

Jesus – King of the Jews #39

The Slaying of John the Baptist

Matt 14:1-13

Introduction:

1. The first Herod that we see in Scripture is Herod the Great
 - a. He was obviously a humble man
 - b. He ruled from about 37 BC to 4 AD
 - c. He was ruling during the time of the birth of Christ
 - d. He was evil, savage and yet crafty
 - e. He had several of his own sons killed when he suspected them of plotting against him
 - f. He was the one who issued the edict to kill the baby boys in Bethlehem
 - g. His family was more like a modern day Mafia rather than a royal fam.
 - h. When Herod died his kingdom was split among his 3 surviving sons
 - i. Archelaus was soon deposed
 - j. Philip received the worst land, desert, northeast of Galilee
 - k. Antipas is the Herod we see in this chapter
2. Herod Antipas visited Rome and his half-brother Philip and his wife Herodias, a granddaughter of Herod the Great
 - a. Herod and Herodias had an adulterous affair
 - b. She was bored with Philip and his kingdom
 - c. Herodias divorced Philip / Herod divorced his wife and they married
 - d. This became the reason that John the Baptist was killed
 - e. This Herod killed John
 - f. It was before this Herod that Jesus appeared during his trial
3. This true account is more incredible than the most bizarre soap opera.
 - a. It is a story of infidelity, divorce, remarriage, incest, political intrigue, jealousy, spite, revenge, lewdness, lust, cold-heartedness, cruelty, brutality, violence, ungodly remorse, and godly mourning.
 - b. But above all, it is the story of godless fear and the power of such fear to confuse, deceive, corrupt, destroy, and damn.
 - c. Nowhere in Scripture is the truth "The fear of man brings a snare" ([Prov. 29:25](#)) more vividly illustrated than here.
 - d. It is one of the most tragic yet triumphant texts in the Word of God.
4. The focal point of this brief episode is Herod's reaction to Jesus.
5. Some Bible scholars call chapters 13-14 a withdrawal period in the ministry of Christ
6. He withdraws from the crowds and teaches his disciples in a more private setting

I. The Problem Causing the Slaying

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

- Time (kairos) refers to a special season or period of time
- The context indicates that this is the general season when Jesus was facing increasing hostility and rejection
- He had been ministering for about a year, teaching, preaching and performing many signs and wonders – healing the sick, raising the dead and casting out demons

A. The Fame of Jesus – vs 1-2

1. Tetrarch – ruler of a fourth part
 - a) The title came to be used to refer to any subordinate ruler of a Roman province or region
 - b) He was not a king in the same sense that his father was
2. Herod had the superstitious belief that John would rise from the grave
3. And when Jesus did many wonderful works in the land, Herod's very troubled conscience concluded that it was John risen from the dead.

BYZ **Matthew 14:1** Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἤκουσεν Ἡρώδης ὁ τετράρχης τὴν ἀκοὴν Ἰησοῦ,

BYZ **Matthew 14:2** καὶ εἶπεν τοῖς παισὶν αὐτοῦ, Οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής· αὐτὸς ἠγέρθη ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αἱ δυνάμεις ἐνεργοῦσιν ἐν αὐτῷ.

B. The Fear of John – vs 2

1. Herod's conclusion about Christ shows that sin can severely upset the conscience.
2. One can imagine the great fear Herod would have of a resurrected John the Baptist.
3. Herod would think that sooner or later John would call on Herod and take vengeance for Herod's evil deed of beheading John.

II. The Provoking of the Slaying – vs 3-4

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.

1. John's rebuke of Herod's sin was the great cause of the beheading.
2. Herod's sin would not shock today's society.
 - a) *He simply fell in love (call it lust) with his brother's (Philip) wife; and she liked Herod's position, which was much higher than her current husband, so she left Philip and went with Herod.*
 - b) *This caused some major political fall-out as Herod was married to the daughter of Aretas, the ruler of Nabatean Arabia whose capital was the famous city of Petra.*
3. Divorcing the daughter of Aretas resulted in some warring retaliation by Aretas.
4. But the great provoker of the marriage was John's rebuking of it.
5. This especially upset Herodias and resulted in John being arrested and put in prison and later beheaded.
 - a) *Herodias was one of the most wicked and perverse women in Scripture – second only to Jezebel*
 - b) *The HS directs Matthew here to refer to Herodias as Philip's wife though she had been divorced from him for several years.*
6. Rebuking divorce and remarriage always upsets the parties involved.
 - a) *John was neither a compromiser or diplomat*
 - b) *His only fear was of the Lord*
7. That is why preachers today seldom rebuke divorce.
8. Churches are full of it and to rebuke divorce will generally result in the pastor being attacked by the church and often dismissed.

