

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

RLJ-1935

JOHN S. TORELL

OCTOBER 29, 2023

PART 37: MIRACLES AND THE SPIRIT WORLD

THE MURDER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Emperors, kings, and other political rulers from the time of Nimrod have for the most part been ungodly men that thought nothing of ordering the murder of their subjects or those in their jurisdiction. **Genesis 10:8-10**

Herod Antipas (20 BC to AD 39) was a local ruler within the Roman Empire who was placed in charge of the Galilee and Perea provinces on the eastern side of the Jordan River. He was the son of Herod the Great and grandson of Antipater the Idumaeon, who was an Edomite and descendant of Esau.

Antipas' first wife, Phasaelis, was the daughter of King Aretas IV of Nabataea, which was located east of Idumea in modern day Jordan. After divorcing Phasaelis, Antipas married Herodias, who had previously been married to his half-brother, Herod II.

Herod Antipas was a party boy who lived on other people's money through taxation. Herodias was a lustful woman who enjoyed the political power she had through her second husband, and when John the Baptist publicly called out her incestuous marriage as illegal, she went ballistic and demanded his head. **Matthew 14:1-4**

Herod Antipas was a weak man who was willing to give in to his wife's demands, but he was more concerned with what the common people said about him. **verse 5**

Herodias had planned a birthday party for her husband and she knew that he liked scantily clad women dancing for him while he drank alcohol. A number of his cronies had been invited to the party and these older men sat there half-drunk watching his step-daughter dancing in front of them. The intoxicated Herod was so moved by the young woman's dancing that he promised to give her anything. **verses 6-7**

Herodias had planned it all out and the step-daughter asked for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. **verse 8**

Herod must have immediately sobered and realized his predicament. This was not at all what he expected when he made the offer to his step-daughter, but now he was compelled to see it through or lose face. **verses 9-11**

John's disciples went to the prison and took the headless body and gave it a proper burial. Then they told Jesus what had happened. **verse 12**

Jesus received the news and quietly got into a boat on the Sea of Galilee, and with the disciples, sailed to the other side to be alone in the desert area. **verse 13**

PERSONAL SPECULATION

Herod Antipas never believed in Jesus as his Lord and Savior. On the day that Jesus was taken to Pilate to be judged, he tried to remove himself from the situation and sent Jesus to Herod who was also from Galilee and happened to be in Jerusalem that day.



Herod was initially glad to meet Jesus, but when the God-man refused to speak to him, he became angry, mocked the Son of God and sent Him back to Pilate. **Luke 23:5-12**

Herod Antipas died some six years later and was taken to hell by God's angels. Imagine meeting the angel in charge of hell and him saying, "So, you are the man that requested the head of John the Baptist. Let me take you to the divide between hell and Paradise, I want you to see John being comforted in the bosom of Abraham." **Luke 16:20-25**

At the last judgment on this earth, Herod Antipas will be sentenced to the Lake of Fire and hell will seem like nothing in comparison to the pain felt as the eternal tormenting fires begin. **Revelation 20:11-15**

THE BATTLE OVER THE BIBLE

Since the 1960s, a large group of pastors have taken the stand that the miracles recorded in the Bible never actually happened. This rejection of supernatural events began in the seminaries when professors received degrees from places like Union Theological Seminary in New York and other useless Christian centers of learning.

This theological teaching originated with German universities which embraced "higher criticism" in the 19th century and declared there was nothing supernatural about the Bible. They believed the stories of the Bible were embellished. Some of the most infamous theologians were Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), George Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

During my time at the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (1969-1973), there was a huge battle within the Southern Baptist Convention as German-influenced pastors and seminary professors wanted to embrace the heretical theology of the German theologians. Pastor W.A. Criswell from the first Baptist church in Dallas, Texas led the fight against the liberals. Criswell wrote a book called "Daniel in the Critics Den" and the church in Dallas paid for tens of thousands copies to be printed and handed out free of charge at the six Southern Baptist seminaries and all the Southern Baptist colleges.¹

I remember reading the book with great joy knowing there still were Baptist leaders that believed in the infallibility of the Bible. I too have taken a strong stand that the Bible is accurate.

FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

The crowds followed Jesus wherever He went in Galilee. He was sought out when it was discovered the God-man had traveled by boat to the eastern side of the sea.

Matthew 14:14

Toward the evening, the apostles told Jesus to send the people away to nearby villages so they could buy food. **verse 15**

Jesus told them to feed the people. **verse 16**

The response was tepid since they only had a small amount of food. **verse 17**

¹ <https://tinyurl.com/36pmv2e2>

Jesus did not argue with them, but simply instructed the fish and bread be brought to Him. **verse 18**

FAITH IN THE FATHER

Up to this point in His ministry, the only notable miracle performed was turning water into wine. **John 2:1-11**

Jesus must have remembered leading the Israelites out of Egypt and the holy angels setting up an orbital bakery that produced enough manna to feed some three million people every day. **Exodus 16:4**

The God-man ordered the people to sit down, and once they had been seated, He looked toward heaven and blessed the loaves and fishes as He broke them into pieces. **Matthew 14:19**

There was enough bread and fish to feed 5,000 men, in addition to the women and children, which means that the crowd could easily have numbered 15,000. The leftover food amounted to twelve baskets from having started with five small loaves of bread and two cooked fish. **verse 20-21**

HOW THIS WAS DONE

I know there are angels involved when reading through all the supernatural events recorded in the Old Testament. When Elijah panicked over Jezebel's threat to kill him, he fled south into the Sinai desert. He had no provisions and ran on raw emotions. He was exhausted when he finally stopped and fell asleep. Elijah was awakened by a holy angel and instructed to eat the cake provided by the angel. The angel had him to eat two servings and wash it down with some kind of supercharged water since he had a long way to walk. The cake was so nourishing that it lasted him for 40 days and nights. **1 Kings 19:1-8**

VIEW OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

From my interactions with Christians over the last sixty years, there are three views that come to mind in relation to the spirit world:

1. Christians read about the miracles in the Bible and simply believe it happened. They're not concerned with the how took place; to them it just happens magically.
2. Christians do not believe the miracles recorded in the Bible actually took place.
3. I believe that the physical world is a replica of the spirit world, but with a much lower level of technology. I believe that heaven is a real place, located outside our universe and its description as recorded in the Book of Revelation is real.

The temple of God located in the city of God in heaven is real and the people who were saved and are now in heaven have real soul bodies, with eyes, ears, mouth, and limbs that are just as solid spirit to spirit as flesh is to flesh.

Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9-17

There are countless descriptions in the Bible about angels and their intervention in the affairs of men.

It is obvious that mathematics is a creation of God, and just like God is eternal, mathematics is perpetual as well.

There are unknown spiritual laws which govern the spirit world and certain spiritual laws governing us such as forgiveness and being born again.

Then there is a set of laws governing the physical world, and as mankind slowly discovers them, we are able to apply them in our industrial production. Electricity has existed since the earth was created, but humanity did not discover it and learn to harness this energy source until around the 1500s.

As a young Christian, I had a rather romantic view of heaven. It was magic to me in that I did not understand the reality of the spirit world in relation to the physical world in which I exist. Heaven was more like a fairyland where things just floated along magically. I believe the majority of Christians espouse this viewpoint of the spirit world, and I was shocked when the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to understand the many miracles of the Old Testament were carried out by angels using advanced technology, such as when Elijah was taken to heaven. **2 Kings 2:9-13**

If we could travel back in time and bring Abraham forward to our time, he would say that something fairly simple like cataract surgery is a miracle.

We need to get used to the fact that the spirit world is real, and in the next creation, there will be a new earth, but it will exist in the spirit world, not the physical dimension we are in now. **Revelation 21:1-5, 21-27**

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?