

Matthew 14

Outline:

- I. Introduction- Herod hears about Jesus (Matthew 14:1-2)
- II. Background to John's arrest and death (Matthew 14:3-12)
 - a. The persecution: John is imprisoned by Herod for fearlessly condemning Herod's unlawful marriage to Herodias, the king's ex-sister-in-law (Matthew 14:3-5).
 - b. The performance: The daughter of Herodias performs a dance for Herod during his birthday celebration (Matthew 14:6).
 - c. The Promise: A highly pleased Herod vows to give her anything she desires (Matthew 14:7).
 - d. The plot: At her mother's urging, the girl demands the head of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:8).
 - e. **John is murdered by Herod Antipas** (Matthew 14:9-12): The reluctant king, forced to keep his promise, has John beheaded.
- III. The five thousand fed (Matthew 14:13-21)
 - a. Jesus has compassion and heals the sick (Matthew 14:14).
 - b. The scarcity of food (Matthew 14:15-17): A quick check reveals only five small loaves of bread and two fish are available for the hungry crowd.
 - c. The surplus of food (Matthew 14:18-21): After all have eaten their fill, twelve basketfuls are left over!
- IV. Jesus walks on water (Matthew 14:22-33)
 - a. *Events preceding his walk* (Matthew 14:22-24)
 - b. The command (Matthew 14:22): Jesus instructs his disciples to cross to the other side of the lake.
 - c. The communion (Matthew 14:23): He then retires to a hill and prays.
 - d. The crisis (Matthew 14:24): A violent storm suddenly threatens the disciples' boat.
 - e. In the middle of the night, Jesus comes to the disciples, walking on the water.
 - f. The alarm (Matthew 14:26): The disciples are terrified, thinking Jesus is a ghost!
 - g. The assurance (Matthew 14:27): Jesus tells them who he is.
 - h. The attempt (Matthew 14:28-31): Peter tries to walk to Jesus but soon begins to sink and cries out for help.
 - i. The awe (Matthew 14:32-33): At Jesus' command, the wind stops, causing the disciples to worship him.
- V. More people are healed (Matthew 14:34-36).
 - a. Jesus is now on the other side of the lake.
 - b. He is recognized.
 - c. They spread the word.
 - d. Jesus heals many sick people on the eastern side of the lake.¹

¹ The outline is adapted from: H. L. Willmington, [*The Outline Bible*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Mt 14:34-36.

Detailed outline:

I. Introduction- Herod hears about Jesus (Matthew 14:1-2)

Matthew 14:1–2 (NASB95)

1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus,
2 and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

- a. I find it interesting that Herod "heard the news..."
- b. The news spread to him.
- c. The news about Jesus is being "gossiped" around.
- d. First, the passage says, "at that time..." Literally, "in that season."
- e. Remember that this is a narrative.
- f. This is picking up after the previous section. In the previous section, Jesus was in Nazareth but would not do any miracles there because of their unbelief.
- g. The NET Bible shares: *A tetrarch, a ruler with rank and authority lower than a king, ruled only with the approval of the Roman authorities. This was roughly equivalent to being governor of a region. Several times in the NT, Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, is called a king (Matt 14:9, Mark 6:14–29), reflecting popular usage rather than an official title.*²
- h. The ESV Study Bible shares: *Herod Antipas was the Roman ruler over the region where Jesus ministered. He was only 17 years old when his father, Herod the Great, died. The kingdom was divided among three of Herod's sons—Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip II (see note on 2:22). Herod Antipas was made tetrarch (the ruler of a fourth part of a kingdom) of Galilee and Perea and had a long rule (4 b.c.–a.d. 39).*³
- i. NIV SB: *tetrarch. The ruler of a fourth part of a region. "Herod the tetrarch" (Herod Antipas) was one of several sons of Herod the Great. When Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons (see chart, p. 1638; see also map, p. 1768). Herod Antipas ruled over Galilee and Perea (4 BC–AD 39). Matthew correctly refers to him as tetrarch here, as Luke regularly does (Lk 3:19; 9:7; Ac 13:1). But in v. 9 Matthew calls him "king"—as Mk 6:14 also does—because that was his popular title among the Galileans, as well as in Rome.*⁴

² Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Mt 14:1.

