

Jesus, the Son of Man

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Date: 30 November 2025

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[0 : 00] Hope you all had a great Thanksgiving. It's wonderful to gather with you, to worship God together. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 13. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand.

We'd love to give you a Bible that you can have and you can use while you're here as well. We're in Matthew chapter 13, starting in verse 53, going to Matthew chapter 14, verse 12.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, thank you for your gracious condescension in sending your Son, the heir and prince of the kingdom of heaven, to earth, to us, who are lowly and sinful.

that he might take on our humanity, that he might redeem us from our sins, that he might lift us to you, our God.

Lord, we plead with you. please, let that wondrous truth strike us afresh this morning.

[1 : 36] Exalt the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, and reveal to us his compassion, his love, his mercy, that we might all draw near to him in faith.

In his precious name, in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. Please stand, if you are able, and join me as I read. Let's honor God by standing together as I read from God's word from Matthew 13, 53 to 14, 12.

And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there. And coming to his hometown, he taught them in their synagogue so that they were astonished. And said, where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?

Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things? And they took offense at him.

[2 : 54] But Jesus said to them, a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household. And he did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

At that time, Herod the Tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus. And he said to his servants, this is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead.

That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him. for Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.

Because John had been saying to him, it is not lawful for you to have her. And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people because they held him to be a prophet.

But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask.

[3 : 57] Prompted by her mother, she said, give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter. And the king was sorry. But because of his oaths and his guests, he commanded it to be given.

He sent and had John beheaded in the prison and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl. And she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came and took the body and buried it.

And they went and told Jesus. God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. Around the 10th century BC, the nation of Israel rejected Yahweh, the Lord God, as their king and instead demanded a human king so that they could have a king like the pagan nations around them.

They rejected theocracy and demanded a monarchy. And Prophet Samuel at that time warned them that a human king would conscript their sons to fight and die in his wars and that he would take their daughters into service in his palace and that he warned them that the king would tax them and take the best of their fields and vineyards and olive orchards and that one day they would regret clamoring for a king when they feel his heavy hand upon them.

But they didn't listen to the prophet. They demanded a king and they got one and after him they got a long line of unfaithful, fickle, wicked kings that led the nation away from God.

[5 : 35] Two centuries later, in the 8th century BC, when Prophet Isaiah warned the northern kingdom of Israel of their unfaithfulness to God and called them to repent of their idolatry that if they didn't that God would lead them into exile but they didn't listen.

Their hearts were dull and their ears were heavy and their eyes were blind. They were deaf to the pleas of the prophet Isaiah and as a result they were conquered by the Assyrians and went into exile as well.

Two centuries later in the southern kingdom of Judah, Prophet Jeremiah brought the same message calling them to repentance because the judgment of God was coming because of their idolatry. once again they brazenly hardened their faces like a rock and refused to repent.

This is the pattern we see all throughout the Old Testament. A prophet whose message is heeded is the exception and not the norm in the Bible.

And there are many reasons why people don't listen to prophets. One obvious reason is that people don't like being confronted about their sins and idols. They cling to their idols tooth and nail.

[6 : 42] They lash out against all those who seek to take those idols away from them. They like being lords of their own lives. They don't want to submit to the lordship of God.

But there's another reason, a second reason people don't often listen to prophets is that they despise the prophets. Prophets are ordinary people entrusted with an extraordinary divine message.

And the very ordinariness of these prophets makes people despise them. You're no better than me. Who made you a prince and judge over us?

That's what the people of Israel said to Moses when he came to them. Who are you to tell me what to do? In the preceding passages, we have seen that Jesus is the ultimate prophet who reveals to us the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.

And our passage this morning shows us how some of the people who heard that message responded to Jesus. And in doing so, it poses to us this most important question, how will you respond to Jesus?

[7 : 53] That's the main point of our passage. We must trust in Jesus as the ultimate prophet who reveals the kingdom of God. And we're going to see in the first passage that the kingdom is not found in Jesus' household.

