

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 14

Ver. 1. *At that time Herod the tetrarch*, etc.] Not Herod the Great, in whose reign Christ was born, and who slew the infants of Bethlehem, but his son; this was, as the Jewish chronologer¹⁸²⁴ rightly observes,

“Herod Antipater, whom they call *yqrtyj*, “the tetrarch”; the son of Herod the First, and brother of Archelaus, and the third king of the family of Herod.”

And though he is here called a “tetrarch”, he is in (⁴⁰³⁴Mark 6:14) called a king: the reason of his being styled a “tetrarch” was this; his father Herod divided his large kingdom into four parts, and bequeathed them to his sons, which was confirmed by the Roman senate: Archelaus reigned in Judea in his stead; upon whose decease, that part was put under the care of a Roman governor; who, when John the Baptist began to preach, was Pontius Pilate; this same Herod here spoken of, being “tetrarch” of Galilee, which was the part assigned him; and his brother Philip “tetrarch” of Ituraea, and of the region of Trachonitis; and Lysanias, “tetrarch” of Abilene, (⁴⁰³⁵Luke 3:1) the word “tetrarch”: signifying one that has the “fourth” part of government: and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, he is called “one of the four princes”; and in the Arabic version, “a prince of the fourth part”; and in the Persic, a “governor of the fourth part of the kingdom”. The “time” referred to, was after the death of John the Baptist; and when Christ had been for a good while, and in many places, preaching and working miracles; the particular instant which respect is had unto, is the sending forth of the twelve disciples to preach and work miracles; and which might serve the more to spread the fame of Christ, and which reached the court of Herod; who, it is said here,

heard of the fame of Jesus: what a wonderful preacher he was, and what mighty things were done by him.

Ver. 2. *And said unto his servants*, etc.] Those of his household, his courtiers, with whom he more familiarly conversed; to these he expressed

his fears, that it might be true what was suggested by the people, and he was ready to believe it himself;

this is John the Baptist: some copies add, “whom I have beheaded”, as in (^{<4016>}Mark 6:16) the guilt of which action rose in his mind, lay heavy on him, and filled him with horror and a thousand fears:

he is risen from the dead; which if he was a Sadducee, as he is thought to be, by comparing (^{<4016>}Matthew 16:6) with (^{<4085>}Mark 8:15) was directly contrary to his former sentiments, and was extorted from him by his guilty conscience; who now fears, what before he did not believe; and what he fears, he affirms; concluding that John was raised from the dead, to give proof of his innocence, and to revenge his death on him:

and therefore mighty works do show themselves in him, or “are wrought by him”; for though he wrought no miracles in his lifetime, yet, according to a vulgar notion, that after death men are endued with a greater power, Herod thought this to be the case; or that he was possessed of greater power, on purpose to punish him for the murder of him; and that these miracles which were wrought by him, were convincing proofs of the truth of his resurrection, and of what he was able to do to him, and what he might righteously expect from him.

Ver. 3. *For Herod had laid hold on John*, etc.] By his servants, whom he sent to apprehend him:

and bound him; laid him in chains, as if he was a malefactor;

and put him in prison, in the castle of Machaerus ^{f825},

for Herodias's sake; who was angry with him, had a bitter quarrel against him, and by whose instigation all this was done; who was

his brother Philip's wife. This Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, son to Herod the Great ^{f826}, and brother to Philip, and to this Herod; so that she was niece to them both; and first married the one, and then the other, whilst the former was living. Philip and this Herod were both sons of Herod the Great, but not by the same woman; Philip was born of Cleopatra of Jerusalem, and Herod Antipas of Malthace, a Samaritan ^{f827}; so that Philip was his brother by his father's side, but not by his mother's; the Evangelist Mark adds, “for he had married her”: the case was this, Herod being sent for to Rome, called at his brother Philip's by the way, where he

fell into an amorous intrigue with his wife, and agreed, upon his return, to take her with him and marry her; as he accordingly did, and divorced his own wife, who was daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia Petraea; which occasioned a war between Herod and his wife's father, in which the former was beaten ^{f828},

Ver. 4. *For John said unto him*, etc.] John having heard of this incestuous marriage, went to Herod, and reproved him to his face for it; and, as Luke says, “for all the evils he had done”, (^{<Q189>}Luke 3:19) for he was a very wicked man, and guilty of many flagitious crimes: John, in so doing, showed his zeal for holiness, his hatred of sin, his courage and faithfulness in reproving thus freely so great a man; and made it manifest, that he came in the spirit of Elijah: what he said to him was,

it is not lawful for thee to have her, being forbidden, (^{<Q1816>}Leviticus 18:16) for though by another law it was right to marry a brother's wife, after his decease, when he left no issue, yet this was not the case here; Philip was now living, and, had he been dead, such a marriage would have been unlawful, because there was issue; she had a daughter, who afterwards is said to dance before Herod; and besides, he himself had another wife, whom he put away; so that his sin was a very aggravated and complicated one: lying with a brother's wife, was one of those sins which, according to the Jewish ^{f829} canons, deserved cutting off, or death by the hand of God. Josephus ^{f830} gives another reason of the imprisonment and death of John, that Herod feared that the people of the Jews, through his means, would be moved to sedition, and revolt from his government; which might be what Herodias suggested to him, or what he gave out himself, to cover the true cause of his proceedings: but the true reason is, what is here given, and is to be confirmed by the testimony of Jewish writers. One of their chronologers ^{f831} delivers the account in these express words:

“Herod Antipater was a very wicked and pernicious man, many of the wise men of Israel he slew with the sword; and he took to wife, his brother Philip's wife, whilst he was living; and because John the high priest (for so through mistake they call him) *hz l [wj ykwh* “reproved him for this”; ((see ^{<Q189>}Luke 3:19)) he slew him with the sword, with many of the wise men of Israel.”