III. The Postponing of the Slaying – vs 5

5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

1. Herod postponed killing John because John the Baptist was popular with the people.
2. He was viewed as a prophet.
3. Herod wanted to keep the allegiance of the people and did not want to upset them by killing a man they held in such high esteem.
4. Herod was a crafty politician.
5. He illustrates the fact that the refraining of doing evil is not always from a holy motive.

IV. The Particulars of the Slaying – vs 6-10

- The day finally came when circumstances inspired Herod to carry out the death sentence for John the Baptist.
- The details are especially condemning for Herod and Herodias.

A. The Dining – vs 6

6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.

1. This birthday celebration would be a sumptuous feast.
2. Food would be in abundance, and wine would flow freely.
3. Also evil entertainment would be included.
4. Accounts in other Gospels tell us many dignitaries were invited to the birthday celebration.

BYZ **Matthew 14:3** Ὁ γὰρ Ἡρώδης κρατήσας τὸν Ἰωάννην ἔδησεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἔθετο ἐν φυλακῇ, διὰ Ἡρωδιάδα τὴν γυναῖκα Φιλίππου τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ.

BYZ **Matthew 14:4** Ἔλεγεν γὰρ αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰωάννης, Οὐκ ἐξεστίν σοι ἔχειν αὐτήν.

BYZ **Matthew 14:5** Καὶ θέλων αὐτὸν ἀποκτεῖναι, ἐφοβήθη τὸν ὄχλον, ὅτι ὡς προφήτην αὐτὸν εἶχον.

BYZ **Matthew 14:6** Γενεσίων δὲ ἀγομένων τοῦ Ἡρώδου, ὠρχήσατο ἡ θυγάτηρ τῆς Ἡρωδιάδος ἐν τῷ μέσῳ, καὶ ἤρρεσεν τῷ Ἡρώδῃ·

B. The Dancing – vs 6

1. The evil entertainment was the dancing by the daughter (Salome) of Herodias.
2. This daughter was from Herodias' first marriage.
3. This dancing would be lewd, sensual, and immorally stimulating (Herod's guests were men).
4. Herodias' daughter was like her mother obviously.

C. The Delight – vs 7

6b ... pleased Herod. 7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

1. The dancing, not surprisingly, pleased the immoral Herod.
2. He was so pleased he "*promised with an oath*" to give the dancer anything she wanted.
3. It was customary to reward a good performance but Herod's reward was too much.
4. It reflected his intoxication with wine, lust, and pride, not his wisdom about due remuneration.

D. The Desire – vs 8

8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.

1. The evil involvement of Herodias in all of this is exposed.
2. She knew her daughter would excite Herod sensually in his condition of intoxication, lust, and pride; and she had instructed Herodias what to ask for when Herod made the customary offer after a pleasing performance.

E. The Decree

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.

- Herod was trapped and made the decree to behead John the Baptist as requested by Herodias' daughter.
 1. Pain in the Decree
 - a) "*The king was sorry*" ([Matthew 14:9](#)).
 - b) *But not sorry enough.*
 2. Pride for the Decree
 - a) *Herod's pride would not let him renounce his oath, and his pride did not want to lose face before the dignitaries at the party.*
 - b) *So pride encouraged the decree to behead John the Baptist.*
 3. Power in the Decree.

9b ... he commanded it to be given her. 10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

 - a) *Herod had the political and governmental power to order this gruesome and wicked deed.*
 - b) *Wicked men in government use their power to do evil.*

V. The Presenting After the Slaying – vs 11

11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

1. This evil is so gruesome—a human head, dripping blood, sitting on a platter, presented as an reward for a dancing performance.
2. Herod, Herodias, and Salome have some horrible memories to aggravate their eternal torment in hell fire.

