**Matthew 14:13-14**

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-14/matthew-1413-14/>

Jesus is back in Galilee. Having learned of the murder of John the Baptist, He seeks a place of solitude. He gets in a boat to find a secluded place, but the crowds see and follow Him on foot. When Jesus gets to shore He has compassion for them and heals their sick.

 The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Mark 6:31-34, Luke 9:10-11, and John 6:1-3.

Matthew returns his narrative’s focus to Jesus. The last time Matthew narrated about Jesus, He was in Nazareth (Matthew 13:54-58). Mark tells us that after His marveling about the unbelief of Nazareth, Jesus sent out His disciples in pairs to cast out demons, heal the sick and preach repentance (Mark 6:7-13). They gathered together with Jesus and reported back to Him about the same time or shortly after Jesus heard about the murder of His cousin John (Mark 6:30). They were in Galilee.

The Gospels do not specify which of Herod’s palaces or the nearby prison John the Baptist was executed. Herod the tetrarch had palaces both in Galilee and a hundred miles to the south in Perea. Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, claims John was executed at Herod’s fortress at Macherus in Perea (Antiquities of the Jews 18.5.2). But Mark’s Gospel says that “leading men of Galilee” were among Herod’s guests (Mark 6:21). While this statement is not conclusive to where John was put to death, it possibly indicates that the execution took place at Herod’s palace in Tiberias on the western shore of Galilee. In either case, this Herodian town would have loomed on the horizon as Jesus’s thoughts turned toward His cousin’s fate, and His own.

The gospel writer John informs us that “the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near” (John 6:4). We know that Jesus was killed at Passover. This means that either this event took place shortly before His death or a year before it. Given the travels of Jesus that Matthew records for his readers between now (Matthew 14) and Jesus’s final week in Jerusalem (Matthew 21), the latter is more likely to be the case than the former.

When Jesus first heard about John’s murder, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself. Jesus recognized His need to be alone with His Father during this emotional time. This was not unusual for Him. As we are told in Luke:

“But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.”
(Luke 5:16)

 But given what He had just learned about the death of his cousin and fellow-minister, it was natural for Him to go to His Father during this difficult moment. The Gospels usually do not tell us specifics about what Jesus prays when He was alone (the clear exceptions being Matthew 26:38-42, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:39-46, and John 17). Neither do they tell us what was said or done on this particular occasion. But it is clear that Jesus’s time by Himself with His Father was an important and integral part of His life and ministry. In them we see Jesus’s sense of utter dependence upon His Father for strength and wisdom (John 5:19). We see His humility. And we see the frailty of His humanity. Consider Jesus’s words to His disciples when He invited them to participate from a distance during a time of solitude and prayer on the night He was betrayed.

“Then He said to them, My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”
(Matthew 26:38)

It is evident that Jesus felt human emotions such as grief (John 11:33-35) and fear (Luke 22:42-44). And sometimes He was greatly troubled by them. But rather than be controlled by His emotions or desires, Jesus acknowledged His frailties with His Father, sought His Father’s comfort and counsel and, chose to obey Him (Matthew 26:38-42). It is reasonable to deduce that this was a moment that Jesus’s emotions upset Him and that is why He withdrew to a secluded place by Himself.

Jesus got in a boat to find His secluded place, along a quiet cove or shoreline away from the cities and crowds of people. Apparently because of His fame, the only solitude He received was when He was in the boat traveling to His destination. Because when the people heard that Jesus was back in Galilee and saw the direction His boat went, they followed Him on foot from the surrounding cities. As Jesus was desperate to spend time with His Father, the people were hungry to see Him. Although their desire to be near Jesus seems to be more transactional than relational.

Instead of finding a secluded place by Himself when Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd. Matthew later records that the crowd would eventually grow to “five thousand men… besides women and children” (Matthew 14:21). And instead of being annoyed that the people would not let Him have a moment by Himself during a time of grief, Jesus felt compassion for them. As a servant, Jesus considered of the needs of others and put them above His own. Jesus acted on His compassion and healed their sick.

**Biblical Text

Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.**