

Pentwater Bible Church

*Gospel of Mark
Message 25*

September 14, 2014



John Baptist by Veneto Bartolommeo Veneto Cir. Late 16th Century

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Mark
Message Twenty-Five
John the Baptist is Executed
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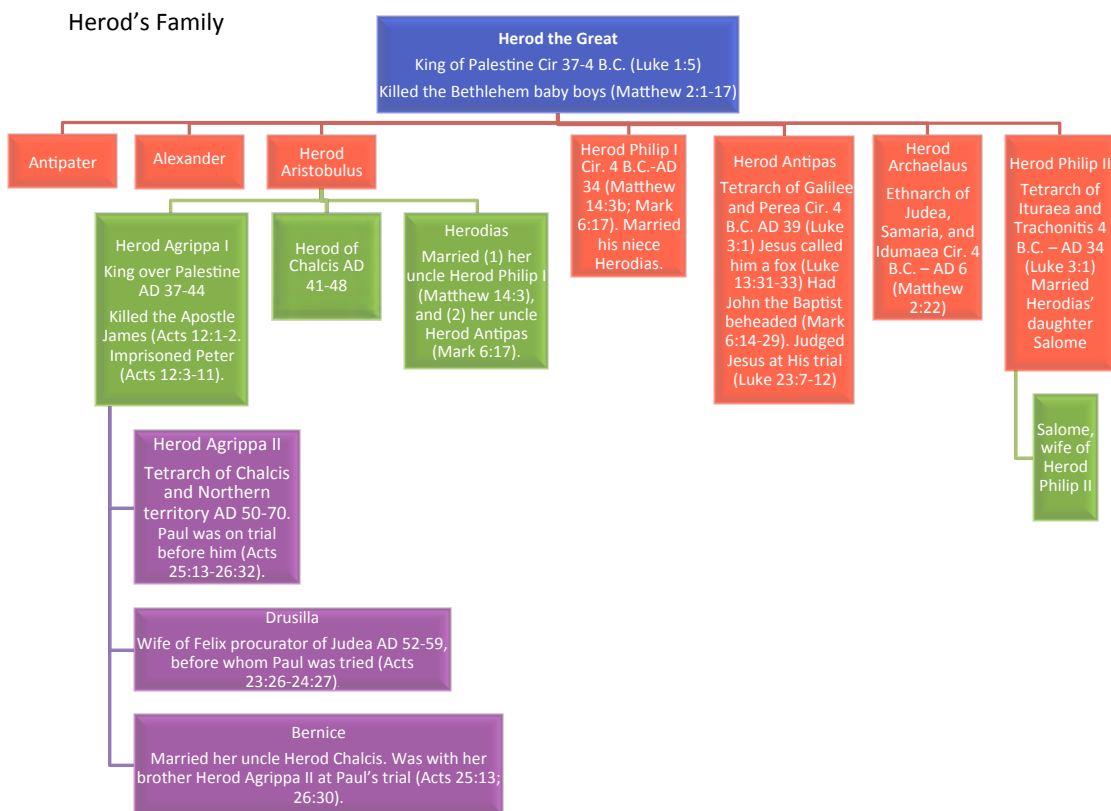
The Beheading of St. John the Baptist by Caravaggio Cir 1607-1608

JOHN THE BAPTIST IS EXECUTED

Mark 6:14-29

¹⁴ And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. ¹⁵ Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. ¹⁶ But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. ¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. ¹⁸ For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. ¹⁹ Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. ²¹ And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; ²² and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the [young girl], Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. ²³ And he swore unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. ²⁴ And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. ²⁵ And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. ²⁶ And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oaths' sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. ²⁷ And immediately the king sent an executioner, and

commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸ and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. ²⁹ And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb (KJV)



The Herod in this story is Antipas. He was one of the sons of Herod the Great. He was born of the union between Herod the Great and a Samaritan woman named Malthace. Herod Antipas is a nickname derived from Antipatros. He was full brother of Archelaus and a half brother of Philip. With his brothers Archelaus and Philip, he was educated in Rome, a kind of honorable detention to guarantee his father's loyalty. In his father's testament, Herod Antipas was appointed tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (the east bank of the Jordan). The Roman emperor Augustus confirmed this decision and Antipas' reign could begin (4 B.C.)