And in the second passage, that kingdom is not found in Herod's palace either. Jesus comes in the first passage in chapter 13, 53 to 58. He comes to his hometown and he teaches in the synagogue in verse 54.

The hometown is not named here in this chapter, but it was named earlier in Matthew in chapter 2 and chapter 4, so we know it's Nazareth. Nazareth was a small, obscure town.

so obscure that it doesn't get mentioned even once in the Old Testament or in the Apocrypha or in any of the rabbinic literature. It doesn't get a single mention in any of those things.

For these reasons, up until recent archaeological discoveries, many skeptical scholars doubted that Nazareth was even a real place. When Philip tells his friend Nathaniel that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah that has come, Nathaniel famously responded in John 1.45, can anything good come from Nazareth?

[9 : 08] Nazareth is estimated to have had about 200 residents during the time of Jesus. So it's basically a village, not much bigger than our church. It's a small town where everyone knows everyone, so everyone would have heard about the homecoming of Jesus.

This is Jesus' only recording return to his hometown, Nazareth, after his public ministry began in Matthew 4. And as we can see in this passage, Jesus was already by this point quite famous.

We see in chapter 14, verse 1, that Herod the Tetrarch has heard about Jesus' fame. His reputation precedes him. The locals have already heard of the mighty works that Jesus has done elsewhere in Capernaum.

Jesus comes home as what we might call the hometown hero, the local boy makes good, the small town obscure boy that grew up and went into the big city and made it.

He comes home as the miracle worker and the esteemed teacher acclaimed by the crowds, and he takes his seat, the honors seat in the synagogue, and he starts to teach them.

[10:20] He's the visiting scholar, the distinguished lecturer, and he's no stranger. He's their own child that grew up. He grew up and is going to the synagogue most likely.

It's a proud moment for the small, humble town of Nazareth. And at first, the reception seems warm. In verse 54, it says that the people at the synagogue were astonished by his teaching.

That's the same word that was used to describe the reaction of the crowds who were favorable toward Jesus in chapter 7, verse 28, after he preached the Sermon on the Mount, the crowd said about him, he teaches as someone who has authority, unlike these scribes of the law.

So similarly here, the crowds are marveling, saying, where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? They're amazed. However, the sweet reception soon turns sour, as wonder and marveling turns into skepticism, familiarity turns into cynicism, and celebration turns into envy. If you examine the structure of chapter 13, verse 53 to 58, you can see that it's structured as a chiasm. The first half of the passage is mirrored by repeated words and phrases in the second half of the passage.

[11:44] And this parallel structure highlights the change, the turning point in the crowd's response. First, Jesus comes to his hometown, and teaches. At the end, Jesus says, the prophet has no honor in his hometown.

Then he says, the townspeople are astonished by Jesus in verse 54. But in verse 57, it says, the same townspeople took offense at Jesus. In verse 54, the people ask, where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?

Astonishment, wonder, marveling. And then that turns in verse 56 to where did this man get all these things? to doubt, to cynicism, taking offense.

Something fishy going on here. He's one of us. He grew up in our synagogue. He didn't apprentice under prestigious rabbi. He didn't have an elite education.

Where did this man get all the wisdom and power? It doesn't add up. He must be a charlatan. Aren't we also prone to become envious of people's successes?

[12:55] He's no better than I. If I had the same opportunities that he had, if I had the connections he had, if I had the platform that he had, then I can be just as successful.

Why does she have so many friends and get so much attention and affection from others? She's no better than I. But envy is sin.

Envy occurs only where the love of self trumps over the love of neighbor. It is a failure to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep as God's word commands us.

And envy is not merely a horizontal offense. It is also a vertical offense. Envy resents the sovereignty of the God who sovereignly orders the affairs of men.

Envy doubts the goodness and generosity of God our Father toward us. And the turn of the crowd, the changing of the crowd, hinges on verses 55 and 56, which is the center of the chiasm that stands alone.

