

John The Baptist Beheaded

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Date: 26 March 2023

- [0 : 00] Very warm welcome to the service this morning as we come before God in worship we pray that he would bless our time under the sound of his word.
- We're going to begin singing to God's praise from Psalm 34. Psalm 34 and we're going to sing from verse 5 down to verse 13.
- 6 stanzas from verse 5. 7.
8. 9. 9. 9. 10. 10. 10.
10. 10. 10. 10. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11.
- [1 : 48] 11. 11. 12. 11. 12. 12. No shame is where there is, this firm and kind of dirt and sick, in bromelic distresses.
- The angels of the Lord in Christ are burned in camp of dead, all those above the earth in fear.
- The angels of the Lord in Christ are burned in camp of dead, for Christians in the dark could keep sinless, In this place, fear to all these sins, In the night's ambition, With want to rest, The night of young may unbeen, And they may not be pure,
- But they that truly sing, The Lord shall not like any good, O children, Never do ye come, And I know to be given, I shall look it to understand, The Lord should fear, What man may see that I desire,
- To seek and move them long, Thy lips reap him from speaking, In guile and draw with words I can.
- [5 : 18] Let's join together in prayer. O Lord our God, As we come into your presence, We give thanks to it.
- We are reminded of an invitation, Extended to children, To young people, But beyond that, To every living soul, To come to the Lord, And to hear, And to learn, From the Lord.
- And we give thanks that, That invitation is extended to each one of us here today, Whoever we may be. However long lived we are, However much we have been numbered, Amongst the followers of the Lord, By way of profession, We are still entrusted, With the obedience that is incumbent upon us, To come to the Lord, And to learn, At your footstool.
- For in this school, There is no graduation, Until the time, When our cautious run, And when we are called, From this seat of learning, To sit forever at the, Feet of the Lord Jesus, In glory.
- And the translation is, Is such that, The difference that will be, In the experience of, Your people, Is immeasurable.
- [7 : 17] That they can barely conceive, Of what they will be like, From, The point in which, They are in a state of grace, To which they are in a state of glory, And yet in that, Reclining at the, Footstool, Of the, Risen and ascended Lord, They will still, Be in a place of learning, They will still, Be led by him, To fountains, Of living water, Whatever that may mean, However their instruction, Will take place, Whatever it will entail, We cannot but understand, That the finite, Cannot take, In the infinite, The truths that, Are represented,

In the God, Who is triune, Can barely be, Conceived of, With the, Greatest faculty, Of reason, That man possesses, And yet your word, Declares it such, That, The God of glory, Possesses, So many characteristics, So many, Facets, Facets, Of being, And each one, Of them perfect, We cannot, Even begin, To imagine, What that is like, But we give thanks, That the God of heaven, Is presented to us, Through your word, You have been pleased, To reveal yourself, To us, You have not, Left it to ourselves, To struggle, And to strive, And to clamber up, Ladders of reason, In order to, Assimilate, Sufficient knowledge, To discover, Who God, Really is, Because you have been, Pleased to reveal yourself,

To us, Particularly, In the passion, Of your son, Jesus Christ, That one, Who has spoken of us, The one, Whom to know, Is life eternal, Help us to look, To him, That our faces, Might be light, And even today, Bless each one, Gathered here, In this place, Of worship, May they, Achieve, That end, For which they have made, That we collectively, Would worship God, That you would, Instill within us, The spirit of worship, That you would, Inspire us, To lift our voices, In the place, Of your name, And to, Fix our attention, Upon, The glory, That you have been, Pleased to present, To us in your word, Help us to, Realize, That, You have set, Before us, In your word, Sufficient, To satisfy,

All the cravings, Of soul, Even these cravings, That we, Foolishly, Sought, To, Meet, In means, Other than the means, Ordained, By, Applying yourselves, To, The provision, Of our own hands, Or looking elsewhere, Other than the word, That God, Has appointed, By which, Our souls, Would be satisfied, Help us to, Believe that, The table of the gospel, Sets, Before us, Good and holds, And fair, That we'll strengthen, And, And confirm, And encourage us, In the path of life, Such as it is, We cannot, Begin to speak, Of the experiences, Of any, Who are here, With us today, Because each one of us, Have our own, Lives to live,

