

Matthew 14

Overview

Let's recall where we are in Matthew's gospel. He has marked off three sections by the repeated notice in 4:17 and 16:21, "From that time forth Jesus began ..." (Figure 1, chart). The theme throughout is that our Lord is the promised Davidic king, and our current section focuses on the message that he proclaims.

Internal symmetries mark off three subsections to the proclamation section (Figure 2).

First, ch. 4-11 consist of three cycles of calling an increasingly broad group of followers: the four, then the twelve, and finally an invitation to all who are weary and heavy-laden. Associated with each cycle is a section preparing his followers for each of his three main modes of ministry: the sermon on the mount exemplifying his teaching, the miracles in ch. 8-9 illustrating his healing, and the missionary discourse in ch. 10 instructing them how to preach.

Next, ch. 12-13 show the response of the Jews to the final invitation of ch. 11. They reject the Lord in four episodes in ch. 12, which Matthew punctuates with a reminder of the Lord's broader Gentile ministry. In response, the Lord narrows the scope of his ministry, cloaking his teaching in parables and explaining it only to committed disciples.

Now we enter the third subsection of the Proclamation section. Having documented the opposition and presented the choice that is to be made, Matthew sets off the section with two episodes. In the first, King Herod kills John the Baptist, the one who introduced the Lord. In the last, Peter confesses our Lord, John's most famous disciple, as the Son of God. We must remember that "Son of God"

Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom

1:1-4:16 The Person of Jesus the King

1:1 "The book of the Generation of Jesus Christ"

- 1:1-17 Genealogy
- 1:18-25 Birth
- 2:1-23 Recognition & Preservation
- 3:1-17 **Baptism**
- 4:1-11 **Temptation**
- 4:12-16 Move to Capernaum (transition)

4:17-16:20 The Proclamation of Jesus the King

4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, ..."

- 4:17-11:30 Call & Preparation of the Disciples
- 12:1-13:58 The Great Schism
- 14:1-16:20 Growing Opposition

16:21-28:20 The Passion of Jesus the King

16:21 "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, ..."

- 16:21-17:21 Principles of Discipleship
- 17:22-20:16 Life in the Kingdom
- 20:17-25:46 Controversy in Jerusalem
- 26:1-28:20 Death & Resurrection

Figure 1: The Structure of Matthew's Gospel

4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, ..."

4:17-11:30 Call & Preparation of the Disciples

Calling	4:18-22 the Four	9:36-10:4 the Twelve	11:2-30 (28) all
Summary	4:23 teaching ... preaching ... healing	9:35 teaching ... preaching ... healing	11:1 teach ... preach
Training	ch. 5-7 Teaching	ch. 8-9 Healing	10:5-42 Preaching

12:1-13:58 The Great Schism

	Ch. 12	Ch. 13
Public Rejection	1-45, the Pharisees reject the Lord	1-52, the Lord rejects unbelievers (by hiding his teaching in parables)
Private Rejection	46-50, the Lord rejects his family	53-58, his home town rejects the Lord

14:1-16:20 Growing Opposition

- 14:1-12 **King Herod kills the Baptist**
- **14:13-36 Miracles**
- **15:1-28 Pharisaic Rejection**
- **15:29-39 Miracles**
- **16:1-12 Pharisaic Rejection**
- 16:13-20 **Peter confesses King Jesus**

Figure 2: The Structure of 4:17-16:20

throughout the OT is the title assigned to the promised royal Son of David. Taken together, these two episodes remind us: the kings of this world will try to stamp out God's purpose to set up his kingdom, but the true king has arrived and is recognized by his own people.

The material between these bookends reminds us of the preparation in ch. 4-11 and the rejection in ch. 12-13. In particular, we have two sections of miracles and boat rides that remind us of the evidence collected in ch. 8-9, evidence that our Lord cited to John the Baptist when he sent early in ch. 11 to ask whether Jesus were in fact the promised Messiah. These alternate with two sections of Pharisaic rejection that recall ch. 12. The first of these includes a reference to the Gentiles, which was the centerpiece of the rejections in ch. 12.

We may have occasion to revise this structure as we proceed, but for now it will be a useful roadmap to help us understand the history in context.

1-12, King Herod Kills the Baptist

1 At that time Herod the tetrarch--

Figure 3 (chart) shows the relation of this individual (Antipas) to Herodias and Philip (v. 3), and to Herod the Great, whom the Wise Men visited.¹ As the chart shows, the Herods were not Jewish, but of Edomite and Nabatean descent, and thus violated the Mosaic restriction of the Jewish throne to a Jew:

Deu 17:15 *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy brother.

They held power as Roman puppet-kings, but were a continual provocation to the more conservative elements of the Jewish population.

heard of the fame of Jesus,--The mechanism by which he learned of Jesus is suggested by the accounts of Mark and Luke. Immediately before reporting this story about the death of the Baptist, they tell us that the Lord sent his disciples out on a preaching tour (chart).