[14:08] It's the lone part of that structure that doesn't have a matching element. It's meant to be highlighted and focused. And that's the center right here. Is not this the carpenter's son?

Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas, and are not all his sisters with us? These are questions, the central questions that surround Jesus' identity, his humble origin.

Is not this the carpenter's son? Notice that it's the definite article, the carpenter's son. The definite article suggests familiarity.

Everyone knew that Jesus' legal father was Joseph, the village carpenter. The word carpenter is a general term that means builder, and he likely made wooden plows and yokes for the farmers in the village.

He's a tradesman. His job, he has a blue-collar profession. It is an honest and respectable profession to be sure, but Joseph was a carpenter.

[15:12] He was no rabbi. And that raises the question concerning Jesus that the people voiced in John 7, 15, how is it that this man has learning when he has never studied?

The polemic against Jesus continues in verse 55. Is not his mother called Mary? It's interesting that they point out that she was called Mary rather than simply saying, is not his mother Mary?

Mary. I think this might be because Mary was one of the most common and ordinary names in the New Testament. Imagine an ordinary, everyday, run-of-the-mill gal, and that gal would be named Mary.

Israeli historian Tal Elan compiled a list of all-known names of Jewish women living in Israel and Palestine between 330 B.C. and 200 A.D. and she found out that 25% of the women were named Mary.

The commonness of the name Mary is borne out by biblical evidence. For example, in addition to Mary, the mother of Jesus, mentioned here in Matthew 13, 55, in Matthew 27, 56, it mentions two other Marys, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, who is most likely Mary, the wife of Clopas, mentioned in John 19, 25.

[16:29] So there's three already. And then there's Mary of Bethany, sister of Lazarus and Martha, who is consistently described as being Mary of Bethany, distinguishing her from Mary of Magdala, Mary Magdalene, even though the two have historically been conflated by some people.

I don't think the Bible intentionally distinguishes! them. Paul greets yet another Mary, a fifth Mary, who lived in Rome in Romans 16, 16. In Acts 12, verse 12, there's another Mary who is called the mother of John Mark, the author of the Gospel of Mark.

His mother was named Mary also. So Mary, there's a lot of Marys. We don't have as many Marys in our church, but we do have lots of Joshua's and Daniel's. So Mary was the most common, ordinary female name in those days, and that emphasizes the townspeople's point.

Is not his mother called Mary? His mother isn't some exotic, otherworldly Persephone or Cleopatra. No, his mother isn't Queen Mary or even Lady Mary.

No, it's just plain old Mary from the block, that Mary number six. What can possibly be so special about her son?

[17:49] And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? His brothers, they're our childhood buddies. We wrestled and tussled with them and ran around playing tag with them.

We played hopscotch with them growing up. And are not all his sisters with us? Their sisters live among us. They're married to my friends and my neighbors.

How can a man whose pedigree, whose family tree is so public and so ordinary be someone so special and extraordinary?

as Jesus says in verse 57, a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.

We have a similar proverb in English, don't we? Familiarity breeds contempt. We often assume that what is near and what is familiar cannot be special, cannot be truly good.

[18:50] good. But don't let your familiarity with Jesus and the claims of Christianity turn that into contempt. Maybe you grew up in a Christian family and you're tempted to have contempt for what you were taught.

Maybe someone has told you, well you're only a Christian because you grew up in a Christian home and because you grew up in the Christian West in the United States of America. If you were born in Saudi Arabia, you'd be Muslim.

Maybe you feel the sting of that criticism. But if you think about it, that's a logical sleight of hand. You can say that about any worldview.

You're three times more likely to be a skeptical, humanistic atheist if you're born in Boston, Massachusetts, as opposed to Boston, Kentucky. Yes, that's a real town in Kentucky. Three times more likely.

But what does that say about the merits of atheism? Nothing. You have to weigh the merits of the ideas themselves. Likewise, you must consider the claims of Christ on its own merit.

