

Matthew 14:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

Analysis

Herod Antipas hears of Jesus: 'At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus' (εν εκεινω τω καιρω ηκουσεν Ηρωδης ο τετρααρχης την ακοην Ιησουν). 'Tetrarch' (τετρααρχης) means 'ruler of a fourth,' indicating Herod Antipas ruled quarter of his father's former kingdom (Galilee and Perea). 'Fame' (ακοην, report/hearing) indicates Jesus' growing reputation reached political authorities. This sets up John the Baptist's martyrdom account (14:3-12), explaining Herod's guilty conscience. Political power becomes aware of spiritual movement—sometimes with deadly consequences. Jesus' ministry couldn't remain obscure; truth inevitably confronts power. Herod's response—fearful superstition—contrasts with wise men's earlier worship (2:1-12). Power often fears prophetic truth.

Historical Context

Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great) ruled Galilee and Perea (4 BC - AD 39). He built Tiberias as capital and divorced his first wife to marry Herodias (his brother Philip's wife), provoking John's condemnation. Herod imprisoned and executed John (14:3-10), creating paranoid guilt. When hearing of Jesus, Herod feared John had risen (14:2). Later Herod desired to see Jesus (Luke 9:9, 23:8), combining curiosity and fear. Jesus called him 'that fox' (Luke 13:32). Early church saw Herod as exemplifying how political power often opposes divine truth.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do political authorities typically respond to prophetic truth?
2. What does Herod's fearful superstition reveal about guilt's psychological power?
3. How should Christians engage political power while maintaining prophetic witness?

Interlinear Text

Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἤκουσεν Ἡρώδης ὁ τετράρχης
At that G3588 time heard Herod G3588 the tetrarch
G1722 G1565 G2540 G191 G2264 G5076

τὴν ἀκοὴν Ἰησοῦ
G3588 of the fame of Jesus G2424

Additional Cross-References

Luke 3:1 (Parallel theme): Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

Acts 4:27 (References Jesus): For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

Mark 8:15 (Parallel theme): And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

Luke 23:15 (Parallel theme): No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