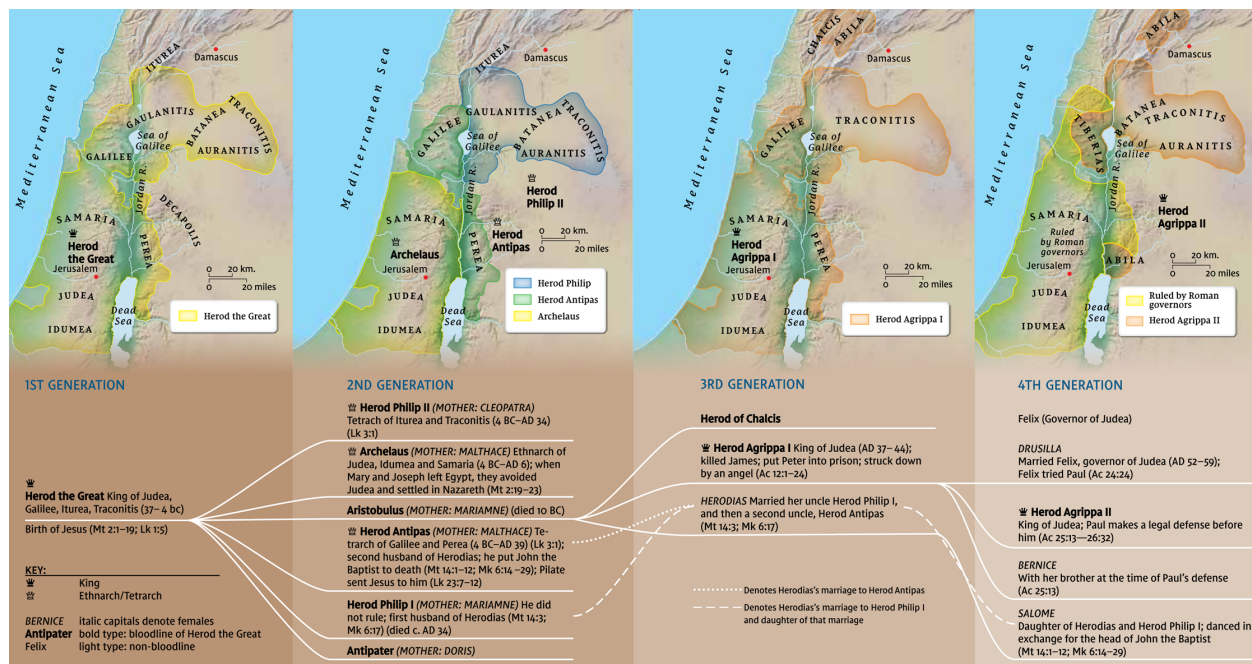
³ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1850.

p. page

p. page

v. verse (in the chapter being commented on)

⁴ Kenneth L. Barker, ed., [NIV Study Bible](#), Fully Revised Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 1667.



- j. Interesting that in verse 2, Matthew explains that Herod thinks this is John the Baptist risen from the dead.
- k. This is why miracles are being done by Him.
- l. The ESV SB shares: *Herod Antipas's reaction at hearing of Jesus' ministry reveals a curious blend of theology and superstition, based partly on semi-pagan ideas of returning spirits.*⁵

Witherington III

It is interesting that at this juncture in the Matthean outline, our Evangelist becomes content to follow Mark's outline for the most part for the rest of his Gospel. The First Evangelist introduces Herod as the tetrarch and later calls him the king at v. 9, whereas Mark simply called him the king. Notably the First Evangelist omits Mark 6:15–16 altogether, and once we get to vv. 3–12 (cf. Mark 6:17ff.), he follows Mark rather closely except that he compresses the narrative by a third. It must have been no small enterprise to figure out how much to edit one's sources so that all of Matthew's Gospel could fit onto one scroll. More interesting is the fact that the First Evangelist says Herod, not merely his wife, wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the crowd who regarded John as a great prophet. Herod is painted in even more black tones in Matthew than in Mark. Finally, in order to make a segue to what

⁵ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1850.

v. verse

vv. verses

cf. confer (compare)

ff. following one(s)

follows, the First Evangelist rounds out his narrative with “and they [John’s disciples] went and reported everything to Jesus.”⁶

II. Background to John’s arrest and death (Matthew 14:3-12)

Matthew 14:3–12 (NASB95)

3 For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip.

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

5 Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet.

6 But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod,

7 so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.

8 Having been prompted by her mother, she *said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.”

9 Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests.

10 He sent and had John beheaded in the prison.

11 And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.

12 His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.

- a. The persecution: John is imprisoned by Herod for fearlessly condemning Herod’s unlawful marriage to Herodias, the king’s ex-sister-in-law (Matthew 14:3-5).
 - i. Witherington III: According to Josephus, John was imprisoned east of the Dead Sea in the fortress of Machaerus (*Ant.* 18.5.2). But it would appear that the banquet recounted here is in Tiberias since Mark tells us it is Galileans who come to the banquet. Perhaps Herod had John moved to Tiberias at some juncture, though clearly the journey from the Machaerius to Tiberias would take longer than an overnight trek (see Josephus, *Ant.* 18.5.2). On the other hand, some, such as H. W. Hoehner, have suggested that the banquet was actually at the Machaerus.

⁶ Ben Witherington III, [Matthew](#), ed. P. Keith Gammons and R. Alan Culpepper, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2006), 281.

