



## **“The Beheading of John the Baptist”**

Matthew 14:1–12

*The Authority of the King*

### **Introduction**

Matthew again draws our attention to John the Baptist, and we need to ask, “Why?”

- To let us know that followers of Jesus run the risk of persecution and death.
- Once you declare your love for Jesus and your desire to walk with Him and obey Him...
- Once you say I’m going to turn away from my sin and say yes to Christ...
- At that moment you are going to start to face some challenges in life.

So in (Matthew 14:1–12), we see three characters:

- A wimpy king, a plotting queen, and a fearless prophet.

So let’s look at the first one...

### **1. A wimpy king (v.1–5)**

Matthew 14:1–2 –<sup>1</sup>“At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus, <sup>2</sup>and said to his servants, ‘This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.’”

Matthew 2:2 –“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”

Matthew 14:3–5 – <sup>3</sup>“For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip.<sup>4</sup>For John had been saying to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’: <sup>5</sup>Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet.”

So Herod wants to kill John the Baptist...for at least two reasons.

- 1) He resents John’s message
- 2) He fears John’s popularity.

Mark 6:20 – “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.”

Charles Spurgeon said, “I would bear any affliction rather than be burdened with a guilty conscience.”

French Philosopher Albert Camus said, “A guilty conscience needs to confess. A work of art is a confession.

## 2. A plotting queen (v.6–9)

Matthew 14:6 – “But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod,”

Mark 6:19 – “Herodias held a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so.”

Mark 6:21 – “A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.”

Matthew 14:7 – “so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.”

Mark 6:23 – “And he swore to her, ‘Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.’”

Mark 6:24 – “And she went out and said to her mother, ‘What shall I ask for?’”

Matthew 14:8 – “Having been prompted by her mother, she said, ‘Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.’”

Matthew 14:9 – “Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests.”

2 Corinthians 7:10 – “For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

## 3. A fearless prophet (v.10–12)

Matthew 14:10–12 – “<sup>10</sup>He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. <sup>11</sup>And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. <sup>12</sup>His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.”

Hebrews 3:7–8a – “<sup>7</sup>Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, ‘TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, <sup>8</sup>DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.’”

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Have you ever gotten upset with someone who made you feel guilty, but then afterward you knew they were right? Explain.
2. When the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin and you are conscience-stricken, what do you do?
3. Why was Herod mad at John the Baptist (Mark 6:17–19)?
4. Why would John the Baptist tell such a powerful leader, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife?” (Leviticus 18:16; 20:21)
5. Why did Herod offer to give Herodias’ daughter whatever she asked? Why would he make such a vow (Mark 6:22–23)? What can we learn from this about oaths?
6. Why did the girl ask her Mom what she should ask for from the King (Mark 6:24)?
7. What’s the difference between sorrow and repentance?
8. What can we learn about peer pressure from this passage?
9. What can we learn from John the Baptist about suffering and persecution?