

Stories of the Master

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~ The Dance That Led to Death ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read the text in which we find the story.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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Mark 6:14-29 NASB	Mark 6:14-29 NLT	Matthew 9:35-10:31 NASB	Matthew 9:35-10:31 NLT
<p>And King Herod heard <i>of it</i>, for His name had become well known; and <i>people</i> were saying, “ John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.” ¹⁵ But others were saying, “He is Elijah.” And others were saying, “<i>He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.</i>” ¹⁶ But when Herod heard <i>of it</i>, he kept saying, “John, whom I beheaded, has risen!”</p> <p>¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, “ It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” ¹⁹ Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not <i>do so</i>; ²⁰ for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him. ²¹ A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; ²² and when the daughter of</p>	<p>¹⁴ Herod Antipas, the king, soon heard about Jesus, because everyone was talking about him. Some were saying, “This must be John the Baptist raised from the dead. That is why he can do such miracles.” ¹⁵ Others said, “He’s the prophet Elijah.” Still others said, “He’s a prophet like the other great prophets of the past.”</p> <p>¹⁶ When Herod heard about Jesus, he said, “John, the man I beheaded, has come back from the dead.”</p> <p>¹⁷ For Herod had sent soldiers to arrest and imprison John as a favor to Herodias. She had been his brother Philip’s wife, but Herod had married her. ¹⁸ John had been telling Herod, “It is against God’s law for you to marry your brother’s wife.” ¹⁹ So Herodias bore a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But without Herod’s approval she was powerless, ²⁰ for Herod respected John; and knowing that he was a good and holy man, he protected him. Herod was greatly disturbed whenever he talked with John, but even so, he liked to listen to him.</p> <p>²¹ Herodias’s chance finally</p>	<p>³⁵ Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.</p> <p>³⁶ Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then He *said to His disciples, “ The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸ Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”</p> <p>10 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.</p> <p>² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the</p>	<p>³⁵ Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ He said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. ³⁸ So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”</p> <p>Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles</p> <p>10 Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness. ² Here are the names of the twelve apostles:</p> <p>first, Simon (also called Peter), then Andrew (Peter’s brother), James (son of Zebedee), John (James’s brother), ³ Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew (the tax collector),</p>

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<p>Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.”²³ And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.”²⁴ And she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.”²⁵ Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”²⁶ And although the king was very sorry, <i>yet</i> because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.²⁷ Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded <i>him</i> to bring <i>back</i> his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison,²⁸ and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.²⁹ When his disciples heard <i>about this</i>, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.</p>	<p>came on Herod’s birthday. He gave a party for his high government officials, army officers, and the leading citizens of Galilee.²² Then his daughter, also named Herodias, came in and performed a dance that greatly pleased Herod and his guests. “Ask me for anything you like,” the king said to the girl, “and I will give it to you.”²³ He even vowed, “I will give you whatever you ask, up to half my kingdom!”</p> <p>²⁴ She went out and asked her mother, “What should I ask for?”</p> <p>Her mother told her, “Ask for the head of John the Baptist!”</p> <p>²⁵ So the girl hurried back to the king and told him, “I want the head of John the Baptist, right now, on a tray!”</p> <p>²⁶ Then the king deeply regretted what he had said; but because of the vows he had made in front of his guests, he couldn’t refuse her.²⁷ So he immediately sent an executioner to the prison to cut off John’s head and bring it to him. The soldier beheaded John in the prison,²⁸ brought his head on a tray, and gave it to the girl, who took it to her mother.²⁹ When John’s disciples heard what had happened, they came to get his body and buried it in a tomb.</p>	<p>Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.</p> <p>⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in <i>the way of the Gentiles</i>, and do not enter <i>any city of the Samaritans</i>; ⁶ but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal <i>the sick</i>, raise <i>the dead</i>, cleanse <i>the lepers</i>, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. ⁹ Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, ¹⁰ or a bag for <i>your journey</i>, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. ¹¹ And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave <i>that city</i>. ¹² As you enter the house, give it your greeting. ¹³ If the house is worthy, give it your <i>blessing of peace</i>. But if it is not worthy, take back your <i>blessing of peace</i>. ¹⁴ Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for <i>the land of Sodom and Gomorrah</i> in the day of judgment than for that city.</p> <p>¹⁶ “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men, for they will hand you over to <i>the courts</i> and scourge you in their synagogues; ¹⁸ and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But</p>	<p>James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, ⁴ Simon (the zealot), Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).</p> <p>⁵ Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: “Don’t go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, ⁶ but only to the people of Israel—God’s lost sheep. ⁷ Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!</p> <p>⁹ “Don’t take any money in your money belts—no gold, silver, or even copper coins. ¹⁰ Don’t carry a traveler’s bag with a change of clothes and sandals or even a walking stick. Don’t hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve to be fed.</p> <p>¹¹ “Whenever you enter a city or village, search for a worthy person and stay in his home until you leave town. ¹² When you enter the home, give it your blessing. ¹³ If it turns out to be a worthy home, let your blessing stand; if it is not, take back the blessing. ¹⁴ If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave. ¹⁵ I tell you the truth, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than such a town on the judgment day.</p> <p>¹⁶ “Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. ¹⁷ But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the</p>
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		<p>when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but <i>it is</i> the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.</p> <p>²¹ “ Brother will betray brother to death, and a father <i>his</i> child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ²² You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.</p> <p>²³ “But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish <i>going through</i> the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.</p> <p>²⁴ “ A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more <i>will they malign</i> the members of his household!</p> <p>²⁶ “Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear <i>whispered</i> in <i>your</i> ear, proclaim upon the housetops. ²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And <i>yet</i> not one of them will fall to the ground</p>	<p>synagogues. ¹⁸ You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me. ¹⁹ When you are arrested, don’t worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. ²⁰ For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.</p> <p>²¹ “A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed.²² And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who endures to the end will be saved. ²³ When you are persecuted in one town, flee to the next. I tell you the truth, the Son of Man will return before you have reached all the towns of Israel.</p> <p>²⁴ “Students are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master. ²⁵ Students are to be like their teacher, and slaves are to be like their master. And since I, the master of the household, have been called the prince of demons, the members of my household will be called by even worse names!</p> <p>²⁶ “But don’t be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. ²⁷ What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all</p>
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		<p>apart from your Father. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.</p>	<p>to hear!</p> <p>²⁸ “Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. ³⁰ And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.</p>
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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