Ant Jewish Antiquities (Josephus)

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- ii. See H. W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 146–48.⁷
- iii. Verse 3 begins with “for” which is bringing explanation. It is a logical, explanatory conjunction.
- iv. John is arrested and bound because of Herodias, his brother’s wife.
- v. In verse 4 it says that John was saying it was unlawful for John to have her.
- vi. NET Bible: ***This marriage of Herod to his brother Philip’s wife was a violation of OT law (Lev 18:16; 20:21). In addition, both Herod Antipas and Herodias had each left marriages to enter into this union.***⁸
- vii. Sproul shares: *As we saw in the previous chapter, Jesus said, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house” (Matt. 13:57). This was certainly true of Jesus when He returned to Nazareth, and ultimately with respect to the whole nation of the Jews. It also was true of John the Baptist, that prophet who came before Jesus and restored the voice of prophecy in Israel after four hundred years of silence. Though he was highly honored at one time, Matthew tells us that John ultimately was senselessly executed by a dissolute ruler.*⁹
- viii. Sproul continues:
 - ix. *Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, yet another son of Herod the Great. She had married her half-uncle Herod Philip, but then entered an adulterous relationship with her uncle Herod Antipas. Antipas was married to a princess, Phasaelis, the daughter of King Aretas, ruler of Nabatea, which adjoined Herod Antipas’s territory of Perea. However, he divorced Phasaelis to marry Herodias, his niece and the wife of his half-brother.*¹⁰
 - x. Sproul continues with good background information:
 - xi. *When this happened, two men were extremely upset and exercised about it. The first was King Aretas, who did not like to see his daughter rejected by the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, Herod Antipas. So, Aretas went to war against Herod Antipas. He defeated Antipas’s army and captured some territory along the Jordan River. The other person who was upset about this marriage was the prophet John the Baptist. He publicly admonished and rebuked Herod for breaking the law of God, not only for*

⁷ Ben Witherington III, [Matthew](#), ed. P. Keith Gammons and R. Alan Culpepper, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2006), 283.

⁸ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Mt 14:4.

⁹ Robert Charles Sproul, [Matthew](#), St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 449–450.

¹⁰ Robert Charles Sproul, [Matthew](#), St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 451.

- committing adultery but for entering an unlawful marriage. For this indiscretion, Herod Antipas had John arrested and imprisoned.*
- xii. *When John the Baptist criticized Herod for his immorality, he was standing in an ancient tradition of the prophets. At the head of the office of prophecy in the Old Testament stood Moses, whom God sent to Pharaoh to say, “Let My people go” (Ex. 5:1). Then came Elijah, who pursued King Ahab for his godlessness and for his transgressions (1 Kings 18:18). Isaiah was often in the palaces of the kings, and he brought word to King Hezekiah that Judah would be taken into exile after Hezekiah showed his treasures to envoys from Babylon (2 Kings 20:12–18). Daniel stood before King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and warned him of his coming humiliation (Daniel 4). Amos cried out against the sins of King Jeroboam II of Israel (Amos 7:10–11).¹¹*
 - xiii. *ESV SB: Josephus reports that John the Baptist was imprisoned at Herod Antipas’s fortress-palace called Machaerus (Jewish Antiquities 18.116–119; cf. the description in Jewish War 7.164–177), which was a fortress built atop a steep hill east of the Dead Sea. It had been fortified by the Hasmonean Jewish kings (2nd century b.c.), destroyed by the Romans (c. 56 b.c.), and rebuilt as a palace by Herod the Great. Archaeological investigation has delineated the Herodian palace enclosure, including a cistern from this era.¹²*
- b. The performance: The daughter of Herodias performs a dance for Herod during his birthday celebration (Matthew 14:6).
 - i. So, we are seeing the background which led to John’s beheading.
 - ii. **ESV SB: When Herod’s birthday came a great celebration was held in his honor at the palace at Machaerus. Herodias had her daughter (named Salome in Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 18.136) perform a dance for Herod Antipas. She was only 12 to 14 years old, but in that debased setting it likely was a sensual dance, which pleased Herod.**¹³
 - c. The Promise: A highly pleased Herod vows to give her anything she desires (Matthew 14:7).
 - i. IVP BBC NT:
 - ii. **Herod’s oath is a drunken one; as a vassal of Rome, he had no authority to compromise any of his territory.**¹⁴
 - d. The plot: At her mother’s urging, the girl demands the head of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:8).

¹¹ Robert Charles Sproul, [Matthew](#), St. Andrew’s Expositional Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 451.

c. about, approximately

¹² Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1850.

¹³ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1850.

¹⁴ Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Mt 14:7.

