

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for January 15, 2017

The Death of John the Baptist
Mark 6:14-29

I. The impact of the twelve (6:14-16)

King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

-Herod Antipas was tetrarch in Galilee

-Jews occupied land while Romans owned the land

-Luke 3:1 "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,"

-Herod the Great died and three sons took over (Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip)

-Sending of the 12 was effective since "King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known"

-First theory: Jesus is John the Baptist resurrected

-"John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him"

-Some actually thought John the Baptist had legitimately come back from the dead

-Jesus' fame matches the fame of John the Baptist

-The miraculous works were because John the Baptist came back from dead

-Second theory: Jesus is Elijah

-This was the Jewish expectation based on OT Scripture

-Malachi 4:5-6 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. 6 And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

-Mark 8:27-28 "And on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' 28 And they told him, 'John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.'"

-Third theory: Jesus is a prophet like the prophets of old

-Matthew 16:14 "And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'"

-Herod's conclusion: Jesus is John the Baptist resurrected

- "But when Herod heard of it, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'"
- This was Herod's nightmare coming to life
- Herod seems to be fearing the haunting of John the Baptist since Herod had killed John
- Notice how there is a clear link between the messages of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the 12 apostles
- Verses 14-16 give an update on the mission of the 12
- Also, verses 14-16 provide a springboard to recount the death of John the Baptist

II. The imprisonment of John the Baptist (6:17-20)

17 For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

- Last mention of John the Baptist was in Mark 1:14
 - Mark 1:14 "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,"
- John was arrested for rebuking Herod Antipas for being in an unlawful relationship
 - Herodias was the wife of Philip who then became Herod's wife
 - Philip was also a tetrarch and step-brother to Herod (Luke 3:1)
 - Leviticus 18:16 "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness."
 - Leviticus 20:21 "If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless."
- Herodias wanted to kill John but Herod would not allow it since he feared John's righteousness and holiness
- Herod was perplexed by John's words yet enjoyed him gladly
 - How was Herod "perplexed" by John?
 - Maybe the text should be ἐποίει (he did/was doing many things) instead of ἠπτόρει (he was greatly perplexed)
 - This would imply that John perhaps provided instruction and counsel that Herod followed and thus heard him gladly
- Initially, Herod wanted to put John the Baptist to death
 - Matthew 14:5 "And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet."
- Despite being rebuked by John, Herod appeared to have a deep respect for John

-Matthew 14:9 "And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given."

III. The ill will of Herodias (6:21-25)

21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22 For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." 23 And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." 24 And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." 25 And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

- Herodias previously had no opportunity to kill John until Herod's birthday
- Herod's birthday banquet involved "nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee"
 - These are the elite in every way
- This was not a Jewish practice, but a Roman or pagan one
 - Violence for sport, immorality for entertainment, drunkenness, etc. all could be found at Roman parties
- While drunkenness was a major part of such events, Scripture contains warnings for rulers about wine
 - Proverbs 31:4-5 "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted."
- Herodias used her cunning to have her daughter dance seductively at Herod's birthday banquet
- Herod desired to reward the girl's dancing as a means to show off
 - Ironically, Herod does not really have authority to give away anything
- Girl took a moment to seek advice from her mother, Herodias
- Herodias's plan worked perfectly since her grudge against John remained
- Thus, the girl came back to Herod with her request of John's head, "immediately"

IV. The immediate response of Herod (6:26-29)

26 And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. 27 And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison 28 and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

- While Herod immediately felt sorrow, he was more overcome by his reputation in front of his guests
 - Herod would have been a fool if he didn't honor her request

- He could have humbled himself and told her no
- Herod gave in to the request in order to maintain respect among the people
- Herod gave an “immediate” response to this “immediate” request
 - An executioner sent to do the work
 - The head of John the Baptist was brought back on a platter and given to the girl
- This girl is completely submissive, obedient, and potentially brainwashed by her mom
 - She brought John the Baptist’s head on the platter to her mom (v. 28)
 - This moment shows Herodias to be the true mastermind behind the death of John the Baptist
- John the Baptist’s disciples were still active and ministering at this time
 - These disciples came to give John a proper burial