[20:04] So what do you make of Jesus? This passage brings into stark relief the scandal of the incarnation of the Son of God. Today is the first Sunday of Advent, which celebrates the coming of Christ to earth, into our world.

And because as Christians we know that Jesus is the risen and ascended and exalted Lord, we can sometimes forget the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ in his coming.

Do you know that Jesus learned a trade? Is not this the carpenter's son? Indeed, Jesus is himself called a carpenter in Mark chapter 6, verse 3, because he learned that trade in his father's shop.

Do you know that Jesus had a human mother? That's a truly mind-boggling fact. Jesus had an ordinary human mother in Mary.

He had a gestation period in her womb. Mary went into labor and she gave birth to Jesus as a baby. Jesus grew up like any other boy.

[21 : 14] He didn't come out of the womb running. No, He came out. He had to crawl first and then cruise and then walk and then run. Jesus did not come out of the womb speaking fluent Aramaic.

He had to learn to speak. It says in Luke chapter 2, verse 52, Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Do you know that Jesus had brothers and sisters?

Some Christian denominations teach that Mary is ever virgin. They call this the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, that she was a virgin before and during and after the birth of Jesus. And therefore they argue, they insist that Jesus could not have had any siblings. Their claim is based on two biblical arguments. First, they point to John 19, 26 to 27.

As Jesus is dying on the cross, he entrusts the care of his mother Mary, not to his brothers or to his other siblings, but to his disciple John. And they infer from that that Jesus could not have had any siblings because if he did, he would not have entrusted the care of his mother to his disciple.

[22 : 29] That's, I think, a huge and a mistaken assumption. Can it simply be the case that Jesus' siblings were not on the scene? Or that they no longer lived in the same town as his mother?

It says explicitly in John 7, 5 that not even his brothers believed in Jesus. Can it be that Jesus wanted to entrust the care of his precious mother not to his unbelieving brothers who think he's a crazy cook, but rather because he wanted to entrust the care of his mother to a trusted disciple, his beloved disciple John?

I think that's far more likely, especially when we have a passage like ours this morning that speaks explicitly of Jesus' siblings. That brings up the second argument that some people make, that they argue that in the biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, the word for cousin or relative is non-existent, so they use instead the word for brother or sister to refer to relatives and kinsmen.

That's true. However, one major problem with their argument is that the gospel of Matthew is not written in Hebrew and Aramaic, it's written in Greek.

And in Greek, there is a word for relative. And in Greek, there is a word for cousin. And in the New Testament Greek, the word brother or sister is never used to mean cousin, because those words exist.

[23 : 52] Colossians 4.10 says that Mark is the cousin of Barnabas. Luke 1.36 refers to Mary's cousin Elizabeth as her relative. Another word.

And remember the immediate context of our passage here, which speaks of Jesus' immediate family members, his father and his mother, so it's only natural to assume that he's speaking of his actual brothers and siblings, his sisters.

Some argue that the perpetual virginity of Mary, as did some denominations argue, is a historical doctrine that the church has always held. However, that's not true. The doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary does not appear on the scene until the fourth century, and most of that in the context of polemical debate about the superiority of celibacy over marriage.

It's not dissimilar to how the doctrine of Trinity has been dragged into the debate, the modern debate over complementarianism and egalitarianism, for some of you who are familiar with that, and how some scholars have unwittingly walked into Trinitarian heresies while in those polemical contexts.

An early church father Tertullian from the second century, earlier on, clearly stated that Jesus had real biological brothers, and that after giving birth to Jesus, Mary did consummate her marriage once for all.

[25 : 15] In fact, that's the clear biblical implication of Matthew 1.25, that Mary did not remain a virgin after the birth of Christ, because it says that Joseph did not know his wife intimately, conjugally, until she had given birth to Jesus.

