

TRAGEDY AND VICTORY AT JOHN'S DEATH
Mk.6:14-29
Ed Dye

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At this time the name of Jesus had “spread abroad” (V.14). That is, the growing fame and influence of Jesus had reached all parts of the land and all classes of society, the poor and neglected, the might and the noble.
2. The learned were jealous of his influence with the people; and powerful rulers wondered what was the secret of his power and influence among the people.
3. Many were the explanations given of the new Teacher's authority. While some traced a resemblance between him and the Hebrew prophets in general; others even deemed him the greatest of the order – Elijah himself, returning to the land of his ministry, in accordance with what was deemed the inspired prediction, Mk.6:15. Cf. Mt.16:13,14.
4. But the most singular (unique, extraordinary) of all conjectures (the formation of an opinion on incomplete information) was that of Herod when he heard of Jesus.
 - a. He, no doubt influenced by a guilty conscience, is reminded of his evil deed in having beheaded John, and said: Vv.14,16.
5. As the teaching of this text unfolds:
 - a. We learn of the time John the Baptist had been seized and imprisoned by Herod at which time he was beheaded.
 - b. We learn that the time and the setting was the celebration of Herod's birthday.
 - c. It furnishes an excellent opportunity for us to study several characters together.
 - d. It will make for a helpful contrast between good and evil, wherein we see such things as:
 - (1) The apprehensions of a guilty conscience.
 - (2) The resentment of the vicious under rebuke.
 - (3) The conflict between conscience and lustful passions.

- (4) Youth and beauty used as an evil instrument of vindictiveness.
 - (5) False honor and wicked pride preferred to justice.
 - (6) Malice triumphant on the part of a wicked, vindictive woman.
 - (7) Finally, the good mourning whom the bad destroy.
6. With this introduction let us further consider the tragedy and victory at John's death.

II. DISCUSSION

A. HERODIAS SHOWS THE TRAGEDY OF ALL THAT AN EVIL WOMAN AND AN EVIL MOTHER CAN BE.

1. She has no love or respect for her first husband, leaving him, V.17. Cf. Eph.5:33; Tit.2:4; Mt.19:4-6; 1Cor.7:10,11.
2. She has no respect for marriage, unlawfully marrying another, Vv.17,18; Cf. Mt.19:9; Rom.7:1-3; 1Cor.7:39.
3. But she will allow no criticism of his lifestyle, Vv.18,19.
4. However, she can nurse her resentment and her wrath and wait for revenge, Vv.20-24.
5. Moreover, she will, in her hateful desire for revenge, use her own daughter for the sinful deed, Vv.25-28. (What a mother!)

B. THE DAUGHTER OF HERODIAS LIKEWISE SHOWS THE TRAGEDY OF ONE BEING NOTHING BUT A FOLLOWER AND A PARTY TO THE SINFUL DEEDS OF ANOTHER.

1. We say this because she followed an evil lead without a second thought, Vv.24,25.
2. There is an element of shamelessness about her and her actions, V.22.
3. History suggests this is Salome, byword for lasciviousness, or absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness, one of the works of the flesh listed in Gal.5:19 – the prominent idea is shameless conduct.
4. The men-pleasing dance, of which no doubt it was, may be suggestive, immoral, V.22.
 - a. Enough so that it turned Herod's head.
 - b. Enough so that it caused him to make a rash oath to her, Vv.22,23.

5. We shudder to see, to even think of, the picture of the gift she brings her mother, V.28. (Can you imagine a man's head being presented to another on a platter as if it were roasted turkey!)
 - a. This is hardly the actions of a refined young lady!

C. HEROD ALSO REVEALS TO US THE TRAGEDY OF ONE WHO HAD GLADLY HEARD A JUST AND HOLY MAN OF GOD AND YET IGNORED HIS MESSAGE.

1. From V.20 we learn about Herod having gladly heard John preach.
2. Yet Herod, himself, had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison, V.17.
3. He had bound John "in prison for Herodias' sake," or on account of Herodias, "his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her," V.17.
4. He had performed this evil deed because he had married his brother Philip's wife and because he had been told by John that, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," V.18.
5. Stealing another man's wife doesn't bother him at all in spite of what John says – at least not enough to repent and give her up!
6. Doing what ever he can to please a stolen wife, with whom he is living in adultery, her dancing daughter, who turned his head, and his other guests, before whom he is seeking to save face, means more to him than the truth of John's preaching God's will!
7. Herod ignored his troubled, guilty conscience to please others, V.26.
8. He is willing to break a great and holy law to the loss of his own soul in order to keep a sinful wife and a foolish oath!
9. **HOW TRAGEDIC!**

D. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE ARE INTRODUCED TO VICTORY AT THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

1. We see the victory of God's will in John's faithfulness to his God-ordained mission in seeking to bring sinners to repentance at great personal sacrifice on his part.
 - a. He is not awed into silence by the ruler's power.
 - (1) Power to imprison him, V.17.

- (2) Power to behead him, V.27.
 - b. He cares more for God's will than for the opinions of powerful, influential men and women, even for his own life.
 - c. His life and preaching is such that when Herod had heard of Jesus (whose name had spread abroad) he thought it was John risen from the dead, whom he had beheaded!
 - d. Cf. what one preacher said about John and Stephen asking for their own funerals—how many more opportunities they could have had if they had not been so emphatic – thus could have done so much more good!
2. We see victory as well as tragedy at John's death in that at great unselfish sacrifice on his part he did everything as God's servant he was supposed to do; he was faithful to the very end – even giving his life in the service.
 3. We see victory here because we see that men can do what God requires of them or expects of them in serving him!
 4. Victory for the word of God! What an encouraging story! What a faith builder! What an insight to the lives of good and bad men!

III. CONCLUSION

1. This horror story shows just how horrible evil can be. Just how far evil men will go to justify self. How men can stifle, suppress, even sear their conscience. What men will do to try to save face!
2. It also makes for us a helpful contrast between good on the one hand and evil on the other.
3. And it also serves to show to us why Jesus held John in such high regard, saying, "Among those that are born of woman there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist..." Lk.7:28.
4. One other thing learned from this horror story is that one may be "married" to one spouse and still be the spouse of another, or be married to one person and yet be "bound" to another person at the same time, V.17.
 - a. Thus Rom.7:1-3 says it is "adultery."
 - b. Mk.6:18 says such a marriage is "unlawful."
 - c. All of which is in harmony with Mt.19:3-6,9; Lk.16:18.