

The Gospel of Mark

The Murder of John the Baptist

Mark 6:14-29

1. **The _____**
John the Baptist began his ministry in the wilderness of Judea and was recognized by the people as a prophet of the Lord (Mt. 14:5; Mk. 11:32). His popularity was recognized by all (Mk. 11:32) and his preaching was welcomed by some (Lk.3:10-14), but he rejected, and was likewise rejected, by others (Mt. 3:5-12; Mk. 11:31). John called all men to repentance, regardless of their station or influence, including king Herod Antipas (cf. Lk. 3:19). Herod arrested and imprisoned John but he was calculating in refraining from having him executed. Herodias was also calculating, but not in the balancing way that herod was. her calculations were a mechanism of her passion and vengeance. Mk. 6:19 ;
2. **The _____**
It was a custom in the Roman world for rulers to celebrate birthdays and the anniversaries of their rule. During one of his birthday celebrations, Herod's step-daughter came and danced for the pleasure of Herod and his guests (cf. Est. 1:10-11). Herod and his guests were pleased by this exhibition of lewdness, so pleased that Herod repeatedly badgered her to ask for an extravagant gift (Mk. 6:22-23). Herod's drunken and excessive response to the debaucherous display is matched by Herodias' devious calculation to exact her own vengeance (Mk. 6:24). Herod's reason for finally deciding to put John to death was not a political calculation or a revulsion at the religious rebuke of his lifestyle, but instead was an effort to save face with his guests (Mk. 6:26).
3. **The _____**
Herod continued in the long line of precedents set by the kings and people of Israel by killing one of the Lord's Prophets (cf. 1 Sam. 8:7). From the time of Moses Israel was marked by popular and sustained rebellion and rejection of the counsel of the Lord as delivered through His Word or His prophets (cf. 2 Chron. 24:17-22). Many kings simply refused to listen to the prophets and either killed them outright or left them to die in prison (cf. 2 Chron. 33:10; Jer. 26:20-23). The disciples of Jesus were to expect the same type of mistreatment that John experienced and that Jesus would soon receive (cf. Mt. 5:12).