

THE MURDER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST *or*
THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

TEXT: MARK 6:14-29

Introduction:

1. This is one of the saddest stories in the Bible.
2. Herod Antipas was a son of the wicked Herod the Great, the tyrant who slaughtered the innocent children in Bethlehem.
3. The history of the Herod family is a sordid tale of murder, immorality, treachery, and incest.
4. Herod Antipas is referred to here as “king Herod” (Mark 6:14), but technically he was not a king. Actually he was a tetrarch (cf. Matt. 14:1, 2; Luke 3:19, 20; 9:7).
5. A tetrarch originally signified the ruler of a fourth part, but it later came to mean by popular usage any ruler dependent upon the Roman emperor. This is why the Jews cried out: “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15).
6. Herod was a sly, crafty, and ambitious rascal. Our Lord said of him, “Go ye and tell that fox, behold, I cast out devils” (Luke 13:32).
7. *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* says of Herod: “His administration was characterized throughout with cunning and crime, intensely selfish and utterly destitute of principle.”
8. This sounds like most political leaders today!
9. Herod had John the Baptist killed (Mark 6:14-16). The Bible says, in John 1:6, that “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.”
10. John the Baptist was just the opposite of Herod Antipas. Whereas Herod was weak and carnal; John was noble and faithful.
11. And even though Herod liked John, he had him executed.

12. I have entitled tonight's message, "The Murder of John the Baptist," or "The Deceitfulness of Sin."

13. My outline is very simple:

- I. HEROD WAS WARNED OF HIS SIN**
- II. HEROD WAS CONVICTED OF HIS SIN**
- III. HEROD WAS ENSLAVED BY HIS SIN**

I. HEROD WAS WARNED OF HIS SIN (MARK 6:18)

1. Herod had first married the daughter of King Aretas, an Arabian king, but he divorced her in order to marry Herodias.
2. Herodias had been married to Herod's brother Philip, but she abandoned him so she could run off with Herod. Adultery, divorce, and incest was common among the heathen, especially among the Herod family, and John the Baptist preached against it.
3. Leviticus 18:16 says, "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness."
4. Leviticus 20:21 says, "And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless."
5. John the Baptist confronted Herod with his wicked sin and said, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6:18).
6. James Smith wrote: "The heavenly searchlight is made to flash into the dark, hidden parts of his life. His besetting sin is pointed out, his unlawful life exposed. This was the day of his merciful visitation if he had only known it" (*Handfuls on Purpose*).
7. When Herod left this world he had no excuse. It was only a few short years later that Herod and Herodias were banished to Gaul by the emperor Caligula, and soon they died.

8. Herod had been warned by John the Baptist, but he would not heed the warning. John's preaching upset Herodias.
9. Mark 6:19 says, "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not" (6:19).
10. "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" (Mark 6:20).
11. Both Herod and Herodias would have killed John the Baptist right away but Herod would not because "he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet" (Matt. 14:5).
12. Therefore, Herodias waited for her "convenient day" (Mark 6:21) to kill him, all the while allowing her anger and animosity toward John to build up.
13. With a wicked mother like her, it is no wonder that her daughter turned out the way she did (Mark 6:21-24).
14. These types of banquets were rowdy and raunchy. The dances were lewd and disgusting, designed to appeal to the perverted, sensual appetites of drunken men.
15. And there are parties like this going on all over this wicked NYC area on any night of the week (right next door), with lewd dancing, drinking, worldly music, and all sorts of wickedness and debauchery.
16. How sad to read of a shooting taking place at some wild drinking party on a Sunday evening, at a time when decent people are in church worshipping God.
17. And what is really disgusting is that some of this debauchery is actually going on in churches! When I was a teenager, all the Roman Catholic churches (I have heard that many of the Protestant churches were doing the same) had teen dances where all sorts of drinking, drugs, and immorality was going on. They were held in dark church basements with loud rock music.