BYZ **Matthew 14:7** ὅθεν μεθ' ὄρκου ὠμολόγησεν αὐτῇ δοῦναι ὃ ἐὰν αἰτήσῃται.

BYZ **Matthew 14:8** Ἡ δέ, προβιβασθεῖσα ὑπὸ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτῆς, Δός μοι, φησί, ὥδε ἐπὶ πίνακι τὴν κεφαλὴν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ.

BYZ **Matthew 14:9** Καὶ ἐλυπήθη ὁ βασιλεὺς, διὰ δὲ τοὺς ὄρκους καὶ τοὺς συνανακειμένους ἐκέλευσεν δοθῆναι.

BYZ **Matthew 14:10** καὶ πέμψας ἀπεκεφάλισεν τὸν Ἰωάννην ἐν τῇ φυλακῇ.

BYZ **Matthew 14:11** Καὶ ἠνέχθη ἡ κεφαλὴ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ πίνακι, καὶ ἐδόθη τῷ κορασίῳ· καὶ ἤνεγκεν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτῆς.

BYZ **Matthew 14:12** Καὶ προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἦραν τὸ σῶμα, καὶ ἔθαψαν αὐτό· καὶ ἐλθόντες ἀπήγγειλαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ.

VI. The Pallbearers of the Slain – vs 12

12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

- The word got around about the beheading of John the Baptist—those at the party would talk, probably in jest, about what happened at Herod's birthday celebration.
- Herod's cronies are not recorded as offering any opposition.
- They were doubtless like him and thus full of evil and so delighted in the evil deed.
- When some of the disciples of John heard that John was beheaded, they took action concerning his body.
- Here is a beautiful ending to an ugly scene

A. Their Courage – “took up the body”

12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

1. To come to the castle for the body of John the Baptist who had just been beheaded took plenty of courage.
2. These men were risking their own lives to honor John.

B. Their Care – “and buried it”

1. These disciples cared about John receiving an honorable burial.
2. They did not want his body cast out for the vultures to eat.

C. Their Comfort – “went and told Jesus”

1. These disciples knew where to go in the time of their great sorrow.
2. Nothing will so comfort the bereaved soul as Jesus.

VII. The Parting After the Slaying – vs 13

13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

- Killing John the Baptist affected the ministry of Christ.

A. The Punishment in the Parting

1. “When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart” ([Matthew 14:13](#)).
2. Christ got farther away from the area of Herod's rule, when He heard of the killing of John the Baptist.
3. The parting of Christ from the area was a form of judgment.
4. When evil abounds, God does not hang around to bless society.
5. When governments tolerate corruption, they drive out Divine blessing.

B. The Place for the Parting – “a desert place”

1. According to [Luke 9:10](#), this desert place was in the area of the Bethsaida.
2. This would be in a province Herod did not rule.

C. The People in the Parting

1. “When the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities” ([Matthew 14:13](#)).
2. Many used their opportunity of seeing and hearing Christ.
3. The loss of blessing by some was gain for others.

BYZ **Matthew 14:13** Καὶ ἀκούσας ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνεχώρησεν ἐκεῖθεν ἐν πλοίῳ εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ' ἰδίαν· καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ ὄχλοι ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ περὶ τῶν πόλεων.

Conclusion:

1. John's faithfulness should inspire us...
 - a. to be true to God's Word even when it is not politically correct
 - b. proclaim God's requirements for marriage even if it angers some
 - c. John's behavior is especially good when compared with the others
2. Salome's shamelessness is often repeated today
 - a. Much modern dance is similar to the lewdness of Salome's dancing
 - b. It is designed to arouse fleshly passions
 - c. Christians need a sense of modesty and decency
3. Vengefulness of Herodias
 - a. She prompted Herod to imprison John
 - b. She prompted Salome to ask for John's head on a platter
 - c. Vengefulness led to the downfall of Haman
 - d. Vengeance destroys families, friends, associates
4. Weakness of Herod
 - a. His unfaithfulness to his first wife
 - b. His manipulation by Herodias /Salome
 - c. Moral weakness is a problem today.