- i. IVP BBC NT:
- ii. *It was an affront to one's honor to break an oath in front of guests, even if (as in this case) Jewish teachers would have absolved the oath.*¹⁵
- e. **John is murdered by Herod Antipas** (Matthew 14:9–12): The reluctant king, forced to keep his promise, has John beheaded.
 - i. Witherington III: *Notice that in v. 9 Herod is called king, surely an ironic twist because though Antipas ruled Galilee from 4 bc to ad 39 and had pretensions to be a king, it was precisely the request to be called king by Rome and everyone else, the request for the title, that eventually got him sent into exile in ad 39 by a paranoid Caligula. In fact, he was tetrarch of the region of Galilee and Perea. Antipas must not be seen as a good Jew. Besides his forbidden marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, which was prohibited according to Leviticus 18:13 while the brother was still alive, Antipas also built his capital Tiberias on top of a pagan cemetery, something an observant Jew would never sanction. A good Jew would never even enter the city due to its uncleanness. [Marriage] In many ways he was a chip off the old block, being a son born to Herod the Great and his Samaritan wife Malthace in 20 bc.*¹⁶
 - ii. IVP BBC NT: *Jewish law required a trial before execution; here Herod, given power by the Romans, ignores this law. Beheading was the fastest and least painful method of execution and was carried out with a sword. But it was a Greek and Roman custom, contrary to Jewish custom.*¹⁷
 - iii. Notice what a gross and morbid event this is.
 - iv. The head is brought to the girl and her mother on a platter.
 - v. John's disciples claim his body.
 - vi. IVP BBC NT: *One's son would normally be in charge of the burial; either John had no adult sons (which is probable) or his disciples were the only ones ready to fulfill this role. Although the whole ancient world (except for some eccentric philosophers) considered lack of proper burial the worst possible fate, Jewish law forbade public mourning for those executed*

¹⁵ Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Mt 14:8–9.

v. verse

BC Before Christ

AD *Anno Domini* ("in the year of the Lord")

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BC Before Christ

¹⁶ Ben Witherington III, [Matthew](#), ed. P. Keith Gammons and R. Alan Culpepper, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2006), 282.

¹⁷ Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Mt 14:10–11.

according to Jewish law, and Herod may have resented whoever showed up to claim the body.¹⁸

III. The five thousand fed (Matthew 14:13-21)

Swindoll writes:

Centuries ago a little boy found himself in the midst of a vast crowd of people—larger than any group he'd ever seen. He had come out of curiosity, having heard that a man named Jesus was nearby.

Not knowing how far he would have to travel or how long he would be gone, the boy had packed a small lunch for himself, a couple of small fish and some bread.

Suddenly a man tapped the lad on the shoulder and asked what he had in his hand. And the next thing the boy knew, his lunch was feeding over five thousand people!

Once Jesus got hold of the boy's simple meal there was no limit to what He could make of it.

Feeling a little overwhelmed? Starting to get the idea that you're surrounded by folks getting giant things done while it's all you can do to make it through the week? Maybe you've fallen into a well of comparison, and you're drowning in discouragement because "compared to _____" you're not making nearly the difference he or she is.

To all who feel overwhelmed or who are tempted to take a much too critical look at their lives and feel insignificant . . . take heart! Do what you can!¹⁹

Matthew 14:13–21 (NASB95)

Five Thousand Fed

13 Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities.

14 When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.

15 When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

16 But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!"

17 They *said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish."

18 And He said, "Bring them here to Me."

19 Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds,

¹⁸ Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Mt 14:12.

¹⁹ <https://insight.org/resources/daily-devotional/individual/do-what-you-can>

20 *and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets.*

21 *There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.*

- a. Jesus has compassion and heals the sick (Matthew 14:14).
- b. Notice first in verse 13 that Jesus goes to a quiet place.
- c. Once again, the people heard about this, and they follow Him.
- d. Jesus travels by boat, but they travel on foot.
- e. Jesus goes to a secluded place. We have seen this before.
- f. In Matthew 13:1, He is sitting by the sea.
- g. I imagine that Jesus may be in mourning.
- h. John was His second cousin (though he could be more of a distant relative).
- i. John's death could be a reminder of what He knows is coming for Him.
- j. The text literally reads: "When Jesus heard about... he withdrew..." Some translations add "it." Direct objects were often omitted in Greek but implied. Some translations say, "Heard about John..." "About John" is added.
- k. The NIV SB says: *what had happened. Probably refers to vv. 1–2, namely, Herod's response to reports about Jesus. withdrew ... to a solitary place. To avoid the threat of Herod and the pressing of the crowds. Jesus' time had not yet come (see Jn 2:4 and note; cf. Jn 6:15).*²⁰
- l. Notice verse 14: Jesus is healing them.
- m. Jesus has compassion on them and then heals them.

I like what R.C. Sproul writes about the eighteenth-century enlightenment and 3 VERY liberal explanations for this miracle:

The eighteenth-century movement known as the Enlightenment changed the course of Western civilization forever. It did so by, among other things, spawning a school of philosophy known as naturalism. As the word suggests, naturalism holds that nothing exists beyond what is found in nature. There is no transcendent realm, nothing that is supernatural or beyond nature.

