

THE MURDER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

--MARK 6:14-29--

INTRODUCTION:

As I stated in the end of my message last Sunday, Mark interrupts his narrative of Jesus sending out the apostles to tell us the fate of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah, Jesus Christ and his preaching always pointed to the Lord Jesus, whom he declared to be the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! If the religious leaders would have recognized John the Baptist as a prophet, they would have been compelled to receive the One of whom he spoke. By rejecting Jesus, they rejected John the Baptist as well. As a martyr, John the Baptist prefigured the type of persecution Jesus' followers would face for their faithfulness to Him. This historical event is as dramatic as any event recorded for us in the New Testament, it is only exceeded by the historical account of the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. JOHN IS HE JESUS? (Mark 6:14-15)

- a. Jesus had sent the twelve _____ out in pairs on their first short-term ministry trip.
- b. That Jesus' name had become well-known indicates for us that the apostles' preaching was _____ the people to Jesus.
- c. *"But others were saying, 'He is _____.' And others were saying, 'He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.'"* (Mark 6:15, NASB95)
- d. As these reports about _____ reached Herod Antipas, he became fixated on Jesus. (Luke 9:7-9)

II. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S ARREST (Mark 6:16-20)

- a. Herod's alarm when news about Jesus reached him is understandable, especially the reports that people thought that Jesus was John _____ from the dead.
- b. Mark relates the rest of this historical event in the form of a _____, in which he reviews for us the details of John's arrest, imprisonment, and execution.

- c. We are not told how John the Baptist _____ Herod Antipas, but John must have begun preaching against Herod's actions
- d. Over the next year or so John the Baptist was _____ in the dungeon of Herod's fortress in Machaerus.
- e. John the Baptist was a faithful prophet of God and as such he was _____ when it came to confronting sin, even to those who were powerful and often brutal leaders.
- f. In a bit of irony Mark tells us that Herod enjoyed listening to John's preaching, even though John spoke out against the king's _____ lifestyle.

III. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S FATE (Mark 6:21-24)

- a. Despite Herod's fear and curiosity, John's _____ was sealed on Herod's birthday when John's imprisonment in Herod's fortress ended.
- b. The high point of the evening was when Herodias' daughter came and _____ for the men.
- c. Before giving an answer, the girl knew just whom to seek, Mark writes, *"And she went out and said to her _____, 'What shall I ask for?'"* (Mark 6:24a, NASB95)

IV. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S MURDER (Mark 6:25-29)

- a. Salome hurried to _____ her mother's request by rushing back to Herod Antipas before he had a chance to sober up or change his mind.
- b. *"Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his _____. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison,"* (Mark 6:27, NASB95)
- c. If the executioner were good at his job, it would have taken one precise _____ of the blade and instantly John the Baptist entered into his glorious eternal rest.
- d. *"When his disciples heard about this, they came and took away his _____ and laid it in a tomb."* (Mark 6:29, NASB95)

CONCLUSION:

It was not until after the death of John the Baptist, and people began to speculate that Jesus might be John resurrected from the dead that Herod Antipas began to pay attention to the ministry of Jesus Christ. Fearing that John had come back from the dead, Herod sought an opportunity to see Jesus. That meeting did not take place until a few hours before the Lord's crucifixion. According to Luke, Pontus Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas because Pilate could find no guilt in Him. In the end, Herod saw Jesus. He was undoubtedly relieved to finally see that He was not John the Baptist risen from the dead. Jesus Christ was in truth far more than John the Baptist, but to Herod He seemed far less—nothing more than a curiosity whom he ridiculed and then sent back to Pilate.

In Herod's interactions with both John the Baptist and with Jesus, Herod Antipas stands like Judas as a monumentally tragic figure in history. He had a great man, a most honored prophet of God in his hands, and he locked him in a dungeon until he had him executed at the bidding of his wife. More importantly, he had an audience with the King of kings, and he mocked Him and turned Him away. Such wasted opportunity was the result of his treacherous love for sin, his arrogant unwillingness to believe, and his cowardly fear of the truth. Herod Antipas claimed to rule over others, but in the light of the truth he was a man controlled by the fear of man. His fear of the people at the beginning kept him from killing John the Baptist. His fear of his friends finally drove him to order John's execution. His fear of John the Baptist made him anxious when he heard about Jesus. But his fear turned to scorn when he finally had an audience with the Son of God. Herod feared everyone except the Lord Jesus, and the result was everlasting condemnation. Who do you fear? Fearing man will lead you down the same path that it led Herod which will end in everlasting judgment. Fearing God and bowing before Him in repentance and faith will lead you into His eternal kingdom of blessing, joy, and salvation.