The natural reading of the verse implies that after Mary gave birth to Jesus, Joseph did have normal conjugal relations with her. And why should that surprise us? Because the Bible teaches it commands regular conjugal relations between husband and wife in 1 Corinthians 7.

the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary, that Jesus had no siblings, this lessens the radical nature of Jesus' incarnation.

Jesus is the Son of God, yes, but he really took on human flesh. He really was born of woman, born under the law. He really was the Son of Man in every way except for sin.

He was raised in a bustling home with rowdy brothers, he knows what it's like for siblings to be jerks toward him, like in this passage.

[26 : 27] Hebrews 2, 14 to 18, which we read for our assurance of pardon, talks about the significance of the true humanity of Christ. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he's able to help those who are being tempted. Jesus had to be made like his brothers in every respect.

If Jesus is not truly man, he cannot rightly represent humanity as our high priest. If Jesus is not truly man, he cannot make atonement for the sins of man.

If Jesus is not truly man, he cannot deliver mortal men from the power of death. death. In order to help man, he must become a man.

[27 : 48] And Matthew 13, 53 to 58 teaches us that Jesus indeed became a man in every respect. He lived as a man, he died as a man, so that he might save men and women like you and me from sin and death.

That's the scandal of the incarnation. How can the king of kings take the form of a servant? How can the creator of the heavens and the earth take the form of a creature?

How can the potter become the clay? How can the architect of the house become the cornerstone of the house that he is building?

How can the author of the book become the protagonist of the book? Why should Jesus endure the humiliation that he endures in his hometown of Nazareth? He's not this, the carpenter's son?

Well, do you not know? He's also the son of God. He's the king, the prince of peace. That's how we want to tell off those Nazarenes.

[29 : 05] But instead, Jesus willingly endured that humiliation. He did come as the carpenter's son. He did come as the son of Mary, as the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon.

And it shows us the humility of Christ, our Savior. Jesus did not go through life, detached from the day-to-day realities of humanity with a halo around his head and floating an inch above the ground everywhere he went.

He was not an angel. He was flesh and blood. He nursed at his mother's breast as a babe. He was the eldest son in his father's carpentry shop.

He knew what it's like to get sawdust in his eyes at the shop. He knew what it's like to clean up after his younger siblings. And most importantly, Jesus died a humiliating death on a Roman cross in our place to save us from our sins.

Jesus came down to the miry pit of humanity, the pit of our squalor and sin so that he might lift us up, save us from sin and death, and bring us and reconcile us to God our Father.

[30 : 26] Jesus knew the fragility of human life. And because Jesus has been tempted as we are in every respect and yet without sin, he's able, it says, to sympathize with our weaknesses.

He's able to help us when we are being tempted. Do you know this morning that Jesus knows and he understands what you are feeling and what you are going through?

Do you know that you don't have to come to Jesus by putting on a face, acting like everything's perfect?

After you put all your life together, then you can finally come to Jesus and meet him. That's not what you have to do. Because Jesus is the humble king. Because he took on our flesh.

Because he knows our infirmities. Because he has become like his brothers in every way. The true humanity of Jesus has made many people throughout history despise him.

[31 : 31] He is a man like me. There's no way he could have done the miracles recorded in the Gospels. He's a man like me. There's no way he rose from the dead.

He's a man like me. There's no way he is a son of God. There's no way he can be the blameless atoning sacrifice for sin. But to say such things is to make the same mistake as the people of Nazareth who took offense at Jesus.

So I urge you this morning don't join the long list of hapless people who have perished for not listening to the prophet of the Lord. He says in verse 58 that Jesus did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Unbelief and the importance of faith are recurring themes in this Gospel of Matthew. Actually all throughout Scripture we see that faith is a prerequisite for the miraculous works of God.

Jesus says later in Matthew 21:21 Truly I say to you if you have faith and do not doubt even if you say to this mountain be taken up and thrown into the sea it will happen.