18. And some of the wildest parties are after so-called “christenings,” when worldly unsaved people have their babies sprinkled by the worldly priest or minister and then they get drunk!
19. Herodias knew Herod’s weakness (the devil knows your weakness too), and so she had her daughter (we’re told her name was Salome, but the Bible does not say) perform her salacious and lascivious dance for him.
20. Her scheme worked – Herod “said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee” (Mark 6:22).
21. But Herod had been warned. Remember Mark tells us, “For Herod feared John...” (Mark 6:20). The word “feared” means he respected him and his message, but he did not want to give up his adulterous relationship with Herodias.

II. HEROD WAS CONVICTED OF HIS SIN (MARK 6:20).

1. But being under conviction is not enough. Many lost sinners come to the place where they realize that they need to get right with God, but they still will not repent (cf. Isa. 55:6, 7).
2. A Sunday School teacher asked her class what the word “repentance” means. A little boy raised his hand and said: “It is being sorry for your sins.” A little girl then raised her hand and said: “It is being sorry enough to quit.” Herod was not sorry enough to quit!
3. A little boy was converted and someone asked him: “What were you before you were converted?” He replied: “a sinner.” “And what are you now?” he was then asked. He said: “a sinner.” Then he was asked, “What’s the difference?” He answered: “Before I was a sinner running after sin. But now I am a sinner running away from sin!”
4. Herod was a sinner running after sin. He may have slowed down enough to listen to John the Baptist, but he was not willing to get right with God.

5. I am convinced the reason many people do not get saved is SIN in their lives. I remember reading a sermon by Spurgeon and he told of a gentleman in his church that attended the services regularly, knew the Bible quite well, and seemed to genuinely enjoy Spurgeon's preaching. But he would not get saved. Many of the members were puzzled. Until after he died and then it was discovered he kept two wives and two sets of families.
6. If you have ever read any books by Charles Dickens, you know his books are filled with Biblical references. Yet as far as we know, he never received Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Why? We are told that he too kept a mistress for many years.
7. Over and over we see sinners convicted of their sin but still unconverted. They simply love their sin more than God, and eventually their sin drags them down to hell.
8. I have seen this many times when preaching and when witnessing to people. And there are many examples of this in the Bible as well (cf. Acts 26:27, 28).
9. Herod heard John the Baptist gladly but he would not give up his sin (cf. Mark 6:20). James Smith, in his book, *Handfuls on Purpose*, wrote, "When the cup of salvation has been deliberately rejected, with what nervous greed men grasp the poisonous cup of sinful pleasure."
10. Herod was convicted of his sin, but he would not give up his sin. Which brings me to my third and final point.

III. HE WAS ENSLAVED BY HIS SIN

1. Herod was consumed by his unlawful lusts (Mark 6:21-29). This sad story is a vivid picture of the awfulness of sin!
2. We have millions of lost souls today that are enslaved by sin – in terrible bondage to pornography, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, dirty

movies and TV shows, smutty jokes, and so on. It is degrading, it is vile, it is disgusting, and it is dragging them down into the pit of hell.

3. I read this news article the other day: “APPLE’S HOT NEW APP: LET’S JUST CALL IT IPORN” (*NY Post*, June 26, 2009).

“Now people are really going to be glued to their iPhones. Thanks to a new application called ‘Hottest Girls,’ tech nerds everywhere will be able to see naked women on-demand on their iPhones. But things haven’t changed all that much – they’ll still have to pay for the privilege.

Available at the iTunes App Store, the new application – the first iPhone application to feature nudity – costs \$2 and features ‘2,200+ images of topless models...Not surprisingly, ‘Hottest Girls’ sent the hands of iPhone users into overdrive downloading the application yesterday...Allen Leung, the application’s developer...pulled ‘Hottest Girls,’ citing excess use.

Leung posted a message on his Web site stating that the application was ‘temporarily sold out’ because his server couldn’t handle the flood of requests.”

