

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 13 & 14

Matthew 13:53-58 - No Place Like Home

v.55-56 - Brothers and sisters - **ESV Study Bible:** “His brothers and his sisters” (v. 55-56) refers to other children born to Joseph and Mary after the birth of Jesus. Some interpreters, seeking to defend a doctrine of the “perpetual virginity of Mary,” have suggested that these were cousins, or children of Joseph from another marriage, but no evidence in the Greek words *adelphoi* (“brothers”) and *adelphai* (“sisters”), or in any other historical information, gives support to that view. For Mary to have sexual relations with her husband, Joseph, and to bear children, would contribute to her holiness, not detract from it (cf. Gen. 1:28; 1 Cor. 7:3–5; 1 Tim. 5:14).”

James and Judas (aka Jude) become well known followers of their brother Jesus who contribute letters to the New Testament.

v.57 - they took offense at him - **why?**

Why do “hometown” and “household” settings often lead to this kind of attitude? It may be because of a knowledge of one’s flaws and sins of youth and awkward stages of life development that those closest to you see. When you arrive in a new place “full grown” all that that new place sees is you in your mature state.

Obviously Nazareth didn’t have to overcome the sins of Jesus’ youth but they seem to have a certain attitude/opinion towards Jesus’ family.

Some people waste a lot of time trying to convince a Nazareth-like crowd that they are wrong - but it seems like Jesus didn’t get caught up in that second rate assignment. On the other hand, it’s probably a good idea to not forever discount someone based on their worst moment and give grace to people we have known for a long time.

v. 58 - “**their unbelief**”

The town of Nazareth fostered an attitude to skepticism that spread through the community. As a result, he did not do many miracles there.

Are you and I extinguishing the faith in ourselves and/or others by the critical and skeptical attitude that we have? Are we encouraging faith or extinguishing faith? Complaining, grumbling and having a critical spirit are not only ugly and annoying, they resist the work of God that is possible when we have childlike faith. Don’t let life’s disappointments harden your heart. And don’t let your challenges and questions affect the faith of those around you.

We can encourage faith in each other or extinguish faith in each other. Which will we do today?

Matthew 14:1-2 - The Politics Of The Day

Herod The Great

Before we get into the story of John the Baptist I wanted to take some time to talk about the Herodian dynasty. Many of these figures show up often in the New Testament and how they are listed can be confusing at times but it's really helpful to understand the history and the figures involved.

Herod The Great lived from 72-4 BC and ruled from around 37-4 BC. He was appointed the ruler over Judea by the Roman Empire because of his family's good relationship with the Emperor. This occurred after the rule of the Hasmoneans/Maccabees which was an independent rule of the area by the Jewish people. The "Jewishness" of Herod The Great has been widely questioned. Apparently he adhered to some Jewish law but was very shrewd and politically motivated (rather than motivated by a desire to honor God).

Herod the Great is known for his many large scale building projects including the rebuilding and enlarging of the Temple in Jerusalem. Herod was the ruling king at the birth of Jesus and was the Herod who received the magi (Matthew 2). Knowing his familiarity with the Hebrew Scriptures helps make sense of his anxiety when asked by the magi about the birth of the "king of the Jews" a title that at the moment would have been applied to Herod The Great.

Herod was married to 10 women and had 15 children, a number of whom will appear in the New Testament.

FAMILY TREE

Herod The Tetrarch

Herod The Tetrarch is also known as Herod Antipas. He was a son of Herod the Great and Malthace, a Samaritan.

When Herod the Great, who ruled over the region of Judea, Samaria and more died, his kingdom was divided into four parts among his sister and three sons. Herod Antipas ruled from 4 BC to 39 AD and thus was ruling over Galilee and Perea during the time of Jesus and his disciples.

A "Tetrarch" is a ruler of a quarter of an area. Because Herod Antipas was one of the rulers of one of the 4 sections, he was known as Herod The Tetrarch (Matthew 14:1) as well as King Herod (Mark 6:14) which confuses things because that phrase is also used of his nephew Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12)

Herod Antipas was first married to a princess from Jordan and later divorced her to marry Herodias. Herodias was both Antipas' niece and the wife of his half-brother Herod Philip!

This controversy got the attention of the nation and specifically a prophet named John the Baptist who preached that Herod Antipas should not marry Herodias.

Matthew 14:3-12 serves as a flashback of sorts of events recorded by Matthew. Matthew 11:2 spoke of John being imprisoned and his questions about Jesus being the Messiah. By Matthew 14, John the Baptist has been killed, and Matthew tells the reader both why John was first imprisoned and now how he dies.

Matthew 14:1-5 - John Preaches Against Herod Antipas' Relationships

As news of Jesus spreads, word reaches Herod The Tetrarch (aka Herod Antipas) and his servants conclude that Jesus was actually John the Baptist risen from the dead. This would have caused a reaction in Herod Antipas because of the history he had with John.

Here is how Mark records this moment:

Mark 6:17-20 - For Herod (Antipas) himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so; 20 for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.

Historians record that Herodias began her relationships with Antipas while still married to Philip. Obviously this was strictly forbidden by God.

Leviticus 18:16 (NIV) - Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother.

Leviticus 20:21 (NIV) - If a man marries his brother's wife, it is an act of impurity; he has dishonored his brother. They will be childless.

Q - What do you think of all of this?!

Matthew 14:6-12 - John The Baptist Beheaded

Considering Mark's mention of Herodias' grudge, it makes sense that she was looking for an opportunity to destroy John, a man who had been preaching directly about her and her sin. Herod Antipas probably regrets his public vow to give Herodias' daughter anything she wanted.

John, in the spirit of all the great prophets, had been faithful to preach God's truth, no matter the reaction of the hearer. As a result, he lost his life. But he will be rewarded with honor and resurrection to eternal life in the age to come. Hebrews says it well in honor of the heroes of faith:

Hebrews 11:32-40 (NLT) - How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. 33 By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. 35 Women received their loved ones back again from death. But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection.

36 Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. 37 Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated.

38 They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. 39 All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. 40 For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.