

Darkness and Light
Herod and John the Baptist – Mark 6:14-29
Sunday Morning – 26MAY13

HEROD'S GUILTY CONSCIENCE

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.
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- *And king Herod heard of him . . .*
 - Herod heard of Jesus and His ministry, including the apostles' mandate to go preach the Gospel. He was frightened about Jesus
 - There is disagreement over what, *exactly*, Herod heard of
 - "Accounts of the deeds of Jesus, the mission of the Twelve, or both are possible."¹
 - Jesus *in general* is the most likely explanation, because Herod fears Christ actually is John!
- *For his name was spread abroad . . .*
 - The power and reach of the Christian message had even reached Herod by this time!²
 - "Herod's execution of John suggests the extent to which opposition to the Christian message may extend."
- *That John the Baptist was risen from the dead . . .*
 - Herod fears John the Baptist has returned to haunt him! He is paranoid, and consumed with fear.³
 - *EX: Edgar Allen Poe story – "The Tell-Tale Heart"*
 - "He feared John while he lived, and now, when he thought he had got clear of him, fears him ten times worse when he is dead. One might as well be haunted with ghosts and furies, as with the horrors of an accusing conscience; those therefore who would keep an undisturbed peace, must keep an undefiled conscience"⁴

¹ James A. Brooks, "Mark," vol, 23, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 104.

² Brooks, "Mark," 100.

³ See James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002), 183.

⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), Mk 6:14–29.

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- Don't underestimate the struggles unsaved people are going through, and how their Holy Spirit may be working on their conscience
- Always keep short accounts with God (1 Jn 1:9-10).
 - 1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.
 - We have an outlet for our sin – we have been forgiven for our sin
 - Pray to Christ and ask for forgiveness – He is faithful to forgive!

15	Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.
16	But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

- *Three popular opinions are:*
 - John the Baptist
 - Elijah (Mal 3:1-6)
 - **Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.**
 - Elijah was John the Baptist (Mt 11:10)⁵
 - An old prophet
 - None of these opinions are correct
- *Having a high opinion of Christ is not the same thing as faith!*⁶
 - Respect does not equal saving faith
 - It may be even more dangerous than outright disbelief – it provides false security
 - Jesus' own family proves that familiarity with Him does not equal faith

⁵ Eugene Merrill, "Malachi," vol. 8, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 857. "Christian scholarship is agreed that the messenger is John the Baptist (Mt 11:10; Mk 1:2) and that the Lord of whom he is forerunner is Jesus the Messiah (Mt 3:1-3; 21:12-17; Lk 2:41-51)." See also Thomas Constable, *Malachi* (Dallas, TX: SonicLight, 2013), 30-31.

⁶ Edwards, *Mark*, 185.

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- Herod has a greater opinion of Christ than His own family!
- Do you have real saving faith in Christ, or is He just somebody you respect?
 - Ask yourself this question, and ask challenge new Christians with these questions now and throughout your life in the local church
- *But when Herod heard thereof . . .*
 - Herod had his own conclusions
 - “His conscience smote him for his crimes”⁷

THE ASSASSINATION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST:

The Resentment of Rebuke:

17	For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.
18	For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

- Very complicated family tree!
 - She is married to Herod Antipas – her uncle!⁸
 - Herod seduced her away from his own brother, Philip
- John fearlessly condemns this terrible, disgusting sin (v.18)
 - Forbidden by Jewish law (Lev 18:16; 20:21)
 - It takes great courage to stand for truth and preach something unpopular, especially to a political leader like Herod!
 - *EX: Incident of Ambrose of Milan and Emperor Theodosius*⁹
 - Late 4th century
 - Riot in Thessalonica. Commandant of the city killed by rioters.
 - Theodosius spoke with Ambrose, who counseled him to not lash out in anger but handle the incident judiciously.

⁷ Albert Barnes, “The Gospels,” vol. 9, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), Mt 14:2, 151.

⁸ See Edwards, *Mark*, 184 for genealogy. See also Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Herodias,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 973.

⁹ Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, combined ed. (Peabody, MS: Prince Press, 2007), 152-153.

