

Lesson 22: Review of Matthew 14:1-36: "Rejection, Reservation and Reception"

Real faith, or that which qualifies faith as real is explained in the Parables of chapter 13:1-52 and fleshed out in chapters 13:53-58 and 14:1-36. It is very interesting to see five "histories" in these critical verses: two histories of failure of faith (13:53-14:12) and three histories of real faith with reward (14:13-36).

We begin with two histories of false faith; a faith that shows its falsehood through utter rejection of Jesus; a faith that fails the test. Does your faith pass the test?

Nazareth rejects Jesus: Matthew 13:53-58: These people were religious. They had a synagogue. They were regulars to the synagogue. They also were impressed and amazed with Jesus' teaching. But something was wrong. They were knowledgeable about Jesus. Their questions indicate knowledge of who Jesus was. They recognized divine power and they knew about His family. But they could not figure out where all this power and wisdom came from. Rather than ask Him, "they took offense at Him."

These people were full of themselves. Psalm 36:2 is aptly applied to these people of Nazareth and to people in our day. They flattered themselves too much to hate their own sin. In other words, they saw no reason to stoop so low as to inquire of Jesus to gain understanding of who He is. Instead, in their pride and self-confidence they held to their offense, believing that Jesus was *so human* that He could not be Messiah.

Because of their lack of faith Jesus chose not to do many miracles. How close they were to seeing the glory of God, yet their lack of faith caused them to miss Christ. True Faith always falls upon God in Christ! Galatians 3:5 asks the question: "Does He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith...? If your faith is weak, ask God to help strengthen your faith! Don't miss Christ because of your own doubts, your own pride and your own fears!

Herod rejects Jesus: Matthew 14:1-12: The Herod of this passage is the son of Herod the Great (Matt.2). Herod's rejection of Christ was not direct in the sense of rejecting Jesus to His face (at least not at this time, Lk. 23:7), but rather as he rejected the message of the prophet John the Baptist.

Herod hated the message John preached. John confronted Herod's sin (Mt. 14:3ff). Herod hated John and desired to kill him but was afraid of the people who held that John was a prophet. Indeed Herod knew enough of the commands of God to know that he was sinning. This is where he failed to believe. He rejected his moral responsibility to God's law. Now, understand, by morally rejecting John's message he rejected Jesus because Jesus was the embodiment and perfection of every command of God. He heard warnings of a Righteous King of a Kingdom from heaven, yet on moral grounds rejected the God of that Kingdom.

How like people today, perhaps even you. Like Herod you love the very things God hates and hate the very things God loves. You have only one obligation. Repent! And turn to God through faith in Jesus that your sins may be washed away!

Histories of Faith: Matthew 14:13-36: These verses highlight two or three big events depending on how you see them: Five thousand hungry people ate and had their fill; Peter walked on water; and some people in a remote part of Israel saw many loved ones healed! Those are big events. But, in my mind, what is more awesome and powerful and helpful is Jesus' words and the power He displays in, over and through these events.

These events tell us more about Christ than about the "greatness of faith" of those who benefitted from Christ's presence and power. But isn't that the point of faith? Isn't Christ the object of faith? You see, it is His quality, His righteousness, His power, etc. that draws you and me outside of ourselves and upon Him!

He fed 5,000 people because He was moved with compassion toward the people (v14). His innermost part of His being was moved, motivated to ease their distress. Observing the disciples reveals that they were more "practical" and "realistic". But Jesus would have them learn His burden for His people and that He will always supply what is needed even in impossible circumstances, often times through His Church!

Lastly, look at His powerful words spoken to the fearful disciples as He walked on the water. 14:27 quotes Jesus, "Take Courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." In the disciples hour of *fear* and *undone-ness* Jesus comes to them. When the crisis comes in their lives He was there! At the point of their greatest need **the gospel came to them!** Jesus came to them in the storm and lifted their eyes to Himself! Jesus comes to you right now with the gospel, lifting your eyes to His saying to you, "Courage! I AM! Fear Not!"

Will you trust Him now in your difficult and seemingly impossible situation? Come to Him now in prayer.

Questions for Matthew 15:1-20: “Jesus Goes Straight For The Heart”

1. From the notes on page 1, **A)** what impressed and/or helped you? **B)** Explain “A”.

Introduction to Matthew 15:1-20: The religious leaders are wearying of Jesus’ popularity among the people. They come to debate and argue with Jesus. These religious leaders are literally experts on matters of Jewish law and customs. They are steeped in traditions handed down to them by their forefathers. But this is where they fail. They have lost connection with God by supplanting His Scriptures with the traditions of great rabbis that came before them (15:2). We find ourselves on quaking ground if we exchange the authoritative Word of God for rules made by men. In this lesson we will see how Jesus goes straight for the heart by way of the Word!

2. Read Matthew 15:1-9. “Let Scripture Rule, pt.1”: **A)** What is the matter that has upset the Pharisees so much? **B)** Who are the Pharisees blaming for the disciples neglect of this tradition? **C)** What is Jesus’ main concern? **D)** From this dialogue between the Pharisees and Jesus what is most important to the Pharisees? **E)** Using 15:3-7, in your own words how would you describe Jesus’ assessment of how they have handled the Scriptures? **F)** Let’s look closely at 15:3-6. What is the tradition practiced by the Pharisees which, according to Jesus, they have placed a higher importance on over Scripture?

3. Read Matthew 15:1-9: “Let Scripture Rule, pt. 2” **A)** What does Jesus say is the command of God, which they are forsaking for their tradition? **B)** Who is being hurt by their rejection of God’s Word? And, who is being offended by their rejection of God’s Word? **C)** Read carefully Jesus’ quotation of Isaiah 29:13. Cite the hypocritical practices mentioned in the verses. **D)** Can you think of areas in your life where you may be practicing your faith like the hypocrites mentioned? Will you share one or two? **E)** God hates hypocrisy. Read the following two examples from Jeremiah and write down your thoughts to share with the group: Jeremiah 6:10; Jeremiah 7:3-11.

4. Read Matthew 15:10-20: “Let the Scripture Reveal” **A)** Who is Jesus talking too? What does He tell them to do (v10)? Why is this important? **B)** How does James 1:13-15 agree with Jesus’ teaching in 15:11? **C)** What does Jesus tell the worried disciples (see vv.12-14)? **D)** How can you apply Jesus teaching in vv13-14 to your life? **E)** According to Jesus where does sin originate? **F)** What role does the mouth play in discerning the heart? **G)** How could you apply this truth to your life and the life of someone you may try to counsel or help someday?