5

> When Jesus looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward Him, He said to Philip, “Where can we buy enough bread for all these people to eat?”

Spiritual Principle

What looks like a problem to us is an opportunity for Jesus.

XVI. YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT

Matthew 14:16 — They Don't Need to Go Away

“Jesus replied, ‘They don't need to go away. You give them something to eat.’”

Jesus surprised His disciples.

“They don't need to go away.”

“You give them something to eat.”

The disciples had nothing to give.

Jesus knew that.

He was testing their faith.

He wanted them to see that they could not meet the need on their own.

Cross References

Mark 6:37

> But Jesus answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to Him, “We would all have to work a month to earn enough money to buy that much bread!”

John 6:6

> Jesus asked Philip this question to test him, because Jesus already knew what He planned to do.

2 Kings 4:42

> A man from Baal Shalishah brought the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread from the first harvest... Elisha said, “Give it to the people to eat.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus often calls us to do what we cannot do without Him.

XVII. ONLY FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH

Matthew 14:17 — “We Have Only...”

“They answered, ‘We have only five loaves of bread and two fish.’”

The disciples looked at what they had.

Only five loaves.

Only two fish.

John tells us this food came from a boy in the crowd.

The loaves were small barley loaves, the bread of poor people.

The fish were probably small dried fish.

It was enough for one person's lunch.

Not for thousands.

Cross References

Mark 6:38

> Jesus asked them, “How many loaves of bread do you have? Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five loaves and two fish.”

John 6:9

> Here is a boy with five loaves of barley bread and two little fish, but that is not enough for so many people.

Luke 9:13

> They said, “We have only five loaves of bread and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.”

Spiritual Principle

What seems too small in our hands is enough in Jesus' hands.

XVIII. BRING THEM TO ME

Matthew 14:18 — “Bring Them Here”

“‘Bring them here to Me,’ He said.”

This is the turning point of the story.

“Bring them here to Me.”

The disciples had to give what they had to Jesus.

As long as the food stayed in their hands, it was only five loaves and two fish.

Once it was placed in Jesus' hands, it became enough for thousands.

Cross References

1 Samuel 21:3

> Now, what food do you have? Give me five loaves of bread or anything else you have.

John 6:35

> Then Jesus said, “I am the bread that gives life. Whoever comes to Me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty.”

Exodus 16:15

> When the Israelites saw it, they asked each other, “What is it?” Moses told them, “This is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.”

Spiritual Principle

God multiplies what we place in His hands.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not ask what you have; ask whose hands you have placed it in.

Application

What can you bring to Jesus?

- Your time.
- Your talents.
- Your money.
- Your weakness.
- Your small faith.
- Your willing heart.

XIX. HE GAVE THANKS AND BROKE THE LOAVES

Matthew 14:19 — The Disciples Gave Them to the People

“He directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, He gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.”

Jesus told the people to **sit down on the grass.**

Mark says they sat in groups of hundreds and fifties.

Then Jesus did four things.

He took the bread.

He looked up to heaven.

He gave thanks.

He broke the loaves.

These same actions are seen later at the Last Supper.

Then Jesus **gave the bread to the disciples.**

And **the disciples gave it to the people.**

Jesus did the miracle.

But He used His disciples to deliver it.

Cross References

Mark 6:39

> Then Jesus told the followers to have the people sit in groups on the green grass.

John 6:11

> Then Jesus took the loaves of bread, thanked God for them, and gave them to the people who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, giving as much as the people wanted.

Psalm 23:2

> He lets me rest in green pastures. He leads me to calm water.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus provides, and He uses His people to deliver His provision.

Key Truth

The Good Shepherd made His sheep lie down in green pastures and fed them.

XX. TWELVE BASKETS LEFT OVER

Matthew 14:20 — They All Ate and Were Satisfied

“They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve baskets full of leftovers.”

They all ate.

Not just a bite.

They were satisfied.

Everyone had as much as they wanted.

And there were leftovers.

Twelve baskets full.

One basket for each disciple.

Jesus did not just provide enough.

He provided more than enough.

Cross References

Mark 6:42

> All the people ate and were satisfied.

John 6:12

> When they had all had enough to eat, Jesus said to His followers, “Gather the leftover pieces of fish and bread. Don't waste anything.”

