

14:1 *Tetrach*- Literally, 'one of a fourth'; a reference to how after the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC, the kingdom was divided amongst four others.

*Heard of the fame*- A play on words: *akouo... akoe*. The Lord has recently used the same word play in saying that unbelievers "By hearing shall hear [same two Greek words] and shall not understand" (Mt. 13:14). The connection may be to demonstrate that pagan Herod was no better than the unbelieving Jewish religious leaders. Even in the Old Testament, unbelieving Israel are often described in terms of the Gentile world. We can also note that the Gospels were designed for memorization, and such word plays are common in order to assist committing them to memory. The Gospels likewise should be the lifeblood of all serious Christian living and thinking in this age of electronic memory.

14:2 *This is John*- The people thought that Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected (Mk. 6:14). Perhaps this was because they looked somehow similar, as cousins?

*Risen from the dead*- The idea of bodily resurrection was around in the first century, but very often in the sense of a dead person not really dying but returning *redivivus* in another form. This was widely believed about Nero- and there are allusions to the legend of Nero *redivivus* in Revelation (they are deconstructed there as being untrue- the ultimate resurrection was of the Lord Jesus, not Nero). Herod's words show that a 'resurrected' person was expected to do great miracles as proof of their resurrection. The Lord's resurrection was likewise accompanied by "mighty works"- but not by Him personally, but by the community of believers. This accommodation to contemporary views of resurrection was therefore a way of demonstrating that the believers doing the miracles after the Lord's resurrection were being presented to society as Jesus *redivivus*; as if they truly were the body of Jesus revived. Which of course they were, and we are. Paul uses the same Greek word translated "show forth themselves" to describe how the Lord Jesus worked through both Peter and himself through the doing of miracles (Gal. 2:8; 3:5).

*Mighty works*- The Greek could more likely mean 'the powers', a reference to the popular beliefs in various 'powers' rather than one God. Jn. 10:41 is plain that "John did no miracle", and yet such was the evident spirituality of John that the theory quickly arose that the miracles of Jesus were really being done by John *redivivus*.

14:3 *Laid hold on*- The Greek means just that, but it is possibly mistranslated in Jn. 20:23: "Whosoever sins you retain ['lay hands on'], they are retained". The idea is that we can in some cases obtain forgiveness for others' sins; but we must beware lest we lay hands on their sin and

commit it ourselves. This is exactly the teaching of Jude- to reclaim others who are in sin, whilst being careful not to become contaminated by their sins rubbing off on us. Herod and his servants (:2) had laid hold on John, bound him, and cast him into prison. These are all terms used elsewhere about how the Lord Jesus will do exactly the same in condemning people at the last day. His servants (Mt. 22:13) shall lay hold of them (Rev. 20:2), bind them (Mt. 22:13) and cast them into prison (condemnation- Mt. 18:30). And these terms are also used about what happened to the Lord Jesus in His death: laid hold on by servants at a king's command (s.w. Mt. 26:4,48,50,57) bound (Jn. 18:12), to prison (Lk. 22:33). Herod is therefore being set up here as an anti-Christ, a fake Christ. And the Lord's death is again described in similar terms to that of John, whose ministry He continued. The way disciples came seeking the body is another point of connection. As events unfolded with the Lord's arrest and binding, He would've surely perceived the connection with John. And would've likewise seen how He was as it were going through the process of condemnation, being treated as a sinner, although He was not one. This means that He has even more so the right to condemn men, because in essence He knows the condemnation process. And it gives Him the ability to identify with those who in this life are currently under condemnation for their sins, and seek to lead them out of that position.

*His brother Philip's wife-* Josephus claims that she was in fact married to another relative, not Philip, before she married Herod (*Antiquities* 18:136). We can simply decide to trust the Biblical record over Josephus. Or it could be that Josephus refers to a previous relationship she had. See on 14:10 for another conflict with Josephus.

14:4 *Not lawful-* The laws of Lev. 18:16; 20:21 were applicable to Jews; which opens the wider question as to whether we ought to be drawing the attention of the world to their disobedience to Biblical principles, even though they do not claim any faith in the Bible. Criticizing others' ways of living leads to anger if the point isn't accepted; and we have a classic case of it here. The Herods were from Idumea, but although they weren't ethnic Jews, they claimed to be religious Jews. So it could be that John's attitude was that if someone considered themselves as being under God's law, then they should be obedient to it and were therefore culpable before Him for disobedience to it. In this case, we do not actually have here any reason to think that a Christian's duty is to lobby the unbelieving world leaders to be obedient to God's law.

14:5 *Would have put him to death-* The same Greek words used about Herod wanting to kill Jesus in Lk. 13:31.

*Feared the crowd-* Another similarity with the plans of the Jewish leadership to kill Jesus, and being frustrated by "the crowd" because they counted him as a prophet (the very same words are

used in Mt. 21:46); see on 14:3 *laid hold on*. These similarities between the deaths of John and Jesus draw a parallel between the despised Gentile Herod (regarding John and the Jewish leadership (regarding Jesus). Yet again, highly religious, legalistic people who have rejected the spirit of Jesus are equated with the very worst of the Gentiles.

*Counted him-* As made explicit in chapters 12 and 13, the crowds did not accept the essential message of John- but they fiercely defended him as a prophet, speaking God's word. Acceptance of an inspired word is one thing, but to grasp the essence of the Lord Jesus is quite another.

*A prophet-* A manipulative woman arranging the death of a prophet through a weak willed ruler recalls Jezebel in 1 Kings 21; and she was a protagonist of Elijah, upon whom John the Baptist was clearly modeled.

14:7 This continues a theme we find in the book of Daniel- powerful rulers making a rash oath and feeling forced to carry it out because of shame and the pressure of courtiers. The contrast with God, the ultimate ruler, is not that He is not so rash and not manipulated by His subjects. Rather the contrast is surely that Yahweh *does* change, He has no fear of shame or being shamed; such is His grace that when He sees a repentant Nineveh, He *does* change His original intention. The fear of shame and pressure from the eyes of others is what leads so many leaders into behaviour and positions which are against their better judgment. There is no shame in change. Indeed, change is part of real spirituality.

*Whatever she asked-* Mk. 6:23 "Up to half my kingdom". This is alluding to the king's promise to Esther in Esther 5:23, but it seems an allusion with no context or specific meaning, for Herodias was not at all Esther.

14:8 *Give me here-* The emphasis on "here" is strange. She wanted the head brought in before everyone. This rather strongly contradicts Josephus' claim that John was beheaded in the Machaerus fortress, a long way from Herod's court.

*Head on a platter-* The feast would have been full of plates with various dishes. The idea was that the head would be offered for eating. The implication is that the head would've been brought immediately, which suggests that John was imprisoned nearby. This again rules out Josephus' claim that John was beheaded in the Machaerus fortress, far from Herod's palace in Tiberias. The offering of a head on a platter is full of allusion to pagan ritual. Herod, as one who claimed to be

an observant Jew, was now forced to choose- between being a serious Jew, following Divine principle, or a pagan. He was forced to decide- and chose wrongly. He had earlier wanted to kill John, and now his evil thought was being brought to action, in a powerful outworking of the Lord's principle that the thought is indeed counted as the action. We ask, naturally, why it all had to be as it was. John would've carefully reflected upon the life of Elijah, and John would've seen the parallel between Jezebel and the manipulative women behind his own death- and taken comfort from that in his last moments: that he was in fact the Elijah prophet.

14:9 *Was sorry-* And yet we learnt in :5 that Herod had wanted to kill John because John had criticized Herod's lifestyle. We may feel flushes of anger against a person, but if it were to come to actually carrying out what we imagine- we would likely regret it.

*The oath's sake-* A *horkos* was not merely a verbal promise; although he was not ethnically Jewish, Herod claimed to be a practicing Jew, and an 'oath' would've been something like 'May I be eternally condemned at the last day if I do not...'. Peter used the same oaths in denying the Lord. And so we see the torture of this unhappy man- asking himself to be condemned if he didn't do something which surely warrants eternal condemnation. The only way out was to *change*, to re-pent, to re-think; to recognize that he was not going to get out of this without a deep repentance.

14:10 *He sent and beheaded John-* The implication is that the court party was held close to the prison. This would have been most unlikely if Josephus is correct in claiming that John was imprisoned and beheaded in the fortress of Machaerus. Herod's court was in Tiberias. See on 14:3. The implication of the language is that Herod took full responsibility for this- as if he personally beheaded John. And he realized this later in his conscience: "John whom I beheaded... John have I beheaded" (Mk. 6:16; Lk. 9:9).

14:11 *Brought on a platter... brought it to her mother-* The Greek for "brought" is used only four times in Matthew, twice in this verse, and three times in this chapter. The Lord uses the word of how He wished the loaves and fishes to be "brought" to Him for His Messianic banquet (Mt. 14:18). It may be that Herod's banquet is being set up in contrast to that of the Lord Jesus described later in the chapter.

14:12 *Took up the body*- The phrase is only used elsewhere about Joseph taking up the body of the Lord Jesus after His death (Jn. 19:31,38). And doing the same with it- burying it. He was likely one of the followers of John the Baptist, and his fine action here was surely motivated by the memory of those brave brethren who ‘took up the body’ of John. The example of devotion shown by believers can inspire later believers in different contexts. The power of example is far greater than we can ever imagine.