And, says their historian ^{f832},

“also he, Herod, slew John, because he said unto him, it is forbidden thee to take the wife of Philip, and he slew him; this is that John that practised baptism.”

Ver. 5. *And when he would have put him to death*, etc.] As soon as he apprehended him, and put him into prison; being provoked by his reproofing him, and being stirred up by Herodias, who was greatly incensed and enraged, and would have killed him herself, but could not, being hindered by Herod: who, though he had a good will and strong inclination to take away his life, yet what with fearing the terror of his own conscience, and the reverence and respect he had for John, as a good man; and especially for the reason here given, he did not do it, for

he feared the multitude: not God, but the multitude; and these, not only the large number of people that attended on John’s ministry, and were baptized by him, and became his disciples, but the generality of the people, the whole body of the Jewish nation. So God is pleased oftentimes to restrain the wickedness of princes, by the fear of their subjects:

because they counted him as a prophet; a holy good man, and who was sent of God; they respected him as such, believing him to be a true and real prophet, and treated him with honour and reverence, suitable to his character; wherefore Herod was afraid, should he take away his life, that the people would mutiny, rise up against him, and revolt from him. In what esteem John was with the people of the Jews in general, may be learned from the character Josephus gives of him, as a good man; who stirred up the Jews to the practice of virtue, especially piety and justice; which made the common people fond of him and his doctrine; and who were of opinion, that the defeat of Herod’s army, which followed the death of John, was a just judgment of God upon him for it ^{f833}.

Ver. 6. *But when Herod’s birthday was kept*, etc.] The birthdays of princes, both of their coming into the world, and accession to the throne of government, were kept by the Gentiles; as by the Egyptians, (⁽⁻⁰⁴¹⁰⁾Genesis 40:20) and by the ^{f834}Persians, and Romans ^{f835}, and other nations, but not by the Jews; who reckon these among the feasts of idolaters.

“These (say they ^{f836}) are the feasts of idolaters; the “Calends”, and the “Saturnalia”, the time kept in memory of subduing a kingdom (or when a king takes possession of it, the day of his accession),
 μυκλ m l ç ayswng μῶνυw, “and the birthday of kings” (when they

are made and crowned, the day of coronation), and the day of birth, and the day of death.”

And it is a question, whether this day, that was kept, was the day of Herod’s natural birth, or of his civil government, being his accession, or coronation day: and it might also be a question, whether it was the then present Herod’s birthday, or whether it was not his father Herod’s, was it not that Mark says, (~~402~~ Mark 6:21) it was his birthday; since it is the latter the poet ^{f837} refers to, as kept by Jews, when he says, “At cum Herodis venere dies”; and the old Scholiast upon him observes, that

“Herod reigned over the Jews in Syria, in the times of Augustus; therefore the Herodians kept Herod’s birthday, as also the sabbath, on which day they set up candles in the windows lighted, and encircled with violets.”

This they did, believing him to be the Messiah: and it is further to be observed, that the word here used, is said ^{f838} to be proper to the dead, and not to the living; and that he that uses it of the living, speaks very inaccurately: but however, it was a festival, and a time of great mirth and jollity; and a proper opportunity offered to Herodias, to execute her malicious designs against John the Baptist; for at this time,

the daughter of Herodias danced before them: in the original text it is, “in the midst”, in the middle of the hall; or in the midst of the company, the lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee, for whom Herod made a supper, (~~402~~ Mark 6:21) and the Syriac renders it *akym s mdq*, “before the guests”. Music and dancing were usual at such entertainments, they were the common appendages of a feast ^{f839}: the daughter of Herodias, who danced before the company for their diversion, whether alone, or with others, was very probably Salome ^{f840}, whom she had by her former husband; and therefore is called, not the daughter of Herod, but of Herodias:

and pleased Herod; and as Mark adds, “and them that sat with him”; so that the pleasure he had did not arise merely from the respect and honour shown to him and his birthday, by her appearing with so much cheerfulness on this occasion before him; who had taken her father’s wife from him, and defiled her mother; but from the airs, gestures, and motions of the lady in dancing; which were so extremely fine and regular, that she gave wonderful satisfaction and delight to Herod, and the whole company.

Ver. 7. *Whereupon he promised with an oath*, etc.] On account of her fine dancing, and being extremely pleased with it himself; and the more, that it gave such pleasure to the whole court: he first promised her,

to give her whatsoever she would ask; and then repeating it, he confirmed it with an oath; adding, as Mark says, that he would give it her, even “to the half of his kingdom”: a way of speaking used by princes, when they give full power to persons to ask what they will of them; and to express their great munificence and liberality; signifying, let it be ever so great, or cost what it will, though as much as half a kingdom comes to, it shall be granted; (see ^{f841}Esther 5:3,6). A very foolish promise, and a rash oath these, which were made upon such a consideration, as only a fine dance. If she, as Theophylact observes, had asked for his head, would he have given it her? And if he swore by his head, which was a common form of swearing with the Jews ^{f841}, she very appropriately, though unjustly, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, answers to him; as you have sworn by your head, give me John Baptist’s head.