Obviously, this new philosophy presented a crisis for the Christian church, because historical Christianity is tethered to the supernatural. If naturalism is true, then all of the supernaturalism found in sacred Scripture must be discarded—and Christianity along with it. Some indeed abandoned the faith. Others, however, attempted to read the Bible through the lens of naturalism and thus salvage some meaning and significance for the church. This desperate effort to reconstruct Christianity gave birth to nineteenth-century theological liberalism, which originated in Germany and spread throughout the rest of Western Europe, and eventually across the sea to America.

vv. verses (in the chapter being commented on)

cf. compare, confer

²⁰ Kenneth L. Barker, ed., [NIV Study Bible](#), Fully Revised Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 1668.

One of the primary concerns of the liberals was to reexamine the miracles of Jesus, those supernatural works He performed. Because they hoped to preserve some vestige of Christianity in the face of naturalism, they did not simply dismiss the miracles. Rather, they treated them as myths that had some basis in reality. However, they believed that basis could not be gleaned just from reading the text of Scripture.

For example, some of the more militant of the nineteenth-century liberals studied the passage we are examining in this chapter, which recounts Jesus' miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, and gave it a natural explanation. They said that the deserted place to which Jesus retreated after learning of the death of John the Baptist was pockmarked with caves. In one of these caves, the disciples had hidden a cache of bread and fish well in advance. When the people became hungry, Jesus stood in front of the hidden entrance of the cave, and the disciples secretly passed bread and fish to Him through the back of His robe, which He then dispersed out of His flowing sleeves, making it appear that He was creating the bread and fish in His hands. This explanation of the miracle, of course, reduced the feeding of the five thousand to unscrupulous fraud.

Others proposed less literal interpretations. When I was growing up in Pittsburgh, the minister of my church once told the youth group that what really happened on this occasion was that some of the people came prepared with food but that others brought none. Those who had brought food for themselves did not want to share with those who had been negligent. So, Jesus called on anyone there who had food and was willing to share it to come forward, and a little boy came up and offered to share his loaves and fishes. This generosity shamed the people who were hoarding their food. Thus, Jesus was able to persuade the "haves" to share with the "have-nots." My minister called this an ethical miracle.

Others have suggested that Jesus was preparing people for the institution of the Lord's Supper and its perpetual celebration by breaking the bread that He had into tiny bits that He then passed around to the multitude, just as we distribute the elements when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. However, it still seems miraculous that Jesus could have been able to break five loaves into enough bits to give one to each of the five thousand men who were there, plus the women and children, which meant that the crowd probably numbered well over ten thousand people. It would take a lot of bits to satisfy so many people, not to mention filling twelve baskets with leftovers.

When we consider these attempts to reconcile Christianity and naturalism, what we see are people bending over backward so far that they break their necks. So these supposed explanations are nothing other than sheer, unadulterated dishonesty. Going even further, Emil Brunner, the Swiss theologian of the twentieth century, wrote a book titled *Der Mittler* (*The Mediator*), in which he asserted that nineteenth-century liberalism and its successor movements are nothing other than unbelief. I believe Brunner was correct. I have much more respect for the skeptic than for someone who twists and distorts the Word of God to try to make it accommodate an incompatible philosophical system.²¹

²¹ Robert Charles Sproul, [Matthew](#), St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 455–457.

- n. The scarcity of food (Matthew 14:15–17): A quick check reveals only five small loaves of bread and two fish are available for the hungry crowd.
- o. I believe John’s account in John 6:1-14 the only Gospel account that mentions the boy.
- p. Sproul: *John adds the detail that it was Andrew who located this meager amount, which belonged to a boy, but he could not help asking, “What are they among so many?” (6:8–9).*²²
- q. The feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle besides the resurrection reported in all 4 Gospels.
- r. Sproul shares: *In a way, the disciples also were being compassionate; they were worried as to how the people would find food if they remained with Jesus in the deserted place too late into the evening. So, they gently suggested that He send them off to buy food in the nearby villages.*²³
- s. I love the pointedness of Jesus in verse 16. They don’t need to go away. You give them something to eat.
- t. Someone said, “Believing Jesus can’t do a miracle is like believing Tolstoy can write War and Peace and not move a comma.”
- u. The disciples had seen many miracles by now. Jesus was healing people just a few verses previously. Jesus had already cast out demons and healed many people.
- v. In verse 17 they take inventory on what they have.
- w. Jesus has them bring the five loaves and 2 fish.
- x. In verse 19: Jesus orders them to sit down.
- y. Jesus prays over the food, breaks it, gives them to the disciples to distribute.
- z. Verse 20: they all ate, and they were satisfied. The disciples pick up the leftovers. There were 12 full baskets of leftovers!
- aa. The surplus of food (Matthew 14:18–21): After all have eaten their fill, twelve basketfuls are left over!
- bb. J. D. Greear writes: *Think of the feeding of the 5,000, for instance. I remember hearing a scientist speculate on just how much power it would take to generate the matter to create the food necessary to feed the 5,000. Remember, Jesus created that food out of thin air. The scientist assumed each person ate eight ounces of food, and, using Einstein’s infamous matter to energy formula ($E=mc^2$), he concluded that the amount of energy necessary to create that much matter would be equivalent to all the electrical power available on earth, working at 100 percent output, 100 percent of the time.*
- cc. *For four straight years.*
- dd. *And Jesus did it without breaking a sweat.*²⁴
- ee. About 5000 men ate