*Went and told Jesus*- The same Greek words are found in Jn. 20:18. Here, after the ‘taking up of the body’ of the Lord Jesus and ‘burying’ it, just as had been done to John’s corpse, Mary “went and told” the disciples. The disciples “went and told Jesus” of John’s death; now, Mary goes to tell the disciples of the Lord’s resurrection. The similarity of language and yet the inversion of the ideas is all surely intentional. The intention is to show that the tragedy of John’s death was vindicated and gloriously reversed in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

14:13 *Hearing this*- Therefore the feeding of the five thousand came some time before the parables of chapter 13, and is not in chronological sequence; it is part of the flashback to John’s death. Perhaps the intention is to present the Lord’s banquet as the antithesis of Herod’s banquet which led to John’s execution. We see here yet another insight into the Lord’s humanity. Knowledge of John’s death wasn’t beamed into the Lord’s mind; He didn’t have the total omniscience of God. For He was not God Himself, but the human Son of God. He had to be informed of some things before He knew them. And He reacts in a very human way- He wants to go away on His own with His closest friends to reflect upon the death of a relative and co-worker. But again, in a typically human way, His plan to have time out relatively alone was thwarted- despite His intention to get away alone, or at least just with His close friends, the crowds heard He had been spotted heading out to an uninhabited area, and followed Him there by foot.

*Desert*- There are no deserts near the Sea of Galilee; the idea is ‘a deserted place’ (there was grass there, :19). Lk. 9:10 says that it was near to Bethsaida. This indicates the literal accuracy of the Gospels, because Bethsaida was just outside the boundary of Herod’s jurisdiction, and it would be understandable that after his execution of John, the disciples and Jesus might want to be outside of his territory.

*On foot*- This is added to demonstrate their commitment to hearing Him teach. Why were they so keen to make such effort to get to Him? Mt. 13:54-58 records how the Lord taught in the

synagogue but didn't get a good response, nor did He do many miracles there because of their unbelief. But now He leaves, and the people flock after Him. This may be understandable just in terms of basic psychology- when a wonderful offer is not taken up but appears to be receding, people then desperately grab onto it. Perhaps that's why the Lord seems well disposed to these people- healing and feeding them (see on :22). But we also get the impression that the Lord was not constantly available for teaching and healing. I have previously remarked that the intensity of some of the days which the Gospels record was surely not repeated every day of His ministry. It seems He spent most of His time training the twelve and only occasionally made public appearances to teach and heal.

The Lord in Jn. 6 comments upon their efforts. The people laboured in that they walked around the lake in the boiling midday sun in order to be with Christ and perhaps benefit from the physical food He might provide. He tells them not to labour for the food which would perish, but for that which would endure for ever. The labouring of those people, trekking around that lake in the heat of the day, should be the effort we put in to eating the manna of God's word- according to how the Lord. There was a theme of urgency in Israel's gathering of the manna; it had to be gathered before the sun was up, or it would be lost. Would that we could have that same sense of urgency as we read, realizing that the rising of the sun at the second coming of will put an end to our opportunity to feed and grow. If Israel didn't gather the manna, or if they left it to another day, it bred worms and stank. The active anger of God was to be expressed against those who didn't take the wonder of the manna seriously. So our gathering of the manna / word must be taken seriously; it's not a question of skim reading familiar words, or doing mental gymnastics with it in an intellectual world of our own. The people had walked all round the lake to see Jesus and get some food from Him. In typical style, He responded: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (Jn. 6:27). They ask what they can *do* that they might work / labour [same Greek word] the works of God; and they are told that the real work / labour which God requires is to believe (Jn. 6:28). To truly believe, to the extent of being sure that we will surely have the eternal life promised, is the equivalent of walking round the lake. We like those crowds want to concretely *do* something. The young man likewise had asked what good thing he must *do* in order to get eternal life (Mt. 19:16). But the real work is to *believe*. To really make that enormous mental effort to accept that what God has promised in Christ will surely come true for us. The proof that this is so is because Jesus really said these words, and "him hath God the Father sealed", i.e. shown His confirmation and acceptance of. So again we come down to the implications of real basics. Do we believe Jesus existed and said those words? Yes. Do we believe the Biblical record is true and inspired? Yes. Well, this Jesus who made these promises and statements about eternal life was "sealed" / validated by God. Do we believe this? Yes. So, what He said is utterly true.

14:14 *Went forth*- We could picture Him hiding away in some cave or bush, noticing the crowds combing the area, having spotted the abandoned boat. And then battling with a desire to retreat further into the bush away from them, or to send them away- but instead having compassion on them and going out to meet them with teaching and healing. But that is unlikely the right reading, because Mk. 6:33 notes that some of the people who ran around the lake got to the destination before they did. The 'coming forth' would therefore have been coming forth from the boat to land. That moment is perhaps noted because the obvious inclination would have been to sail further and find a better resting place, far from this irritating crowd.

*Took pity*- Mark adds the reason- "because they were as sheep having no shepherd" (Mk. 6:34). His pity was therefore for their spiritual state rather than their material need. This being 'moved with compassion' is a major characteristic of the Lord which the Gospel writers noticed (s.w. Mt. 9:36; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34 in Matthew alone- see too Lk. 7:13; 10:33; 15:20). The Greek speaks of a literal movement within the ribcage, as if the Lord's actual body was moved by the compassion He felt. The Lord Jesus is the same yesterday, today and at the day of judgment- and forever. This same basic pity is part of Him, as it is of His Father- and it must be with us too. Several times when we read of the Lord showing such pity, it is in the context of others *not* doing so. In this instance, the disciples don't want to feed the hungry people; and likewise in Mt. 15:32. In Mt. 18:27 the compassion of the Lord to His indebted servant was not reciprocated by that servant; the Samaritan of the parable had compassion when the priest and Levite did not (Lk. 10:33); the Father had compassion on the prodigal son when the older brother did not (Lk. 15:20). Such compassion is therefore an act of the will, rather than a streak some are born with. We can shut up our "bowels of compassion" against human need (1 Jn. 3:17), we have to "put on... bowels of mercies" (Col. 3:12).

14:15 *His disciples came to Him*- The implication is that they weren't standing by Him, but rather watching cynically from a distance. Which explains their harsh attitude to the crowds. After all, they too had been followers of John the Baptist, they too wanted to get away on their own to mourn the news of His death. They probably felt the Lord should've sent away the multitudes from the start. It's not hard to sense that the record paints the disciples negatively at this time. But who wrote this record? The Gospels are transcripts of how the disciples preached the Gospel. Despite the process of inspiration, the disciples in their recounting of the Gospel repeatedly mentioned their own weakness, and thereby would've come over as all the more credible to their audience. And in this we see a fine pattern for our own witness.

*The time is now past*- "Past" translates *parerchomai*; the Lord uses a similar word in replying that "they need not *depart*"- *aperchomai*. This word choice not only aided memorization of the

Gospel record. The disciples considered that time had more than gone, that it was inevitable that the Lord must now send the crowd away, and should've done earlier. But He is saying that actually He is not limited by time, the time didn't have to be "past"; because He was not limited by food either, and could feed them.

*Send the crowds away-* Twice they wanted to turn away those who wished to come to Jesus, and whom He wished to accept (Mt. 14:15; 15:23). As with the two miracles of bread, the second incident was giving them the opportunity to learn the lesson from the first incident- and yet they failed. Likewise they "forbad" John's disciples just as they wrongly "forbad" the little children to come to Him (Lk. 9:50).

*Buy themselves food-* Seeing most of the people were poor, and were likely subsistence farmers, it is most unlikely they had money to buy food. And 5000 men plus women and children would've meant a crowd of 10,000 at least- the few shops in those tiny hamlets would've been totally unable to provide for them. Here again we see the insensitivity of the disciples being related in the narrative which they themselves told after the resurrection. The apparently redundant "buy *themselves*" may suggest the disciples' bitterness and resentment at the apparent expectation of the crowd that the Lord was to provide food for them. The only other time we meet the phrase is when the wise virgins tell the foolish to go and 'buy for themselves', and refuse to give their oil to them. Perhaps the Lord built that phrase into the parable because the disciples had earlier used it- and by His provision, He had effectively rebuked them for doing so.

*Therefore* His idea may be that the wise are to give to the foolish *in this life*, both oil and the bread of salvation- but at the Lord's return, it will be impossible to do so.

14:16 *They need not depart-* See on :15 *the time is now past*. They ask the Lord to send the multitude away (Mk. 6:36), whereas Jesus later taught by word and example, that whoever came to Him He would not turn away (Jn. 6:37). Mark and Matthew present themselves, the disciples, as seriously out of step with their Lord at this time. And surely the communities which they were establishing were likewise tempted to 'send away' or deny fellowship to those whom the Lord would have them fellowship.

*You give them-* According to Jn. 6:5, the Lord also asked: "From whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?". Even if money was no issue, the village shops simply had nowhere near the amount of food required. So in "You give them...", the stress was not only on the word "you". Perhaps it was more so on the word and concept of "give", standing as it does in contrast to the

disciples' unrealistic and harsh expectation that these poor people go to a village and *buy* food. Surely the Lord had in mind Is. 55:1,2: "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food". He intended the disciples to see the connection and to figure that He would even provide them with free food, because they were seeking His word. We are confirmed in this idea by the way that He appealed to the crowd in the same discourse: "Labour not for the food which perishes" (Jn. 6:27), which is surely an allusion to Is. 55:2. Perhaps the disciples got the point- perhaps not. Often the Lord sets us up with situations in which we are intended to have our minds sent back to a Biblical verse or precedent as encouragement and guidance for us in our decisions. Whether or not we grasp it is a matter partly of our familiarity with the text of Scripture, but more significantly, our openness to this kind of spiritual prompting, and the idea of God's word being part of a living, two-way dialogue between Him and ourselves.