Ver. 8. *And she being before instructed of her mother*, etc.] What request to make; for as Mark says, “she went forth” to her mother immediately, as soon as she had received the king’s promise, and took advice of her, what she should ask; who bid her ask for the head of John the Baptist; and accordingly she went in, “straightway with haste unto the king”, as the same evangelist observes, to take him at his word, and whilst he was in the mood; being urged and hastened on by her mother, who was eager to satisfy her revenge on John; and said,

give me here John Baptist’s head in a charger: she desires his head, and this to be brought to her in a large dish, that her mother might be sure of his death; and have an opportunity of insulting that mouth and tongue, that had spoke against her incestuous marriage: and she desires to have it given “here”, in that very place, at that very time, where, and while the company was together, who were witnesses of the king’s promise and oath; and this she did, lest when the festival was over, and he was out of his cups, he should repent of his folly and rashness. The mother and daughter seem to be much alike, both for lasciviousness, revenge, and cruelty: and if what the historian says ^{f842} be true, that this same person Salome, the daughter of Herodias, as she walked over a river which was frozen in the winter season, the ice broke, and she fell in, and the pieces of ice cut off her head; the “lex talionis”, the law of retaliation, was righteously executed on her.

Ver. 9. *And the king was sorry*, etc.] As he might be upon many accounts; partly on account of John, whom, notwithstanding his freedom in reproving him, he had a respect; and partly on his own account, his conscience dictating to him that it was an evil action, and would leave a brand of perpetual infamy upon him; as also on account of the people, who were so much affected to John, lest they should make an insurrection, and rebel against him; and likewise, because it was reckoned an ill omen with the Romans, to take away life on that day they received their own; and therefore carefully abstained, on such days, from executions.

Nevertheless for his oath's sake; that he might not be guilty of perjury, chose rather to commit murder; though it would have been no iniquity in him, to have acted contrary to such a rash promise, and wicked oath; which would have been better to have been broke, than kept;

and them which sat with him at meat; lest he should be thought by them fickle and inconstant, and not a man of his word, and who had no regard to an oath: or it may be, they, either to curry favour with Herodias, or out of ill will they might bear to John; or in great respect to the damsel, who had so well pleased them with her dancing; instead of dissuading him from it, pressed him much to perform his promise: and therefore,

he commanded it to be given her; in the form and manner she requested it. Some have thought, that the whole of this affair was a concerted scheme; and that Herod himself was in it, though he pretended to be sorry and uneasy, having fixed on this season as a convenient time for it; and chose to have it done in this way, and in so public a manner, to lessen the odium of it; or otherwise, it is not easy to account for his extravagant promise, and his punctual performance of it.

Ver. 10. *And he sent*, etc.] “An executioner”, as in (~~4067~~ Mark 6:27) where the Latin word “speculator”, or as it is sometimes written “spiculator”, is used; and is the name of an officer concerned in executions, and particularly in beheading of persons; and so is used by Latin writers.

“In a civil war (says ^{f843} Seneca), a servant hid his master that was proscribed; and when he had fitted his rings for himself, and put on his clothes, he met “speculatoribus”, the “speculators”; he told them he desired nothing, but that they would perform their orders, and immediately stretched out his neck.”

And the same writer elsewhere ^{f844} speaks of a soldier that was condemned by Piso, on suspicion of murdering his fellow soldier;

“Who was had without the camp, and as soon as he stretched out his neck, he, who was thought to be killed, suddenly appeared; upon which the centurion that had the management of the execution, ordered “speculatorem”, the “speculator”, to put up his sword, and returned the condemned person to Piso.”

The word is also used by the Jewish doctors, and in the same sense: take the following instance among many ^{f845} .

“R. Ishmael said to R. Simeon ben Gamaliel (when they were both apprehended, in order to be executed), brother, there was a man ready to receive his blow, and they entreated *rwj l qpsal* , “the speculator”: one said, I am a priest, the son of an high priest, slay me first, that I may not see the death of my companion; and the other said to him, I am a prince, the son of a prince, slay me first, that I may not see the death of my companion: he replied unto them, cast lots; and they cast lots, and the lot fell on R. Simeon ben Gamaliel; immediately he took a sword, “and cut off his head”.”

And as this word is often used by them ^{f846} for an executioner, so *al wqps*, “specula” is often made mention of by them ^{f847} , as a sort of punishment by death: and such an officer was sent by Herod, to inflict this punishment upon John; who accordingly executed it,

and beheaded John in the prison; that is, of Machoeras, where he lay, without giving him a hearing, or allowing him to speak for himself, or with his friends: and which was done in this private manner, partly for dispatch, and partly on account of the people; who it might have been feared, had the execution been public and known, would have rose and rescued him.

Ver. 11. *And his head was brought in a charger*, etc.] By the executioner that cut it off, to Herod, whilst he and his guests were at table; by which it should seem, that the prison was very near; and it is not improbable, that it was the castle of Macheerus that Herod made this entertainment in:

and given to the damsel; the daughter of Herodias, who, by her mother’s instigation, had asked it, and who received it out of the hands of Herod himself; or however, it was delivered to her by his orders:

and she brought it to her mother; who had put her upon it, than which, nothing could be a more agreeable dish to her; and who, as Jerome says ^{f848}, because she could not bear truth, that tongue which spoke truth; she plucked out, and pierced it through and through with a needle, as Fulvia did Cicero's: but this triumph over the faithful reprover of her, and Herod's vices, did not last long; for quickly after this, they were stripped of their honours and riches, and deprived of the kingdom, and banished to Lyons in France, where they died ^{f849}. A Jewish chronologer says ^{f850}, Herod was driven out of the land by Tiberius, and fled to Spain, and died there.

Ver. 12. *And his disciples came*, etc.] To the prison where his body was left, and to which they had liberty of recourse before; (see ~~CHD~~ Matthew 11:2) and very probably, upon hearing what was done, might apply to Herod, as Joseph of Arimathea did to Pilate, for the body of Jesus; who might, as he did, give them leave to take it: and

took up the body and buried it. Theophylact says, his body was buried in Baste Caesarea, and that his head was first reposit in Emesesa. This was the last office of love to their master, and was done in respect and gratitude to him, and to show that they still abode by his doctrine; and was what decency and the belief of the resurrection of the dead, as well as the will of God, require should be done:

and went and told Jesus; that their master was dead, what kind of death he suffered, and by what means it was brought about; and how that they had interred him; and what Herod also had said of Jesus, that he was John risen from the dead. Their coming to Christ, and informing him of all this, show, that they were taught by their master to respect him as the Messiah, and believe in him, and adhere to him; and it is very likely that they continued with him.