2 Kings 4:44

> Then he served it to the people, and they ate and had some food left over, as the LORD had said.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus provides more than enough.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When Jesus feeds His people, there is always something left over.

XXI. FIVE THOUSAND MEN

Matthew 14:21 — Besides Women and Children

“The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.”

About five thousand men.

In that culture, crowds were often counted by the number of men.

Matthew adds **besides women and children.**

The total crowd may have been fifteen or twenty thousand people.

This is the only miracle of Jesus, other than the resurrection, recorded in all four Gospels.

Cross References

Mark 6:44

> There were five thousand men who ate.

John 6:10

> Jesus said, “Tell the people to sit down.” This was a very grassy place, and about five thousand men sat down there.

Luke 9:14

> There were about five thousand men there.

Spiritual Principle

No crowd is too large for Jesus to care for.

XXII. JESUS SENT THE DISCIPLES AHEAD

Matthew 14:22 — Into the Boat

“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowd.”

Immediately after the miracle, Jesus **made** His disciples get into the boat.

The word means He insisted.

Why the hurry?

John tells us the crowd wanted to make Jesus king by force.

Jesus did not want His disciples caught up in that excitement.

So He sent them away and dismissed the crowd Himself.

Cross References

Mark 6:45

> Immediately Jesus told His followers to get into the boat and go ahead of Him to Bethsaida across the lake. He stayed there to send the people home.

John 6:17

> They got into a boat and started across the lake to Capernaum. It was already dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

Matthew 8:23

> Jesus got into a boat, and His followers went with Him.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus protects His followers from dangers they cannot see.

XXIII. ALONE TO PRAY

Matthew 14:23 — On the Mountainside

“After He had dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone.”

After a long day of ministry, Jesus went **by Himself to pray.**

He had wanted to be alone earlier.

Now He finally had time with His Father.

Jesus, the Son of God, needed time in prayer.

How much more do we?

Cross References

Mark 6:46

> After sending them away, He went into the hills to pray.

Luke 6:12

> At that time Jesus went off to a mountain to pray, and He spent the night praying to God.

Luke 9:18

> One time when Jesus was praying alone, His followers were with Him.

Spiritual Principle

Prayer is the source of strength for every servant of God.

Key Truth

After feeding thousands, Jesus went to be fed by His Father.

XXIV. THE WIND WAS AGAINST THEM

Matthew 14:24 — Buffeted by the Waves

“Meanwhile, the boat was already far from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.”

While Jesus prayed, the disciples were in trouble.

The boat was **far from land.**

The waves were beating against it.

The wind was against it.

This time, Jesus was not in the boat.

They were obeying Him.

He had sent them.

And still they faced a storm.

Mark tells us Jesus **saw them** straining at the oars.

Cross References

Mark 6:47

> That night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and Jesus was alone on the land.

Jonah 1:4

> But the LORD sent a strong wind on the sea, which made the sea so rough the ship was in danger of breaking apart.

Psalm 107:25

> He spoke, and a storm came up, which blew up high waves.

Spiritual Principle

Obedience does not always mean calm seas.

Key Truth

Even when we cannot see Jesus, He sees us.

XXV. WALKING ON THE LAKE

Matthew 14:25 — Shortly Before Dawn

“Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.”

Shortly before dawn means the fourth watch of the night, between three and six in the morning.

The disciples had been fighting the wind for hours.

They were exhausted.

Then **Jesus went out to them.**

Walking on the lake.

In the Old Testament, only God walks on the waves of the sea.

Jesus was doing what only God can do.

Cross References

Job 9:8

> God alone stretches out the skies and walks on the waves of the sea.

Psalm 77:19

> You made a path through the sea and walked through the deep waters, but Your footprints were not seen.

Exodus 14:22

> And the Israelites went through the sea on dry land, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus comes to His people in their darkest hour.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The waves that threatened the disciples were the floor Jesus walked on.

XXVI. “IT'S A GHOST!”

Matthew 14:26 — Terrified

“When the disciples saw Him walking on the water, they were terrified. ‘It's a ghost!’ they said, and cried out in fear.”

The disciples saw a figure coming toward them on the water.

In the dark.

In the storm.

They were **terrified.**

“It's a ghost!”

They did not recognize Jesus.

Sometimes we do not recognize Jesus when He comes to us in our storms.

We are so afraid that we do not see Him.

Cross References

Mark 6:49

> But when they saw Jesus walking on the water, they thought He was a ghost and cried out.