4. Foolish people sometimes complain when we preach hard against sin. If they only knew all the people we have to deal with whose lives are shattered by pornography, adultery, homosexuality, and other filthy sins of the flesh.
5. Herod put John in prison “for Herodias’ sake” (Mark 6:17). The dirty voice of lust drowned out the voice of Herod’s conscience. But his conscience kept on bothering him (Mark 6:14-16).
6. Some one once said: “If your conscience smites you once, it is an admonition; if it smites you twice, it is condemnation.” Herod’s conscience had been smote already by John – it was an admonition. He had been warned (6:18). After executing John, his conscience condemned him (6:16).
7. He rejected the light of God’s Word and he murdered an innocent man. How many weak men have been led astray by evil women like Herodias and her daughter? We think of King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel.

- How many strong men like Macbeth have been dragged down to hell by a Lady Macbeth?
8. And let us pause for a moment and consider: How many youngsters are growing up like Herodias' daughter? In an atmosphere of sin and debauchery, drinking and dancing parties, and other sinful pastimes?
 9. Sin first entices, then excites, then captivates, and then destroys. Herod was "exceeding sorry" (Mark 6:26), but it was too late – he was captivated by sin. He was wrapped tightly by sin's strong cords; they had him tied up and he felt powerless to break loose.
 10. I read in the newspaper of a man who was flying on a plane from Zurich, Switzerland to Beirut, Lebanon. Halfway there, he started shouting for help, complaining that he could not breathe.
 11. The plane landed in Athens and the passenger, a man named Joseph Pasatour, died. Undressing him, the hospital attendants discovered that he was a smuggler and had on a corset with 1,500 valuable Swiss watches.
 12. The doctors discovered that the watches had restricted his breathing and caused his death.
 13. Herod was wrapped tight – not with 1500 Swiss watches – but with the sins of lust and incest. John the Baptist warned him but rather than heed John's warning, he put John to death.
 14. Sin had blinded Herod. He broke God's commandments with impunity but would not break his foolish oath (6:26). The oath was wrong to begin with – and he was making a bad situation worse by keeping it.
 15. Herod was a proud man. He knew her request was wrong, "yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her" (Mark 6:26).
 16. He would reject God, but not he would not reject wicked Herodias.

17. He would reject God's Word, but he would not reject Herodias' wicked daughter.
18. He would reject heaven, but not sin. Such is the folly of sin! Such is the deceitfulness of sin! Such is the perversity of sin!
19. Sin always leads to death – "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).
20. After the executioner brought in John's head, Herodias' daughter gave it to her mother (Mark 6:27, 28).
21. By giving John's head to her mother, she was acknowledging that her mother was the instigator of the horrible crime.

CONCLUSION:

1. The Scofield Study Bible refers to "Herod's troubled conscience." While doing some research, I read about the IRS "Conscience Fund." This fund is part of the United States Treasury Department, and is used for voluntary contributions from people who have stolen from or defrauded the [United States Government](#).
2. The fund was created in 1811 and received \$5 during its first year and over \$5.7 million during its first 175 years.
3. The fund's name comes from a letter sent with a \$1,500 check for previously misappropriated funds saying, "Suppose we call this a contribution to the conscience fund and get it announced in the newspapers, and perhaps we will get some more."
4. The name stuck.
5. Donations given to the Conscience Fund vary in size. A nine [cent](#) donation was made by a person from [Massachusetts](#) who had re-used a 3 cent [postage stamp](#), while a person from [Jersey City](#) sent \$40,000 in several installments for \$8,000 he had previously taken.

6. Another donor sent handmade quilts in an effort to settle her tax bill. Most gifts to the Conscience Fund are from anonymous donors. Others are forwarded by preachers who have received [deathbed confessions](#).
7. The sincerity of some donors' repentance can be uncertain as demonstrated by a received letter reading, "Dear Internal Revenue Service, I have not been able to sleep at night because I cheated on last year's income tax. Enclosed find a cashier's check for \$1,000. If I still can't sleep, I'll send you the balance."
8. Another interesting message: "I'd hate to burn in hell over a couple of bucks."
9. Maybe there is someone here tonight who is bothered by a guilty conscience.
10. Or like Herod, maybe you are slowly being choked by the cords of sin. Take heed – repent of your sin. Turn to the Lord Jesus Christ before it is eternally too late.
11. He died on the cross for your sins. If you receive Him as your Saviour, He will deliver you from all your sins.