Ver. 13. *When Jesus heard of it*, etc.] Of the death of John, and of the cruel usage he had met with; and particularly, that his fame had reached the court of Herod, and that he was talked of there, and said by Herod himself to be John the Baptist, that was risen from the dead;

he departed thence by ship, into a desert place apart; to avoid Herod, though not through fear of death; but because his time was not yet come: which may teach us, that it is lawful to shun dangers, when there is an opportunity; which may be done, without betraying truth, or sacrificing a good conscience. The other evangelists, Mark and Luke, assign another

reason of this departure of Christ's, that it was upon the return of his disciples to him from their embassy; when having given him an account of what they had done, and taught, he judged it proper they should retire, and get some refreshment and rest; and both may very well be thought to be the reasons of this recess. At the same time that John's disciples brought him the news of their master's death, Christ's disciples return to him, with the account of the success of their ministry; who might not only be weary, and want refreshment, but be discouraged in their minds, at this instance of cruelty; wherefore Christ thought it necessary to retire, partly for his own safety, and partly for their ease; and that he might have an opportunity of fortifying their minds against all trials and persecutions they were to meet with: the place from whence he departed, was either Capernaum, his own country and city, or Nazareth, where we have lately heard of him; or some other place in Galilee, where he was, when John's disciples came to him: the place whither he went, was "a desert place"; and, as Luke says, "belonging to the city called Bethsaida", the city of Andrew and Peter, which lay on the other side of the sea of Galilee, or Tiberias; over which he went by ship, (~~¶~~ John 6:1).

And when the people had heard thereof; of his departure, and whither he went,

they followed him on foot out of their cities; such as Nazareth, Capernaum, Tiberias, and others; and passing the bridge at Jordan, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, they outwent the ship, and got thither before them, as Mark relates. This showed their great affection and zeal for Christ, and their diligence in attending on him.

Ver. 14. *And Jesus went forth,* etc.] Either from the mountain where he sat with his disciples, (~~¶~~ John 6:3) or out of the desert, where he had retired for secrecy; or out of the ship, which seems best, the company having got thither before his landing:

and saw a great multitude; for, there were about five thousand men, beside women and children, (~~¶~~ Matthew 14:21)

and was moved with compassion toward them: partly on account of their bodily infirmities, which were very many and great; and partly on account of the bad situation they were in, through want of spiritual pastors to feed them with the bread of life; for Mark gives this as the reason, moving his compassion, "because they were as sheep, not having a shepherd": all

which shows the truth of Christ's human nature; proves him to be a merciful high priest, and one truly concerned for both the bodies and souls of men:

and he healed their sick; which they brought along with them, and that without the use of any medicine, by a word speaking: so that as the former phrase gives proof of his humanity, this attests his divinity: but this was not all he did, he not only healed their bodies, but he taught them the doctrines of the Gospel; and spake to them concerning the kingdom of God, for the good of their souls, as the other evangelists relate.

Ver. 15. *And when it was evening*, etc.] Mark says, "when the day was now far spent"; and Luke, "when the day began to wear away"; it was upon the decline of the day. The Jews, as Grotius rightly observes, had two evenings; the one began when the sun declined at noon, and the other at sun setting: now it was the former of these, and not the latter, that was now come; for after this, you read of another evening that was come, (⁴¹⁴³Matthew 14:23) between which two evenings Christ made the multitude to sit down, and he fed them in a miraculous manner; and the disciples reason for the dismissal of the multitude, that might go into the neighbouring villages, and buy provisions, shows that it could not be the last, but the first of these evenings, that is here meant.

His disciples came to him; the twelve, whom he had left in that part of the desert he retired to; or on the mount, where he had sat down with them for their rest and refreshment:

saying, this is a desert place; where no food was to be had; where were no houses of entertainment:

and the time is now past; not the time of the day, but of dining: the usual dinner time was past, which, with the Jews, was the fifth hour of the day, and answers to eleven o'clock with us, or at furthest six; which, with us, is twelve at noon; concerning which, the Jewish doctors thus dispute ^{f851}.

"The first hour, is the time of eating for the Lydians, or Cannibals; the second for thieves, the third for heirs, the fourth for workmen, and the fifth for every man: but does not R. Papa say, that the fourth is the time of dining for every man? But if so, if the fourth is the time for every man, the fifth is for workmen, and the sixth for the disciples of the wise men."

Which is elsewhere ^{f852} delivered with some little variation, thus;

“the first hour is the time of eating for Lydians; the second, for thieves; the third, for heirs; the fourth, for workmen; the fifth, for scholars; and the sixth, for every man: but does not R. Papa say, etc.”

But supposing the usual time of dining to be, at the furthest, at the sixth hour, at twelve o'clock, this time must be elapsed, since the first evening was commenced; so that the reasoning of the disciples is very just,

send the multitude away. Christ was preaching to them, the disciples move that he would break off his discourse, and dismiss them; in the synagogue the manner of dismissing the people was, by reading the **hrj ph**, or “dismission”, which was some passage out of the prophetic writings.

That they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals; the little towns which lay nearest the desert, where they might be supplied with suitable provisions.