Herod Antipas was a Jewish leader, or liked to pose as a Jewish leader. For example, he is known to have celebrated Passover and Sukkoth in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, his subjects were not convinced by their leader's piety. Jesus compared him to a fox, an animal that was ritually unclean and very crafty.

He was first married to Phasaelis, a daughter of Aretas IV, an Arabian leader. Later, he divorced her in order to marry Herodias. She had been the wife of Herod Antipas' half-brother (who was also called Herod). Marriage to the ex-wife of one's brother was not uncommon, but Herodias was also the daughter of another half-brother, Aristobulos. Marriage to one's niece was also permitted, but marriage to a woman who was both one's

sister-in-law and one's niece was most unusual. John the Baptist criticized the king and was consequently killed.

In 37 A.D., Herodias' brother Agrippa became king of the realms of Philip. She thought that the royal title ought to be given to her husband and made a plan to make Herod Antipas king. The emperor did not agree and exiled the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea to Lyon in Gaul.

HEROD FEARS HIS PAST

Mark 6:14-16

¹⁴ And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. ¹⁵ Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. ¹⁶ But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead (KJV).

Herod Antipas heard the stories of Jesus who was quickly becoming extremely well known. By the time Herod was also hearing of the stories of Jesus he had already had John the Baptist beheaded. He carried this out prior to Jesus beginning His ministry. Suspicious as he was he began to express the notion that the miracles of Jesus must be attributed to a reincarnation of John the Baptist. He knew John to be a man of God and thought this was an appropriate explanation for the miracles of Jesus. Some who were trying to explain the ministry and His miracles said He must be Elijah the prophet or one of the other prophets that has come back to life. They were expecting Elijah to return before the Day of The Lord, which is the Great Tribulation. Jesus knew that John must come first as the messenger announcing the first advent of the Lord Jesus.

Malachi 3:1

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: And the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, Even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts (KJV).

Jesus had explicitly identified this person as John the Baptist (Matthew 11:7-10). This parallels well with Isaiah 40:3 and John 1:23. However, it was well known that when the Lord would come to bring the terrible Day of Judgment upon the earth it would be preceded by an appearance of the prophet Elijah. So Herod not wanting the Day of The Lord to occur was sure it was John the Baptist who had risen from the dead. Beside he was sensing an immense amount of guilt for taking John's life for political reasons. He sought to preserve his dignity and prestige over taking John's life.

Malachi 4:5-6

⁵Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. ⁶And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and

the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (ASV 1901).

This is the only passage in the Bible that speaks to a future ministry for Elijah. Some try and tie to Malachi 3:1 passage to him but Luke 1:17 makes it quite clear that an angel when prophesying to John the Baptist's father said, "*And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*"

So the first prophecy in Malachi is about John the Baptist and the second one refers to Elijah who will come before the Day of the Lord. Each Jewish Seder eaten at Passover leaves a place mat set at the table in case he returns. Because of this passage it is reasonable to believe that Elijah is one of the two witnesses prophesying during the first half of the Great Tribulation before Jesus returns to establish His earthly 1,000 year Kingdom.

Revelation 11:3-12

³ And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. ⁴ These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. ⁵ And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. ⁶ These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. ⁷ And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹ And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not |allow| their dead bodies to be put in graves. ¹⁰ And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. ¹¹ And after three days and a half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. ¹² And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them (KJV).

HERODIAS WANTS JOHN KILLED

Mark 6:17-20

¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. ¹⁸ For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. ¹⁹ Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just

man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly (KJV).