The Lord told the disciples to feed the crowd, when they had nothing to give them (Mk. 6:37). He was actually quoting from 2 Kings 4:42, where the man of God told his servant to do the same. He gave what bread he had to the people, and miraculously it fed them. The disciples don't seem to have seen the point; otherwise, they would have realized that if they went ahead in faith, another such miracle would likely be wrought. But it seems that God almost over-ruled them to make the response of the faithless servant of 2 Kings 4:43: "Shall we... give them to eat?" (Mk. 6:37). They were almost 'made' to do this to make them later see the similarity with the 2 Kings 4 incident. If they had been more spiritually aware at the time, the Lord's quotation would have been a fillip for their faith.

When the Lord calmly bid them feed the huge crowd with just a few loaves ("How many loaves have ye? Go and see" (Mk. 6:38)), we are left to imagine those men, almost paralysed and certainly gobsmacked by the extent of the demand, awkwardly going away to count their few loaves. He could be seen as a demanding Lord. The Lord Jesus said many "hard sayings" which dissuaded people from seriously following Him. He kept speaking about a condemned criminal's last walk to his cross, and telling people they had to do this. He told them, amidst wondrous stories of flowers and birds, to rip out their eyes, cut off their limbs- and if they didn't, He didn't think they were serious and would put a stone round their neck and hurl them into the sea (Mk. 9:42-48). He healed a leper, and then spoke sternly to Him (Mk. 1:43 AV mg.).

It makes a good exercise to re-read the Gospels looking out for cases of where the Lord urged the disciples to not look at Him as somehow separate from themselves, an automatic Saviour from

sin and problems. Thus when it was apparent that the huge, hungry crowd needed feeding, the Lord asked the disciples where “*we*” could get food from to feed them (Jn. 6:5). In all the accounts of the miraculous feedings, we see the disciples assuming that Jesus would solve the situation- and they appear even irritated and offended when He implies that this is *our* joint problem, and *they* must tackle this seemingly impossible task with *their* faith. The mentality of the disciples at that time is that of so many Trinitarians- who assume that ‘Jesus is the answer’ in such a form that they are exempt from seeing His humanity as a challenge for them to live likewise.

The disciples, in John’s record, complain: “From whence shall *we* find bread in the wilderness?”. The record of the disciples' murmuring in John 6 reflects how influenced they were by the Jews around them. "The Jews then murmured at him", and the Lord rebukes them: "Murmur not among yourselves". But then we read of how "Jesus knew in himself that his disciples were murmuring" (Jn. 6:40,43,61). And again, remember that these gospel records were written by the repentant disciples, and they were using the example of their own weakness in order to appeal to others. The disciples appeared to share Judaism's idea that Moses never sinned. When the Lord challenges them to find food for the crowd in the desert, they quote Moses' hasty words: "Whence shall I have flesh to give unto all this people?"; and note Moses almost mocks God by saying that all the fish of the sea wouldn't be enough to feed the people (Num. 11:13,22). Faced with the same need for bread and fish, the disciples justified their lack of faith by quoting Moses, apparently unwilling to accept that Moses' words at that time were not of faith. The way everything worked out, they doubtless learnt that Moses, like them, was of imperfect faith and spirituality.

14:17 *We have here-* Jn. 6:9 says that they said: “There is a lad here, which has five barley loaves and two small fishes”. The boy out of the crowd gave the bread to the disciples- for now, the bread is no longer ‘his’, but belongs to ‘the disciples’. Then they gave it to Jesus. He then gives it back to the disciples, and they give it back to the crowd, including to the boy. We see in this cycling around of the bread an eloquent picture of the Lord’s humanity. What little the crowd of humanity had was taken by the Lord and transformed by Him into what could save them; and in this sense, the bread was ‘sent down’ from Heaven, in John’s terms, even though it was a recycling of the peoples’ own bread.

The very human perspective of the disciples is almost predictably brought out by their response to the Lord’s question to them about where to get bread to feed the hungry crowd. “Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient” was Philip’s response (Jn. 6:7). Andrew’s comment that they had five loaves and two fishes surely carried the undertone that ‘...and that’s not even

enough for us, let alone them- we're starving too, you know!'. The disciples wanted the crowd sent away, to those who sold food, so that they might buy for themselves (Mt. 14:15). As the Lord's extended commentary upon their reactions throughout John 6 indicates, these responses were human and selfish. And yet- and here is a fine insight into His grace and positive thinking about His men- He puts their very words and attitudes into the mouth of the wise virgins at the very moment of their acceptance at the day of judgment: "The wise answered [the foolish virgins] saying, Not so, lest there be not enough [s.w. "not sufficient", Jn. 6:7] for us and you; but got ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves" (Mt. 25:9). Clearly the Lord framed that parable in the very words, terms and attitudes of His selfish disciples. He counted even their weakness as positive, and thus showed His desire to accept them in the last day in spite of it. Another reading of the connection would be that the Lord foresaw how even in the final moment of acceptance into His Kingdom, right on the very eve of judgment day, His people would still be as hopelessly limited in outlook and spiritually self-centred as the disciples were that day with the multitude. Whatever way we want to read this undoubted connection of ideas, we have a window into a grace so amazing it almost literally takes our breath away.

14:18 *Bring them hither to Me*- The word "hither" would appear to be redundant in terms of the meaning if the Lord simply meant 'OK, give them to Me'. He wanted to focus the disciples upon the need for His personal presence and involvement with whatever we are willing to give Him. The loaves and fishes had to be brought *here*, to Him, and the miracle would proceed only once they were in His hands.

14:19 *Took the five loaves... brake*- The zoom of Matthew's camera is now very close up. We are invited to play 'Bible television' with the language and re-live it all again.

*Looking up to Heaven*- This detail not only suggests the close fellowship enjoyed between the Father and Son, to the extent that the Lord could pray with open eyes looking up to Heaven, knowing there was no barrier between Him and God. But we also as it were have the camera zoomed in upon the Lord, yet another indication that we have in the Gospels an eye witness account. Likewise the Lord's way of looking up was noticed in Lk. 19:5; 21:1.

*The disciples*- Clearly the record is structured to show how the Lord worked through them. In giving the bread of life to the world, the Lord usually works through some kind of human mechanism rather than as it were parachuting His word and salvation directly to a person. There was no word from the Lord that He had performed the miracle of multiplication- the disciples had to go forth in faith and start distributing the bread and fish. Presumably He broke the five loaves into 12 parts, and the two fish likewise. The disciples, each holding a small piece of bread and fish in their hands, in turn went to the crowds and broke it further- and never ran out. It was

indeed a sign of their faith that they participated, risking looking foolish as they first began. This is indeed an accurate picture of our fears as we go out into this world with the Lord's salvation.

Time and again, it becomes apparent that the Lord especially designed incidents in His men's experience which they would learn from, and later be able to put to use when similar experiences occurred after He had ascended. This was essential to the training of the twelve disciples. Thus He made *them* distribute the food to the multitude (Jn. 6:11); yet after His ascension, we meet the same Greek word in Acts 4:35, describing how they were to distribute welfare to the multitude of the Lord's followers.

14:20 *Did all eat*- See the special section about the openness of Jesus.

*Ate and were satisfied*- Perhaps alluding to Dt. 8:10, "you shall eat and be full".

*The fragments*- Why this feature in both the feeding miracles? In Mt. 16:9,10, the Lord asks the disciples to recall how many baskets they took up after each miracle- in order to help them to show faith in another time of need. The details of the Lord's past actions with us need to be remembered- because they are designed to fortify us in future tests of faith. We sense that all along, the Lord was working with the disciples (just as He does with us) according to a specific program, tailor made for them, designed to lead them from one spiritual level to another whilst re-enforcing the points learnt.

*That remained*- Eph. 1:8 talks of how God has lavished or *abounded* His grace upon us. The same word is used about the Lord not only made miraculous loaves and fishes, but there was so much that *abounded* (AV "that remained") that it filled twelve baskets (Mt. 14:20). Why did the Lord do that, and why make the disciples pick up all those crumbs? Surely to give them an object lesson in how God delights in abounding to us. He didn't just give the people food; He abounded to them. The record of each of the feeding miracles, in each of the Gospels, uses this word translated "remained" in commenting about the fragments that were left over- although the real meaning is 'to abound'. Each of the Gospel writers was therefore deeply impressed by the fact that the Lord not only provided food- but such an abundance. All this sets the background for Paul's use of the very same word to describe how God's grace has "abounded" to us in Christ (Rom. 3:7; 5:15; Eph. 1:8).

*Baskets*- A different word to that used in the feeding of the 4000 in Mt. 15:37. This here in 14:20 is the smaller basket, used for carrying ritually clean food when in Gentile areas.

14:21 *About five thousand men*- It is tempting to try to work out some significance in the figures here and in the feeding of the 4000 recorded in Mt. 15. Five loaves and two fishes fed 5000 with 12 baskets taken up; seven loaves and a few fishes fed 4000 with seven baskets taken up. With the food distributed each time by 12 disciples. One observation would be that the total number of loaves used was 12, which was the number of loaves required for the showbread (Lev. 24:5). The loaves in totality represent the Lord Jesus, the bread of God's presence in Israel, offered to all and sundry- not just to the priests. The Lord had made the same point in reminding Israel that David and his men had eaten the showbread- the things considered exclusively for the religious elite were now open to all, women and kids and Gentiles included. The very same Greek phrase "about five thousand men" occurs in Acts 4:4, to describe the total number of converts made by the disciples in the very early days of the church. Surely there must be some connection here. As the disciples moved amongst the crowds, each of them repeatedly breaking the bread of Christ to the multitudes, they were being trained towards the day when they would move amongst other multitudes preaching Christ and baptizing people into Him. It would seem that there were two major incidents when the disciples preached and performed mass baptisms; the 3000 in Acts 2:41, and then either 2000 or 5000 (depending how one reads the Greek) in Acts 4:4. These days of mass baptisms were probably never repeated in the history of the early church; and so the two feeding miracles were to prepare them for those two later incidents. In our yearning to attach meaning to event, we too can be encouraged that what we currently cannot understand is likely preparation for some potential future calling for us at some point in the future.