Mar 6:7 And he called *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two;

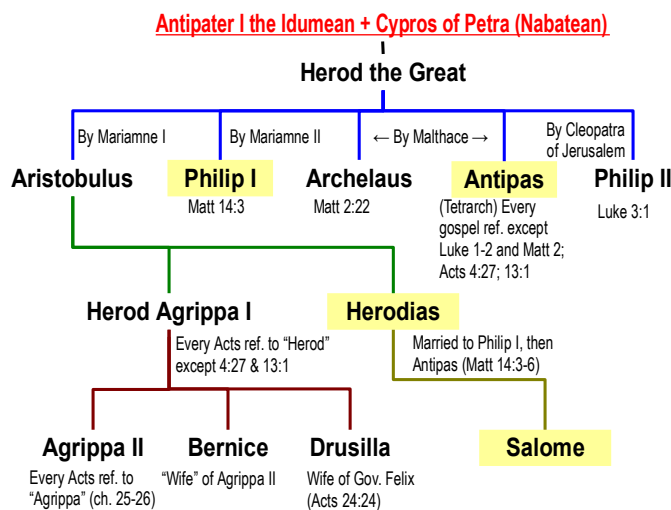


Figure 3: The Herods (after <http://pastorglenn.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/herods-family-tree.png>)

¹ This chart differs in one detail from the one I showed in our study of ch. 2. That one identified Philip, the first wife of Herodias, with the son of Herod the Great by Cleopatra. But Josephus (Ant. 18:136-237) clearly distinguishes the Philip of Luke 3:1, who married Salome, from the first husband of Herodias.

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and gave them power over unclean spirits; ... 12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them*. 14 **And king Herod heard of him;** (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

Their ministry is what brings the Lord's name to Herod's attention. We don't know what the Lord was doing during this period when his disciples were away; we can imagine that he continued his ministry. So instead of just one band preaching² and healing around the land, six or seven separate campaigns are underway.

2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.--It is amazing to observe the mental hoops through which people jump to explain the Lord's mighty works. If they had simply taken Isa 35:5-6 seriously, they would have recognized the Lord as the Messiah. They cannot deny the works, but they are not willing to bow to him, so they would rather attribute them to Satan (9:34; 12:24), or to John (here), or even just leave them unexplained (13:54-57).

Our analysis suggests that this story is intended to be understood in parallel with Peter's confession in 16:13-20. One mark of this linkage is that both paragraphs mention this confusion of our Lord with John:

Mat 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist:

Matthew now gives some history to explain why Herod is so interested in the fame of Jesus.

3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. 4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.--Even if Philip had died, the OT law would forbid remarriage to Antipas:

Lev 18:16 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it *is* thy brother's nakedness. (cf. 20:21)

But we know from secular history that Philip had not died. Josephus (Ant. 18:109-110, cf. 136-137) reports that Herodias and Antipas agreed to divorce their current spouses in order to marry.

Mal 2:15 Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away:

John faithfully condemned this action, and for his troubles was imprisoned (4:12), which was the catalyst for the Lord's public ministry.

2 Neither Mark nor Luke says that they were teaching, only that they preached and healed. The absence of the teaching ministry is consistent with the restriction that the Lord introduces in ch. 13, reserving teaching for those who have decided to follow him, and is also consistent with the distinction between the commission in ch 10 (to preach) and that in ch. 28 (to teach). Those can preach who are not yet mature enough to teach.

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5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.--He would not fear God, whose law he had despised, but he fears the people.

6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. 7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. 8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.--We see the tension within the family. Herodias wants the Baptist removed.

Herod wants to spare him. Their daughter becomes a weapon in their combat. How convoluted a family's life becomes when they do not follow the Lord.

This episode recalls an OT story about an Egyptian Pharaoh (Table 1, chart), the second such parallel that we have seen in Matthew.

In ch. 2, Matthew described Herod the Great using images from the Pharaoh in the time of Moses who slew the Hebrew children. Now the birthday of another Herod reminds us of the birthday of another Pharaoh, and in both cases there is an execution.

The Herods, 40 BC – AD 90	Egyptian Pharaohs, 1800-1400 BC
Mat 2:13-16 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, ... Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. ... 16 Then Herod , when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.	Exo 1:15 And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: 16 And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.
Mat 14:6-10 But when Herod's birthday was kept, ... 10 ... he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.	Gen 40:19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee. 20 And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday , ... 22 ... he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Table 1: Comparing Two Dynasties

Given Matthew's preoccupation with "the kingdom of heaven," it seems inescapable that he intends us to see this parallel as a commentary on earthly kingdoms. Earthly rulers may be overtly pagan (like the Pharaohs), or pretend to be God's people (like the Herods), but at the root they are all the same: promoting themselves and their prestige, and willing to abuse the people of God if they get in the way. Matthew's commentary is even more meaningful when we recall that before he followed the Lord, he was a tax collector on the boundary between the territory of Herod Antipas and Philip II, collecting taxes for this very same Herod.³

Perhaps this is why Matthew is the disciple who tells us the most about the kingdom of heaven. He knows the politics of earthly monarchs very well, and wants to show us that beneath the skin, they are all the same. He was converted from serving a worldly king, to serving God's king, and

³ See notes on 9:9. Others from Herod's circle who came under the Lord's influence were Chuza (Luke 8:3) and Manaen (Acts 13:1)

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he wants us all to understand how different the two kingdoms are, and how we must forsake the one in order to be part of the other.

The focus on these two birthdays (the only two birthday parties described in Scripture) is particularly revealing. These two monarchs convened parties on their birthdays to glorify themselves, and in both cases they brought suffering to others. We should be thankful for the physical life that God gives us, but beware the danger of focusing on ourselves. The birth that matters is our new birth.