[32 : 46] Jesus does not do many mighty works in Nazareth because of the townspeople's unbelief. In a more detailed account of Jesus' visit to Nazareth recorded in Luke chapter 4 the townspeople say to Jesus Doubtless or Jesus says to all of the townspeople Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb Physician heal yourself What we have heard you did at Capernaum do here in your hometown as well.

These people were demanding that Jesus perform the same mighty works that he did elsewhere in Capernaum but Jesus did not indulge their prideful unbelief. Instead he said to this evil and unbelieving generation will be given only the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Matthew 12:39 Jesus does as you see in the gospel of John John 10:37 and 38 this is stated explicitly he does do miracles and signs and wonders to help people who come to him with faith seeking understanding who believe in him and want to be helped.

However Jesus steadfastly refuses to indulge the whims of people who question him out of their pride and unbelief. Jesus will not be reduced to a genie in a bottle or a cheap magician that does tricks upon demand.

And I think this is important because in order to truly follow Christ in order to truly submit to God we need humility we need faith that takes God and his word and submits to him.

[34 : 21] only and if people say people who will only believe in God on their own terms if you do this and this and you prove this to me then I will believe in you they'll only obey God on their own terms too.

Well I'll obey you if I like what you're saying if I like what you're telling me to do if it doesn't cost me that much if I don't need to sacrifice too much only those who believe God on his terms by faith will obey God on his terms.

So what do you make of Christ this morning? For those who come to him with settled skepticism and doubt Jesus offers only one sign the sign of the prophet Jonah and that's the sign that Jesus explained in Matthew 12:40 to 41 for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The man of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold something greater than Jonah is here.

The sign of the prophet Jonah is Jesus' death and resurrection. He died on the cross for our sins and he was buried in the heart of the earth in the realm of the dead and he was raised on the third day.

[35 : 41] That's the sign that Jesus offers and without interruption from the first century until now Christians have died proclaiming that Jesus is the risen son of God.

That he did die and that he was raised on the third day. And when Jonah preached repentance as a prophet in the great city of Nineveh the entire city repented but this puny town of Nazareth spurned the greatest of all prophets the son of God.

will you trust him as your savior and redeemer? How will you how how you answer that question will determine your eternal destiny whether you enter the kingdom of heaven or not.

If you pay attention in your Bibles to the broader context of this passage you might see that just before Jesus began his third teaching discourse which is in chapter 13 the parables of the kingdom of God just immediately before he preached that he talked about how his family his brothers and sisters and his mother are not his biological mother and brothers and sisters but those who do the will of God and then now right after right immediately after the third discourse Jesus says essentially the exact same thing a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household Jesus said whoever receives me receives the one who sent me and whoever receives a prophet will receive a prophet's reward if you receive Jesus as the ultimate prophet the anti-messianic prophet then you receive God himself and have fellowship with him and enter the kingdom of heaven it's not his biological family but all those who receive Jesus in faith who will enter the kingdom of heaven

Jesus intentionally bookends the parables of the kingdom of heaven with the story about his families and story about his hometown visit to redraw the boundaries of the people of God people of God are not the Jews the ethnic Jews people of God are not those who are genealogically close to

Jesus the people of God are all those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ as some people have said God has no grandchildren children you cannot be saved because your parents are Christians you cannot be saved because you grew up in church you can only be saved because you have yourself put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior of course Jesus' biological family can put faith in him too which his mother obviously has done at some point later in her life and as his brothers have done

[38 : 39] Acts 1.14 indicates that other siblings of Jesus also came to faith but most prominently we know Apostle James the leader of the church of Jerusalem was a brother of Jesus later convert Apostle Jude who authored the book of Jude was a brother of Jesus according to church tradition the kingdom of heaven became theirs not because of their nearness to Jesus in their lineage but because of their faith in Jesus then in chapter 14 the scene shifts from Jesus' hometown to Herod's palace quite the change it says in verse 1 at that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus and he said to his servants this is John the Baptist he has been raised from the dead that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him apparently John the Baptist is already dead by this point but Matthew hasn't yet told us of the fact that