We have, So many things, Going on in our lives, That perhaps others, Cannot understand, We have thoughts, We have feelings, We have, Experiences to encounter, And pass through, And only the God of heaven, Knows, The intimate detail, Of all our lives, To that end, We bring every soul, Present to you, From the youngest, To the oldest, Thankful that we can, Entrust, Our lives, To your care, And keeping, That we can, Seek from you, That light, In our darkness, That we can, Seek from you, As the one, Whose arm is, Almighty, That you would, Sustain us, By that arm, Support us, And, Be, The one, To whom we look, To encircle, Our, Our hearts, And minds, With knowledge, That would,

[12 : 25] Encourage us, In believing, That there is one, Greater than ourselves, The walking, With us, Every step of the way, We pray, We pray for those, Who are unwell, Remembering, Especially any, Who may desire, To be with us, But because of ill health, Are not here, We pray for those, Who are confined, To homes, To hospitals, Who are being, Ministered to, By, Skilled hands, And, Wisdom, That we do not, Possess ourselves, We pray that, Such skills, Would be used, To the glory, Of your name, And for the betterment, Of all, Who are in their care, Remember the frail elderly, Again, Those who are confined, To their own homes, Some confined, To homes, Appointed, To their care, We pray for any, Who may, Be at this time, In the hospice, Those who care for them, In that place, We do thanks, For the provision,

That is made, For our needs, Within our, Own community, We pray for the nation, That we form, Part of, And for the administration, Of law, Within that nation, We pray for wisdom, To be imparted, To the lawmakers, That they may, Understand, That they have, A privileged, Position, Even in the path, Of duty, That each one, Of us will answer, To God, And surely, They must, Also answer, To God, To God, And we pray, That you would remember, The various parliaments, Representative, Of the people, And our king, We pray for the king, And his family, We pray for the nations, Of the earth, That have experienced, At this time, So many, Conflagrations, And, Disputations, Some resulting, In open warfare, Some with, With hostilities,

On the brink, Of creating, Greater, Discords, Still, We remember, Lord, All these places,
And pray for peace, To reign, And as the God of peace, We cannot do better, Than, Plead
the merits, Of the Christ, Who is a peacemaker, Who has made peace, By way of the
cross, That he may, Be made known, To such places, And such peoples, We remember,
Those amongst ourselves, Who are grieving, And sorrowful, As the enemy, Of our soul,
Has once again, Made inroads, Into our communities, With the voice of death, That is
inescapable, We may have a measure, Of time, Where, The voice, May not be heard,
May be silent, But, We live in the shadows, And, The voice of death, Is frequently, Ever so
frequently, Heard amongst us,

May that remind us, Of the fact, That we are too, On the same path, Of those who, As
those who have, Gone, From this world, Into the next, Make us ready, With the readiness,
That only you can provide, That we may look unto Jesus, Through the gospel, Of his
grace, And through, That word, Be reminded of, The provision, That is made, Not only for
life, But for death, We pray for the, Empowering, Of the preachers, Of the gospel, That
your voice, May be heard, As a voice of grace, And that it may be, Heard, Woundsomely,
And powerfully, And defectually, So that men, And women, Young and old, May respond,
In faith, To, The entreaties, Of the gospel, Remember the congregations, Where the,
Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Is, Celebrated, Today, We pray for,

Back, We pray for loss, And, For your people, Gally together, In, Commemoration, Of the
death, Of the Lord Jesus, Until he come, How easily, It is forgotten, That we are, In such
places, Only in preparation, For the coming, Of the Lord Jesus, And the prayer, Of the
judge of old, Was even so come, Thou Lord Jesus, And, May be that, That part of, Of the
desire, Of your people, Has been hollow, And empty, Because we are, So fixed in our
ways, So settled, Upon our leaves, So content, With what we have, Forgetting, That there
is, Greater, By far, Awaiting your people, So pour out, Your spirit upon us, To that end,
Bless us, One, And all, And bless the children, As they go to Sunday school,