It is certainly demeaning to the Herodian dynasty to compare them with the Pharaohs, who oppressed Israel and throughout Scripture are an image of opposition to God. The insult is even greater when we recall that Pharaoh at least recognized the work of the Spirit of God in Joseph, and elevated him to high position:

Gen 41:38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find *such a one* as this *is*, a man in whom the Spirit of God *is*?

But Herod kills the forerunner of the Messiah. Matthew wants his readers to understand that ultimately, all kings fail, and only the Lord Jesus will provide a just and true society.

9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.--He had kept John alive for fear of the people. Now he slays him for the same reason. He is a vivid picture of the fickle politician, and a case study of Solomon's warning,

Pro 29:25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. 11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.--So Herodias wins, and John is put to death. Meanwhile, Herod's conscience leads him to see the ghost of John everywhere, and in particular in the miracles of Jesus.

12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.--Imagine the shock this must have been to our Lord. He had been John's disciple, and spoke of him as the promised prophet of Malachi 3:1, unsurpassed "among them that are born of women" (10:10-11). At the human level, this event must have come as a tremendous shock.

13-36, Miracles Recalling ch. 8-9

Our high-level analysis suggests that this section is meant to recall the events in ch. 8-9. Table 2 (chart) suggests the correspondences. When John sent asking whether the Lord was in fact the Christ, the Lord responded by citing his miracles (11:2-6). Now that Herod has provided a stark example of rejecting God's messenger, Matthew reminds us of these same signs that show the Lord's true authority.

13-21, Multitudes in the Countryside

13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place ἐρημος τοπος apart:--The focus of the Lord's ministry so far has been in "their cities and villages" (9:35). We are tempted to understand "desert" in terms of sand dunes, but the Greek word means simply a deserted place, and the Greek word ἐρημος is the regular LXX translation for מדבר, which can refer to pasture land, and v.19 tells us there was green grass where the people sat down to eat.⁴ The Lord is out in the country, but we know from v. 15 that there were villages accessible to it. It was a boat-ride away from his usual area, and Luke 9:10 tells us that it was near Bethsaida, on the NE coast of the lake just beyond the mouth of the Jordan (Figure 4⁵, chart).

Why does he now withdraw?

We know that he would withdraw from the crowds to spend time in prayer (chart):

Mar 1:35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a **solitary place ἐρημος τοπος**, and there prayed.

And after the interruption by the crowds is over, he will do exactly that, in v. 23.

From Mark and Luke, we learn that it was at this point that he was rejoined by the disciples after their training mission. So another motive is that he wants time with them:

14:13 the people followed him	8:1 great multitudes followed him
14:14 moved with compassion	9:36 when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion
14:14 healed their sick	(all of ch. 8-9)
14:15-21 fed the multitudes	9:10-17 dining with publicans and sinners
14:22-33 delivered the disciples' boat in a storm	8:23-27 stilled the storm
14:35 they brought unto him all that were diseased	8:16; 9:2, 32 they brought unto him those needing help

Table 2: Similarities between 14:13-36 and ch. 8-9

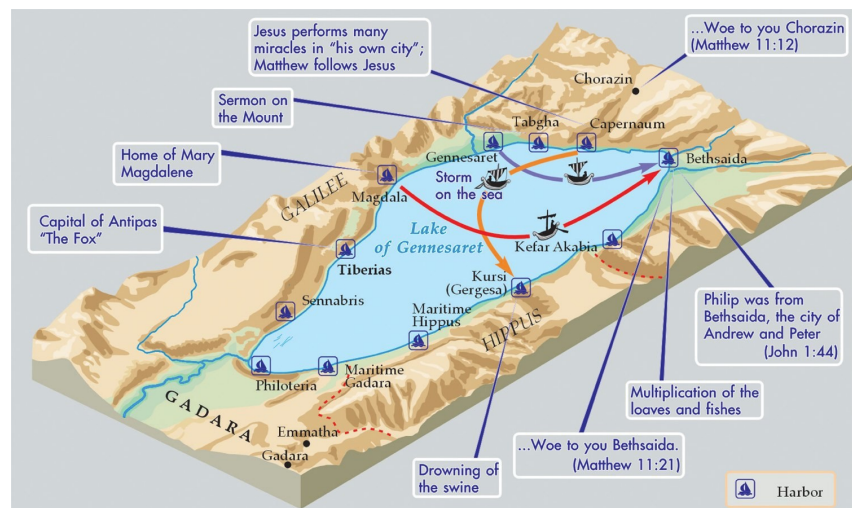


Figure 4: Locations around the Sea of Galilee

4 Mendel Nun, The "Desert" of Bethsaida. Jerusalem Perspective, 1 Oct 1997, <http://www.jerusalemerspective.com/2796/>, http://s3.amazonaws.com/storage-nm-storage.com/calvaryslc/downloads/loc081_bethsaida.pdf

5 https://abramkj.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/ch-22_lake-of-gennesaret.png, from Rainey and Notley, The Sacred Bridge, Carta, 2006, p. 354

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Mar 6:31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a **desert place ερημος τοπος**, and **rest** a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

Matthew links this story to the news of John's death. This news may have motivated the trip in two ways.

First, Bethsaida, the likely destination of the journey, lies on the other side of the Jordan, in the territory of Herod Philip II, not Herod Antipas. So relocating may be a simple security measure, as in 12:15, Luke 4:30, and John 8:59, and his instructions to the disciples in 10:14 not to linger where one's message is rejected.

