

23. What is your point of view regarding Jesus?

1/4/2004

What we are about to study today is like watching a Jerry Springer show. It riddled with adultery, incest, jealousy, murder, violence, political fight and all the other garbage to go with. Herod has his point of view regarding Christ. Then we'll find ourselves looking at the people who got fed by Jesus and yet they were coming up with a completely different view of Jesus. Finally, we will see Peter and the disciples looking Jesus with another point of view.

A. FROM THE VIEW OF SUPERSTITIOUS EYES

Matthew 14:1-2 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him."

Do you remember John the Baptist cried out repentance of the people of Israel and the coming Messiah? He is the original hippie with a camel fur coat and wide belt around his waist. And he is the one who ate locusts for pure protein and honey. John the Baptist is the one who actually started Atkins diet, eating no carb, just protein.

Matthew 14:3-5 For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

Herodias was a niece of Herod and a wife of his half brother Philip. While he was visiting Rome, he seduced Herodias, Herod divorced his own wife and married her. John the Baptist rebuked the king for his adultery.

Herod is like many people today, especially politicians. They fear the opinion of the multitude before fearing God.

Matthew 14:6-12 But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, "Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter." And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

The request of Herodias shows that she had this planned out all along. She knew her husband and she knew what a pervert he was to look at his own step-daughter Salome with lustful eyes, and knew she could get what she wanted this way.

Even though Herod promised a half of his kingdom to Salome, he couldn't keep his promise anyway. Because he was nothing more than a puppet of the Roman government, and he had no authority to compromise any of his territory. He just wanted to impress others.

As we just have read, Herod is looking at Jesus with his superstitious eyes. To Herod, Jesus is nothing more than a somebody who can do a few nifty magic tricks.

When the disciples of John heard the news, they came to tell Jesus about it. When the difficult times hit us, we don't know what to do because of the overwhelming circumstances, that is a good time to tell Jesus about it. He is our Wonderful Counselor and the Good Shepherd. He may not tell you the reason why you are going through, but He will be there with you every moment.

B. HEAVENLY CATERING SERVICE

Matthew 14:13-14 When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

I am sure that Jesus felt a grief for His cousin John the Baptist's death.

The word translated "moved with compassion" literally means "to have one's inner being stirred." It is stronger than sympathy.

Matthew 14:15-21 When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Before Jesus fed 5000 plus, total of close to 20000 people, He gave a test to His disciples. According to the Book of John, Philip flunked the test right away. Andrew almost made it, but at the last moment, he also flunked, because they didn't realize whom they were talking to. Andrew could say, "We only have so little, but you could make them into the amount to feed all these people or even provide us something we have never tasted yet. Like Big Mac or Chili Dog or Enchilada." But they didn't.

Just like these disciples, how often do we think God is nothing more than a person like us with a limited resources and capabilities. Our unbelief of God's power makes Him to withheld His power back from blessing us more than we can possibly imagine.

Why is that Jesus didn't just create a heavenly catering service completed with Chuck Wagons coming down from heaven to feed these people? Why did He use five loaves of bread and two fish? He wanted us to see that God wants our participation in what He does. Even though He doesn't need us, He wants us to bring your bread and my fish to Him, so that He can bless us in the process of His miracle.

I'd like to make four points from this miracle of Jesus:

1) Start with what we have

Andrew found a young boy who had a small lunch, and he brought the boy to Jesus. Was the boy willing to give up his lunch? Yes, he was! God begins where we are and uses what we have.

2) Give what we have to Jesus

Jesus took the simple lunch, blessed it, and shared it. The miracle of multiplication was in His hands! Little is much if God is in it. Jesus broke the bread and gave the pieces to the disciples, and they, in turn, fed the multitudes.

3) Obey what He commands

The disciples had the people sit down as Jesus ordered. They took the broken pieces and distributed them, and discovered that there was plenty for everybody. As His servants, we are "distributors," not "manufacturers." We are His channels of blessing to others.

4) Conserve the results

There were twelve baskets filled with pieces of bread and fish after the people had eaten all they wanted. But these pieces were carefully collected so that nothing was wasted. Each basket for each disciples as a reminder of God's power.

