

Episode #814 Matthew 14 Part 1-The Outrages of Herod

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. Today we will consider the final fate of John the Baptizer (Identifier) and consider the outrageous actions of the usurper king Herod.

III. Herod, Herodias, and John. Matthew 14:1-5.

- A. Matthew 14:1. A tetrarch was governor of a fourth (or another fraction) of a region. The former realm of Herod the Great was divided among his sons. This was Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great by Malthace.
- B. Verse 2. His “servants” were not his *doulos* or slaves, but the word for children, often meaning servants or attendants, his (young) retainers. Herod reasons this about John. Mighty works are the Greek *dunamis*, meaning they are inherently powerful.
- C. Verse 3. Herodias was a granddaughter of Herod the Great. She married her (half) uncle, Herod Philip I, but afterwards had an unlawful union with his brother Herod Antipas. She persuaded him to go to Rome to seek the title of king, but Agrippa dispatched a freedman to Rome to bring charges against him, after which he was exiled. Herodias followed him into exile.
- D. Verse 4. This is per Leviticus 18:16. Note that this was only while the brother was still alive, as when he had died the law actually expected a brother to marry his wife in certain circumstances, Deuteronomy 25:5. Had Herod asked him about the legality of this? If so, he didn’t answer as he was expected to! Luke 3:19 says he also reproved Herod for all the evils he had done.
- E. Verse 5. He wished, Greek *thelo*, to put him to death. Of course, the crowd were quite right that he was a prophet, as the Lord Himself confirmed, Matthew 11:9.

IV. The Girl and the Oath. Matthew 14:6-8.

- A. Verse 6. This was Herodias’ daughter by Philip. History tells us this girl’s name was Salome. There is no historical reason to think she later became a believer or is the Salome of Mark 15:40 and 16:1 (but that would make an interesting story!). Historically she drowned while crossing an icy river. “Danced” is used elsewhere for children dancing in play in Matthew 11:17. The dancing may or may not have been erotic. She may simply have greatly amused Herod and his guests so much by her play that (probably under the influence of drink) he made his outrageous oath.
- B. Verse 7. “Promised” is *homologeō*, to say the same thing, in this case in the sense of saying what you later will do. The usual thing was to say up to half the kingdom.
- C. Verse 8. This was not her desire, but she was incited, instigated, or persuaded by her mother. It seems doubtful that this was a carefully laid trap ahead of time. Mark 6:24 tells us that she had to leave to find and ask her mother what she should ask for. There is no evidence here that she was a co-conspirator in a plot, but just a child who was a stooge of her vengeful mother. No doubt Herodias immediately saw in this a chance to get her way, and took it.

V. The Death of John. Matthew 14:9-12.

- A. Verse 9. Herod would rather save his face than save John the Baptist.
- B. Verse 10. This was a wicked mission! Greek is *pempo*, a simple and not official sending. This was on Herod’s word, not by any official decree.

C. Verse 11. The word for “girl” is used elsewhere for the twelve-year-old girl he “raised” from her death-like illness, Mark 5:42. Salome may have been of similar age. Her mother was the real instigator of the bloody deed.

D. Verse 12. Telling Jesus is always a good thing to do in our troubles, or when we have to bury a loved one. To whom else would we go?

VI. Conclusion: The sad end of John the Baptizer was brought about by the jealousy of an immoral woman and the outrageous oath of a proud and probably drunk king. This faithful man of God came to this sad end, yet in standing for the Lord and His truth he actually had the victory. Do we stand for truth in spite of the hateful disagreement of the godless world? Will we be faithful to our message, come what may? Let us learn this lesson from the unwavering John the Baptizer.