According to Josephus the first century Jewish historian Herod put John in Machaerus prison.¹ It was a fortress combination palace and prison near the northeastern shore of the Dead Sea in Moab. He did this as a favor to Herodias. She was Herod's brother Phillip's wife and the daughter of Aristobulus another of his half-brothers. Making the entangled relationship more complex, she was a half niece to both Herod and Philip. They each were her half uncles! She married her half uncle Philip and then divorced him to marry Herod. Herod had first married a daughter of the Arabian king, Aretas IV. In the meantime he had divorced her for Herodias. So by marrying Herodias, Herod was committing adultery as well as a form of incest. John the Baptist had condemned them for living an immoral life. John was outspoken for the truth and was not afraid of Herod. He knew that by speaking out he was endangering himself but as a prophet he had no other choice. He was compelled to do so.

John made both a private and public declaration of the immoral behavior. He had explained the situation clearly to Herod that it was against God's Law for him to marry his brother's wife (Leviticus 18:16; 20:21). Even though Herod was from Edom (an Idumean) and only half Jewish he feared a Jewish revolt. If the Pax Romana was broken as a result of his behavior he could lose his tetrarchy granted by Rome, which he eventually did anyway. Herod was at the end of his patience with the entire situation as Herodias' anger toward John became hatred and his political security was threatened.

Herodias kept up the anger toward John. As the text says, *Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him;* She never let up in her animosity toward John and was waiting for an opportunity to get her revenge and kill John. Herod knew that John was a just man and was well aware of what he had personally done in his life, which was against the Mosaic Law. He actually liked John and put him in prison more for John's protection than any penalty. Herod was evil and became disturbed at listening to John's admonitions toward him. The Greek text says he was puzzled by John's words which left him with a sense of vacillation between what he knew was right and his moral weakness.

THE DANCE OF SALOME²

Mark 6:23-24

²¹ And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; ²² and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the [young girl], Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. ²³ And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. ²⁴ And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist (KJV).

¹ Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). *The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged*. Peabody:

² Ibid, Antiquities 18:5.4

Herodias waited for such a time as this. Herod put on a lavish party, a *supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee*. This was a high political event for Herod with people he was out to impress and affirm his station in life. Herodias sent her young attractive daughter to the party to entertain the men. She was certain that her presence there in the midst of their intoxicated revelry would enable her to gain access to John the Baptist's life. Salome's dancing pleased *Herod and them that sat with him*. As a result Herod issued a proclamation, which reflected the entire scope of his kingdom as well as the pleasure that he was receiving from the dance. So he *said unto the young girl, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.* ²³ *And he swore unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.* No doubt he did not actually mean to give away half of his kingdom for a sexy dance, but Salome knowing her mother's animosity toward John ran to her mother and said, "What shall I ask? And she said, *The head of John the Baptist.*" Since he swore to her that she could have anything she wanted he was entrapping himself because of the other politicians in the room. If he did not keep his word it would weaken his political standing with them. If he followed through he would have to kill John the Baptist. Fearing men more than he feared God, Herod chose to move forward with killing John. It was easier than continuing to listen to his wife Herodias' continual anger toward John and he did not want to place himself into a weakened political position with the highly positioned political people of Galilee.

HEROD EXECUTES JOHN

Mark 6:25-29

²⁵ *And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.*
²⁶ *And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oaths' sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.* ²⁷ *And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸ and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.* ²⁹ *And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb (KJV)*

Salome immediately after consulting with her mother returned to the party and said to the king *give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist*. Herod was immediately sorry he had made such a rash promise to her. He realized what was happening to him and he felt trapped. On the one hand he liked John and did not want to kill him. Even though his wife's continuous ranting about John bothered him he could now not avoid keeping his oath to Salome. On the other hand not to follow through on an oath would put his political power and therefore stability with Rome in jeopardy. Herodias was successfully satisfying her lust for revenge and John the Baptist lost his life. Salome got the head on a serving platter and took it to her mother Herodias. John's disciples heard of the death and came for the body to give it a proper burial. Herod's guilt could not be eased over this. When Jesus was beginning to do all His miraculous works Herod was fearful it was John coming back from the dead to haunt him.

NEXT WEEK: MARK: JESUS TEACHES IN THE SYNAGOGUE CONT.

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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