Luke 24:37

> They were fearful and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost.

Job 9:11

> When He passes me, I cannot see Him. When He goes by, I do not see Him.

Spiritual Principle

Fear can keep us from recognizing Jesus when He comes near.

XXVII. “IT IS I”

Matthew 14:27 — Do Not Be Afraid

“But Jesus immediately said to them: ‘Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.’”

Jesus spoke **immediately.**

He did not leave them in fear.

“Take courage!”

“It is I.”

“Do not be afraid.”

In Greek, **“It is I”** is literally **“I am.”**

These are the words God used when He revealed His name to Moses.

“I AM WHO I AM.”

Jesus was telling them more than who was walking toward them.

He was telling them who He is.

Cross References

Mark 6:50

> They all saw Him and were afraid. But quickly Jesus spoke to them and said, “Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.”

John 6:20

But Jesus said to them, “It is I. Do not be afraid.”

Isaiah 43:2

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you cross rivers, you will not drown.

Spiritual Principle

The presence of Jesus is the cure for fear.

Key Truth

The greatest comfort in any storm is knowing who is with us.

XXVIII. “TELL ME TO COME”

Matthew 14:28 — Peter's Request

“‘Lord, if it's really You,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to You on the water.’”

Only Matthew tells us this part of the story.

Peter spoke up.

“Lord, if it's really You.”

Peter did not ask to walk on water to show off.

He asked Jesus to **tell** him to come.

He wanted to be where Jesus was.

And he knew he could only do it if Jesus commanded it.

Cross References

John 21:7

When Simon Peter heard him say it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat around himself and jumped into the water.

2 Corinthians 5:7

We live by what we believe, not by what we can see.

Hebrews 11:1

Faith means being sure of the things we hope for and knowing that something is real even if we do not see it.

Spiritual Principle

Bold faith wants to be where Jesus is.

XXIX. “COME”

Matthew 14:29 — Peter Walked on the Water

“‘Come,’ He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus.”

Jesus said one word.

“Come.”

And Peter **got down out of the boat.**

The other disciples stayed in the boat.

Peter stepped out.

And he **walked on the water.**

For a few moments, Peter did the impossible.

Because Jesus said, **“Come.”**

Cross References

Psalm 66:6

> He turned the sea into dry land. The people crossed the river on foot.

Habakkuk 3:15

> You marched through the sea with Your horses, stirring up the great waters.

Mark 6:48

> He saw His followers struggling hard to row the boat, because the wind was blowing against them. Between three and six o'clock in the morning, Jesus came to them, walking on the water.

Spiritual Principle

When Jesus calls, He gives the power to obey.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Peter is the only man besides Jesus who ever walked on water — because he was the only one who got out of the boat.

XXX. “LORD, SAVE ME!”

Matthew 14:30 — He Began to Sink

“But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and began to sink. He cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’”

Something changed.

He saw the wind.

Peter took his eyes off Jesus.

He looked at the storm.

And **he was afraid.**

And **he began to sink.**

The wind had been there the whole time.

The waves had been there the whole time.

What changed was where Peter was looking.

Then Peter cried out:

“Lord, save me!”

This is one of the shortest prayers in the Bible.

And one of the best.

Cross References

Psalm 69:1

> God, save me, because the water has risen to my neck.

Psalm 18:16

> The LORD reached down from above and took me. He pulled me from the deep water.

Psalm 144:7

> Reach down from above. Save me and rescue me out of the deep water.

Spiritual Principle

Faith falters when our eyes move from Jesus to our circumstances.

Key Truth

Even sinking faith knows where to turn.

XXXI. JESUS CAUGHT HIM

Matthew 14:31 — “Why Did You Doubt?”

“Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith,’ He said, ‘why did you doubt?’”

Immediately.

Jesus did not wait.

He did not let Peter sink deeper.

He **reached out His hand and caught him.**

Then He said gently:

“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Jesus did not say Peter had no faith.

He had enough faith to step out of the boat.

But his faith was small.

And doubt pulled him down.

Cross References

Matthew 8:26

> Jesus answered, “Why are you afraid? You don't have enough faith.” Then Jesus got up and gave a command to the wind and the waves, and it became completely calm.

Matthew 6:30

> If God makes the grass in the field so beautiful... then He will dress you even better. You have so little faith!

