

John the Baptist as a Role Model of Christian Discipleship (Mark 6:14-29)

Summary: John the Baptist, whom Herod the king executed by the request of a young girl, the daughter of Herodias because of his testimony of God's justice, previews the discipleship of Christ the crucified Lord, through whom God's kingdom has come true to us.

John the Baptist and Jesus

Many people followed Jesus and his disciples. But they understood Jesus as one of the great prophets. None of them thought Jesus to be the Messiah they expected to come. Some believed that Jesus was John the Baptist, who had been raised from the dead. The power of John was with Jesus, so that Jesus did miraculous works (Mark 6:14). They believed that John had been reincarnated into Jesus. Reincarnation is not the biblical belief of the resurrection from the dead. It is the belief of the pagan people who did not believe in the resurrection of the body. Others believed that Jesus was the Elijah who should come before the coming of the Messiah, or "a prophet like one of the ancient prophets" (Mark 6:15). Herod the king also thought that John he had executed was reincarnated into Jesus: "But when Herod heard these rumors, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised to life" (Mark 6:16). It is Herod himself who arrested John and put him in prison because John spoke against him: "It is against

the law of God for you to marry your brother's wife" (Mark 6:17–18).

Herod Executed John the Baptist

Herod had respect for John the Baptist, even though he was an evil king, and his rule was against God's reign. When John the Baptist testified to the Word of God against him, he ordered to arrest him and put him in prison. Herodias, his wife, had a deep feeling of hatred against John because of his testimony against her marriage. She wanted to see him killed. But she could not execute him because Herod did not want to kill him. John's testimony to criticize his wrongdoing disturbed his mind and woke up his conscience. It was the voice of God to call him to repentance and correct his way of living in injustice. Herod recognized and respected John "as a righteous and holy man"; "When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him" (Mark 6:20).

However, the time to kill John the Baptist came. It was the birthday of Herod the king, in which he "gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the lead men of Galilee" (Mark 6:21). In this banquet was the daughter of Herodias. She danced. Her dancing was so sensual and pleasurable to everyone at the banquet. It made Herod and all his guests so enjoyable. So, Herod said to her, "Ask me anything you want, and I'll give it to

you” (Mark 6:22). And he made an oath to her: “Whatever you ask, I will give you up to half my kingdom” (Mark 6:22–23). Herod made this oath to the daughter of Herodias in front of the important political leaders of his kingdom.

So, she left the banquet place and asked Herodias, her mother, “What shall I ask for?” and Herodias replied to her, “The head of John the Baptist” (Mark 6:24). Immediately she went back to the banquet in a hurry and made her request: “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter” (Mark 6:25). Herodias controlled her daughter to achieve her purpose of killing John the Baptist. She used Herod’s promise to her daughter to do her revenge against John, who witnessed that Herod’s marriage with her was against God’s law and kingdom.

The request of the daughter of Herodias made Herod grieve in his mind so greatly. But he could not express it in front of the political leaders at the banquet. Because of the promise he made as a king in front of them, “he did not want to refuse her” (Mark 6:26). So, reluctantly, he ordered his executioner to behead John in the prison and bring his head on a plate to him (Mark 6:27). The executioner went to John’s prison, cut off his head, brought it back on a platter, and gave it to Herod. Herod gave it to the daughter of Herodias in the banquet place,

and the daughter delivered it to her mother (Mark 6:27–28).

John the Baptist a Role Model of the Discipleship

John was the one God called to prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah, to come. But his life ended in humiliation, pain, sorrow, and misery. He was executed in prison, his head cut off, at the request of a young girl, the daughter of Herodias. But he was so faithful to his ministry to pave the way of the Lord. He testified to God's justice and worked for the kingdom of God, even to the point of his death in prison. He disappeared into misery in history, but God's kingdom moved forward through him.

This is the lesson for the disciples of Jesus who enjoyed their success in ministry: They showed their power to heal the sick and drive out demons, and people loved them and gathered around them. But they should remember God's kingdom moving forward through John the Baptist, whose life was ended in humiliation and death in prison. Jesus' ministry for God's kingdom was moving forward to the point of being crucified. He commanded his disciples and anyone who was willing to follow him to live in imitation of him: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:34–35).