The second motive related to John's death may reflect his time with John. The wilderness, the countryside, is where John the Baptist ministered (3:1, 3), and where the multitudes went to hear him (11:7)

Mat 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the **wilderness ερημος** of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the **wilderness ερημος**, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Mat 11:7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the **wilderness ερημος** to see?

Perhaps the news of John's death reminds the Lord of the time he spent following John in the wilderness, and he now withdraws to consolidate his experience with John and prepare for his own coming suffering at the hands of pagan kings and sinful people.⁶

There is a lesson here for us, in the busyness of our lives, that we need to withdraw from time to time, to reflect and gather our thoughts before the Lord. Each day, we need to draw apart for a quiet time with the Lord. Israel's calendar teaches us the need to devote one day a week set apart to the Lord, and occasional longer breaks (the pilgrimage feasts) when we set aside the business of our daily lives. The world sees personal time, holidays, and vacation as focused on us, but for the believer, they are important times to be with the Lord and recharge our spiritual batteries.

and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.--But the disciples' ministry has been effective. Many more have heard of the Lord, and work their way around the coast, following the boat, to meet personally with the Lord of whom the disciples have been speaking.

The idea of the multitudes οχλοι following ακουλυθεω the Lord is distinctive to Matthew (7x, 1x

⁶ Lamar Cope (CBQ 38 (1976) 515-519) argues from the δε in the critical text that what Jesus heard was Herod's interest from vv. 1-2, not the death of John, which would then be marked off by γαρ-δε, a common rhetorical device. In this case the motive would be escaping from Herod's territory by withdrawing into Philip's. However, MT uses και, not δε. This has been thought to mark temporal confusion (so Bultmann), assuming that John's death antedated Herod's amazement by some time, but there is no evidence of such a delay. So France, unlike Morris and Carson.

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in Mark, 2x in Luke, 1x in John, nowhere else). Matthew wants to remind us that in spite of the opposition of the Pharisees, many are still interested in the Lord.

We can imagine two reactions that the Lord might have toward the multitudes.

On the one hand, they may have been an encouragement to him. Recall when Elijah withdrew to the wilderness in the face of Jezebel's threats, and the Lord said to him (chart),

1Ki 19:18 Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

When the Pharisees determined to destroy him, great multitudes showed that some were still interested in his message:

Mat 12:14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. 15 But when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

Herod has demonstrated his wrath against John's message, which the Lord now carries, but there are still many who want to be with him.

On the other hand, they might be an annoyance. This trip was intended to be a vacation for him and for the disciples, and now he faces a multitude clamoring for attention. How does he respond?

14 And Jesus went forth,--that is, from the boat. The minute they came to shore, they were thronged.

and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.--The Lord thinks first of the needs of the multitude, and ministers to them.⁷ His compassion for them is a point linking this history to 9:36,

Mat 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

There is an important lesson here for us. We are often frustrated with the mass of people around us, milling aimlessly, with no moral compass. Our frustration may grow into irritation when they intrude on our privacy, our vacation, time that we had scheduled for ourselves. Our Lord's example reminds us that we need to take such intrusions as the Lord's appointments. Following him, we should have compassion on them, and offer them the only thing that can satisfy them.

Now the Lord's care shifts from healing to feeding, and links to another episode in ch. 8-9, the Lord's dinner with publicans and sinners in 9:10-17. There, he insisted that the days of his presence among men was not a time to fast, and here, as there, he meets the need of his followers for food. What a contrast this meal is with Herod's riotous feast at which John lost his life in the previous episode.

⁷ The other gospels note that he also taught them (Mark) and spoke to them about the kingdom of God (Luke). Does Matthew omit this to emphasize the shift in the Lord's policy in ch. 13 away from direct teaching? There need be no contradiction; he may well have used parables here as well.

15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.--The disciples are focused on their own need for rest, and perhaps also concerned about the Lord and the stress under which he is laboring.

16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. 17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.--Where did these come from? I suspect this is the disciples' lunch. They don't talk about going to get a meal themselves, just sending the multitudes away. Surely their own stomachs are growling.

John recalls that they were in the custody of "a lad" (John 6:9), but the other gospels don't mention him. He may be one of Zebedee's young helpers who had accompanied them in the boat, and was carrying their picnic basket. If this is true, the real issue is their willingness to give of their own resources to minister to the needs of the multitude.

18 He said, Bring them hither to me. 19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.--This is the Lord's pattern for how he distributes his blessings: from the head, through the members of the body.

20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.--If I am correct that they have been asked to share their lunch, the twelve baskets become significant: each of them now has more to himself than the whole group had before the miracle.

Like so much of the Lord's ministry, this miracle recalls the ministry of Elisha:

2Ki 4:42 And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. 43 And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave *thereof*. 44 So he set *it* before them, and they did eat, and left *thereof*, according to the word of the LORD.

21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.--But as always, the magnitude of our Lord's miracle surpasses that of his forerunners. Elisha fed 100 men with twenty loaves, but our Lord feeds more than 5000 with only five loaves.

22-33, Miracle on the Sea

The next event recalls yet another episode from ch. 8-9, the stilling of the sea in 8:23-27. But there are several notable differences (Table 3, chart).