*Beside women and children*- The Greek for "beside" can carry the sense of being separate from physically, as if the men were seated in a slightly different place to the women and children- which is just how a Middle Eastern feeding scheme would be run to this day.

14:22 *Sent the crowds away*- Jn. 6:15 says that the crowds wanted to "take him by force to make Him a king". Yet these were the same folk, it seems, who had showed little real faith in Him previously- see on :13 *on foot*. They were so fickle. They evidently saw the connection between the feeding miracle and Him being Messiah, but their understanding of Messiah was that He was to be a King offering immediate salvation. Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:9 claimed that "...as the former redeemer caused manna to descend... so will the latter redeemer cause manna to descend". We get the impression that the Lord felt under a sense of great urgency- He "constrained" the disciples to get into the boat and leave, whilst He sent the crowd away. Perhaps He felt that the crowd intended to make Him King and the disciples the leaders of their new *junta*, but by sending the disciples away, He was greatly reducing the chances of them doing this. However the other reason was simply that the disciples themselves were looking for an immediate

kingdom and glory, and He knew the temptation would be too great for them. He likewise works with us so often to deliver us from temptation He knows is too great for us.

*To go before Him-* The Lord told them to sail to the other side of the lake, but said that they would be 'going before Him'. The Greek could suggest that His words could have been understood as meaning that they would sail to that place, He would send the crowds away, and then go behind them- i.e., walking on the water. Of course, they could have understood 'going before Him' as meaning that He would join them there at a later stage. But as they sailed away, they must have debated whatever He meant. Because if He meant that He would join them there at a later stage, however was He going to walk there around the lake, whilst so desperately wanting the crowds to go away from Him? Remember He had no personal boat, and they were in a deserted location. Whichever exit He took, whichever way He walked around the lake, He would have the very people with Him whom He was so earnestly trying to avoid. Again, as in asking *them* to *give* and not *buy* food for the crowd, the Lord was stretching them. He wanted them to reflect upon His words, and if they had done, then logically they were intended to come to the conclusion that He was implying that He would walk over the water to them. And if they were Old Testament minded, they would have known the passages which spoke of Yahweh walking upon the water and the waves of the sea (Ps. 29:3,10; 77:19; Nah. 1:3; Hab. 3:15). When, therefore, the waves arose and they seemed likely to drown, they were intended to figure that He would come to them, manifesting Yahweh, walking upon the waves of the sea- to save them. Whether any of them did actually get that far in perception and faith seems doubtful. But I believe we can discern how the Lord was seeking to lead them and educate their faith. The tragedy is that so many of His detailed plans for us are likewise wasted because of our lack of spiritual perception, and allowing the immediacy of issues to obscure the clear light of His leadership through life.

However, Jn. 6:15-17 implies they got tired of waiting for the Lord Jesus to return from prayer, and so they pushed off home to Capernaum, leaving Him alone. Yet by grace He came after them on the lake, to their salvation.

14:23 *Sent the crowds away-* The phrase is repeated as in :22, probably in recognition of the miracle performed in managing to send these crowds away empty handed, with no visible Messianic Kingdom. At least, the power of personality in the Lord was very great to be able to get Himself out of this situation.

*Apart-* The term *kata idios* is used about 16 times in the Gospels, covering around 12 different occasions. The need to be alone with the Lord or with the Father is therefore a significant theme.

The Lord had departed to the deserted place because of this need to be *kata idios* (:13), but His plans were thwarted by the unexpected tenacity of the crowd in following Him there. In this we see another picture of His humanity. But ultimately, God granted Him the need He felt to be *kata idios*, to be alone with God. Perhaps one reason He so insistently sent both the crowd and the disciples away was because He knew He simply had to be alone with God. And there can be times like this for us too. No matter how stupid we might appear in secular life, there can be a time when you just have to go and sit in the toilet for 5 minutes in your lunch break and pray. The Lord uses the term in speaking of how we are each given something very personal which we are to use in His service- *kata idios*, 'alone by ourselves', or as in AV "according to his several ability" (Mt. 25:15). Each sheep is called by the Lord *kata idios*, AV "by name" (Jn. 10:3). And therefore the judgment of each believer will be *kata idios*, AV "according to his own labour" (1 Cor. 3:8). There is a very wide range of translations of this phrase. But the idea is that we were each individually called by the Lord and given different callings, and our judgment will be according to this. This is not to say that there is anything other than one basic faith, Gospel, Hope, Lord etc. But in many denominations and fellowships the idea is pushed that each believer must adopt an identical, detailed statement of understanding and calling. Yet in practice, the frames of our calling and the Lord's hopes for our responses vary significantly between individuals.

*To pray-* The fact the Lord Jesus prayed to His Father is one of the profoundest and logically strongest evidences that He was not God in any Trinitarian sense. The basic facts of the Gospel records were simply not given their full weight by the unBiblical politicians who first created the Trinity doctrine. The liberal theologian Hal Taussig observes that other theologians haven't written much about Jesus at prayer- for this very reason, that of itself it contradicts Trinitarian dogma: "Because Jesus at prayer confuses theological categories of "divine" and "human" (is there any need for a divine Jesus to pray?), theologians have rarely been interested in Jesus at prayer" (1). Taussig's question "is there any need for a divine Jesus to pray?" is ultimately impossible for Trinitarian apologists to answer.

*Was there alone-* This is a pointed repetition of the information that the Lord was there *kata idios*- alone apart, by Himself. His aloneness with God is being brought to our attention.

Prayer in one sense has to be a lonely experience. This is all surely why the Lord Himself is frequently pictured by the Gospel writers as making an effort to be alone in prayer to the Father (Mk. 1:35; 3:13; 9:2; Mt. 14:13,23; 17:1; Lk. 6:12; 9:28; 22:39,41). This is all some emphasis. Be it rising in the early hours to go out and find a lonely place to pray, or withdrawing a stone's throw from the disciples in Gethsemane to pray... He sought to be alone. Jn. 6:15 emphasizes this repeated feature of the Lord's life: "He departed again into a mountain himself alone". The

fact He often ["again"] retreated alone like this is emphasized by three words which are effectively saying the same thing- departed, himself, alone. Much as we should participate in communal prayers or in the prayers of our partner or our children, there simply has to be the time for serious personal prayer in our lives. And I have to drive the point home: *Are you doing this?* Putting it in other terms- are you alone *enough*. Incident after incident shows the Lord doing something alone, and then the disciples somehow being presented as doing the same. Take the way He departed "himself alone" when the crowd wanted to make Him king; and then soon afterwards we read that the crowd perceived that the disciples had likewise departed 'themselves alone' [same Greek phrase and construction, Jn. 6:15,22]. The point is that the world is presented as perceiving the disciples in the same terms and way as they did Jesus, even when, in this case, Jesus was not physically with them. And we too are to be "in Him" in our work of witness for Him.

14:24 *In the midst of the sea*- People at that time had a strong association between the sea and the forces of evil and condemnation; beginning with the condemnation of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, the Bible itself speaks of condemnation as being swamped at sea by the waves. The Egyptians perished "in the midst of the sea" (Ex. 14:23,27; Ez. 29:3); Jonah drowned "in the midst of the sea" (Jonah 2:3) as does the fool of Proverbs (Prov. 23:34), as did Tyre and the Gentile nations (Ez. 26:12; 27:26,27,32; 28:8; Ps. 46:2) and Babylon (Jer. 51:63). The disciples doubtless felt condemned. For there were these 12 Old Testament references to condemnation ringing in their Jewish ears. Their cry for salvation was therefore not merely for physical deliverance, but a cry for deliverance out of condemnation. They were "tossed with waves"- the very term used for the torment of the rejected (Rev. 14:10; 20:10). The disciples had earlier seen people who were tormented [s.w. "tossed"] being delivered by the Lord- to pave the way for them personally crying out for that same deliverance (s.w. Mt. 8:6).

14:25 *The fourth watch*- Between three and six a.m. This indicates how long they had been struggling. It is the same 'watch' of the night in which God used the sea to destroy the Egyptians and thus save His people (Ex. 14:20).

*Went unto them*- The Greek strictly means that He departed, He left to walk over the sea to them, in the fourth watch of the night. Mk. 6:48 adds the detail that "He would have passed by them". This is often His style to this day- it's not that He plays hard to get, but He wants to elicit in us a sense of our desperation for Him. Likewise He often asked sick people what He could do for them, when it was obvious what they wanted. For the same reason on the road to Emmaus, He made as if He would have gone further- to elicit in those disciples an urgent desire for fellowship with Him. The same word translated "passed by them" had just been used by the disciples in

saying that "the time is now *past*" and so the Lord should send the crowd away to feed themselves. The disciples likely realized that they were being corrected for their desire to turn away the crowds of people from the Lord; admittedly their motivation was poor, as the Lord seems to explain to them in John 6, but it was seriously wrong to turn them away.

Mk. 6:48 says that "He saw them toiling in rowing" and then, later, He went to them. He didn't literally see them rowing; but in His sensitive mind, He imagined just how it would be for them, and so He went to them.

*Walking-* The Greek *peripateo* means to walk *around* (from whence 'peripatetic'), and is used about our walk of life, career, habits etc. The impression is of the Lord walking around at ease upon the waves which were so frightening to the disciples. Walking on the sea, Jesus "would have passed by them" (Mk. 6:48). I don't suppose He *would* have done, because He was 'coming unto them', but this was how they perceived it – and thus the record stands written, from a human perspective.