James 1:6

> But when you ask God, you must believe and not doubt. Anyone who doubts is like a wave in the sea, blown up and down by the wind.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is quick to save those who call on Him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Peter sank because of the wind, but he was saved because of the hand.

XXXII. THE WIND DIED DOWN

Matthew 14:32 — When They Climbed into the Boat

“When they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.”

Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat together.

And **the wind died down.**

Jesus did not even need to speak this time.

His presence was enough.

When Jesus came into the boat, the storm stopped.

Cross References

Mark 4:39

> Jesus stood up and gave a command to the wind and said to the water, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind stopped, and the lake became completely calm.

Psalm 107:29

> He made the storm quiet, and the waves of the sea became calm.

Mark 6:51

> Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind became calm. The followers were greatly amazed.

Spiritual Principle

The presence of Jesus brings peace.

XXXIII. “TRULY YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD”

Matthew 14:33 — They Worshiped Him

“Then those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’”

This is the climax of the chapter.

The disciples **worshiped Him.**

And they said:

“Truly You are the Son of God.”

In Matthew 8, after Jesus calmed a storm, they asked, **“What kind of man is this?”**

Now they knew the answer.

This is the first time in Matthew that the disciples call Jesus **the Son of God.**

And they worshiped Him.

Only God is to be worshiped.

Jesus accepted their worship because He is God.

Cross References

John 1:49

> Then Nathanael said to Him, “Teacher, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

Matthew 16:16

> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Psalm 89:9

> You rule over the raging sea. When its waves rise up, You calm them.

Spiritual Principle

The right response to who Jesus is, is worship.

Key Truth

The storm led the disciples from fear to worship.

XXXIV. GENNESARET

Matthew 14:34 — They Landed

“When they crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret.”

Gennesaret was a fertile plain on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

It was a beautiful, productive farming area.

The storm was over.

The journey was complete.

And a new day of ministry was beginning.

Cross References

Mark 6:53

> When they had crossed the lake, they came to shore at Gennesaret and tied the boat there.

John 6:21

> Then they were glad to take Him into the boat. At once the boat came to the land where they wanted to go.

Matthew 4:18

> As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus brings His people safely to the other side.

XXXV. THEY RECOGNIZED HIM

Matthew 14:35 — All Their Sick

“The men of that place recognized Jesus and sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to Him”

The people of Gennesaret **recognized Jesus.**

They did not wait.

They **sent word to all the surrounding country.**

They told everyone.

And **people brought all their sick to Him.**

These people did what Nazareth did not do.

They recognized Jesus and brought their needs to Him.

Cross References

Mark 6:54

> When they got out of the boat, people immediately recognized Jesus.

Matthew 4:24

> The news about Jesus spread all over Syria, and people brought all the sick to Him.

Luke 4:14

> Jesus went back to Galilee with the power of the Holy Spirit, and stories about Him spread all through the area.

Spiritual Principle

Those who recognize Jesus bring others to Him.

XXXVI. THE EDGE OF HIS CLOAK

Matthew 14:36 — Completely Healed

“and begged Him to let the sick just touch the edge of His cloak. And all who touched Him were completely healed.”

The people **begged** Jesus.

They only wanted to **touch the edge of His cloak.**

They had heard about the woman who was healed by touching His cloak.

And **all who touched Him were completely healed.**

Not some.

All.

Not partly.

Completely.

The chapter that began with death ends with healing.

Cross References

Mark 6:56

> Everywhere He went — into towns, cities, or countryside — the people brought the sick to the marketplaces. They begged Him to let them touch just the edge of His coat, and all who touched it were healed.

Matthew 9:20

> Then a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years came behind Jesus and touched the edge of His coat.

Mark 5:27

> She had heard about Jesus. So she came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His coat.

Spiritual Principle

One touch of Jesus is enough.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The chapter that began with a prophet's death ends with the Healer's touch.

XXXVII. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM MATTHEW 14

1. Standing for Truth May Cost Everything

John the Baptist's boldness led to his death, showing the price of faithfulness.

Principle:

It is better to lose your life for the truth than to keep it by giving up the truth.

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2. Jesus Provides Abundantly

With just five loaves and two fish, He fed thousands, teaching that God multiplies what we surrender to Him.

Principle:

Little is much when God is in it.

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3. Faith Requires Focus

Peter walked on water until he looked at the storm.

