

A DEADLY DANCE
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Mark 6:14-29

1. For the last two weeks we have focused on Jesus' instructions to the Apostles as He prepared them for a mission trip.

2. He told them:

- a. That He was sending them out as sheep in the midst of wolves.
- b. That they would be hated by all on account of His name.
- c. Not to be afraid.
- d. To love Him supremely and to take up their cross and follow after Him (obey Him) regardless of the cost to them personally.

3. The passage we are focusing on today illustrates why it was necessary for Jesus to prepare the disciples the way He did.

4. What happened to John the Baptist has happened, and is still happening, to millions of people over the last twenty-one centuries.

5. Paul understood this reality when he declared, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12)

NOTE: Only those who compromise with this present world system can escape being persecuted.

6. We see that the ministry of Jesus and His disciples had captured the ears and imaginations of a lot of people.

7. When Jesus later asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" they responded, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." (Matthew 16: 13-14)

8. Herod, who had ordered John to be executed, was convinced that John had risen from the dead.

9. In fact, Luke tells us that Herod kept trying to see Jesus to confirm or disprove his fears.

Luke 9:7-9

Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, 8 and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. 9 Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see Him.

10. Herod finally did get to see Jesus after His arrest, but Jesus had nothing to say to him.

Luke 23:8-10

Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. 9 And he questioned Him at some length; but **He answered him nothing.**

NOTE: **Herod had his opportunity through John the Baptist, but rather than embracing John's message he killed the messenger. Sadly, like Herod, some have missed their opportunity and God has nothing more to say to them.**

11. We are going to look at this passage under two headings.

- a. The fearless prophet.
- b. The fearful king.

I. The fearless prophet.

- A. John was sent to prepare the Jewish people for the coming of the Messiah.
- B. He did so by:
 - 1. Preaching, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” Matthew 3:2
 - 2. Baptizing those who genuinely responded to his message.
 - 3. Confronting those who wanted to be baptized apart from repentance. Matthew 3:5-8
 - 4. Counseling people to live changed lives. Luke 3:7-14
 - 5. Pointing to and exalting the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. John also confronted Herod several times and told him, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”
- D. John was filled with the Holy Spirit, and because he was he did not limit his ministry and message just to the Jews, rather he spoke truth to all those God put in his path.
- E. If we are going to represent God faithfully, and make a difference in the lives of others, we need to deal with the issue of fear.

II. The fearful king.

- A. Background.
 - 1. Herod, also known as Herod the Tetrarch and Herod Antipas, was a son of Herod the Great by his fourth wife.
 - 2. He was not a Jew; rather he was a descendent of Esau, the brother of Jacob.
 - 3. His mother was a Samaritan which meant she was part Jew and part Gentile.
 - 4. He was well schooled in cruelty by his father who had the entire Jewish Sanhedrin executed for opposing him, who put at least one wife and two sons to death, and who, in an attempt to kill the Christ-child, ordered the destruction of all the male children under the age of two who lived in and near Bethlehem.
 - 5. After Herod the Great’s death his kingdom was divided between three of his sons: Herod Antipas, who ruled Galilee; Archelaus, who ruled Judea and Samaria; and Philip, who ruled an area north of Galilee.
 - 6. On a trip to Rome, Herod seduced Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip.
 - 7. He then divorced his current wife, Herodias divorced Philip, and then the two of them were married.
 - 8. Herodias was not only his wife, but also his niece because she was the daughter of another one of Herod’s half-brothers named Aristobulus.
 - 9. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Herodias had a daughter from her marriage to Philip named Salome.
- B. Herod’s relationship with John the Baptist was a strange one.
 - 1. He had John arrested and held in prison for over a year.
 - 2. Matthew 14:5 tells us that Herod wanted to put John to death, but he **feared** the multitude, because they regarded him as a prophet.
 - 3. He resisted Herodias’ desire to have John put to death because he was **afraid** of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man.
 - NOTE: People should know that we are both righteous and holy people even as they oppose us and want to do us harm.
 - 4. He also enjoyed listening to him.
 - NOTE: There are a lot of people who love church but do not love Jesus.
- C. Herod not only feared John, he also feared Rome, the powerful father of his previous wife, the multitudes, his wife, and losing the respect of his lords, military commanders, and the leading men of Galilee who were all present at his birthday party.

D. Herod's birthday party provided Herodias with the opportunity she had been looking for.
1. These celebrations were characterized by drinking, overeating, erotic dancing, and sexual indulgence.

2. When Salome danced for Herod and his guests the king was so pleased with her

performance that he promised to give her anything she wanted up to half of his kingdom.

3. She asked her mother what she should ask for, and her mother replied, "The head of John the Baptist."

4. She hurried to the king and asked, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

E. Herod was trapped, and, even though he was very sorry, there was no way out because of his oaths and dinner guests.

F. In the end Herod delivered John's head to those who wanted him dead because he lacked the courage to do what was right.

NOTE: He cared more about pleasing people than he did his own soul.

APPLICATION

1. What does all this have to say to us?

a. Being faithful to God calls for us to take a stand against sin.

b. People may not like us, but they should know that we are both righteous and holy.

c. Confronting our current culture, both in the church and in the world, will not make us popular.

d. Fear of others can lead to actions for which we will later be sorry.

e. Passions inflamed by alcohol and worldly entertainment and pursuits can entrap us.

f. Enjoying church, singing and listening to Christian music, and hearing preachers preach will not, in themselves, get us into heaven.

g. In response to the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, we must genuinely repent towards God and embrace Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

2. What the world calls Christianity is pretty convenient, but Biblical Christianity is not.