

Matthew 14:1-2

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-14/matthew-141-2/>

Herod hears about the miracles of Jesus and incorrectly presumes that Jesus is John the Baptist returned to life.

The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Mark 6:14-16 and Luke 9:7-9.

Matthew switches scenes in his narrative. His account moves from Nazareth where *Jesus* was unable to perform many miracles because of the people's unbelief to a palace of *Herod the tetrarch*. *Herod the tetrarch*, or "Antipas" as he is sometimes called, was the son of *Herod the Great*, who sought to kill the Messiah when *Jesus* was a baby (Matthew 2:1-3; 2:16) and the brother of Archelaus, who was given reign over Judea when their father died (Matthew 2:22).

Unlike his father, *Herod the tetrarch*, was never officially granted the title of "king." He was only nominally a king. But he was made *tetrarch* of Galilee and Perea by Caesar Augustus when his father died in 4 B.C. *Tetrarch* was a political position in the Roman political system. It means ruler over a "fourth part." The regions that *Herod the tetrarch* had authority were the lands west of Galilee and Perea which was east of the lower half of the Jordan River extending to the northeastern mountains rising from the Dead Sea.

Herod the tetrarch had no official authority over the regions of Judea (and the capital city of Jerusalem on the western side of the Dead Sea); or Samaria (dividing Galilee from Judea between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River). The provinces Judea and Samaria were the jurisdictions of the Roman governor Pilate following Rome's deposing of Archelaus in 18 B.C. Neither did *Herod the tetrarch* have official authority over the Decapolis (dividing Galilee from Perea on the southeastern shore of the sea of Galilee) or the region of Iturea and Trachonitis (on the northeastern shore of Galilee). Iturea and Trachonitis, sometimes called Gaulanitis, was the region ruled by *Herod's* half-brother Philip (Luke 3:1). (But confusingly, this is not the same Philip who is discussed in this chapter.)

Matthew tells us *at the same time that Jesus* was in Nazareth, *Herod the tetrarch* heard reports about *Jesus*. News of public miracles *Jesus* had performed among the poor in and around Galilee had reached the palace of the regional authorities.

Herod seemed disturbed by these reports. *And he* told his servants, "This is John the Baptist: he has risen from the dead." For reasons that will soon become apparent, it is interesting that *Herod* made these remarks to his servants and not his family.

Matthew has previously shown the prophetic and personal roles *John the Baptist* has served in the ministry and life of *Jesus*. *John* was the Messianic forerunner preaching the gospel of the kingdom preparing the way of the Lord (Matthew 3:1-6; 11:7-15). *John* was also *Jesus's* cousin (Luke 1:35-36) and the one who baptized Him, inaugurating His earthly ministry (Matthew 3:13-17).

Recently *Herod* had *John the Baptist* beheaded as part of a grotesque bargain promised to his niece and her mother Herodias who was his lover and sister-in-law (Matthew 14:6-11). It appears that *Herod* executed *John the Baptist* reluctantly (Mark 6:20, 6:26). Perhaps he was feeling guilty or afraid when he heard about *Jesus* and the miraculous powers at work in him. In any case, *Herod* wrongfully assumed that *Jesus* was the prophet he just had murdered risen from the dead and more powerful than ever.

Biblical Text

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus, and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."