

## ***Jesus' authority over creation***

### **Matthew 13 v 53 to 14 v 36**

#### ***Jesus rejected at Nazareth (Matthew 13 v 53 to 58)***

- Why were the people at Nazareth so sceptical about Jesus teaching? What do these verses tell us about Jesus' childhood and adolescence?

#### ***The death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14 v 1 to 12)***

Background: there are four Herods we need to note:

- (1) Herod the Great, who slaughtered the children in Bethlehem (Matthew 2 v 16);
- (2) Herod Antipas, his younger son (not really a king but a tetrarch, ruling over a quarter of the kingdom), who had John the Baptist executed and before whom Jesus stood trial (Luke 23 v 6 to 8);
- (3) Herod Agrippa I, Herod the Great's grandson, who killed James, imprisoned Peter, and then died a gruesome death (Acts 12); and
- (4) Herod Agrippa II, Herod the Great's great-grandson, before whom Paul stood trial (Acts 25 v 13).

The Herods were Edomites (i.e. not really Jews), and puppet-kings, as the real political ruler was the Emperor of Rome...

- What does this story tell us about the character and values of Herod Antipas? How is he like many politicians today? What does the story tell us about John the Baptist?

#### ***Jesus feeds the five thousand (Matthew 14 v 13 to 21)***

- What differences are there between Jesus' approach to the crowd and that of the disciples? Do you think exhaustion and fatigue blunted their desire to care for others? Is the same true of us?

Both Jesus and the disciples were aware of the crowds and their needs; yet it is Jesus' compassion and awareness of God's power that lead him to feed the crowds. "You give them something to eat" (v 16) – here Jesus challenges both the compassion and faith of the disciples. "He looked up to heaven and said a blessing" (v 19) – Jesus thanked his Father for the food he did have.

He may have prayed the familiar Jewish prayer before a meal: "*Baruch atta, Adonai Eloheinu, Melek ha'olam, hammotzi lechem min ha'aretz*" (Blessed art thou, O LORD our God, eternal King, who bringest forth bread from the earth). This miracle displays Jesus' complete authority over creation – it goes far beyond what can be expected of even a Spirit-filled person. We too can trust God's unlimited resources...

#### ***Jesus walks on the water (Matthew 14 v 24 to 33)***

- How is this story a wonderful picture of 'walking by faith' and keeping our eyes on Jesus? See also Psalm 25 v 15. At what point did Peter cry out to the Lord to save him (v 30), and what had caused this moment of crisis? How did Jesus help Peter? What can we learn from this incident?

***[MORE OVER...]***

### ***Jesus heals the sick in Gennesaret (Matthew 14 v 34 to 36)***

- How does this episode display Jesus' authority over sickness? Notice how Jesus' healing ministry extended to "all who were sick" (v 35), but what act of faith did each person have to perform in order to be healed (v 36)? In the ancient Middle East the 'fringe' or 'hem' of a garment denoted the rank or authority of the person wearing it (recall the healing of the woman in Matthew 9 v 20, 21).

Hebrew hermeneutics included *peshat* (plain meaning); *derash* (comparative meaning); and *remez* (hidden allegoric, symbolic meaning): is there a '*remez*' dimension to Matthew's account of the events in this chapter?

Herod is a usurper, living in open adultery, who executes a prophet at the request of a woman (see Revelation 18 v 24).

The death of John marks the closing of the Old Testament era. Next, crowds are fed in the wilderness and 12 baskets are left over (very Jewish symbols).

Then Jesus deliberately puts the disciples in a boat in the middle of the sea. Boats represent the one great boat, the Ark, and the sea represents Gentile nations (Daniel 7). Jesus is on a mountain, which represents God's rule (Daniel 2), interceding for a boat in a stormy sea. Peter is 'called out' (*ekklesia*) and represents the Church – when focused on Jesus he is fine, but when he takes his eyes off the Lord he begins to sink...