22 And straightway Jesus constrained [αναγκασω "force, compel"] his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.--The verb

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describing the dismissal of the disciples shows that they were reluctant to leave the party. We know from John 6 that the response of the multitudes to this miracle was an attempt to make the Lord an earthly king (chart):

Joh 6:14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.
15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

	8:23-27	14:22-33
Destination	28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes [to the east]	34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret [to the west]
Lord's location	23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him . 24 ... he was asleep .	Mat 14:23 he went up into a mountain apart to pray:
Initiative	25 And his disciples came to <i>him</i> , and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.	25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them , walking on the sea.
Self-Revelation	(none)	27 Be of good courage; I am he ; be not afraid
Distinguished disciple	(none)	28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.
Lack of faith	26 Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? (to them all)	31 O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (to Peter)
How storm ended	26 Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.	32 And when they were come into the ship , the wind ceased.
Response	32 But the men marvelled , saying, What manner of man is this	33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God .

Table 3: Calming Two Storms

The disciples were at risk of being infected with this enthusiasm as well, so he sends them away, against their will (“constrained,” compelled), and deals with the multitudes.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.--Consider the stresses under which our Lord is laboring: liability to depression at the death of the Baptist, fatigue from the day's ministry, temptation to worldly glory by an enthusiastic crowd. To deal with these, he withdraws in prayer—a good example for us if we would remain faithful to the Lord. As he exhorted the disciples in Gethsemane,

Mat 26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:

In the first storm story, he is asleep after a busy day of healing and teaching. In the second, he withdraws to guard against temptation. Both episodes are evidence of our Lord's human flesh, and the steps he took to keep that flesh under control.

On the first boat ride, he rested when he was tired. Charles Ryrie used to tell his students that the first step to leading a spiritual life was getting a good night's sleep. It's not right to be like the

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sluggard, turning on one's bed like a door on its hinges (Prov 26:14). But it's also not right to abuse our bodies by neglecting to take needed rest. Fatigue can lead to carelessness or emotional weakness. When the Lord was tired, he slept.

On the second ride, he prayed when he was tempted. When we are discouraged, our natural inclination is to find somebody to whom to complain. That way lies bitterness. The one person to whom we should speak first when we are down is our heavenly Father, "casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you," 1 Pet 5:7.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.--As in ch. 8, they find themselves in peril. But there, the Lord was with them in the boat. Now they are alone. We can imagine how they must have longed for his presence.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night—The Romans divided the period from dusk to dawn, roughly 6 PM to 6 AM, into four three-hour watches, so this would be in the period 3-6 AM.

They have been laboring all night. But by the same token, the Lord has been in prayer all night. Their effort leaves them nowhere, while he now appears in great power. What a contrast between carnal labor and spiritual investment!

Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.--Here is great encouragement for saints in troubled waters. The Lord will come to us, even when there is no apparent way for him to intervene.

Note the contrast with the first storm in ch. 8. There, he was with them the whole journey. Now, he allows them to enter into trial without his physical presence. There is a clear progression here in his training of them. He is preparing them for the day when he will be taken from them. He is teaching them that even when they cannot see him, he knows of their condition, and will come to them whenever they need his help.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.--They cannot imagine that a person could walk on the water, and conclude that it is an apparition of some sort.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.--In contrast to the first storm, the Lord identifies himself to them. There, they thought they knew who he was, but here, he makes it clear that they have not yet apprehended his true nature. This trilogy of statements has important OT roots (chart).⁸

The first and last statements are alternative translations of the same Hebrew expression אֵל תִּירָא "fear not." The first is better translated "be of good courage" than "be of good cheer." They are afraid for two reasons: the danger of the storm, and the terror of confronting a spirit (v. 26). "Be of good courage" (θαρσέω) is much less common (11x vs. 50x), and often appears with a reassurance of the Lord's presence and intervention, as here:

Exo 14:13 And Moses said unto the people, **Fear ye not**, stand still, and see the **salvation of the LORD**, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye

⁸ See notes for detailed discussion.

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have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

Joe 2:21 **Fear not**, O land; be glad and rejoice: for **the LORD will do great things**.

Hag 2:4-5 for **I am with you**, saith the LORD of hosts: 5 *According to* the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so **my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not**.

Zep 3:16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, **Fear thou not: and to Zion**, Let not thine hands be slack. 17 **The LORD thy God** in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

The central statement appears 178 times in the OT, but almost always with a predicate (chart), e.g.,

Gen 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, **I am the Almighty God**; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

Exo 4:10 And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but **I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue**.

Exo 20:2 **I am the LORD thy God**, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Rut 2:10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing **I am a stranger?**

Only ten instances lack a predicate. In six of these, the Lord is identifying himself, and in three more, it is on the lips of a personified empire (Babylon or Assyria) with pretensions to divine authority. Here is the first example of the expression without a predicate in the OT:

Deu 32:39 See now that I, *even I, am* he [LXX “Behold, behold, that **I am**”], and *there is* no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither *is there any* that can deliver out of my hand.

Isa 43:10 Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he [LXX “**I am**”]: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

Five of the cases where the Lord is identifying himself are in Isaiah ch. 41-47, where the Lord is asserting his uniqueness as God and assuring Israel of his care through their difficulties.

So the overall assurance is an echo of divine statements from the OT encouraging the people not to fear because their God is with them. Our Lord’s appropriation of them is a claim to deity. He is preparing them for the confession that they utter in v. 33, and that Peter emphasizes in 16:16.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the

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water. 29 And he said, Come.--One of the distinctions between the storms is that here one disciple is distinguished. Matthew named Peter with the four in 4:18 and with the twelve in 10:2, but this is the first time Peter is distinguished from the others. Matthew is preparing us for his confession at the culmination of the center section of the book.