14:26 *Troubled-* The word is specifically used in literature of troubled water (and in Jn. 5:4,7). The state of the water was as the state of their minds. Hence the power of the image of the Lord Jesus walking at ease upon that troubled water.

*It is a spirit-* The Greek *phantasma* could refer to a ghost, in which cases we see how under pressure, disciples return quickly to their previous belief systems. But the word could equally refer to an Angel. Their fear, and that fear being met with assurance *not* to fear, would then be typical of human reaction whenever Angels appear to them. The Lord's assurance that "It is *I*" would then be yet another evidence that the Lord Jesus was not an Angel (as the Watchtower wrongly claim).

*Cried out for fear-* These Greek words are only used together elsewhere in Rom. 8:15, where Paul says that we do not cry out in fear, but rather cry "Abba, Father". This would again present the disciples at this point as condemned and far from the right relationship with the Father and Son which they should've had. The point of the incident is that they were saved out of that, by grace.

14:27 *Take heart!-* They had at least twice heard the Lord comfort others with those words before healing them (Mt. 9:2,22). According to their recollection of His words, so their comfort would have been. And that principle applies to us today.

*It is I-* The *ego eimi* construction could be understood as an allusion to the Yahweh Name. They

were to understand Him as the fulfilment of the Old Testament language of Yahweh walking upon the raging sea. “It is I” could be a quotation of the Divine Name from Is. 41:4; 43:10. It is used in that context of not fearing the power of Assyria / Babylon. The Lord wanted the disciples to perceive that the huge waves were to be met with the same faith that the faithful remnant had in the face of the opposition of superpowers against Israel. However, it needs to be asked how else the Lord could have said “It’s Me!”. There are alternatives, but this is the phrase used. And yet on the other hand, the use of *ego eimi* is not necessarily an allusion to the Divine Name, because it is found on the lips of men in 2 Sam. 2:19 LXX; Mt. 26:22,25; Jn. 1:20,27; 9:8 and Acts 22:3 (see too Lk. 1:18,19). The question is: Did the Lord really expect the disciples to perceive such Scriptural allusions in the midst of panic and crisis? And if so, what was the point? For surely they were not in the midst of a quiet Bible class evening. The point likely was and is that in the heat of crisis, the spiritually minded will unconsciously perceive spiritual nudges from the Father and Son- and thus be strengthened to endure and decide rightly in the heat of crisis.

*Be not afraid-* A phrase so often on the Lord's lips to the disciples. They so often feared (Lk. 8:25; 9:34,45; Mk. 4:40; 6:50; 10:32); despite the Lord repeatedly telling them not to be afraid (Lk. 12:4,32; Jn. 14:27). Despite His high demands on the one hand, on the other, He was and is ever assuring His people of His total and saving love for them. Peter uses the same phrase when he in his turn urges us to not be afraid nor 'troubled'- the very word used about the troubled disciples on the water that night (1 Pet. 3:14; Mt. 14:26). The Lord likewise leads each of us through situations in order that we might then strengthen others in those situations. Paul's teaching in 2 Cor. 1:4-8 would seem to go as far as saying that in fact *all* we experience is in order that we might later give strength to others in similar situations. And this enables us, in broad terms at least, to attach meaning to event in a way which the unbeliever simply cannot.

The Qumran *Thanksgiving Hymns* are full of reference to the true Israel being saved from drowning in the sea of Gentile nations (1 QH 3:6,12-18; 6:22-25; 7:4,5). The *Testament of Naphtali* 6:1-10 speaks of “the ship of Jacob” almost sinking in a storm, but Jacob himself walks on the water to save her. Clearly the Lord has these popular images in mind, and is recasting them- Jesus is the founder of the new Israel as Jacob was of the old, his 12 disciples are as the 12 sons of Jacob. And the faithful Israel in the boat are in fact not very faithful, they are secular, non-religious very human Jews who have come to believe in Jesus as Messiah.

How exactly was Peter motivated to walk on water? We want to know, because it’s the motivation that we so urgently need. We read that the Lord “passed by”. This is the very language used in the Old Testament concerning theophanies, i.e. those times when God ‘passed by’ before His people, accompanied by earthquake, rain, wind, fire etc. These ideas all recur here in the account of Jesus ‘passing by’ before the fearful disciples. In Mt. 14:27 the Lord tells them: “It is I”. This was a reference to the “I am” of the Yahweh Name. Peter knew that it was Yahweh who walks upon the waves of the sea (Job 9:8), and so he asks that if Jesus is really “I am”, God manifest in flesh, then He will bid Peter also walk on the water. It was Yahweh whose way was *upon* the sea (Ps. 77:19 Heb.; Ps. 29:3). Indeed, the whole incident on the lake is almost

prophesied in Ps. 107. The people are hungry in desolate places (:4,5), they are filled by Yahweh with good things, as the Lord Jesus fed the multitude (:9); some go down to the sea in ships (:23); a storm arises, sent from God (:25); they are troubled and cry out (:27,28); and then Yahweh delivers them, bringing them to their desired haven (:28-30). Peter, I think, perceived all this. He saw that this Man from Nazareth was indeed manifesting Yahweh, and he is asking that he too will be a part of God's manifestation; he perceived that what was true of Jesus really could be true for us. If Jesus, manifesting Yahweh, walked upon the sea, then so could Peter. When Peter asks Jesus to "bid me come unto thee", the Greek word translated "come" is also translated "to accompany". He wanted to walk with Jesus on the water. He wanted to do what Jesus was doing. This of itself explains how the fact Jesus did what God did [e.g. walk on waves] doesn't mean He is "very God of very gods"- for Peter realized that he too could have a part in that manifestation. If Jesus was a man of our nature and yet God manifest, then, Peter reasoned, I too can manifest the Father. And the same is true for us, today. The reality of God's manifestation in the human Jesus should inspire us too to leave our comfort zones and enter the adventure of living Godly- living like God- in this present world. Peter "came down" out of the ship to go walking on water (Mt. 14:29). He is described as "coming down" [s.w.] in Acts 10:21, where he came down from the roof top and said: "Behold I am he whom ye seek; what is the cause wherefore ye are come?". "I am he" uses the same two Greek words as in Mt. 14:27, when the Lord says "It is I". Three Greek words occurring together like this is surely not incidental. Peter recalls when he 'came down' out of the ship- and now, he really is Christ-manifest. He speaks as Jesus did; and further, "I am he whom ye seek" and "wherefore [are ye] come" are the very phrases of Jesus in Gethsemane. The record is showing us that consciously or subconsciously, Peter is Christ-manifest now. The words and person of Jesus have all had such impact upon him that now for him, "to live is Christ". To 'come down' and manifest Him is what life is all about; Peter's coming down out of the ship is a cameo of a life lived like this, time and again manifesting Him, overcoming the fear, the cowardice of our brethren, the distractions of the life and world which surrounds us...to walk out unto Him.

14:28 *If it is you*- I suggested on Mt. 14:22 that the Lord had hinted that He would come to them walking on the water. Jn. 6:17 comments that the disciples were in the boat in the sea "and Jesus was not come to them"- suggesting He had promised to do so and they should have been looking for Him, walking on the water to them. Perhaps Peter had grasped this, and therefore reasoned that what the Lord could do, all in Him could likewise potentially be empowered to do. Another angle on Peter's question is that He realized that only the Lord would ask such a thing of His followers. No ghost, satan, Angel or other imagined entity would actually invite a disciple of Jesus to do such a thing. To challenge us to the very limit of human faith is indeed the Lord's unique and distinguishing characteristic. Yet another slant on Peter's words is provided by the consideration that the three Greek words translated "If it is you" are always used elsewhere in the Gospels about whether Jesus is indeed the Christ ("tell us *if it is you* the Christ", Mt. 26:63; Lk. 23:37,39; Jn. 1:25; 10:24). The miraculous providing of manna had been sure evidence that Jesus was indeed Messiah, the Christ. But they still doubted. But on the other hand, Peter was willing

to be persuaded again, and it is to his huge credit that he obeyed the Lord's invitation to get out of the boat and walk on the water.

Mark's account of this incident omits all reference to Peter walking on the water (Mk. 6:45-51). Yet there is good reason to think that Mark is really Peter's gospel; in characteristic humility, he emphasizes his failures and downplays his achievements in his Gospel record. Hence this omission of any reference to Peter's bravery may indicate that this incident places Peter in a positive light; it was a tremendous achievement, and he humbly declines to mention it.

*Bid me-* Peter's unswerving respect for his Lord's word is seen as he looked out of that sinking ship on Galilee, battling with his own humanity as he weighed up in his own mind whether to be spiritually ambitious enough to get down into that raging water. He only felt able to take such a leap of faith if he had Christ's word behind him. So he yelled out above the noise of the wind: "If it be thou, *bid me come* unto thee" (Mt. 14:28). In other words: 'With your word behind me, I'll have a go; without it, I won't'. How much spiritual ambition is there within us? Or do we huddle in the sides of the ship, or desperately expend our own strength to bring about our salvation, without even seeking the word of Christ? Peter's request to be bidden walk on the water was (typically) both full of faith and yet also tinged by an element of unspirituality. His words as recorded here ("If it is you, bid me come unto you on the water") appear strikingly similar to the LXX of 2 Kings 5:13, where a spiritually limited Naaman is rebuked for expecting to be asked to do something "demanding"- also connected with going into water!