[17 : 30] May what they learn, Be an encouragement, To them, Throughout their lives, Here in this
world, Help us to wait upon you, Cleanse from sin, We pray in Jesus name, Amen, Amen,
We are going to read, From the New Testament scriptures, The gospel, Of Jesus Christ,
According to Mark, We are reading, From chapter 6, And we are going to take up, The
reading at verse 14, And read down to, Verse 29, The gospel of Mark, Chapter 6, Verse
14, And at the point at which, We take up the reading, We are told that, King Herod, Had
heard of Jesus, And, We take up the reading, At that point, 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, To show them, Show forth, Themselves
in him, Others said, That it is Elias, And others said, That it is a prophet, Or as one of the
prophets, But when Herod heard thereof, He said, It is John, Who might beheaded, He is
risen from the dead, 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,
For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee, To have thy brother's wife,
Therefore, Herodias had a quarrel against him, And would have killed him, But she could
not, For Herod feared John,

Knowing that he was a just man, And unholy, And observed him, And when he heard him,
He did many things, And heard him gladly, And when a convenient day was come, That
Herod, On his birthday, Made a supper, To his lord's high captains, And chief estates of
Galilee, 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 damsel, Ask of me whatsoever
thou wilt, And I will give it thee, And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I
will give it thee, Unto the half of my kingdom, And when she went forth, And said unto her
mother, And she went forth, And said unto her mother, What shall I ask?

And she said, The head of John the Baptist, And she came in straight away, 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, And the king was exceeding, Sorry, Yet for his oath's sake, And for their sakes, Which sat with him, He would not reject her, And immediately the king, Sent an executioner, And commanded his head, To be brought, And he went and beheaded him, In the prison, And brought his head, In a charger, And gave it to the damsel, And the damsel, Gave it to her mother, And when his disciples, He heard of it, They came, And took up his corpse, And laid it, In a tomb.

And so on down, May the Lord, At his blessing, In this reading of his word, And to his name, Be the praise. Well, boys and girls, We're going to, Be looking today, At the, Story that we have, In the Bible, Of Moses, Encountering God, In the burning bush, Moses, Was in the desert, And he was looking after, The sheep, Of his father-in-law, Jethro, And, He was in the desert, With his sheep, And all of a sudden, He saw something, That was very strange, To him, And, What made it strange, Was not that there was, A bush, In the desert, That was burning, With flames, And fire, Because that could, Well have been, A regular occurrence,

[22 : 25] Something that happened, Frequently, Plenty would, Say that, That would be the case, But Moses' attention, Was drawn to the bush, Because, Although he saw, The flames, Burning, The bush, The bush, Was not, Consumed, It was burning, And yet, It wasn't, Behaving, In the way that you would expect, Any fuel, To be consumed, And, We are told, In the account, That Moses turned aside, To look, At the bush, That burned, In other words, He turned, Because he, He knew, There was something, Miraculous about what he saw, It couldn't possibly be, That a fire, That was burning, Even in the wilderness,

Would burn, Without, Without, The fire, Needing fuel, And the fuel, That was used, Was the bush, And the bush, Was not, Burning, Completely, Wasn't burnt, Completely, Now, That's what, That's what, Drew his attention, To the bush, But when he turned, To the bush, God, We are told, Saw, Moses, Turning to the bush, And the angel, Of the lord, Spoke to Moses, Out of the bush, And that itself, Was very strange, And we're told, That the voice, That spoke to Moses, Was the angel, Of the lord, We are told, That God spoke, To Moses, Out of the bush, And, Some people, Will ask, Well how was it, The angel of the lord, And how was it, God, What is the meaning, Of that, And the explanation, That is given, Is that the name,

The angel of the lord, Which is, In the Hebrew, Malach, Yahweh, Is a description, Of Jesus Christ, A description, Of Jesus Christ, Coming, In the form, Of what is called, By theologians, Christophany, Sometimes God, Appears to men, And women, To boys and girls, In a physical way, God is a spirit, And it cannot be seen, Because he is spirit, It's like the air, That you see around you, You know there's air there, But you can't see it, And, I suppose that's a very simple way, Of thinking about God, You cannot see him, Because he is spirit, But at times in the bible, He revealed himself, Physically, Not because he had a body, But because he wanted,