²² Robert Charles Sproul, [Matthew](#), St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 458.

²³ Robert Charles Sproul, [Matthew](#), St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 458.

²⁴ <https://jdgrear.com/vision-jesus-need-life-tough/>

- ff. Additionally, there were women and children.
- gg. ESV SB: *The scene recalls the nation of Israel wandering in the wilderness after the exodus, and God's gracious provision of manna for his people. The explicit mention of **twelve baskets** left over may symbolize the 12 tribes of Israel as well as the abundance of God's provision. **They all ate and were satisfied** may also be a prefiguring of the messianic banquet in the kingdom at the end of the age (cf. 8:11).*²⁵
- hh. *Staple foods of bread and dried or pickled fish, ideal for short journeys into the hills. The loaves were small cakes sufficient for one person's afternoon meal.*²⁶
- ii. CSB: **The loaves were the size of dinner rolls.** *John's description of the fish (Gk opsarion) indicates that they were either dried or pickled (Jn 6:9). He also identified the loaves as made of barley, the food of the poor. He implied that the loaves and fish were small since they were sufficient for only one boy's lunch.*²⁷
- jj. *John's Gospel shows that many bystanders compared Jesus's miracles to God's provision of manna in the wilderness (Jn 6:22–33). The miracle also closely resembles a miracle of Elisha (2Kg 4:42–44)*²⁸
- kk. Witherington III: *The First Evangelist leaves out the idea that Jesus told the disciples to make them sit down in groups of hundreds and fifties, presumably sharpening the focus on Jesus himself as in charge here. It is interesting that he leaves out this possible Old Testament allusion. The arranging of the crowd in groups of fifties and hundreds mentioned in the Markan version of the story echoes Exodus 18:25 (Num 31:14) where Israel is arranged in groups of one thousand, five hundred, one hundred, and ten under their respective leaders. It is right to note that these same Old Testament texts were taken as a model for the eschatological groupings of Qumranites, and specifically in 1Qsa 2.11–22 it is seen as a blueprint for the messianic banquet. Now this omission of an echo of a Mosaic story is passing strange if it was really true that the First Evangelist wanted to stress that Jesus was like Moses.*²⁹

IV. Jesus walks on water (Matthew 14:22-33)

Matthew 14:23–33 (NASB95)

23 After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

²⁵ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1851.

²⁶ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1851.

Gk Greek

²⁷ Charles L. Quarles, ["Matthew,"](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1525.

²⁸ Charles L. Quarles, ["Matthew,"](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1525.

²⁹ Ben Witherington III, [Matthew](#), ed. P. Keith Gammons and R. Alan Culpepper, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2006), 287–288.

24 But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.

26 When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.

27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

28 Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

29 And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

30 But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

31 Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and *said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

32 When they got into the boat, the wind stopped.

33 And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

- a. Events preceding his walk (Matthew 14:22–24)
- b. The command (Matthew 14:22): Jesus instructs his disciples to cross to the other side of the lake.
- c. Notice the gospel uses the word "immediately."
- d. Verse 23 shares that Jesus is alone in prayer.
- e. Just think about that.
- f. Jesus was likely eager to have His own time.
- g. Then verse 24 shares that the boat is a long distance from the land, battered by the waves...
- h. "for" the wind was contrary.
- i. NET: Grk "*The boat was already many stades from the land.*" A stade (στάδιον, stadion) was a unit of distance about 607 feet (187 meters) long.³⁰
- j. The Sea of Galilee is about eight miles wide at its widest point.³¹
- k. The crisis (Matthew 14:24): A violent storm suddenly threatens the disciples' boat.
- l. In the middle of the night, Jesus comes to the disciples, walking on the water.
- m. About verse 25, the CSB shares: **Very early in the morning** is literally "during the fourth watch of the night." The Romans divided the period from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00

³⁰ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Mt 14:23–24.