John died so that prompts this literary flashback starting in verse 3 to recount how John the Baptist died it says in verses 3-4 for Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias his brother Philip's wife because John had been saying to him it is not lawful for you to have her the Herod in view here is not Herod the first but he is Herod the tetrarch as he's called in verse 1 this is Herod Antipas Herod the first son Herod the first is the one that we saw in Matthew chapter 2 who massacred all the boys in Bethlehem under the age of 2 in an attempt to kill baby Jesus Herod Antipas is his son after Herod the first death his kingdom which was a client state of the Roman empire over what is now modern day Israel was divided into four tetrarchies four regions and his three sons and his sister ruled over the four areas and

Herod Antipas the one named here was one of those rulers he was not technically a king even though he is called that later in verse nine he was a tetrarch who desperately wanted to be king Herod Antipas had jailed John the Baptist for the sake of Herodias his brother Philip's wife so that tells all the story doesn't it his brother Philip's wife Herodias was Herod's half brother Philip's wife but while Herod was visiting Philip his brother he fell in love with his brother's wife and the two agreed!

their respective spouses in doing so not only did they commit adultery with each other they also committed incest according to biblical guidelines in Leviticus 18 John the Baptist being a true prophet of the Lord pointed out that what Herod Antipas has done is not lawful it was not lawful for him to have Herodias as his wife and notice how Matthew drives that point home by calling Herodias not Herod's wife his brother Philip's wife Herod wanted to kill John for speaking the truth but he feared the people who held John to be a prophet so he settled for imprisoning John instead but then his birthday comes around in verse six he's hosting a lavish feast having a birthday party the daughter of Herodias dances before him and the company and he is so pleased by her he promises I'll give you anything you ask he makes an oath and prompted by her vengeful mother Herodias she the young girl says give me the head of John the Baptist here on the platter and you could see what kind of woman Herodias is she doesn't just want John the Baptist killed she wants proof and she wants to gloat over him as his head is served on a platter to the banquet that she is at like the lamb's head at Rosh Shanna or something like that and Herod is sorry to have to oblige that gruesome request he says in verse 9 at this point of the story Herod didn't want to kill John he had already imprisoned him and effectively silenced him and he was posing no threat to him whatsoever he was just an interesting guy he can visit once in a while and talk to in prison and so he was content to leave John to rot in prison instead but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given notice the underlying reasons for all of

[43 : 31] Herod's actions in this chapter why did he put John the Baptist in prison for the sake of Herodias he says in verse 3 why didn't he put John to death initially when he wanted to because he says in verse 5 he prophet why did Herod take such a rash ill advised oath on his birthday because it says in verse 6 Herodias daughter so pleased him with her dance later on why does Herod behead John even though at that point he doesn't want to because it says in verse 9 because of his oaths and his guests everything Herod does in this chapter Herod does because of other people he's so concerned with what other people will think what other people will say this is what the Bible calls the fear of man he's the king but he doesn't act like a king this he's no true sovereign he's a

ship that is tossed to and throw by the waves of people's opinions and whims he's a people pleaser manipulated and controlled by those around him this is starkly different from the portrait of

Jesus that we see in the preceding passage the skeptical and envious hometown crowd looked down upon Jesus and questioned his credentials they said to him physician heal yourself what we have heard you did at Capernaum do here in your hometown as well but Jesus instead of embarking on a campaign to prove himself and performing these extra miracles and saying see look what I can do I am who they say I am no Jesus doesn't do that he did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief rather than indulging and catering to their wicked unbelief Jesus only offers the sign of the prophet Jonah in this Jesus models for us what it looks like for us to seek to please God rather than men Proverbs 29 25 says the fear of man lays a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe we fear people and what they might say about us or to us because we mistakenly think that people can give us love and acceptance that people can make us safe and secure that people can give us make our dreams come true but people are fickle and they're unreliable only