In other Gospels, the multitude wanted to make Jesus as their king by force, so that they could eat without any problem. Their point of view regarding Jesus was nothing more than someone who would satisfy physical needs.

C. WALKING ON THE WATER

Matthew 14:22-23 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.

Throughout the four Gospels, we find Jesus intentionally spend His time in prayer to hear from the Father in heaven. If Jesus who is the Son of God, spent that much time in prayer, how much more do we need time in prayer? Remember, prayer is not a spiritual 911 call. It should be our daily conversation with our God.

Matthew 14:24-27 But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

Why did Jesus walk on water to get to His disciples? Was He showing off what He can do? Waltzing across the Sea of Galilee? No. What was the disciples afraid of? Even though they were experienced fishermen, they were afraid of being drowned in water. To show His disciples that Jesus as God and their Lord, was the Master over any nature, He walked on water.

He could have come over to them at the beginning of the storm, but He waited until there was absolutely no way for anyone could do anything to bail themselves out. This applies into our lives. Yes, God can bail us out of trials and tests of our lives anytime He wants. But He waits until we have absolutely no way to turn other than Him. Then He steps in. In that way, no one can take credit other than our God.

When Jesus was walking on the water, why didn't the disciples recognize Him as their Lord Jesus? Because they were not looking for Jesus. Their thoughts were preoccupied with something other than Jesus.

This applies to us as well. Many people tell me that they don't hear from God. What is the reason? Because they are expecting something else that would meet their expectations, such as a booming voice from heaven, an instruction written on the sky, an angel sent by God to tell them what to do, etc. God speaks through the Word of God, the Bible. God speaks to us through godly advices from godly people. We choose not to hear Him, because He doesn't speak to us in the way we expect as the disciples didn't recognize him as Jesus, because they didn't expect Him.

Matthew 14:28-29 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

How could Peter walk on water? He was not walking on the surface of the water, but he was walking on the Word of Jesus in faith. The one word "Come" off the mouth of Jesus was literally supporting the weight of Peter.

Matthew 14:30-33 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Often many Bible teachers only talk bad about Peter sinking into water. But he was the only human who had ever walked on water. Obviously, he is better than me. When the difficulties of our lives - I am sure that you can fill what those difficulties in your lives - make such a boisterous storm around us, it is not that difficult to take our eyes off our Master Jesus and look at the situation. The problem with that is the situation goes from bad to worse. Why? Because our faith in God gets out of the equation. Like in Peter's case, as his doubt steps into his mind, the faith steps out. They are mutually exclusive and cannot co-exist.

This word translated 'doubt' carries the meaning of "standing uncertainly at two ways." Peter started out with great faith but ended up with little faith, because he saw two ways instead of one.

What was the motive of Peter walking on the water? Was it to show off to his buddies? Maybe. I'd rather think that Peter wanted to be close to Jesus. That is why he did what no other human could.

Now, the disciples of Jesus have a new point of view regarding Jesus: "Truly You are the Son of God." That is the right point of view.

D. THE PEOPLE WHO BELIEVED IN JESUS

Matthew 14:34-36 When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well.

In last chapter 13, we ended our study with the people of Nazareth, Jesus' home town, would not believe in Him, because they thought they knew Jesus. Their unbelief costed them God's miracles in their lives.

Contrary to their unbelief, the people around Gennesaret came with faith in Him. Guess what happened to them? Everyone who came to Him in faith got healed and received His miracles.

Their point of view regarding Jesus brought many blessings in their lives from Jesus.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Start with what we have to offer to God.

If we come to Him with a sincere heart to be used by God, He will multiply and improve what we offer to Him for His glory. While He is using our sacrifices, we are the ones who actually get blessed by Him.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

2) Simple obedience to God goes in a long way.

While twelve disciples were carrying loaves of bread and fish, they were multiplying before their very own eyes, because they were obedient. In the same way, we are not to keep our gifts and resources from the Lord for ourselves only, but to use them for our God and for other people. You might say, "If I do that, I will be bankrupted." Test God, see what He does. He will bless your socks off.

3) What is your point of view regarding Jesus?

Is He a man who can do a few miracles to entertain your curiosity? Or is He someone who meets your physical need, but you don't want Him to tell you how to do and what to do with your life? Or is He your God who deserves to be worshiped?