

Matthew 14

by John Nelson Darby

In Matthew 14, Jesus demonstrates His compassion and divine authority through the feeding of the 5000 and His miraculous walking on water, teaching the importance of faith amidst trials.

Scripture: Matthew 14:1

Topics: "Faith in Trials", "Divine Provision"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the events in Matthew 14, focusing on the tragic beheading of John the Baptist by Herod, which illustrates the rejection of God's testimony. Jesus, moved by compassion, performs miracles, including the feeding of the 5,000, demonstrating His divine provision and the importance of faith in His power. The sermon emphasizes the disciples' struggle to recognize and utilize the power of Christ, especially during trials, as depicted in Peter's attempt to walk on water. Darby highlights the necessity of keeping faith in Jesus amidst life's storms, as He is the source of strength and sustenance. Ultimately, the message conveys that true faith allows believers to overcome challenges and remain close to Christ, who will return to restore and bless His people.

Transcript

Our Gospel resumes the historical course of these revelations, but in such a manner as to exhibit the spirit by which the people were animated. Herod (loving his earthly power and his own glory more than submission to the testimony of God, and more bound by a false human idea than by his conscience, although in many things he appears to have owned the power of the truth) had cut off the head of the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist; whom he had already imprisoned, in order to remove out of the sight of his wife the faithful reprover of the sin in which she lived.

Jesus is sensible of the import of this, which is reported to Him. Accomplishing in lowly service (however personally exalted above him), together with John, the testimony of God in the congregation, He felt Himself united in heart and in His work to him; for faithfulness in the midst of all evil binds hearts very closely together; and Jesus had condescended to take a place in which faithfulness was concerned (see Psalms 40, 9, 10). On hearing therefore of John's death He retires into a desert place. But while departing from the multitude who thus began to act openly in the rejection of the testimony of God, He does not cease to be the supplier of all their wants, and to testify thus that He who could divinely minister to all their need was amongst them. For the multitude, who felt these wants and who, if they had not faith, yet admired the power of Jesus, follow Him into the desert place; and Jesus, moved with compassion, heals

all their sick. In the evening His disciples beg Him to send the multitude away that they may procure food. He refuses and bears a remarkable testimony to the presence, in His own Person, of Him who was to satisfy the poor of His people with bread (Psalms 132). Jehovah, the Lord, who established the throne of David, was there in the Person of Him who should inherit that throne. I doubt not the twelve baskets of fragments refer to the number which, in scripture, always designates the perfection of administrative power in man.

Remark also here, that the Lord expects to find His twelve disciples capable of being the instruments of His acts of blessing and power, administering according to His own power the blessings of the kingdom. "Give ye them," said He, "to eat." This applies to the blessing of the Lord's kingdom, and to the disciples of Jesus, the twelve, as being its ministers; but it is likewise an all-important principle with regard to the effect of faith in every intervention of God in grace. Faith should be able to use the power that acts in such intervention, to produce the works which are proper to that power, according to the order of the dispensation and the intelligence it has respecting it. We shall find this principle again elsewhere more fully developed.

The disciples wished to send the multitude away, not knowing how to use the power of Christ. They should have been able to avail themselves of it in Israel's behalf, according to the glory of Him who was among them.

If now the Lord demonstrated with perfect patience by His actions that He who could thus bless Israel was in the midst of His people, He does not the less bear testimony to His separation from that people in consequence of their unbelief. He makes His disciples get into a ship to cross the sea alone; and, dismissing the multitude Himself, He goes up into a mountain apart to pray; while the ship that contained the disciples was tossing on the waves of the sea with a contrary wind: a living picture of that which has taken place.

God has indeed sent forth His people to cross the stormy sea of the world alone, meeting with an opposition against which it is hard to strive. Meanwhile Jesus prays alone on high. He has sent away the Jewish people, who had surrounded Him during the period of His presence here below. The departure of the disciples, besides its general character, sets before us peculiarly the Jewish remnant. Peter individually, in coming out of the ship, goes in figure beyond the position of this remnant.

He represents that faith which, forsaking the earthly accommodation of the ship, goes out to meet Jesus who has revealed Himself to it, and walks upon the sea—a bold undertaking, but based on the word of Jesus, "Come." Yet remark here that this walk has no other foundation than, "If it be Thou," that is to say, Jesus Himself. There is no support, no possibility of walking, if Christ be lost sight of. All depends on Him. There is a known means in the ship; there is nothing but faith, which looks to Jesus, for walking on the water.

Man, as mere man, sinks by the very fact of being there. Nothing can sustain itself except that faith which draws from Jesus the strength that is in Him, and which therefore imitates Him. But it is sweet to imitate Him; and one is then nearer to Him, more like Him. This is the true position of the church, in contrast with the remnant in their ordinary character. Jesus walks on the water as on the solid ground. He who created the elements as they are could well dispose of their qualities at His pleasure.

He permits storms to arise for the trial of our faith. He walks on the stormy wave as well as on the calm. Moreover the storm makes no difference. He who sinks in the waters does so in the calm as well as in the

storm, and he who can walk upon them will do so in the storm as well as in the calm-that is to say, unless circumstances are looked to and so faith fail, and the Lord is forgotten. For often circumstances make us forget Him where faith ought to enable us to overcome circumstances through our walking by faith in Him who is above them all.

Nevertheless, blessed be God! He who walks in His own power upon the water is there to sustain the faith and the wavering steps of the poor disciple; and at any rate that faith had brought Peter so near to Jesus that His outstretched hand could sustain him. Peter's fault was that he looked at the waves, at the storm (which, after all, had nothing to do with it), instead of looking at Jesus, who was unchanged, and who was walking on those very waves, as his faith should have observed.

Still the cry of his distress brought the power of Jesus into action, as his faith ought to have done; only it was now to his shame, instead of being in the enjoyment of communion and walking like the Lord.

Jesus having entered the ship, the wind ceases. Even so it will be when Jesus returns to the remnant of His people in this world. Then also will He be worshipped as the Son of God by all that are in the ship, with the remnant of Israel. In Gennesaret Jesus again exercises the power which shall here after drive out from the earth all the evil that Satan has brought in. For when He returns, the world will recognise Him. It is a fine picture of the result of Christ's rejection, which this Gospel has already made known to us as taking place in the midst of the Jewish nation.

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