Peter's experience is a good example for us of living the Christian life in the midst of troubling times. There are three lessons here (chart).

First, Peter does not leave the boat until he is sure of the Lord's will in the matter. We are not to rush into threatening circumstances on our own initiative. It must be clear to us that the Lord is calling us, and here, the Lord does invite Peter to come to him.

And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid;--The second lesson is that we must keep our attention on the Lord, and not on the circumstances. His fear arose when he lost sight of the Lord and started looking at the wind's effects on the water.

and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him,--The third lesson is that even when our faith fails, the Lord does not, and he will deliver us if we cry to him.

and said unto him, O thou of little faith ὀλιγοπιστος, wherefore didst thou doubt?--The first storm story contains a similar rebuke, but to the disciples as a group. Now the Lord focuses on Peter.

This word and its relatives are favorites of Matthew. He uses it in 6:30; 8:26; 16:20; here; and the noun in 17:20 in the critical text, where MT has ἀπιστία. The only other instance in the Greek Bible is Luke 12:28, parallel to Matt 6:30. But regardless of the reading, the meaning in 17:20 leads to a question (chart):

Mat 17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

There the Lord seems to imply that the problem is not small faith, but lack of faith.

The answer may lie in a Hebraism, reflecting the rabbinic expression קטני אמונה. One example is Sota, 48b: "He who has bread in his basket and says: 'What shall I eat tomorrow?' is a man of little faith."⁹ More literally, we could translate, "small with respect to faith," in which case the

9 Thus TDNT. Gill offers even more examples: The phrase, קטני אמונה, "men of little faith", is often to be met with in the Rabbinical writings: so Noah is represented by them, as one of "little faith", who believed, and did not believe the flood; and therefore did not go into the ark, till the waters drove him (l): and though he is said to be perfect, this was not by his works, but by the grace of God (m). So the Israelites at the Red Sea, who thought that when they came out on one side, the Egyptians would come out on the (n) other. So the little children that mocked Elisha, are said to be so called, because they were men "of little (o) faith". So everyone that exalts his voice in prayer, is reckoned such an one (p). But what comes nearest to the case before us, is the following (q) passage; "Says R. Eliezer the Great, whoever has a morsel in his basket, and says, what shall I eat tomorrow? is no other than מקטני אמונה, "one of those of little faith". Refs: (l) Jarchi in Gen. vii. 7. (m) Tzeror Hammor, fol. 10.

“little” is describing not the faith but the person.

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.--In 8:26, the Lord rebuked the sea, and it was still, but here his mere presence in the boat causes the wind to cease.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.--Again, there is progress compared with the earlier event (chart). There, his stilling of the sea led to a question:

Mat 8:27 What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

Here, it leads to a confession. Up to this point, the only ones to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God are Satan (4:3, 6) and the demons of Gergesa (8:29). Now for the first time, the disciples have this insight, stimulated not only by the miracle, but by the Lord's direct confession in v. 27, "I am." They are being prepared for Peter's great confession at 16:16.

Mat 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

34-36, Mass Healings

34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.--From the vicinity of Bethsaida just beyond the mouth of the Jordan, the Lord returns with the disciples to the broad plain at the NW edge of the sea (Figure 4, chart).

35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;--Matthew loves to describe how people brought their friends to the Lord for help (chart):

Mat 4:24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and **they brought unto him** all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

Mat 8:16 When the even was come, **they brought unto him** many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick:

Mat 9:2 And, behold, **they brought to him** a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

Mat 9:32 As they went out, behold, **they brought to him** a dumb man possessed with a

2. (n) T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 118. 2. Erachin, fol. 15. 1. (o) T. Bab. Sota, fol. 46. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 90. 2. (p) T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 24. 2. Zohar in Num. fol. 93. 2. (q) T. Bab. Sota, fol. 48. 2.

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devil.

Mat 12:22 Then was **brought unto him** one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

There is an example here for us, and an important perspective on evangelism. Those who recognized the Lord were not able to heal as he could, but they knew that he could heal, and they brought to him those who needed him. Our task as believers is not to save our unsaved friends. It is to bring them to the Lord Jesus: to point them to him, to make available to them resources that may be able to help them. If you can't preach to them, bring them to a meeting where somebody else is preaching. If you can't lead them in a Bible study, host a Bible study where someone else does the teaching.

36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.--This episode recalls and amplifies that of the woman with the issue of blood in 9:20 (Table 4, chart).

In both cases someone is healed by touching the Lord's garment. But Matthew's account emphasizes that the latter healings are greater than the former.

- In ch. 9, only one woman is so healed, but now many are delivered.
- In ch. 9, the touch is coupled with the Lord's word, but no such word is added in 14:36.
- The woman "was made whole" σωζω, but the people in 14:36 "were made perfectly whole," διασωζω, using a stronger form of the verb that is rare (8x) in the NT.

All three of the miracles reported here echo ch. 8-9, but in each case, the new miracle is greater than the old one (Table 5, chart).

- In chapter 9, he graciously eats with publicans and sinners, but just a few of them, in the house, and from the other gospels it appears that Matthew

Matt 9	Matt 14
20 And, behold, a woman , which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years,	35 they ... brought unto him all that were diseased
came behind him,	36 And besought him
and touched the hem of his garment:	that they might only touch the hem of his garment:
22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.	(lacking)
And the woman was made whole σωζω from that hour.	and as many as touched were made perfectly whole διασωζω.