*Come unto you-* The same words are used in describing how Peter obediently 'came unto' Jesus on the water (:29). This phrase is used multiple times in the Gospels for people coming to Jesus. The crowd had 'come unto Jesus' (Jn. 6:5) and the disciples had clearly not been happy about that, and wished to send them away. The crisis on the lake was not so much the Lord's punishment of the disciples for that attitude, but rather His attempt to teach them a better attitude (see on 14:30 *sink*). Now Peter realizes the need to come to Jesus and the grace of His 'coming to' them on the lake. This is why he asks to 'come unto' Jesus, rather than simply to walk on water. Never again would He despise those who wished to come to Jesus; Peter was asking permission to do what the crowd had done, and which he had despised them for doing- namely, coming to Jesus. The Lord's discourse afterwards emphasized the need to 'come to Him' and how all who were of God would come to Him and never be turned away (Jn. 6:35,37,44,45,65). Peter's desire to come to Him made Peter typical of all disciples. The same challenge, to leave the boat and walk on water, echoes down to us all. Peter as so many others had in a sense already 'come unto' Jesus but now he perceived that he was to come to Him again, going through a level of re-conversion.

*On the water-* The Lord walked "on the sea" (:25) but Peter asks to walk "on the water".

Different words are used. I would be open to suggestion as to the significance, if any, of this difference.

In the account of Peter walking on water, we have a cameo of what it means to walk out of our comfort zone. Peter asked the man on the water to invite him to walk on the water; for Peter knew that only Jesus would be that demanding. He's a demanding Lord for us too. Peter didn't have to get out of the boat. But He realized that following the Lord Jesus involves this stepping out of our comfort zone. For us, it may be making a radical donation of our money, our time, a donation that really hurts, that is significant, not a giving that is well within our comfort zone. Or it may be a radical forgiveness, a radical refusal to answer slander, to not fight back, to day after day live amidst provocation. This may be our walking out on the water. Picture Peter as he stood by the side of the boat, wind blowing his hair back and forth, rain driving into his forehead, his brethren muttering "You're absolutely *crazy*, there's no need for this...we're only going to have to save you ourselves". He must have felt so alone. There was no human encouragement. Probably his thoughts went back to the wife and kids he had left behind on the other side of the lake, in that humble home in that quaint fishing village. But his focus was upon one Man, the same Lord and Master whom we look out to from the sides of our ships. The sheer bravery of Peter's walking on water stands out. Was he afraid to walk on water? Of course he was. But he focused all his faith into the word of Jesus: "Come!". He overcame his fear to the point that he climbed over the sides of the boat. Picture him there, with one leg over the side and on the water, and the other still in the boat. He couldn't stay like that. He had to go only forward. The only thing that kept him back was fear. And it is basically *fear* which holds us within our comfort zones. Fear, fear, fear...that's all it is. To know 'truth' in its experiential sense should free us from fear; for fear is related to the unknown. God appeals to Israel: "Of whom has thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied?" (Is. 57:11). Fear leads to our abdicating from the responsibility of making choices; and this is why humanity has such a dearth of truly creative imagination, and why genuinely new ideas are so rare. But the true life in Christ is a life of repeatedly overcoming that fear, the fear which paralyzes, which holds you back. Let the widow woman of 1 Kings 17:13 be our heroine; she had totally nothing, just some flour; and she was hunting around in a parched land for two sticks with which to make a fire to bake it and eat her last meal, then to lie down in the dust of death. She must have been literally on her last legs. But then god through Elijah asked her to give Him even what terribly little she had. And Elijah encourages the frightened, wide-eyed woman: "Fear not!". And she went forward in faith and gave him her very last hope of life. Living at such an animal level would have made her very self-centred; but she stepped out of it in response to the Lord's challenge. Fear is, to my mind, the greatest single barrier to faith and true spirituality. It is fear alone which stops us from keeping commitments, from not entering into covenant relationship as deeply as we are bidden. This is why people shy away from covenant relationships, be they with the Father through baptism, or to another person through marriage or having children. Fear holds us back. We fear

even ourselves, our own spiritual capacity, our standing before the Father. Our inner anxieties, our unconscious inner conflicts as we stand with Peter on the edge of the boat, contemplating what walking on water concretely meant, often lead us to criticize others or to speak and act with a hypocritical bravado. Yet true faith asks us to risk. As a psychotherapist friend of mine once jotted to me: "We are asked to risk all we believe ourselves to be, we may find we're not what we thought ourselves to be, our constructs of the self will be pushed to the limit and we're afraid of what we may find of ourselves, that we may not be what we imagine ourselves to be in the construct upon which we have built our theories of the self. Obeying rules, staying within the construct, is much easier, much safer. We may have never tested ourselves in the real world. To launch off into the unknown, into a future that contains or may contain unknown risk, where our worst fears are realised, the greatest fear may be that we are failures... most of us, it would seem, don't have enough faith in there even being a God to risk even getting out of the boat let alone walking on the water". Don't underestimate the power of fear when it comes to walking on water. Nor let us fail to appreciate that the fearful are listed alongside the unrepentant whores and idolaters who shall remain outside the city of God (Rev. 21:8). Our thirst for love, our fear of death and spiritual failure before a perfect God, the fear of displeasing or misunderstanding the infinite God...these fears should all be taken away for the man or woman who is truly clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ. Yet they have a way of persisting in our weakness of faith. And so there develops a conflict between our true conscience and the false suggestions of our faithless fears. All this can lead to neurotic behaviour and a repression of conscience. The only way out of this is to boldly step forward as Peter did, albeit bricking ourselves as we do so.

14:29 *He said, Come-* The Lord's appeal to all men to 'come to Him' invites us to see ourselves as Peter, the prototype for all who would 'come unto Jesus'. Peter was asking to do as the Lord was doing- walking on water. Our coming to the Lord is therefore not merely an intellectual assent to a set of theology, however good that theology may be. The Lord defines coming to Him in practice as coming to the sick and imprisoned and thereby coming unto Him (Mt. 25:36).

*Come down-* The idea is 'to descend'. The boat was not that much above the water, but the point is being made that Peter 'came down' from it. The same word is used about how the disciples 'came down' to the sea as they boarded the boat (Jn. 6:16). And Peter is to descend yet lower when he sinks into the water. The impression is that the whole incident was intended to bring Peter down- and from thence to be raised up by the Lord's grace. The Lord's following discourse about Himself as the bread of life has many verbal connections with the incident on the lake which preceded it, as well as the feeding of the 5000 which had preceded that. Thus He emphasizes in the discourse the need to 'come' to Him, just as Peter had done. He also uses this same word for 'come down' to speak of how He too 'came down' as the bread of God (Jn. 6:33,38,41,42,50,51,58). It cannot be coincidental that this word has been used of the disciples 'coming down' into the boat (Jn. 6:16) and of Peter 'coming down' from the boat into the water

(Mt. 14:29). Surely the message is that in Peter's 'coming down', and indeed in the necessary 'coming down' in humiliation of all disciples- the Lord is with us and has passed through the same. The idea of 'coming down' suggests both humility, and also, in the context, manifesting God, being sent from God. But this very process means it is done in humility. The Lord developed the same theme with Peter when he later sees the sheet of unclean animals 'coming down' to him, and then he is commanded to 'come down' to the Gentiles waiting for him below (Acts 10:11,20,21).

*Walked on the water... to go-* The very words in Mk. 6:48 used about the Lord Jesus walking on the water to go to the disciples. Peter wanted to replicate exactly what his Lord was doing; and he knew that if it really was his Lord, then this was possible. As He is the light of the world, so are we. If we in Him, we too are Abraham's singular seed; all that is true of Him becomes true of us. And if He can walk on water, then given the appropriate motive, time and context, we too can do so.

At Peter's initial conversion, he had also been in his ship on the sea of Galilee, and had seen Jesus walking [s.w.] near the sea shore (Mt. 4:18). He left his boat, and responded to the call to follow Jesus. Now it's the same basic scene, but this time Jesus is walking not "by" the sea but "on" the sea. The similarity is perhaps to teach Peter that the Lord's real call may be repeated throughout our lives; the initial response may be relatively painless, but through the storms of life, the Lord teaches us as He did Peter how radical is the response required. To follow Him meant not merely walking away from the cares of this life, the boat, the nets, the fishing...but if Jesus walks on water, then those who follow Him must do likewise. And Peter, to his immense credit, perceived this; he saw his Lord walking on water as an imperative that demanded he do likewise. For him, Jesus wasn't just a Saviour on whose back he could ride to salvation in God's Kingdom. Yes, He is of course our saviour wherein we sink and drown in our weaknesses. But He is more than that; He is an inspiring example. His offer to walk on water wasn't motivated, therefore, by any form of inquisitiveness or daredevilery; the offer to walk on the water was rooted in his grasp that if this is where the Lord walks, then axiomatically, we must do likewise. When the Lord walked "by" the sea, Peter had come out of the boat and followed Him; now the Lord walks "on" the sea, Peter perceives that he must follow Him even there. For "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, as he walked" (1 Jn. 2:6- the same word is used as in the record of Peter's walking on water with Jesus, making it possible that John is upholding Peter's example for us all). For many, our conversions were relatively painless; indeed, for those raised in the faith, it may have been easier to get baptized than to walk away from it. But the essentially radical invitation to follow Jesus is repeated in later life; and the validity of our earlier choice to follow is put to the test by our later response to the same invitation.

14:30 *When he saw*- His focus wandered from Jesus, for one can only 'see' the wind by seeing what it blows. Perhaps his focus moved from the face of Jesus to His clothes, or maybe he even looked back to the sails of the ship being blown, or down to the waves beneath him. Our focus on the Lord's face likewise so easily wanders.