Faith falters when eyes shift from Jesus to fear.

Principle:

Keep your eyes on Jesus, not on the wind.

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4. Jesus Is the Son of God

His authority over nature and His saving power reveal His divine identity.

Principle:

The One who walks on the sea deserves our worship.

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5. Compassion Moves Christ

Whether feeding the hungry or healing the sick, Jesus responds to human need with mercy.

Principle:

Jesus' compassion is greater than His own need.

XXXVIII. TWO KINGS, TWO FEASTS

Matthew 14 places two feasts side by side.

Herod's Feast

- Held in a palace.
- For the rich and powerful.
- Filled with pride, lust, and drunkenness.
- Ended with a foolish promise.
- Ended in death.

Jesus' Feast

- Held on a grassy hillside.
- For ordinary, hungry people.

- Began with thanksgiving to God.
- Ended with everyone satisfied.
- Brought life and healing.

Key Truth

Herod's banquet served death on a platter; Jesus' banquet served life to thousands.

XXXIX. LESSONS FROM PETER ON THE WATER

Peter Recognized Jesus

He said, **“Lord, if it's really You.”**

Peter Wanted to Be Near Jesus

He asked to come to Him.

Peter Waited for Jesus' Word

He asked Jesus to tell him to come.

Peter Stepped Out in Faith

He got out of the boat when others stayed.

Peter Looked at the Wind

His focus shifted from Jesus to the storm.

Peter Called Out

“Lord, save me!”

Jesus Saved Him Immediately

He reached out His hand and caught him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

It is better to step out and sink into Jesus' hand than never to step out at all.

XL. WHAT MATTHEW 14 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Matthew 14 presents Jesus as:

The One Herod Feared

His power troubled the guilty king.

The Grieving Friend

He withdrew when He heard of John's death.

The Compassionate Shepherd

He healed the crowds even in His sorrow.

The Provider

He fed thousands with five loaves and two fish.

The Praying Son

He spent the night alone with His Father.

The Lord of the Sea

He walked on the water.

The I AM

He said, **“It is I. Do not be afraid.”**

The Savior

He caught Peter when he was sinking.

The Son of God

His disciples worshiped Him.

The Healer

All who touched Him were made well.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Jesus who walked on the storm is the Jesus who reaches into it to save us.

XLI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Who was Herod in Matthew 14?

He was Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great.

He ruled Galilee and Perea under the authority of Rome.

Question 2

Why did Herod think Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead?

Herod had a guilty conscience.

He had killed John, and the reports about Jesus' miracles frightened him.

Question 3

Why did John the Baptist tell Herod his marriage was wrong?

Herod had married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, which was forbidden by God's law.

John spoke the truth even though it was dangerous.

Question 4

Why did Herod go through with John's execution if he was distressed?

Because of his oath and because of his guests.

He cared more about his pride and what others thought than about doing what was right.

Question 5

Should a person keep a promise to do something evil?

No.

A promise to do evil should be broken, and the person should repent for making it.

Question 6

What did John's disciples do after his death?

They buried his body and went to tell Jesus.

Question 7

What did Jesus do when He saw the crowd after He had withdrawn?

He had compassion on them and healed their sick, even though He was grieving.

Question 8

Why did Jesus tell the disciples, “You give them something to eat”?

He was testing their faith.

He wanted them to see that they could not meet the need on their own, but He could.

Question 9

What does the feeding of the five thousand teach us?

Jesus provides abundantly.

God multiplies what we place in His hands.

He uses His disciples to deliver His provision.

Question 10

Why did Jesus go up on the mountain alone?

To pray.

Even the Son of God spent time alone with His Father.

Question 11

What is the meaning of “It is I”?

In Greek, it is literally **“I am,”** the name God used to reveal Himself to Moses.

Jesus was revealing that He is God.

Question 12

Why did Peter begin to sink?

He took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the wind.

He became afraid, and his faith weakened.

Question 13

What did the disciples say after Jesus got into the boat?

They worshiped Him and said, **“Truly You are the Son of God.”**

Question 14

What happened at Gennesaret?

The people recognized Jesus, brought all their sick to Him, and all who touched the edge of His cloak were completely healed.

Question 15

What should Matthew 14 change about the way Christians live today?