Table 4: Touching his hem

	Matt 8-9	Matt 14
Feeding	9:20 eats with a few in the house	14:15-21 feeds 5000+
Calming the Sea	8:24-27 speaks to the storm Disciples question who he is	14:24-33 his presence alone Disciples realize who he is
Healing with a Touch	9:20-22 one woman "made whole"	14:35-36 many people "made perfectly whole"

Table 5: The evidence grows from ch. 8-9 to ch. 14

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provided the food. Here, he miraculously feeds more than 5000 people.

- In ch. 8, he calms the storm by speaking to it, leaving the disciples with a question of who he is. Here, his mere presence calms the storm, and the disciples realize that he is the Son of God.
- In ch. 9, one woman touches his hem and is made whole, but here many people touch his hem and are made “perfectly whole.”

The miracles of ch 8-9 led us to John’s question in ch. 11. If there was sufficient evidence in the earlier miracles to persuade the Baptist in ch. 11, surely this new evidence should be even more persuasive. Yet as we move into ch. 15, we find that the opposition of the Pharisees is intensified.

Notes

Structure of ch. 12-16

Ch. 12-13 mark the Great Division between the Lord and those who reject him. Ch. 14 starts with the death of JB, which anticipates the end that awaits the Lord. Then ch. 14-16 alternate between echoes of ch. 8-9, and echoes of 12-13, and the section ends with Peter's great confession. So after the Great Division, we see the extreme examples of rejection (Herod) and confession (Peter), bracketing a summary of the evidence and the resulting division.

- 14:1-12, death of JB (how does this fit with 4:12 and 11:1?)
- 14:13-36, evidence, recap of 8-9. Components: healing, sea miracle (8:23ff), feeding (cf. 9:10-17) Recalls the evidence he gave John.
 - 13-21, healing and feeding 5000 while withdrawn with the disciples (note name resumption between healing and feeding). Feeding recalls 9:10-17.
 - 22-33, boat ride, disciples: walking on water, recall the storm in 8:23ff
 - 34-36, healings in Gennesaret
- 15:1-28 folds ch. 12 (pharisaic opposition, going to the Gentiles)
 - 1-9 rejects Pharisees' tradition (ch. 12 par 1-2)
 - 10-20, explains to the multitude, and then to the disciples (cf. ch. 13; Peter calls it a "parable")
 - 21-28 to woman of Tyre and Sidon (cf. ch. 12 par 3)
- 15:29-39 echoes 14:13-36 (evidence)
 - 29-31 healing the multitude, on a mountain by Galilee (cf. 14:34-36)
 - 32-38, feeding 4000 (note name resumption)
 - 39, boat ride to Magdala (Mark Dalmanutha) (cf. 14:22-33, but no miracle)
- 16:1-12, back to ch. 12-13
 - 1-4, Pharisees and Sadducees asking a sign (cf. ch. 12 par 5; in both cases the Pharisees are associated with another group)
 - 5-12, speaking to the disciples about the leaven of the P&S (echo of ch. 13? again, uses figurative language that needs to be interpreted)
- 16:13-20, Caesarea Philippi: Peter's confession
 - echoes God's announcement at the baptism

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- counters the Pharisees' accusation in ch. 12 par 4.

Notable repetitions:

- Ch. 12 appears to be some kind of summary that is echoed throughout this section.
- The two feedings would seem to be some kind of correspondence.

Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees

Figure 5 shows the distribution of these terms, individually and jointly, throughout the chapter (data in file ScribesPhariseesSadducees.ods).

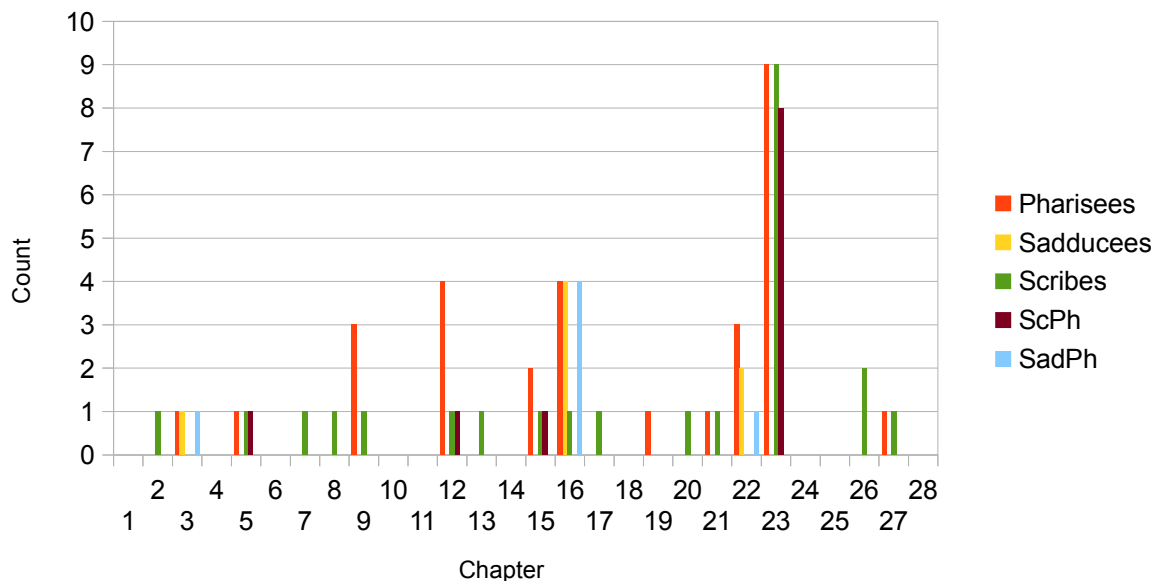


Figure 5: Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees in Matthew

Observations:

- The Sadducees and Scribes are never named in the same verse.
- Sadducees are distributed rather differently than the other two. Much less common—only in ch. 3 (rebuked by John, along with Pharisees), 16 (joined with Pharisees four times), and 22 (offering their challenge to the Lord, followed by Pharisees). They are not part of the general rebuke in ch. 23.
- 16:1 is the only place that the Sadducees and the Pharisees act in concert.
- Both sign requests are from joint committees (scribes and pharisees in ch. 12; sadducees

and Pharisees in ch. 16)

14:27 **Θαρσεῖτε· ἐγὼ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε**

Track the background of each of these.

Θαρσεῖτε

In the canonical LXX, the imperative of this verb always represents “fear not,” אל תירא , אל תיראי or אל תיראו (ten times: Gen. 35:17; Exod. 14:13; 20:20; 1 Ki. 17:13; Joel 2:21, 22; Zeph. 3:16; Hag. 2:5; Zech. 8:13, 15). However, the Hebrew expression is also translated more literally 19 times, mostly μη φοβείσθε (Gen. 43:23; 50:19, 21; Num. 14:9; Deut. 20:3; Jos. 10:25; 1 Sam. 12:20; 2 Sam. 13:28; 2 Ki. 25:24; 2 Chr. 20:15, 17; Neh. 4:8; Isa. 35:4; 51:7; singular Deut 31:6; subjunctive instead of imperative Jer. 10:5; 40:9; 42:11) and one time μη πτοηθῆτε 2 Chr 32:7. Only Genesis has both usages, so the difference may be mostly due to different translators. In any case, the LXX usage indicates that the word has much more the sense of “good courage” than “good cheer.” But the LXX never uses the two imperatives in the same verse, and even the two verbs occur together in the same verse only once, in Judith 11:1.

The positive command tends to be associated with assurances of God’s presence and care:

Exo 14:13 And Moses said unto the people, **Fear ye not**, stand still, and see the **salvation of the LORD**, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

Joe 2:21 **Fear not**, O land; be glad and rejoice: for **the LORD will do great things**.

Zep 3:16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, **Fear thou not**: *and to Zion*, Let not thine hands be slack. 17 **The LORD thy God** in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

Hag 2:4-5 for **I am with you**, saith the LORD of hosts: 5 *According to* the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so **my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not**.

But these assurances are sometimes associated with μη φοβου as well, as here:

Isa 41:10 Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Εγὼ εἰμι

By far the usual use of this expression is with a predicate:

Gen 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to

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Abram, and said unto him, **I am the Almighty God**; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

Exo 4:10 And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but **I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.**

Exo 20:2 **I am the LORD thy God**, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Rut 2:10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing **I am a stranger?**

The combination without predicate is rare in the LXX. In all the books other than Isaiah, I have found only five instances out of 156 occurrences of εγω εμι that appear to belong to this category, and I will argue that two of them do not. Isaiah's usage is different: out of 22 instances, seven are without predicate.

The instances apparently without a predicate are as follows:

The first instance is Deut 32:39, which refers to the Lord, as do five of Isaiah's: Isa 41:4; 43:10; 45:18*; 46:4; 47:8*. Note the alignment of these with the rare Hebrew expression אני הוא (Deut 32:39; Isa 41:4; 43:10, 13*; 46:4; 48:12*; 52:6*). The asterisked forms are the exceptions in both cases.

Exceptional Greek cases:

- 45:18 translates אני יהוה , an even more direct assertion of deity than אני הוא
- 47:8 is spoken by Babylon, in her pretensions to divine splendor

Exceptional Hebrew cases:

- 43:13 LXX does not translate אני הוא
- 48:12 and 52:6 construe the expression with a predicate

The three (the other two in Isa 47:10, and one in Zeph 2:15) refer to the pretensions of the personified empires that tried to dominate Israel, Nineveh (in Zeph) and Babylon (in Isaiah). Here also the title appears to involve a claim to deity.

Now consider the last three.

2Sa 2:20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, *Art* thou Asahel? And he answered, I *am*.

Here the expression is in a terse response to a question of identity, and clearly assumes the predicate "Asahel."

Jdg 11:37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I εγω

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εγω και οἱ ἀδελφοί μου and my fellows.

As in 2 Sam 2:20, translates the solitary אֶחָד, but actually the predicate is the previous πορευσομαι, so, like 2 Sam 2:20, it's not a real exception.

2Sa 15:26 But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, *here am* I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

This is quite remarkable. The Hebrew is הִנְנִי, commonly translated εγω εδου or simply εδου. It's not clear why the translator would use this translation in this one place alone (even in Samuel).

So we are down to one case out of 178 where εγω εμι appears with neither a predicate nor an assumption of divine status on the part of the speaker.

It is tempting to relate the expression to the "I am" of Exod 3:14, but the LXX there uses ο ων as the translation of אֶהְיֶה, and εγω εμι appears only with ο ων as a predicate.

Μη φοβησθε

See discussion under θαρσευτε above. This is the more common translation for אל תיראו.