God can give us unchanging and eternal love and acceptance only God can give us true eternal safety and security and for this reason he who fears man and tries to please man lays a snare for himself that will entrap him but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe it's important that we learn this lesson because if we don't we cannot be faithful witnesses do do do you think it was easy for John to tell Herod Antipas that his marriage to Herodias was unlawful it seems that John had a personal acquaintance he had a personal audience with Herod so it's not like John is denouncing Herod from his wilderness pulpit he had an opportunity to personally confront Herod about his sin and in that moment John could have easily sidestep the issue well Herod's not going to listen to me anyway it's none of my business I'll just stay in my lane but if you're a prophet or a teacher of God's word you don't get to pick and choose your message you're not the sender or the author of the message you are just the herald you are the mailman you convey the message of God you deliver it and you don't get to sidestep moral issues that the

Bible clearly speaks of when your co-workers speak condescendingly of Christians and mocks Christian ethics will you hide your faith in shame or will you identify yourself as a follower of Christ and share the reproach of Christ that the saints across the ages have experienced will you take a stand for your Christian convictions even if that means you will be reviled will you overcome your hesitations and fears and share the gospel with your neighbors not knowing how exactly they will respond what happens to our in our passage to John the Baptist here of course does not bode well for Jesus because throughout the gospel of Matthew Matthew has portrayed Jesus as coming in and following in the ministry that John the Baptist started in Matthew 3 verse 2

John the Baptist preached repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand and then when Jesus started his ministry in Matthew 4 17 he began with the exact same message repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand this is because John is Jesus' forerunner he is the harbinger of the king he is the one who as Matthew 3 said prepares the way of the Lord and makes the path of the Lord straight before he comes he goes ahead he's the harbinger that goes on ahead of the king to announce that the king is coming so then the unjust execution of John the Baptist in this chapter foreshadows how people will ultimately in the end receive Jesus and treat him killing him on the cross and this passage serves as an illustration what did Jesus teach us in the parable of the weeds that the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one coexist until the end they coexist there will always be this tension and conflict and persecution and suffering what did

[49 : 48] Jesus teach us in the parable of the mustard seed and the leaven that kingdom of God does not come at once to dominate the earth no it starts seed that grows gradually until it becomes the largest seed and the largest tree in the garden that the kingdom of God grows almost imperceptively it is hidden like leaven that is hidden inside the bread John the foremost prophet of God from the old covenant summarily being beheaded and served on a platter like some kind of animal does not look like the kingdom of heaven has come in power does it Jesus the heir of the kingdom of heaven the prince being crucified does not look like the kingdom of heaven has come in power does it and that's why Jesus tells this story as an illustration of the parables that he has just told but don't you doubt that the kingdom of God has come in power and one day though you might not see today it will be consummated the kingdom of

God does not come in ways that can be observed Jesus said in Luke 17 20 so don't be disheartened when you can't see the kingdom like you want to see when you are facing sufferings

reviles revilements and persecutions true true messengers of God who prophesy and preach the truth of God regardless of whether it earns them the favor or the ire of man will be persecuted and when that happens it might seem like the hereds of this world have all the power it might seem as though the kingdoms of this world are the real kingdoms with lavish palaces and banquets and birthday parties and armies at their disposal but we must not forget that the reality that Jesus proclaimed! life, death, and resurrection and ascension and he now reigns at the right hand of the father far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named we might not see it yet with our own eyes but one day we will see every eye will see every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord and every knee will bow before him so let us press on with that day and as witnesses of Jesus Christ let's pray together Father teach us teach us the humility of Christ that we might not think Christ unapproachable unapproachable and distant rather that we might see that Christ is humble he invites us to come to him and as we come to him we are accepted and loved by him Lord embolden us to go out to this world as witnesses of Jesus Christ to proclaim to herald the kingdom of heaven that has come knowing that Lord Jesus King Jesus you are coming back help us to be faithful servants that discharge this duty of heralding the king who has come and the king who is coming soon in Jesus name we pray amen