Matthew 14 should cause believers to live:

- Speaking the truth with courage.
- Refusing to be ruled by the fear of people.
- Taking their grief to Jesus.
- Showing compassion even in hard times.
- Bringing what little they have to Jesus.
- Spending time alone in prayer.
- Trusting Jesus in the storms of life.
- Keeping their eyes on Jesus.
- Calling out to Him when they are sinking.
- Worshiping Him as the Son of God.

XLII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Matthew 14 asks several important questions.

Am I Willing to Speak the Truth Even When It Costs Me?

Is My Conscience Clear Before God?

Have I Made Any Foolish Promises I Need to Repent Of?

Am I More Concerned with What People Think or What God Thinks?

Where Do I Take My Grief?

Do I Show Compassion Even When I Am Hurting?

What Do I Have That I Need to Bring to Jesus?

Do I Make Time to Be Alone with God in Prayer?

What Storm Am I Facing Right Now?

Am I Looking at Jesus or at the Wind?

Have I Cried Out, “Lord, Save Me”?

Do I Worship Jesus as the Son of God?

XLIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Eyes on Jesus”

Peter's walk on the water teaches one of the most important lessons in the Christian life.

As long as Peter looked at Jesus, he walked.

When he looked at the wind, he sank.

The storm did not get worse.

The waves did not get higher.

Peter's focus changed.

This creates a powerful principle.

The circumstances of life will always be stormy.

There will always be wind.

There will always be waves.

The question is not whether there will be storms.

The question is where we will look.

If we look at the storm, we will sink in fear.

If we look at Jesus, we can walk through what seems impossible.

And even when we do sink, Jesus is close enough to reach out His hand.

Principle:

Look at the wind and you will sink; look at Jesus and you will walk — and if you start to sink, call on Him, and He will catch you.

XLIV. FINAL APPLICATION

Matthew Chapter 14 begins in a king's palace and ends on a crowded shore.

At the start, a faithful prophet dies for speaking the truth.

A weak king keeps a foolish promise.

A head is carried out on a platter.

But the story does not stay there.

Jesus grieves.

Jesus withdraws.

And then Jesus has compassion.

He heals the sick.

He feeds thousands with a boy's lunch.

He prays alone through the night.

He walks on the stormy sea.

He calls Peter out of the boat.

He catches Peter when he sinks.

He calms the wind.

And His disciples fall down and worship Him.

Matthew 14 therefore reminds us:

Faithfulness may cost us everything.

But Jesus is worth everything.

What we have may seem small.

But in His hands, it becomes enough.

The storm may be strong.

But Jesus is stronger.

The story of Matthew 14 does not end with:

A prophet's death.

A fearful crowd.

Or a sinking disciple.

It ends with:

A calm sea.

A worshiping church.

And healing for all who touch Him.

The same call still stands:

Speak the truth.

Bring Him what you have.

Pray.

Step out in faith.

Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Call on Him when you sink.

Worship Him as the Son of God.

And until He returns:

Keep trusting.

Keep looking to Him.

Keep stepping out.

Keep worshiping.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for faithful servants like John the Baptist.

Give us the courage to speak the truth, even when it is costly.

Keep us from being ruled by the fear of people.

Guard us from foolish words and reckless promises.

When we have sinned, give us a clear conscience through repentance.

Lord Jesus, thank You for understanding our grief.

When we lose people we love, help us bring our sorrow to You.

Thank You for Your compassion.

Thank You that You care for the crowds and for each person in them.

Teach us to show compassion even when we are tired or hurting.

Thank You that You feed the hungry.

We bring You what little we have.

Take it, bless it, and use it for Your glory.

Teach us that little is much when it is placed in Your hands.

Help us make time to be alone with You in prayer.

When the wind is against us, remind us that You see us.

When we are afraid, speak to us: “Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid.”

Give us faith to step out of the boat when You call.

Help us keep our eyes on You and not on the storm.

When we begin to sink, help us cry out to You.

Thank You that You are quick to reach out Your hand and save us.

Calm the storms in our lives and in our hearts.

We worship You.

Truly You are the Son of God.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Then those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’” — Matthew 14:33

Central Truth

Jesus is the compassionate Son of God who provides for His people, rules over creation, and saves those who call on Him, even when following Him costs everything.

Matthew 14 in One Sentence

After John the Baptist is killed for speaking the truth, Jesus has compassion on the crowds, feeds more than five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, walks on the stormy sea, saves sinking Peter, and is worshiped by His disciples as the Son of God.