



# SPORTS IN FOCUS

KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

Matthew 14:1-17:27 • Lesson Eight

## READY

- What positive signs or events in the world today give you reason to be optimistic about the days ahead?
- What negative or ominous signs tell you that the world is getting worse, and perhaps even moving toward a climatic end?

## SET

### Context of Matthew 14:1-17:27

Our Lord's prophetic parables underscore the truth that some people will believe the gospel, but many people will not. Matthew records in this section a number of incidents in Jesus' life that confirm this spiritual law: the hostility in His hometown of Nazareth, the hard-hearted Herod, the superficial reception of the masses, the worship of the twelve disciples, the desperate faith of a Canaanite woman and the Jewish leaders who sought to trap Jesus. Yet in the midst of this kingdom conflict, we see the true heart of Jesus for people as He performs more amazing miracles.

### Keys to Text

*Compassion:* The Greek verb translated "compassion" means literally "to be moved in one's bowels," where the ancient cultures considered the emotions to reside. Christ represented the compassionate heart of God.

## GO

### Read Matthew 14:1-17:27

1. Why did King Herod deal with John the Baptist so severely? What was Jesus' response (14:1-13)?
2. The account of the feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle, other than the resurrection, that is recorded in all four gospels. What are the significant details of this work of Christ?
3. Jesus took the Pharisees to task for what violations of the Mosaic law (15:1-20)?
4. What happened when Jesus quizzed His disciples as to His "reputation" (16:13-20)? What was the significance of this?
5. Skim the passage and identify the various encounters Jesus had with different individuals. What do you learn from them?
6. What affirmation did God the Father give to Jesus' ministry (17:1-5)?
7. How did Jesus respond to those who valued man-made religious tradition over divine truth?
8. What is significant about the way Jesus describes His church (16:18)?

## SPORTS IN FOCUS

Last week, Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker James Harrison became a central figure in the NFL crackdown on dangerous hits. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell served notice last week that illegal hits to the head and neck would bring more significant discipline, including suspensions. His memo to teams and players followed a weekend of high-profile hits that led to a \$75,000 fine against Harrison. Many doctors have felt that the NFL for too long has rejected the overwhelming evidence that blows to the head cause long-term health problems. In other words, they think the NFL policies have not ignored the problem because of lack of evidence but in spite of overwhelming evidence. In a similar way, those who heard and saw Jesus did not reject Him because they lacked the truth, but because they rejected the truth. They refused forgiveness because they wanted to keep their sins. They denied the light because they preferred darkness. The reason for rejecting the Lord has always been that men prefer their own way to His. [www.nebraskafca.org](http://www.nebraskafca.org)