³¹ Charles L. Quarles, "[Matthew](#)," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1525.
p.m. from noon until midnight

a.m. into four watches of three hours each. **Thus the fourth watch lasted from 3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.**³²

- n. The alarm (Matthew 14:26): The disciples are terrified, thinking Jesus is a ghost!
- o. IVP BBC: *Belief in ghosts or disembodied spirits was common on a popular level in antiquity, even though the idea of ghosts contradicted popular Jewish teachings about the resurrection from the dead.*³³
- p. ESV SB: **Ghost** represents *phantasma*, a Greek term for spirit appearances or apparitions. The disciples may have thought an evil spirit was trying to deceive them.³⁴
- q. Different Greek word for “Ghost” than the word for “Holy Spirit” when translated as “ghost.” This word means more of an apparition.
- r. Interesting that in Mark 6:48 it says that Jesus was intending to pass by them.
- s. Mitch Glaser writes:
 - i. So what’s going on with this action of passing by the disciples?
 - ii. The description is an allusion. In the Old Testament, when God “passes by,” he is revealing glory.
 - iii. In the story of Moses and the mountain in Exodus 33–34, God promises to “pass by” Moses. The request was, “Please show me your glory” (Exod. 33:18), and God’s response was, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name...” (33:19). God told Moses, “I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by” (33:22). Then, in Exodus 34:6, “The LORD passed before him...”
 - iv. Think now of Elijah. While Elijah was on Mount Horeb (also known as Sinai—the same mountain where Moses was in Exod. 33–34), “...the LORD passed by...” (1 Kgs. 19:11). The mountain and action are identical to the experience of Moses, where the Lord passed by Moses and now Elijah.
 - v. This Old Testament background should inform the way we understand Mark’s statement that Jesus “meant to pass by them” (Mark 6:48). Walking on water was a revelation of glory, of deity, of identity. The God of Moses is the God of Elijah, and this God is upon the Sea of Galilee.
 - vi. Consider these references in the book of Job and Psalms:
 - vii. In Job 9:8, God is the one “who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea.”
 - viii. In Job 9:11, the Lord “passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him.”
 - ix. In Psalm 77:19, “Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen.”
 - x. Jesus walks on water, and this action reveals his deity. According to Mark 6:48, Jesus “meant to pass by them.” In the Old Testament, God is the one who subdues the

a.m. from midnight until noon

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³² Charles L. Quarles, [“Matthew,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1525.

³³ Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Mt 14:26.

³⁴ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1852.

waters and treads the waves. That poetic language in the Old Testament takes on a physical sense in the New Testament. The Word became flesh, and the Word walked upon the water.³⁵

- t. The assurance (Matthew 14:27): Jesus tells them who he is.
- u. Some translations say “be of good cheer; it is I.”
- v. Sproul writes:
 - w. *Why did He say “Be of good cheer”? Friedrich Nietzsche was one of the giants of philosophy in the nineteenth century. He was contemptuous of nineteenth-century Europe, for he thought Christianity had made Western culture weak and fearful. He said the world’s only hope was the emergence of the übermensch, the superman. The übermensch would build his house defiantly on the slopes of Vesuvius and sail his ship into uncharted waters, for his major quality would be what Nietzsche called “dialectical courage.” That was a fancy way of speaking of absurd, irrational, or illogical courage. With this courage, the übermensch would defy the meaninglessness of life. So, Nietzsche’s message was basically this: life is meaningless, but be of good cheer anyway.*
 - x. *Jesus did not ask His disciples to defy meaninglessness, to take a blind leap of faith. He said, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b). As He walked toward the disciples in their boat, they could see that He was no ordinary man. They could see that the supernatural is real. They could see that there is a God. Therefore, life is not meaningless.*
 - y. *Perhaps the best news for the disciples was hearing Jesus’ own voice say, “It is I.” But this little statement is packed with meaning. One of the fascinating features of the Gospel of John is his record of Jesus’ “I am” statements. Jesus repeatedly crafted metaphors for Himself: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6), “I am the vine, you are the branches” (15:5), “I am the good shepherd” (10:11, 14), “I am the door” (10:9), “I am the bread of life” (6:48), and so on. Each time Jesus said “I am,” He used a unique combination of Greek words, egō eimi. Both the word ego and the word eimi mean “I am,” so it was as if Jesus were saying, “I am, I am.” However, this same combination of words, egō eimi, was used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, to render the ineffable name of God, “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex. 3:14). Thus, every time Jesus said, “I am,” He was equating Himself with God. Ego eimi is rarely found outside of John’s Gospel, but here it is in Matthew as Jesus said, “It is I.” I am sure the disciples noticed this and were comforted by it.³⁶*
- z. Dr Rydelnic:
 - aa. “I am” exact same phrase as Ex 3:6 and Ex 3:14 for I am in the LXX.
 - bb. It can also be translated “It is I.” But it is profound that the Messiah walking on water would say that.
 - cc. Likely allusion to Ex 3:6 and Ex 3:14³⁷

³⁵ <https://mitchchase.substack.com/p/he-meant-to-pass-by-them>

³⁶ Robert Charles Sproul, [Matthew](#), St. Andrew’s Expositional Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 464–465.