Ver. 16. *But Jesus said unto them,* etc.] the disciples,

they need not depart; meaning so long as he was with them, who had power enough to provide a sufficient meal for them, as well as by a word speaking, to heal their diseases; however, to try their faith, and make way for the working of the following miracle, he says to them,

give ye them to eat; such provisions as you have along with you.

Ver. 17. *And they say unto him,* etc.] In order to excuse themselves, and to show the impossibility of feeding such a large number of people;

we have here but five loaves; and these barley ones, coarse bread;

and two fishes; small ones, which were dried and salted, and fit for present eating; which they either brought along with them for their own refreshment, or rather, were brought thither by a boy to sell, as is usual where a great concourse of people are got together: these words seem to be spoken by Andrew, Simon Peter's brother; who added, “but what are they among so many?” (see ~~RB8~~ John 6:8,9) not thinking of the power of Christ, who was able to multiply, and make this provision a sufficiency for the whole company.

Ver. 18. *He said, bring them hither to me.*] The loaves and the fishes, signifying that they were sufficient; or that he would make them so: this he said, to try their faith in him, their obedience to him, and their liberality to others: and indeed, the best way to have an increase of temporal supplies, is to bring what we have, and put it into Christ's hands; whereby not only good is done to others, but that with an overplus is returned to the giver.

Ver. 19. *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass,* etc.] The other evangelists say, that he ordered the disciples to cause the people to sit down; both no doubt were done: the multitude were commanded to sit down by Christ, which, without his orders, they would never have done; and the disciples were enjoined to place them in form, by companies, in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties, that their number might be the better taken, and the food more orderly distributed by the apostles:

and took the five loaves and the two fishes: into his hands, lifting them up, that they might be seen by the whole company; and they be fully convinced of the miracle going to be wrought by him:

and looking up to heaven; to his Father in heaven, who is the Father of mercies; and from whom every mercy and blessing of life comes; and giving thanks to him for the same, as was usually done by him,

he blessed the five loaves and the two fishes;

and brake the loaves, and divided the fishes;

and gave the loaves, and fishes also,

to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude; who were the ministers and servants of Christ, employed by him in this manner, for the more orderly and quick dispatch of this business: and which was an emblem of their spiritual work and office: who received all their food from Christ, which they distributed to the churches, and fed them with.

Ver. 20. *And they did all eat,* etc.] Christ and his twelve disciples, and the five thousand men, with the women and children, of the five loaves and two fishes; everyone had their portion,

and were filled; they were satisfied, they had a full meal, they had enough, and to spare; (see ⁴⁴⁸¹⁰2 Chronicles 31:10) which the Targumist paraphrases thus.

“And Azariah said unto him, who was appointed chief over the house of Zadok, and said, from the time that they began to separate the offering, to bring it into the sanctuary of the Lord, ךַּל בְּצַו ךַּל כֵּא, “we have eat and are filled”, and have “left much”; for “the word of the Lord” hath blessed his people, and what is left, lo! it is this plenty of good.”

The Jews used not to reckon it a meal, unless a man was filled, and account it an ill sign, if nothing was left: but here was fulness, and more left than was first had; which was gathered up, either for the use of the poor, or reserved for after service; teaching us liberality to the needy, and frugality, not to waste that which is left.

And they took up of the fragments that remained, twelve baskets full; according to the number of the disciples, every man had his basket full. It may be inquired, where they could have so many baskets in the wilderness? It is not likely, that everyone of the apostles had a basket with him; it is indeed not improbable, but that they might be furnished with them from some in the company, who might bring provisions with them, either for their own use, or to sell; (see ^{f853}John 6:9) but perhaps the reason why they were so easily supplied with such a number of baskets in a desert place, might be a custom which the Jews ^{f853} had of carrying baskets with hay and straw, in commemoration of what they did in Egypt; when they were obliged to carry bricks in baskets, and to go about and pick up straw in baskets to make bricks; hence the ^{f854} Epigrammatist calls a “Jew”, “cistifer”, a “basket bearer”, or “carrier”; and Juvenal ^{f855} laughs at these people, as if all their household goods lay in a basket, and a little hay, or straw: it is said of R. Siraeon, that when he went to the school, *אֵן לַיִּץ*, “he carried a basket” on his shoulders ^{f856}; the gloss suggests, it was to sit upon; but a basket is not very proper for a seat; very likely it was for the above reason: such a custom will account for it, how such a number of baskets could be come at in the wilderness.

Ver. 21. *And they that had eaten were about five thousand men,* etc.] The word “about”, is omitted in the Vulgate Latin, in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, and in the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, which expressly say there were so many. A large number indeed, to be fed with five loaves and two fishes!

besides women and children; who were not taken into the account, though they all ate, and were filled, it not being usual with the Jews to number their women; and who might be near as large a number as the men: for generally there is a very great concourse of the female sex, and of children, where anything extraordinary, or out of the way, is to be seen or heard; and of this sort was a large number of Christ's audience, who only came out of curiosity, or for one sinister end or another.

Ver. 22. *And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples*, etc.] As soon as ever he had wrought the above miracle, and perceived that the people were so convinced by it, of his being the Messiah, that they were determined, whether he would or not, to set him up for a temporal king, to deliver them from the Roman yoke; which they doubted not he was able to do, who could feed so large a number, with such a small quantity of provision; (see ~~4814~~ John 6:14,15) and knowing also, that his disciples had imbibed the same notion of a temporal kingdom, were very fond of it, and big with expectation thereof; and would have readily encouraged the populace, and joined with them in such an action: wherefore, in all haste, he hurried them away, obliged them to depart, lest any step should be taken, which might be of dangerous consequence to them, and the people: it looks as if the disciples were bent upon the same thing, and that it was with much difficulty and reluctance they were brought off of it. Christ was forced to use his power and authority; and order them directly

to get into a ship; very likely, the same they came over in;

and to go before him unto the other side of the lake of Tiberias or sea of Galilee, over against Bethsaida, to Capernaum, or the land of Gennesaret;

while he sent the multitudes away: who would not so easily have been prevailed upon to have departed, if Christ had not first shipped off his disciples; for had he withdrawn himself, and left his disciples with them, they would have been in hopes of his return, and would have continued in a body with them, in expectation of it; and therefore, the better to disperse them, and prevent their designs, he sends away his disciples before him.

