

Lesson 17 Matthew 14 1-16 Jesus teaches disciples to take responsibility

The account of Jesus

Herod the tetrarch of Judea heard a report about Jesus just as Jesus honour was at a low ebb in the home territory of Galilee. Indeed Herod was convinced that Jesus was John risen again. His conscience was linked here to teaching which would have percolated down from the miraculous ministry of Jesus whose "mighty works" and of his disciples at this period. Acts of power (Matthew 11.5..."The dead are raised") Herod though-resurrection indeed. Herod jumped to his own conclusion-it was not that Jesus raised John but that Jesus was John.

The conscience of Herod

Herod had taken Philip's wife and when rebuked by John he imprisoned him and in a subterfuge Herodias-the very woman at the eye of this moral storm made bold to request John's decapitation when Herod compromised himself by making an unguarded promise. John was despatched cruelly and the rueful king was cast into despair and deep anxiety. Herod kept his promise but had no pleasure in the incident. No doubt he later had a flaming row with Herodias, and possibly on account of her intrigue and jealousy he blamed her for the whole affair. Nevertheless he was the King and he had a conscience-however it might have been salved by the involvement of others and weakened by compromise and imbibing.

The Disciples of John

John's disciples approached the palace and requested the torso of John and buried it. One gets the impression that these were men who deeply admired this leonine man whose courage never failed him. The greatest of all the prophets

The compassion of Jesus

The LORD on hearing the response in the south-both the stricken Herod and the report of the impact of the disciples' ministry-Jesus went to a desert place. It was a desolate or abandoned place. It was also a famous place (Greek τοπος)

As ever the LORD found it impossible to escape the crowds. The cities emptied into the desert. Scarce had his boat landed than he was surrounded by a myriad of people who needed Him. He was moved as we would say to the pit of His stomach. He felt he must sacrifice Himself and His privacy for these poor ones. He gave full attention and healing to all their sick. These "weak ones" were too weak to work or do any serving task. They must have been brought by various means right across the northern coast of the Lake.

Disciples shrug off responsibility

The evening wore on. The disciples were watching the evening sky with the westering sun. Their thoughts turned to home. They said, "Send these away now LORD" it is getting late. The hour when shops will be open is coming close. Let them go now and find bread or meat in the markets. That would release them to sail home in the quiet of a beautiful late afternoon.

Jesus said, "They have no need to leave" "You give them to eat"



From paper to practice

Did John the Baptist take his responsibilities as a national prophet seriously?

Herod had some sort of concern after despatching John-was this penitence?

Herodias had responsibilities to God Philip and John? What was her attitude?

Where is the evidence that John's disciples took their responsibilities seriously towards their master?