*Boisterous*- The Greek can strictly mean 'stronger, mightier', with the sense of comparison to something else- as in "one *mightier* than I" (Mt. 3:11), "a *stronger* than he comes" (Lk. 11:22). The wind seemed stronger to Peter- than what? Presumably- stronger than the power of Jesus. Maybe Paul had this in mind when he used the word in 1 Cor. 1:25; 10:22: "The weakness of God is *stronger* than men... [men] are not *stronger* than Him". Even though the Lord was Himself standing at ease upon those waves. Peter later uses a related word to speak of the strength or might which God gives in order to fulfil our ministry (1 Pet. 4:11). He had learnt the lesson- that nothing equals God's power, nothing is really stronger than Him. And yet any lack of faith in Him is effectively saying that there are winds or crises stronger than Him.

*He was afraid*- The record presents this as direct disobedience to the Lord's command "Be *not* afraid" (14:27). The Gospel records are transcripts of the preaching of the apostles, and they seem to love to emphasize their own weakness, especially that of Peter, their early leader, the rock upon whom the church was initially built. Such recognition of weakness should likewise stud our own presentations of the Gospel.

*To sink*- The same word is only used elsewhere in Mt. 18:6 where we read that those who turn away the little ones, as Peter and the other disciples had wished to do by wanting to send the crowd away, will be condemned by being cast into the sea where they will drown (s.w. "sink"). It wasn't that the Lord was punishing Peter for his attitude, but rather helping him realize that this was what condemnation would feel like for turning little ones away. We noted on 14:28 *come unto you* that the Lord's subsequent discourse when they reached land pointed out that their turning away of the crowd was the very opposite of His refusal to turn away any who come to Him. We must pause and reflect whether in any way we are turning the little ones away; or whether we are lending support to any church policy which results in that. Peter's experience of what condemnation would feel like surely empowered him never to do this in any way. Especially through supporting exclusions of the little ones from the Lord's table we run the risk of making the same mistake- with eternal consequences. We really must think through the implications of our positions, whatever it costs us in this brief life.

When Peter was sinking, he was living out the picture we have of condemnation at the last day. When we read that he began to "sink" into the sea of Galilee, this is exactly the image we find in Mt. 18:6, where the Lord says, in response to the question 'Who will be the greatest?', that he who offends one of the little ones will be drowned [s.w. "sink"] in the midst of the sea, His

audience would have immediately associated this with the midst of the sea of Galilee, just where the storm had occurred. Peter seems to have realized that this warning was pertinent to him, for it is he who then interrupts the Lord to ask how often he should forgive his brother (Mt. 18:21). Peter sinking into Galilee, giving up swimming but desperately throwing up his hand to the Lord [you don't swim with a hand outstretched], is the position of each person who truly comes to Christ. This is the extent of our desperation; baptism, conversion to Him, is most definitely not a painless living out of parental expectations. Note how they were "tossed" or 'tormented' (Gk.) by the raging waves (Mt. 14:24)- the very same word is used about how the rejected will be "tormented" in condemnation (Rev. 14:10; 20:10). Peter's salvation by the hand of the Lord was representative of us all. As he drowned there in the lake, he was effectively living out the condemnation of the last day. But he appealed urgently to the Lord: "Save me!". Later, Peter was to use the same words in his preaching, when he appealed to his nation to "save [themselves]" by calling on the name of the Lord, just as he had done on the lake (Acts 2:40). He saw that those people were in just the position which he had been in on the lake.

*Cried, saying-* The use of the two words highlights the significance of his words.

*Lord, save me-* Even in a moment of crisis, Peter's mind was in God's word; for here he is quoting from the urgent cry of the drowning man which is recorded in Ps. 69:1,2,14,15. This is where our subconscious absorption of God's word is so valuable. In the split second of crisis, the word comes to mind. The words are significant because they are the words used by Peter in urging others to call upon the same Lord to be saved. He was such a compelling preacher- persuading 3000 people to be baptized instantly- exactly because he had called out these very words himself. It is only by knowing our own desperation that we will be compelling preachers. No amount of artistry, presentation or wordsmithing can produce anywhere near the same effect. He encouraged the crowds to likewise call upon the name of the Lord and be saved (Acts 2:39). He saw himself then and there, in all his weakness and yet sincere desperation, as the epitome of us all. But the parallels don't stop there. Peter had asked the Lord bid him 'Come unto me' (Mt. 14:28). Yet this is the very language of the Lord to all: 'Come unto me...'. Yet Peter went further; in the same way as the Lord stretched forth His hand and saved Peter, so He stretches forth His hand, Peter observed, to save all who would come to Him (Mt. 14:31 = Acts 4:30). But Peter is framed as Jesus, in that he too stretched out his hand to save others as Jesus had done to him (Mt. 14:35 = Acts 5:15,16; Mt. 14:31 = Acts 3:7), bidding them come through the water of baptism as Jesus had done to him. As Jesus was worshipped after saving Peter, so men tried to worship Peter (Mt. 14:33 = Acts 3:11). So Peter went through what we all do- having been saved by Jesus, having come to Him and having been rescued by the outstretched arm, he responds to this by doing the same for others. When the Lord "caught" hold of Peter as he sunk in the waves (Mt. 14:31), a Greek word is used which occurs only once elsewhere: "He did not take hold [s.w. to catch] of Angels, but of the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16). The Hebrew writer was surely

alluding to the Lord's 'catching' of desperate Peter and pulling him to salvation- and saw in Peter a symbol of all those who will be saved by Christ.

Note that Peter cried out "*Lord, save me!*" when most men in that situation would have simply cried out "Save me!". But his grasp of the Lordship of the One he followed inspired faith. If He was truly Lord, He was capable of all things. "Lord, save me!" was a call uttered in a moment of weakness. His "sinking" (Mt. 14:30) is described with the same word used about condemnation at the last day (Mt. 18:6), and yet Peter in his preaching persuades condemned men to do just the same: to *call* on the *Lord* in order to be *saved* (Acts 2:21,40,47; 4:12; 11:14). He invited all men to enter into the weakness and desperation which he had known on the water of Galilee, and receive a like unmerited salvation. And when he tells his sheep that the righteous are "scarcely saved" (1 Pet. 4:18) he surely writes with memories of that same gracious deliverance. And in discussing ecclesial problems he points out that all of us have had a similar salvation, and should act with an appropriate inclusiveness of our brethren (Acts 15:11).

14:31 *Stretched forth His hand*- Peter again reflects his experience of personal salvation in his witness to others- for he likewise stretched out his hand to the lame man, and again with "immediate" effect, as here on the lake that night (Acts 3:7 s.w.). Peter felt that all the work he did by his own hand was effectively the Lord "stretching forth His hand to heal" (Acts 4:30). He realized that *his* hand was now the hand of Jesus, the same hand which had stretched forth [s.w. Acts 4:30] to save *him* on the lake that night. Our experience of salvation simply has to be re-enacted by us towards others. There is great emphasis in the Gospels upon the hands of Jesus- so often stretched out to heal, save and bless; the hands out of which no sheep can be taken, the hands into which all power has been given by the Father, the hands which were nailed through by men in their ignorance and rejection of God's salvation. And those hands are our hands. Think through this again- the Lord "stretched forth his hand" to save Peter (Mt. 14:31); and this is the very phrase used by Peter in Acts 4:30, speaking of how the Lord's hand is "stretched forth to heal". Peter saw himself on the lake as typical of all whom the Lord saves. Yet, it was *Peter*, not the Lord Himself, who stretched forth his hand to do the Lord's healing work on the lame man (Acts 3:7). Again, Peter is thinking back to the incident on the lake and perceiving that he is now Christ manifest as he had intended to be then. Thus it was the principle of God manifestation which inspired Peter to reach out of his comfort zone so dramatically; and properly appreciated, it can motivate us likewise.

*Caught him*- The writer to the Hebrews twice uses the same Greek word. First, in describing how the Lord Jesus 'caught hold' of all the seed of Abraham in His saving work (Heb. 2:16), and again in speaking of how God "took" [s.w. "caught"] Israel "by the hand" and redeemed them

from Egypt (Heb. 8:9). Peter is thus presented as everyman in Christ. He was saved out of condemnation, drowning in the waters for turning away the little ones. There is surely in each of us, looking back upon our lives, the sense that we were in His grip, and still are; He took hold of us, to save us. And there is a mutuality in this- for we too desperately catch hold of the hope of the Kingdom (s.w. 1 Tim. 6:12,19).

*Little faith-* A word used five times by the Lord, four of them recorded in Matthew (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31;16:8). It's as if Matthew loved to emphasize in his preaching how weak their faith had been.

*Wherefore?-* The *eis tis* construction means far more than "why?". The simple sense of "why?" could have been expressed in one word. This little phrase is elsewhere translated "to what purpose?" (Mt. 26:8; Acts 19:3). The idea would then be: 'You know you need saving. To what purpose is doubt? Will doubt save you? No. So, seeing that lack of faith will not save you, and you need saving, then totally believe in My ability to save you'.

*Doubt-* A form of the Greek for 'twice' or 'double'. James surely has the incident in mind when he warns not to be a double minded man, wavering in faith "like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:6,8). He is holding up Peter- leader of the early church to whom he was writing- as the example of how *not* to be. This is no evidence of any tension between James and Peter; rather is it typical of what Peter himself does, in drawing attention to past weakness and development from that weakness as the sign of real spiritual strength and the basis for legitimate respect. James is clearly telling his readers not to be like Peter. It is easy for our reaction against Catholic extremism to lead us to under-estimate the high status of Peter in the early church. Here was James, also a respected elder, telling the flock to take a snapshot of their great leader Peter in his moment of weakness on the lake- and not be like him! Leaders of worldly organizations have a way of telling the flock that all their fellow leaders are as spotless as they are. But this wasn't the case in the early church. It was Peter's very humanity which was and is his inspiration.