Ver. 23. *And when he had sent the multitudes away*, etc.] Had ordered them at least to go away; for, it seems, according to (~~4812~~ John 6:22) that they did not in general disperse: there was a large body of them that continued upon the spot all night, expecting his return; in which being disappointed, they took shipping, and came to Capernaum.

He went up into a mountain apart to pray; perhaps the same he went up to before, and from whence he came down, (^{<416B>}John 6:3). This he chose as a proper place for prayer, where he could be retired, and alone, have his thoughts free, and, as man, pour out his soul to his Father, on his own account, and on the behalf of others; and particularly, he might be concerned about this notion of a temporal kingdom, that his disciples and others were so fond of; and pray that his disciples might be convinced of their mistake, and that the people might be hindered from prosecuting their designs. His going up into a mountain and praying there, were quite contrary to the canons of the Jews; which forbid praying in places ever so little raised.

“Let not a man stand (say they ^{f857}) *hwbg μwqmb*, “in an high place”, and pray, but in a low place and pray; as it is said, “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord”, (^{<3D00>}Psalm 130:1). It is a tradition, that a man may not stand, neither upon a throne, nor upon a footstool, nor in any high place and pray, because there are no high places before God.”

This rule is delivered by Maimonides ^{f858}, in this form:

“A man may not stand in a place that is three hands high, or more, and pray, neither upon a bed, nor upon a seat, nor upon a throne.”

But Christ did not look upon himself obliged, by these traditions of the elders; but chose such places, whether high or low, which were most private and retired.

And when evening was come; when it was now dark, (^{<4167>}John 6:17) when the second evening was come and ended; (see ^{<4145>}Matthew 14:15) and it was properly night,

he was there alone; in the mountain, where he continued the greatest part of the night, even until the fourth watch.

Ver. 24. *But the ship was now in the midst of the sea*, etc.] That is, the ship in which the disciples were put into, to go on the other side, had by this time got into the midst of the sea: the Syriac and Persic versions say, it was “many furlongs from land”; and the Arabic expressly says, “about twenty five furlongs”: which account seems to be taken from (^{<4169>}John 6:19) but this was not all, it was not only at such a distance from land, but was

tossed with waves: up and down, and in danger of being overset, and the passengers lost:

for the wind was against them; which beat the waves with such violence against them, that they were in the utmost danger of their lives, and not able to get forward; and what was worst of all, and most discouraging to the disciples, Christ was not with them. The ship in which the disciples were, was an emblem of the church of Christ, and of its state and condition in this world: this world is like a sea, for its largeness, and the abundance of nations and people in it, compared to many waters, (^{f675} Revelation 17:15) and for the tumultuousness of its inhabitants; the wicked being like a troubled sea, which cannot rest, continually casting up the mire and dirt of sin, to the dishonour of God, and the grief of his people; and for its fickleness and inconstancy, changes and war being continually in it: now the church of Christ is like a ship in this troublesome sea; where the true disciples and followers of Christ are selected together; and are preserved from the pollutions of the world, and from the danger to which the men of it are exposed, being in their sins, and liable to the wrath and curse of God, and eternal damnation; which, they that are in Christ, and members of his body, are secure from; the port or haven to which they are bound, is heaven and eternal happiness; their's and Christ's Father's house, where are many mansions provided for them; and where they long to be, and hope, and believe, ere long they shall arrive unto; and hope is as an anchor of their soul, sure and steadfast: but in the mean while, whilst they are sailing through the sea of this world, they are often, as the church of old, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, (^{f251} Isaiah 55:11) with the tempests of Satan's temptations, the storms of the world's persecutions, and with the winds of error and false doctrine; and then is it most uncomfortable to them, when Christ is not with them, which was the case of the disciples here.

Ver. 25. *And in the fourth watch of the night*, etc.] This is said, according to the division of the night into four watches, by the Jews; who ^{f859} say, that

“there are four watches in the night, and four watches in the day.”

It is true indeed, that it is disputed among them, whether there were four watches, or only three in the night: some say there were four, others say there were but three ^{f860}; not but that these made a division of the night into four parts, the three first of which, they thought were properly the watches of the night, and the fourth was the morning. The first watch began at six

o'clock in the evening, and lasted till nine; the second began at nine, and ended at twelve, which was midnight; the third began at twelve, and closed at three; the fourth began at three, and ended at six in the morning. But since some ^{f861} Jewish writers are so positive for the division of the night into three watches only, and a watch is with them called ^{f862} the third part of the night; and it is dubious with some, whether the Jewish division is here referred to; and since it is so clear a point, that the Romans ^{f863} divided their night into four watches, and their writers speak not only of the first, second, and third watches, but also of the fourth watch ^{f864}; it is thought by some, that the evangelist speaks after the Roman manner: but however, certain it is, that within this period, probably at the beginning of it, after three o'clock in the morning, Christ came to his disciples, when they had been almost all the night at sea, tossed with waves, and in great danger.

Jesus went unto them; from the mountain where he had been praying, the greatest part of the night, to the sea side, and so upon the waters to them; for it follows,

walking upon the sea; as on dry land: though it was so stormy and boisterous, that the disciples, though in a ship, were in the utmost danger, yet he upon the waves, was in none at all; by which action he showed himself to be the Lord of the sea, and to be truly and properly God; whose character is, that he “treadeth upon the waves of the sea”, (~~1008~~ Job 9:8).

