

Chapter 14

<i>Death of John the Baptist</i>	1–12
<i>Five thousand people miraculously fed</i>	13–21
<i>Jesus walks upon the sea</i>	22–33
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Verses 1–12

The terror and reproach of conscience, which Herod, like other daring offenders, could not shake off, are proofs and warnings of a future judgment, and of future misery to them. But there may be the terror of convictions, where there is not the truth of conversion. When men pretend to favour the gospel, yet live in evil, we must not favour their self-delusion, but must deliver our consciences as John did. The world may call this rudeness and blind zeal. False professors, or timid Christians, may censure it as want of civility; but the most powerful enemies can go no further than the Lord sees good to permit. Herod feared that the putting of John to death might raise a rebellion among the people, which it did not; but he never feared it might stir up his own conscience against him, which it did. Men fear being hanged for what they do not fear being damned for. And times of carnal mirth and jollity are convenient times for carrying on bad designs against God's people. Herod would profusely reward a worthless dance, while imprisonment and death were the recompence of the man of God who sought the salvation of his soul. But there was real malice to John beneath his consent, or else Herod would have found ways to get clear of his promise. When the under shepherds are smitten, the sheep need not be scattered while they have the Great Shepherd to go to. And it is better to be drawn to Christ by want and loss, than not to come to him at all.

Verses 13–21

When Christ and his word withdraw, it is best for us to follow, seeking the means of grace for our souls before any worldly advantages. The presence of

Christ and his gospel, makes a desert not only tolerable, but desirable. This little supply of bread was increased by Christ's creating power, till the whole multitude were satisfied. In seeking the welfare of men's souls, we should have compassion on their bodies likewise. Let us also remember always to crave a blessing on our meals, and learn to avoid all waste, as frugality is the proper source of liberality. See in this miracle an emblem of the Bread of life, which came down from heaven to sustain our perishing souls. The provisions of Christ's gospel appear mean and scanty to the world, yet they satisfy all that feed on him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

Verses 22–33

Those are not Christ's followers who cannot enjoy being alone with God and their own hearts. It is good, upon special occasions, and when we find our hearts enlarged, to continue long in secret prayer, and in pouring out our hearts before the Lord. It is no new thing for Christ's disciples to meet with storms in the way of duty, but he thereby shows himself with the more grace to them and for them. He can take what way he pleases to save his people. But even appearances of deliverance sometimes occasion trouble and perplexity to God's people, from mistakes about Christ. Nothing ought to affright those that have Christ near them, and know he is theirs; not death itself. Peter walked upon the water, not for diversion or to boast of it, but to go to Jesus; and in that he was thus wonderfully borne up. Special supports are promised, and are to be expected, but only in spiritual pursuits; nor can we ever come to Jesus, unless we are upheld by his power. Christ bade Peter come, not only that he might walk upon the water, and so know his Lord's power, but that he might know his own weakness. And the Lord often lets his servants have their choice, to humble and prove them, and to show the greatness of his power and grace. When we look off from Christ, and look at the greatness of opposing difficulties, we shall begin to fall; but when we call to him, he will stretch out his arm, and save us.

Christ is the great Saviour; those who would be saved, must come to him, and cry to him, for salvation; we are never brought to this, till we find ourselves sinking: the sense of need drives us to him. He rebuked Peter. Could we but believe more, we should suffer less. The weakness of faith, and the prevailing of our doubts, displease our [Lord Jesus](#), for there is no good reason why Christ's disciples should be of a doubtful mind. Even in a stormy day he is to them a very present help. None but the world's Creator could multiply the loaves, none but its Governor could tread upon the waters of the sea: the disciples yield to the evidence, and confess their faith. They were suitably affected, and worshipped Christ. He that comes to God, must believe; and he that believes in God, will come, [Heb 11:6](#).

Verses [34-36](#)

Whithersoever Christ went, he was doing good. They brought unto him all that were diseased. They came humbly beseeching him to help them. The experiences of others may direct and encourage us in seeking for Christ. As many as touched, were made perfectly whole. Those whom Christ heals, he heals perfectly. Were men more acquainted with Christ, and with the diseased state of their souls, they would flock to receive his healing influences. The healing virtue was not in the finger, but in their faith; or rather, it was in Christ, whom their faith took hold upon.