

**Study Notes: Matthew 14:1-12**  
**November 2, 2026: “The Impact of Sin”**  
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***At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, and he said to his attendants, “This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him.”***

- Around the time that Jesus was rejected at Nazareth, word about the work and ministry of Jesus reached Herod, who was serving as the tetrarch or ruler of Judea.
- The New American Commentary provides background on Herod, “‘The tetrarch’ identifies this Herod as Antipas, son of Herod the Great. Antipas governed Galilee and Perea from 4 BC to AD 39.”
- When Herod heard of the work of Jesus, he believed that Jesus was actually John the Baptist who had risen from the dead. Herod believed this was why Jesus had miraculous powers at work within Him.
  - The New American Commentary explains Herod’s belief in more detail, “Matthew has already underlined several similarities between John’s and Jesus’ ministries, so Herod’s opinion is understandable. His belief in the possibility of resurrection was undoubtedly based on Pharisaic doctrine but may well have intermingled various superstitious notions as well. This belief seems to demonstrate the existence of a contemporary rumor that John had been raised. The “miraculous powers” are most likely those to which 13:54, 58 refer, where the same word (dynamis) has just been used.
- Herod was correct in attributing the miraculous work of Jesus to the power of God, but had he understood the testimony of John the Baptist, he would have realized that John was not the Messiah (see John 1:20). Just like the people at Nazareth, Herod also misunderstood who God’s Messiah is.

***Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, for John had been saying to him: “It is not lawful for you to have her.” Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet.***

- At this point in the text, Matthew provides a flashback to explain to his readers the events that surrounded the death of John the Baptist. Herod’s belief that John had risen from the dead probably caused him some distress, since Herod had actually put John to death.
- Herod originally arrested John because John spoke out against Herod’s sinful behavior. Herod had taken his brother Philip’s wife, Herodias. John spoke out publicly against this sinful behavior, and Herod harbored murderous thoughts against John in his heart. However, knowing it would cause outrage with his subjects, Herod did not kill John, but simply kept him bound in prison.
  - The Expositor’s Bible Commentary provides some details about Herod’s behavior, “John’s courage in denouncing Herod distinguishes him from the Essenes (with whom many scholars associate him), for they tended to refuse to meddle in political life, no matter how evil it became (Bonnard). Herodias was not only Antipas’s sister-in-law but also his niece, the daughter of his half-brother Aristobulus, but for most Jews there was no bar to marrying a niece. The larger offense may have sprung from the ritual impurity of marrying a brother’s wife (while the brother was still alive; see Lev 20:21).”

- Herod's fear of others became a motivating force in this narrative. His fear of others originally kept John alive, but later it became the reason he was beheaded.

***On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted and had John beheaded in the prison. His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.***

- On Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias, Salome, performed for Herod and his guests. This performance was so enthralling that Herod swore by an oath to give the girl whatever she wanted. Herodias, who was also upset by John's outspoken rebuke of her sin, convinced the girl to ask for the head of John the Baptist.
  - The New American Commentary gives some further details on the girl's request: "The daughter is probably about twelve years old and not free to speak for herself. Herodias, who is more eager than her husband to be rid of John and his preaching, thus asks for his execution and the gruesome proof of it (v. 8)."
- Now caught between a rock and a hard place, but still fearful of not fulfilling an oath and disappointing his guests, Herod ordered John beheaded. The girl brought the head of John to her mother, but John's disciples were given his body to bury.
  - The New American Commentary notes, "In a touch of poignant but tragic irony, Herod's reply shows that he is more concerned to save face in front of his guests than to uphold justice and morality (vv. 9–11). 'The king' in v. 9 is probably also ironic, as when used of Herod's father in 2:1, 3. Matthew calls Antipas 'king' precisely at the moment in which he acts least kingly."
- All this was reported to Jesus, which caused Him to withdraw to a solitary place with His disciples.