Ver. 26. *And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea*, etc.] It being now morning, and perhaps might have moon light; and besides, there is always more light upon the water than land; they were able to discern something like a man, walking upon the surface of the sea, but had not light enough to distinguish what, or who it was; and, moreover, had no thought of Christ, or expectation of seeing him; and the appearance of a man walking upon the waters being so unusual, and astonishing,

they were troubled, saying it is a spirit: a nocturnal apparition, a demon in human form. The Jews, especially the sect of the Pharisees, had a notion, from whom the disciples might have their's, of spirits, apparitions, and demons, being to be seen in the night; hence that rule ^{f865},

“it is forbidden a man to salute his friend in the night, for we are careful, lest **awh dç**, “it should be a demon”.”

They say a great many things of one *tyl yl* , “Lilith”, that has its name from *hl yl* , “the night”, a she demon, that used to appear in the night, with an human face, and carry off young children, and kill them. Some such frightful notions had possessed the minds of the disciples:

and they cried out for fear, as persons in the utmost consternation, in the greatest danger, and in want of help: the fear of spirits arises from the uncommonness of their appearance; from their superiority to men in power and strength; from the enmity there is between men and evil spirits; and from a general notion of their doing hurt and mischief: hence, demons are, by the Jews, called *ˆyqyzm*, “hurtful”, or “hurting”, all their study being to do hurt to men; and the same word is here used in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel: add to all this, that the fear of the disciples might be increased, through a vulgar notion among seafaring men, that such sights are ominous, and portend evil to sailors; and they might the more easily be induced to give credit to this, and fear, since they were already in such imminent danger.

Ver. 27. *But straightway Jesus spake unto them*, etc.] Directly, the very moment, as soon as ever they cried out, and he perceived the consternation they were in, as one truly affected towards them, and concerned for their welfare; he called out aloud unto them, not coming with any intention to fright them, but to save them;

saying, be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid: take heart, be of good courage, do not be affrighted at my appearance, from whom you have nothing to fear; nor be afraid of the storm and tempest in which you are, I will deliver you; for it is I, your Master, Saviour, and Redeemer, and not any hurtful spirit; who am able to save you, and am come for that purpose. Christ may be sometimes near his people, and they not know him; as the Lord was in the place where Jacob was, and he knew it not, (⁰¹²⁸¹⁶Genesis 28:16) and as Christ was standing by Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, and she took him to be the gardener: and for want of a distinct knowledge of Christ in his person, offices, and grace, persons have wrong apprehensions of him, and are filled with dread and fears, concluding they have no interest in him; that he is a Saviour, but not of them; that their sins are so many, and of such a die, and attended with such aggravating circumstances, that though he is able to save them, he never can be willing to receive such vile sinners as they are: but when Christ makes himself known unto them, as the able and willing Saviour, and their Saviour and

Redeemer, then, instead of dreading him as a judge, their fears vanish, their faith increases, and they are ready to do anything he shall order them; as Peter says in the next verse, who was willing to come to Christ on the water, when he knew who he was, if he was but pleased to bid him come.

Ver. 28. *And Peter answered him and said*, etc.] Who knew his voice, and was ready to believe it might be Christ; and having more courage, and being more forward than the rest of the disciples, ventured to speak to him; saying,

Lord, if it be thou; for he was not fully assured that it was he: he might consider that nocturnal apparitions are deceitful, and that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and could put on the appearance, and mimic the voice of Christ; wherefore, to try whether it was a spectre, or really Christ, he says,

bid me come unto thee on the water; thereby expressing great love and affection to Christ, being willing to come to him, though through danger, through storms and tempests; and also his strong faith in him, supposing it to be he; who, he knew, was as able to support his body on the water, as his own; and yet much modesty, submission, and dependence; not willing to take a step without his order.

Ver. 29. *And he said, come*, etc.] This he said, partly to assure them who he was; for had he denied him, he and the rest might have concluded, it was none of Jesus; and partly to commend his love, and confirm his faith, by giving a further instance of his power, in enabling him to walk upon the water, as he did:

and when Peter was come down out of the ship; as he immediately did, having orders from Christ; and being by this second speech fully convinced it was he

he walked on the water; a little way, being supported and enabled by the power of Christ; for this was an extraordinary and miraculous action: for if it was so in Christ, it was much more so in Peter: Christ walked upon the water by his own power, as God; Peter walked upon the water, being held up by the power of Christ. The Jews^{f866} indeed, call swimming *μυμη γρη* | [*hj yçh*, “walking upon the face of the waters”: hence we read of a swimmer’s vessel, which is explained to be what men make to learn in it, how *μυμη γρη* | [*j wçl* , “to go or walk upon the face of the waters”^{f867};

but then this is not going upon them upright, but prone, or lying along upon the surface of the waters, which was not Peter's case; he did not, as at another time, cast himself into the sea, and swim to Christ; (see ^{<4207>}John 21:7) but as soon as he came down from the ship, standing upright, he walked upon the waters,

to go to Jesus; not merely for walking sake, but for the sake of Christ, he dearly loved; that he might be with him, and be still more confirmed of the truth of its being he, and not a spirit.

Ver. 30. *But when he saw the wind boisterous*, etc.] Or "strong", blowing hard against him, and raising up the waves, which beat with great violence upon him,

he was afraid; though Christ was so nigh him, and he had had such an instance of his power in bearing him up, causing him to walk upon the waters thus far; which shows, that his faith was imperfect:

and beginning to sink; through fear, and the violence of the wind and waves, just ready to be immersed, and go down to the bottom of the sea,

he cried; being in a great fright and much danger, and with great importunity and eagerness,

saying, Lord, save me: I am just going, I shall certainly perish else; still having so much faith in Christ, that he was able to save him in the last extremity.