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- The Emperor changed his mind, issued a pardon, threw an event for those who were pardoned, then slaughtered them!
- When Theodosius next tried to enter church in Milan, Ambrose confronted him with these words:
 - “Stop! A man such as you, stained with sin, whose hands are bathed in blood of injustice, is unworthy, until he repents, to enter this holy place, and to partake of communion!”
- Theodosius repented
 - You probably won’t have this kind of opportunity, but be willing to stand for Biblical truth now and in the future. John the Baptist did it. Ambrose did it. Pastors all across the world do it. You can do it too.
- Herod threw John in prison because his wife wanted him to

19	Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:
20	For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

- *Therefore Herodias had a quarrel . . .*
 - She didn’t like John’s message, so she sought to kill him
 - “There is no hatred so virulent and awful as the hatred of sinners against faithful and righteous rebuke.”¹⁰
 - There is nothing we hate more than to be told we’re wrong
 - Many excuses run through our mind. We know the truth, which is why we get angry in the first place!
- *For Herod feared John . . .*
 - Herod couldn’t bring himself to actually kill John, like his wife wanted
 - He imprisoned him instead, hoping this would make her happy
 - He was convicted by John’s teaching and enjoyed listening to him, but never repented

¹⁰ *St. Mark Vol. I*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 253.

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- “Herod is pictured as superstitiously fearing John because he knew that John’s life was holy and his was wicked.”¹¹
- “He kept his prisoner safely, even from the malice of his paramour, whom he would gladly have gratified had not his conscience barred the way.”¹²
- Herod, like all of us, has innate knowledge of his own sin. He was spellbound by John’s preaching about Christ, but would not repent
 - Read Rom 3:9-20
 - Herod, like all men, is utterly without excuse

The Plot:

21	And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;
22	And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.
23	And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

- Herodias waited for a chance to kill John. Her day now came, and her plot sprang into action
- Herod and his important lieutenants are having a party.¹³
 - Civil servants
 - Military officials
 - Rich and “important” people
- The party is celebratory, riotous and trending toward debauchery
 - Doesn’t say they were drinking
 - Context suggests debauchery and sin

¹¹ Brooks, *Mark*, 105.

¹² *St. Mark Vol. I*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 253.

¹³ John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff and William G. T. Shedd, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Mark* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 58. “The first two classes are servants of the state, civil and military officials; the third includes the great men of the land generally.”

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- The dance by Herodias' daughter suggests this was *sexual* in nature
 - She was a teenager
 - "Her dance was a suggestive, indecent dance, meant to incite the lust of Herod and his guests."¹⁴
 - "When woman's charms are used not only to provoke lust, but to induce to cruelty, can there be a more awful instance of the misuse of the fair gifts of the Creator?"¹⁵
 - Herodias sent her daughter out to dance this way intentionally
- Consumed with lust, in a fit of abandonment, Herod promised her anything she wanted, to impress his lieutenants who were watching.¹⁶

Herod's Sin – And Our's, Too:

24	And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist
25	And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist
26	And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her

- Herodias' evil plot went according to plan
- Herod's actions were disgraceful and pathetic
 - He didn't want to execute John, but he elevated his word and the opinions of his lieutenants over what he *knew was wrong*
 - "He would not reject her"
- His actions are terrible and inexcusable – but we do the same thing, in smaller ways, every single day
 - We succumb to peer pressure because we don't want to lose face with our friends

¹⁴ Rodney L. Cooper, "Mark," vol. 2, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 103-04.

¹⁵ *St. Mark Vol. I*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones, *The Pulpit Commentary* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 253.

¹⁶ See Cooper, "Mark," 103-104 and Edwards, *Mark*, 189.

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- Sex, general immorality, drugs, theft, false teaching, etc.
- There are Christians down through the ages who have died rather than conform to the ideas of the world
 - *EX – death of Swiss Baptist Felix Manz*
 - Spoke against paedo-baptist teachings of Reformer Ulrich Zwingli and state involvement in the affairs of the church
 - Was put to death by drowning in 1527
 - “All the way to the waterside, he witnessed to the crowds and to those accompanying him. He was trussed up like a turkey and tossed from a boat into the River Limmat. Zwingli said, ‘Let him who talks about going under the water . . . Go under!’ ”¹⁷
- What a contrast in men!
 - John is willing to preach against Herod, knowing it may kill him
 - Ambrose preaches against an Emperor
 - Felix preaches to the crowds on way the to his own murder
 - Herod, on the other hand, kills John because he is afraid to lose face in front of his subordinates
 - We fall into sin for the same reasons
 - **Jas 3:10b My brethren, these things ought not so to be.**

The Execution:

27	And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison
28	And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother
29	And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Conclusion:

¹⁷ Jack Hoad, *The Baptist* (London, UK: Grace, 1986), 66-67.

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- Know that people are convicted of their own sin and without excuse
- Know that we, too, must keep short accounts with God
- Know that *respect for Christ is not saving faith in Christ*. Consider which one you have, and challenge other Christians to do the same
- Do not succumb to peer pressure – stand firm for truth and do what is right
 - Christians down through the centuries have managed it
 - You can, too!