

Spurgeon's Notes on Mark

6:20 - Herod was a great monarch; John was only a poor preacher whose garment and diet were of the coarsest kind. But "Herod feared John." Observe the good things said about Herod. **First**, Herod protected John. Herodias wanted to kill John (v. 19). **Second**, Herod respected righteousness and holiness. Herod respected virtue even if he, himself, did not have it. **Third**, Herod also admired the specific person in whom he saw righteousness and holiness. This is a step further, for one may admire abstract virtue, and yet, when one actually sees it embodied in a person, he may hate him. A **fourth** good point about Herod was that he listened to John--in fact, "heard him gladly."

But Herod had serious flaws. **First**, even though he like to listen to John's preaching, "and when he heard him, he did many things." He could not go to the whole length John would have him go. He halted between two opinions. He hesitated. He wavered. **Second**, though he feared John, he never looked to John's Master. It is easy to hear and admire the preacher while the preacher's Master remains unknown. **Third**, even though Herod admired goodness in another, there was none of it in himself. Herod was a fox of a man--selfish, full of tricks, and cruel. **Another flaw** in Herod's character was that he never loved the word of God as God's word. He admired John, but he never said to himself, "God sent John. God speaks to me through John." He did not receive the testimony of John as the word of God. **Finally**, it is not said that Herod feared God but that he "feared John." The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Herod ended most wretchedly. He murdered the preacher whom he once respected. After a time people dislike being rebuked, and they proceed in their dislike until they scoff at the things they once revered. Herod feared John and yet he beheaded him. This Herod Antipas was the man who afterwards mocked the Saviour. In the end Herod was recalled in disgrace by the Roman emperor. Such was the end of Herod who listened to John but did not heed his words.