14:32 *When they-* Jesus and Peter. The "they" is contrasted with the "they" who were still in the ship (:33). The word picture is of Jesus and Peter united very closely.

*Ceased-* Gk. 'grew weary', as if there was a brief period over which the raging decreased.

John speaks in his Gospel of those who received Christ (Jn. 1:12,16; 3:32 etc.)- and it is in allusion to this that he speaks of how the disciples 'received Christ' into their ship whilst about to drown on Galilee (Jn. 6:21). Their desperation as they faced death was understood by John as a symbol of the desperation of all those who truly receive Christ. But without perceiving our desperation, can we properly 'receive' Him?

14:33 *They that were in the ship*- They are not simply called 'the disciples', perhaps because as Matthew retold the Gospel, he felt that at that time they were not worthy of the name. The desire to send away the crowd hungry was such a major failure. And it makes sense that in the process of retelling the Gospel to audiences (of which the Gospel records are transcripts), Matthew would emphasize this- that the Lord turned nobody away, and neither would the apostles who were now retelling the story- because they had learnt how wrong that would be.

*Came and worshipped Him*- Let's not miss the significance of the fact they 'came' to Him. The same word has been used of Peter 'coming' to the Lord on the water (:28,29), of the crowd 'coming' to Jesus immediately prior to their departure in the boat (Jn. 6:5), and the Lord will go on straight away to teach the need to 'come' to Him (Jn. 6:35,37,44,45,65). Peter's example inspired them all. They too realized that the crowd had not been wrong to 'come to Jesus', and that they had been wrong to want to send them away (Mt. 14:15); for they had been saved exactly because Jesus does not send away any who come to Him (Jn. 6:37). Those who were in the ship came and worshipped Him after He came into the ship- suggesting that they kept themselves at some distance from Him and Peter, marvelling at Him, realizing their unworthiness, and therefore cowering around the sides of the boat.

*Truly You are the Son of God*- The implication is that they had doubted it previously. The miracle of feeding 5000 people surely had elicited faith in them that He was God's Son. But when He appeared silent to their needs when about to die on the lake, they started to lose that faith- just as we can, when the Lord doesn't act as we think He should or when He appears completely silent. The title they use is "Son of God" when they could just as easily have called Him 'Messiah' or some other equivalent term. Because He acted as God, whose voice is greater than stormy winds (Ps. 148:8) and who walks upon the waves of the sea- they therefore concluded and intuitively felt that He must be God's Son. And yet when Trinitarians perceive that Jesus did things which the Father is spoken of as exclusively doing, they conclude that 'Jesus is God'. But that was never the conclusion of the disciples- their conclusion and immediate, intuitive feeling was that therefore this Son of man must be also Son of God. And that is indeed the Biblical position. The only other person who cried out "Truly [this was] the Son of God" was the Centurion at the cross (Mt. 27:54- the same three Greek words are used). Our experience of the cross likewise leads us to the same position as the disciples upon the lake. And it seems likely that this exclamation that 'I truly believe Jesus is God's Son' was one of the declarations made by baptismal candidates in the early church (as it was in Acts 8:37). In this case, Matthew and the apostles would have been holding up their own conversion experiences as a pattern for other believers, just as Paul saw his conversion as a pattern for all who would later believe (1 Tim. 1:16).

*You are the Son of God*- This was the emotional confession of a moment, because Mk. 6:52 says that their hearts were hard and they didn't "understand". In this we see the fickleness of what can appear to be faith; we can with sincerity say one thing, when actually our hearts very soon go to a position of unbelief or at least, far lower faith than in the heat of the glorious moments when faith is rewarded. The Gospel writers use their records to bring out their own fickleness. After having been awed to this confession by the Lord's stilling of the storm, they are soon almost mocking Him for asking who had touched Him, when hundreds of the jostling crowd had touched Him (Lk. 8:25 cp. 45).

After recording the feeding of the 5000, Luke records that the Lord asked the disciples again about who He was, and Peter replied that He was the "Christ of God". The Lord was seeking to develop and consolidate their confession of faith. Thus in Lk. 9:18, the Lord Jesus asks His men: "Whom say the people that I am?". Why did He ask this? Surely, with His sensitivity and insight into people and society, He knew full well the various theories that first Century Palestine entertained about Him. It seems to me that He asked this question for the disciples' sake; He wanted them to reflect upon the wide range of wrong theories which there were concerning His identification. And this led on to His next question: "But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God". Surely the Lord Jesus knew what they thought of Him, without needing to ask them. Philip and Nathanael had earlier revealed that they considered Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah and "the Son of God" (Jn. 1:45,49). So, why did the Lord ask this question? Again, it was surely to focus His disciples upon the reality of the fact that despite all the various wrong theories, they actually knew the truth about Him. But the Lord then goes on to His essential point: "Tell no man that thing; saying, The Son of man must suffer many things...and be slain, and be raised...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me... For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" (Lk. 9:21-25). The Lord told the disciples to "Tell no man" by saying that "The Son of man must suffer...". I submit that "Tell no man..." is almost hyperbole; surely He means 'For now, focus more on the fact of my forthcoming death and your response to it, than telling others. If you gain the whole world for me in your preaching but lose your own salvation, what are you advantaged?'. After His resurrection they were to tell others; as the great commission made plain. And there is a powerful message to us all here, especially to those who concern themselves with large amounts of preaching. We should not be so caught up in listing the errors of others that we fail to appreciate the huge personal import of the truth that we do surely know. Indeed, the Lord sought to focus His men upon the Truth they knew by asking them firstly to consider all the wrong theories about Him. He then went on to bring home to them the radical, transforming impact of that Truth if it is properly believed and acted upon. Luke seems to draw attention to this theme again in Lk. 10:20, where the disciples return from a successful preaching mission to be told to focus their elation instead upon the reality of their own

personal salvation: "Rejoice not [i.e. not so much] that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven". We are not to turn a blind eye to others' misunderstandings; the tragedy of the errors of Islam, Judaism, Hinduism etc. should not pass us by. But neither are we to remain obsessed with them. We are to be led by such reflection to rejoice in the basic truth of Jesus which we have been blessed with.

14:34 *They came*- Perhaps the emphasis is upon *they*. The Lord and His disciples were now united again.

*Gennesaret*- This is on the northwest shore of Galilee. Mk. 6:45 says that they departed on their journey aiming for Bethsaida, on the northeast shore. The Lord had upbraided Bethsaida in Mt. 11:21. Perhaps the disciples had insisted on pressing ahead with giving those people another chance, whereas that was not the Lord's will. Such providential overruling of our preaching is a common occurrence. One wonders whether the changed journey plan involved not returning to the Jews but going to a more Gentile area. This would have been in line with the Lord's own change of course in His ministry, turning away from the Jewish masses towards the tiny minority who accepted Him and towards the Gentiles (see on 13:10).

14:35 *Recognised Him*- This would suggest that they didn't know His face. Their faith was therefore based around the word about Christ which they had heard. Matthew may well have this in mind as an example to the audiences he is preaching too, who were likewise hearing about Christ and being asked to show practical faith in Him, even though they had not seen Him. We in our generation are of course in the same situation.

*Sent out into all the region*- These "men" were not disciples. But they 'sent out'- Gk. *apostello*. Although they were not the apostles, they acted as apostles, purely on the basis of what they had heard about Jesus, as they had not personally seen Him before. And they sent out the message to "all", inviting people to come to Jesus and 'leading' them to Him (AV "brought them to Jesus"). This is all very much the language and concepts of the great commission. That commission was to be obeyed by those who had not personally met the Lord, whose faith was based upon the word of others; and they were to do the work of apostles, going to "all" and urging people to come to Jesus. These "men" of Gennesaret are being set up as a model of obedience to the great commission, and are therefore a particular role model for our generation. Mark seems to put the emphasis at this point on the Lord going out into all the region. Mk. 6:56 speaks of His preaching campaign as focusing on the towns, villages and "country" - in modern terms, the villages, hamlets and isolated rural dwellings. He made the effort to get out to the individuals, the poorest and loneliest of society. So the Lord went out to people in those hamlets (Mk.), and yet people

from those hamlets came to Him (Mt.). This is how the Lord operates to this day. God is in search of man, and yet man is in search of God- hence the cosmic joy in the 'touch' of meeting.

*Diseased-* Gk. *kakos* can mean a very wide range of illness, including spiritually.

14:36 *Pleaded-* The Greek *parakleo* means literally 'to call near' and in this case we can understand it literally. They felt that they had to touch Him in order to be healed (unlike the cases of faith in His spoken word which the Lord so commends). Therefore, needing that physical presence, it makes sense to understand *parakleo* here as meaning to literally call near. They called Him near so that they might touch the hem of His garment.

*The hem-* The Law of Moses commanded the Jews to make "borders" of blue upon their clothes (Num. 15:38), presumably to remind them of Heaven in daily life. But the same Hebrew word is found in Mal. 4:2, speaking of how the Messianic "sun of righteousness" was to arise with "healing in His hems". Their seeking for healing in the hem of the Lord's clothes was therefore a sign that they accepted Him as Messiah. But the 'arising' of Malachi 4 is the time of the Kingdom established on earth, with Judah freed from her oppressors. The time for Mal. 4:2 was not then. They thought it was. And yet the Lord still goes along with their misunderstanding, by granting them healing from His hems. This may have been simply from compassion of the moment towards human need; or it could be that the Lord was happy to reward faith when He saw it, even if it was based upon somewhat wrong interpretation of the Father's word.

## Notes

(1) Hal Taussig, *Jesus Before God: The Prayer Life of the Historical Jesus* (Santa Rosa, CA: The Polebridge Press, 1999) p. 7.