- King Herod was the son of Herod the Great and Malthace, a Samaritan woman. He ruled over Galilee and Perea shown in the map at the right as the gray-shaded area.
- He locked up John because John said it was not lawful to have his brother’s wife, Herodias. But there were also political considerations. To marry Herodias, Herod Antipas had to divorce his first wife who was the daughter of the Nabatean king. This shamed the daughter and the king and eventually caused a war. Many Nabateans would live in Perea where Herod ruled. Also, John preached in this area and would be well known there.
- John was locked in the fortress of Macherus. Archeologists have discovered two banquet halls, one for men and one for women in this fortress which is why Mark 6:24 that the daughter “went out” to her mother for the mother was not in the room when the daughter danced. Then the daughter went “back in” where the men were.
- In agrarian cultures, only 2-4% could read and write. Communication, therefore, was primarily by word of mouth. Although Herod would be among the literate, he lived among a people where news traveled most often and frequently by word of mouth. Reputations could be sustained or damaged depending on what kind of reports were circulated about leaders. Herod received his information about Jesus through word of mouth reports for as the passage says, “everyone was talking about him.”



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- While Jesus' esteem and fame is increasing as people talk about him, so is John's even though he has already been martyred by Herod. Herod's continuing fear of John as stories of miraculous works circulate shows the weakness of Herod's character.
- Dancing at weddings could be erotic and was only done for kin but Herod allows the leading men of Galilee and officers to watch. Honorable males would not allow this, showing another facet of Herod's weakness.
- It is shameful for a man to allow himself to be bewitched by a woman in public.
- The maximum a woman could ask for was half the man's worth. Thus, Herod offered as much as he could.
- Because Herod made the oath in front of guests he was honor bound to fulfill the request.
- Because Herodias asks for the head of John, she shows that she is more aware of the threat of John than Herod realizes.
- Matthew says Jesus was talking to the crowds which was often a term to refer to the peasantry. They would usually not have leaders, thus, they are viewed as sheep without a shepherd.
- Belts and bags in 10:9-10. Travelers would carry money in a bag attached to one's belt. The bag may refer to the kind of bag Cynics would take with them to beg for money.
- To be welcomed into a home (Matt 10:14) would mean to come under that home's protection.
- To shake off the dust from the feet (Matthew 10:14) would be an insult indicating that one does not want to touch anything associated with a certain place.
- Being flogged in the synagogue would be by a leather strap. 26 lashes would be applied to the back and 13 to the chest.
- Family relationships held the highest loyalty, thus, to have a family member betray another would be the most serious social breach possible. See Matthew 10:21, 34-36
- In 10:26 Matthew speaks of all secrets becoming known. In village life, virtually nothing was private and all became known to everyone in village settings.
- Two sparrows sold for a penny. A penny was an assarion which was 1/16 of the denarius which was considered a day's wage.

These insights were taken from A Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels by Bruce J. Malina and Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible.

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3. Answer these reflective questions.

Herod was a man who was given to fear. He feared the multitudes. He feared John. He feared the reports about the miracles. How is it possible to have wealth and power and yet still have fear? Do you know anyone like this?

When Herodias' daughter asked for the head of John the Baptist, do you think there was any way out of the dilemma for Herod. He did not want to execute John, but he had to save face and keep his word. What would you have done?

We are not told what John's last thoughts were before he was executed. What do you think was going through his mind when the executioner came for him? When the time of your death comes, how do you want to respond to it?

Jesus told his disciples that the harvest was plentiful, then he sent them out to preach and to heal. Do you think Jesus is still looking for workers in his harvest today?

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Jesus told the disciples, “It is enough for the servant to be like his master.” What do you think Jesus meant by this?

Jesus said the hairs of your head are numbered and that we should not even fear those who kill the body. What fears can you bring to the Lord right now?

What does it mean to pick up our cross and follow Jesus?