Ver. 31. *And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand*, etc.] The Syriac reads it, ht [çrbw, "and in that very moment"; for his case requires immediate assistance, and Christ readily gave it; he reached out his hand at once, being just by him,

and caught him; as he was sinking to the bottom, and lifted him up, and set him on his feet upon the water, and enabled him to walk with him to the ship; but not without reproving him for the weakness of his faith,

and said unto him, O thou of little faith: he does not say, O thou unbeliever! or, O thou who hast no faith! for some faith he had, though but small; of this phrase, *See Gill* "^{<4165>}Matthew 6:30".

Wherefore didst thou doubt? waver, fluctuate, or wast divided between faith and fear. He was worthy of reproof, since he had had the order of

Christ to come to him upon the water; and an experience of his power in supporting him thus far; and was now so near unto him, that he had no room to doubt, whether it was he or not, nor of his power to preserve him.

Ver. 32. *And when they were come into the ship*, etc.] Christ and Peter. The Arabic and Persic versions, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel read, "when he ascended", or "was come into the ship"; but there is no doubt but Peter went with him into it, though the following effect is only to be ascribed to Christ's coming into the ship, and not to Peter's:

the wind ceased: from blowing with that fury and violence it did before, and there was a perfect calm; which gave equal proof of the divine power of Christ, as his walking upon the sea: he walked upon the sea whilst the wind was blowing hard, and the waves were tumultuous; he comes into the ship, and all is calm; both winds and sea obey him, who is Lord of both.

Ver. 33. *Then they that were in the ship*, etc.] Not only the rest of the disciples, who remained in it, whilst Peter came forth out of it, to walk upon the sea, to go to Christ: but the mariners also, the owners of the vessel, and their servants that managed it,

came and worshipped him: not merely in a civil, but in a religious way; being convinced, by what they saw, that he must be truly and properly God, and worthy of adoration;

saying, of a truth, thou art the Son of God: not by creation, as angels and men, nor by office, as magistrates, but by nature; being of the same essence, perfections, and power, with God, his Father: and which these actions of his now done, as well as many others, are full attestations of; as his walking upon the sea, causing Peter to do so too, saving him when sinking, and stilling the wind and waves upon his entrance into the vessel; all which being observed by the disciples and mariners, drew out this confession upon full conviction from them, that he was a divine person, and the proper object of worship.

Ver. 34. *And when they were gone over*, etc.] That is, "the sea", as Munster's Hebrew Gospel adds, the sea of Tiberias, or Galilee;

they came into the land of Gennesaret; the same with Cinnereth, or Chinnereth, or Cinnerot, (^{<0811>}Numbers 34:11 ^{<0817>}Deuteronomy 3:17 ^{<0812>}Joshua 11:2 12:3 13:27) (^{<1153>}1 Kings 15:20) in all which places, the Chaldee paraphrase renders it by **רִסְוּנַיְג**, "Ginusar", the same word that is

used in Munster's Hebrew Gospel here: it was a country in Galilee, in the tribe of Naphtali ^{f868}, bordering upon a lake, called the lake of Gennesaret; taking its name from the country, or the country from the lake: it was exceeding fruitful, full of gardens and orchards; hence we often read in the Talmud ^{f869}, of *rswnq twryp*, "the fruits of Genusar", or Gennesaret, which are said to be exceeding sweet: and it is said to ^{f870} be a country in the land of Israel, in which were many gardens; and by others ^{f871}, a place in the land of Galilee (as it was) whose fruits were large and good; and was, as Josephus says ^{f872}, thirty furlongs long and twenty broad. And thus the saints, after a long and troublesome passage over the sea of this world, arrive, at last, safe at their desired haven, and enter upon a most delightful country, a paradise, a garden of pleasure; where all delicious fruits and desirable things are enjoyed, even pleasures for evermore; where they shall be led to fountains of living waters, into fulness of joy; where all troubles will cease, and tears will be wiped away; and when they will have leisure and capacity to reflect upon all they have met with in their dangerous, and difficult voyage; and will admire the wonderful grace of God, which has been with them; and his divine power, which has appeared for them, and supported them, and brought them safe to eternal glory; and they ascribe greatness to Christ, as the Son of God, and for ever worship him as the eternal Jehovah, who has done such great things for them, as none but God can do.

Ver. 35. *And when the men of the place had knowledge of him*, etc.] Not merely by report, but by face, having seen, and heard him before; (see ~~<ant>~~ Luke 5:1).

They sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; which not only expresses their faith in him, that he was able to heal all their sick and diseased, were they ever so many; but also their affectionate regard to their fellow creatures and countrymen; and their care and diligence in sending messengers about to their respective cities, towns, and villages, and which must be attended with expense: for they neither spared cost nor pains, to do good to their country; in all which, they set an example worthy of imitation.

Ver. 36. *And besought him that they might touch the hem of his garment*, etc.] As the woman with the bloody issue did; (~~<ant>~~ Matthew 9:20). This they desired, partly to show the strength of their faith in him, that they doubted not of a cure, could they be admitted so near his person; and

partly, to signify the sense of their unworthiness, to be in another way taken notice of by him, either by speaking to them, or putting his hands on them:

and as many as touched, were made perfectly whole. Christ condescended to this their request, and perfectly cured all such of their diseases, of whatever kind they were, who, in the exercise of faith, touched the hem of his garment, the fringe he wore, in compliance with the ceremonial law, (~~04538~~ Numbers 15:38,39 ~~16212~~ Deuteronomy 22:12).