³⁷ Open Line; 07.17.2023

- dd. The attempt (Matthew 14:28–31): Peter tries to walk to Jesus but soon begins to sink and cries out for help.
- ee. This is only in Matthew’s gospel.
- ff. IVP BBC: *Despite Peter’s failure to follow through, by beginning to walk on water he had done something that not even the greatest prophets of the Old Testament had done. Walking on water might remind readers of Israel passing through the Red Sea or the Jordan but was a greater miracle. (In one story told by the rabbis—we cannot determine whether it is as early as Jesus’ time—the first Israelite to cross the Red Sea began to sink in the waves but was rescued by Moses’ rod, which divided the sea.) For Jesus’ rescue, cf. Psalm 18:16 and 144:7.*³⁸
- gg. Verse 31 uses the word “immediately” again as Jesus pulls Peter up.
- hh. Think of the picture.
- ii. Jesus walks on water.
- jj. Peter walks on water.
- kk. This is during a storm. Peter sees the wind, and I am sure he saw the waves, etc.
- ll. Jesus gives him a name, “little faith.”
- mm. Witherington III: *Notice the parallels between this story and the stilling of the storm in Matthew 8, where the cry for rescue in both stories is identical—“Lord, save.” Peter here, like all the disciples in Matthew 8:26, is said to be of little faith. The verb often translated “doubt,” diastazein, is found in the New Testament only here and at Matthew 28:17 in the post-Easter appearance story. It literally means to be of a divided mind. This was precisely Peter’s difficulty. He had some faith, but he also had fears. Concentration and single-mindedness and trust in Jesus are required. In this case, Peter needed to keep his eyes on Jesus and not focus on the frightening wind and waters. Real faith requires real concentration and not focusing on the difficulties. But when one is sinking and there seems to be no remedy, as Hagner says, “In the moment of most dire human need, there is but one cry, just as there is but one source of salvation.”*^{16,39}
- nn. This may be more tender, and more compassionate than we think.
- oo. The awe (Matthew 14:32–33): At Jesus’ command, the wind stops, causing the disciples to worship him.
- pp. They realize that He certainly is God’s Son (verse 33).
- qq. *The wind ceased. Swindoll thinks this was immediate, like a slick forming on the water*

³⁸ Craig S. Keener, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Mt 14:28–32.

¹⁶ D. Hagner, 424.

³⁹ Ben Witherington III, [*Matthew*](#), ed. P. Keith Gammons and R. Alan Culpepper, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2006), 293.

rr. Mark 6:51-52 Mark tells us that they had hard hearts and did not gain any insight from the loaves and fish. Swindoll says they should have because now the food is likely all over them. This is since they had throwing up the food in the storm (imagination).⁴⁰

ss. Swindoll continues:

- 1) There are nights we feel alone, but we are not.
- 2) There are huge storms that seem like they never end, but they will. Remember no storm strikes us that God does not approve. Habbakuk thought through this. He was asking the Lord how He could use the Assyrians. The Lord said to him "If I told you, you would not believe." Habakkuk said, "Tell me and I will believe." The Lord tells him and he does not believe it.
- 3) There are flashes of faith believe will last but they do not.
- 4) There are dreadful moments we think we will sink and drown but we won't.

The Lord plans the depth of the test, but also the length of it.

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation.

Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window.

The man in the other bed began to live for those one hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside.

The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every color and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance.

As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene.

One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by.

⁴⁰ Insight for Living

Although the other man couldn't hear the band — he could see it. In his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

Days and weeks passed.

One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.

As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.

Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside.

He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed.

It faced a blank wall. The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window

The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall.

She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."⁴¹

Sometimes we envy others... We think they have the colorful side of life.⁴²

V. More people are healed (Matthew 14:34-36).

Matthew 14:34–36 (NASB95)

34 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.

35 And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent word into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick;

36 and they implored Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were cured.

a. Jesus is now on the other side of the lake.

b. He is recognized.

⁴¹ <https://medium.com/motivationapp/hospital-window-6c0efe03a31>

⁴² Insight for Living; 07.06.2021

- c. ESV SB: *There is no record of any prior ministry by Jesus in Gennesaret, but its people had certainly heard about him, knowing that even touching the **fringe of his garment** could bring healing.*⁴³
- d. They spread the word.
- e. Jesus heals many sick people on the eastern side of the lake.⁴⁴
- f. IVP BBC: *The “fringe” of Jesus’ garment no doubt refers to the tassels he wore as an observant Jew; see comment on 9:20; cf. 23:5. Ancient literature commonly includes not only longer narrative segments but also summary statements like this passage (cf. 4:23–25). Gennesaret was a plain on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.*⁴⁵

⁴³ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1852.

⁴⁴ The outline is adapted from: H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Mt 14:34–36.

⁴⁵ Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Mt 14:34–36.