

# THE GOSPEL OF MARK: STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

## 6, The Gospel conflict in this sinful world against unbelief, disbelief, false belief, and weak belief, but saving faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the victory that over comes the world

### Part 6D

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**Introduction:** The Gospel of Mark 6:14-29 includes the story of King Herod and the martyrdom of John the Baptizer. This King Herod is Antipas a Tetrarch in the Herodian dynasty but vassal to Rome who possessed no actual kingdom. His father King Herod the Great had ordered the massacre of boy children two years old and younger in Bethlehem upon hearing the Magi and the scribes tell of the Biblical prophecy of the Messiah/Christ (cf. St. Matt. 2). At first glance this story may seem out of place or parenthetical in the development of Mark's account of the public ministry of Jesus, but upon closer look, it fits the theme of chapter 6, e.g.

### **Chapter 6, The Gospel conflict in this sinful world is against unbelief, disbelief, false beliefs, and weak belief, but saving faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the victory that overcomes the world.**

The elements of the story of King Herod and the martyrdom of John the Baptizer as historical reality reveal well-recognized themes from human experience:

- Lustful ambition for power and possessions, e.g. autonomy, adultery...
- Power of guilt attempting self-covering, e.g. plotting/framing, blaming, even killing others...
- Revealing of truth and the voice of conscience, e.g. facts, witnesses, prophets, superstitions evoking the supernatural...
- Public exposure and the great reversal of the mighty fallen [as a preview and pledge of the Great Day of the Lord], e.g.

This basic story-line has been and continues to be repeated in a variety of expressions of conscience and culture through stories, poems, songs, plays, films, T.V. series, etc.

One of the most celebrated examples is Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*.

*\*The original source of these theme elements is of course the Biblical story of original sin with the fall of Adam and Eve as well as numerous renditions throughout epochs of the O.T.: Pharaoh and the Exodus from Egypt, Samson, King Saul's treachery & consorting with a witch, King David's adultery, betrayal and plot to murder Uriah, Belshazzar's Feast, Queen Esther and evil Haman hanged on his own gallows...*

The story of King Herod and the martyrdom of John the Baptizer in the context of Mark 6 highlights false beliefs continuing the development on the theme of unbelief expressed by common objections, (vv. 1-6) and disbelief over the message of repentance, conversion, and judgment, (vv. 7-13).

**vv. 14-29**, False beliefs by religious superstitions and unbiblical interpretive traditions...

*\*People believe all kinds of things, i.e. strange faith..., but people cannot believe anything they wish about God and be accepted by Him!*

**vv. 14-15**, Unlike the self-conscious blasphemy of the Jewish religious leaders (Mk. 3:22ff), those with some Scripture knowledge recognized Jesus' prophetic presence:

- King Herod was conscience-bound by religious superstitions probably entangled with guilt...
- Others suggested Jesus was a reincarnation of Elijah or "the prophet" Moses by pressing an unbiblical interpretive tradition of forced literalism e.g. cf. Malachi 4:5, et al.
- Some others expressed a contradiction of false belief using a caveat that Jesus was "like one of the prophets" while rejecting Him as an imposter...

*\*Religious superstitions and unbiblical interpretive traditions continue to preoccupy people obscuring the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but God the Holy Spirit will not sanctify error...*

**vv. 16-18**, Mark gives the back story about King Herod's troubled conscience from the faithful witness of John the Baptizer as a Prophet of the LORD condemning the King's adultery with Herodias, his brother Phillip's wife:

- King Herod was in soul-prison while falsely imprisoning John the Baptizer...
- The true Word of God witnessed by the one Jesus said was the greatest Old Covenant prophet did not neutralize persecution for righteousness sake...

*\*The law-word of God has conscience-binding power over the human soul demonstrated as true and greater than the commandments of men, however sinful guilt often darkens a person's mind with fears and violence...*

**vv. 19-29**, The sad story of King Herod, Herodias and her daughter, all who were complicit in the martyrdom of John the Baptizer, gives sanctified insight about false beliefs working out in people's lives. So what do you think John told King Herod? The Biblical record clearly reveals that John the Baptizer testified that Jesus was the Messiah/Christ. But like his father before him, no fear of God by the proclaiming of His Word changed or restrained his sinful heart:

- Herodias feed a murderous resentment resulting in a plot causing the guilt of murder to be on the souls of others...
- King Herod's guilt was even compounded by his knowledge that John was a just and holy man of God...
- Herodias' daughter was manipulated by her own mother into blood-guiltiness in an ironic twist of her sensual manipulation of a weak and foolish king whose sinful pride and false oath also brought blood-guiltiness upon him...

*\*False beliefs are very often driven by religious superstitions and unbiblical interpretive traditions in the face of the verifiable prophetic Word of God, the conscience-binding power of the moral Law of God sometimes hardens sinful hearts by the very means of the Gospel which God uses to soften and save others.*