To speak to people, Whose understanding, Needed help, And we have, All the time, We need God's help, To understand, Many things, That are true of him, And, On this occasion, We're told, That it was the angel, Of the Lord, God, Coming, Speaking, From the fire, So, There's a mystery, Attached to it, It's quite, A wonderful, Occurrence, But when God, Speaks to Moses, He says to him, Take your sandals, Take your shoes, From off your feet, Because, Where you are standing, Is holy ground, In other words, God, Wanted Moses, To understand, That, It was God, That was in the bush, He wanted Moses, To understand, Because, He needed,

Moses, To, Appreciate, What was happening, At that time, So God, Made himself, Known to him, By his voice, By the miracle, And, By what he had to say to him, He said to him, The God, Of your fathers, The God of Abraham, The God of Isaac, And, The God of Jacob, Is the one, Who is speaking to you, All of these things, Are important to us, Because, The reminders, Of the power, That God has, Very often, We think of power, As something, That God possesses, But when we think, About power, We think, That when power, Is used, Inevitably, That power, Is spent, Every one of us, I'm sure, In the house, Will have some, Something that uses,

[27 : 30] Batteries, And we're told, There are many kinds, Of batteries, And they're powerful, Batteries, And we're told, They'll last, They'll last, Well, They won't say forever, But they'll last, A long time, But all, Every one of these, Batteries, Will need to be replaced, Because the power, They have, Will be spent, And we're used enough, To understanding, That when we use, Something, And it needs, Power to operate, But once, The power is used, It will run out, It will be spent, But the God, Who is, All powerful, Is a God, Who has power, Without limit, Without end, It will not run out, It's not going to be spent, He, Revealed himself, In the fire, Without burned, And yet, Wasn't consumed, He also, Revealed himself, As a God, That was holy,

I was reading, One of the, Theologians, And he was saying, Now this is a theologian, And his work, His work is to talk about God, And to speak about God, And to think about God, And to speak about all the things, That God is said to be, And he said, He was a very, Very experienced, Teacher and preacher, Then he says, I know nothing, About God's holiness, I know nothing, About God's holiness, But surely he knew something, Surely he knew, What the Bible was telling him, About God's holiness, But what he was saying, Was that, Our puny, Understanding, Our limited, Appreciation, Of what holiness, Is all about, Is such that, We bring God,

We bring God down, To our level, We may think, That we know, Who, Who is holy, In this world, What they are like, But, The reality is, That even, Moses, Who God, Consecrated, Dedicated to his service, Equipped, And, Sent into the wilderness, To learn more about him, He, Was told by God, Take your shoes, Off your feet, Because, The ground, That you are on, Is holy, Because he was there, And sometimes, That's, Some of the lessons, That God, Wishes us to understand, Simple truths, That we may bypass, Or overlook, Because they are so obvious, To what we are making, But in the lesson, Of the burning bush, We have, An all powerful God, Speaking to, Puny, Ordinary, Weak, Insecure, Human beings,

Reminding them, That he is such a God, That they can look to, And, That he is a holy God, Who is, All holy, And all, Powerful, Well, May you think of these things, As you are taught, These lessons, Today, We are going to sing now, As you go out to Sunday school, Psalm 103, From verse 8, Singing down to verse 15, The Lord, O God, Is merciful, And he is gracious, Longsuffering, And slaughtered wrath, In mercy plenteous, He will not chide continually, Nor keep his anger still, With us he dealt, Not as we sin, Not that we quite our will, For as the heaven in its height, The earth surmounteth far, So great to those, That do him fear, His tender mercy's hour, As far as east is distant,

From the west, So far hath he, From us removed, In his love, All our iniquity, Such pity, As our father hath, And to his children dear, Like pity shows the Lord, To such as worship him in fear, For he remembers we are dust, And he outframed well knows, Frail man his days, Are like the grass, As flower in field he grows, Let us sing these verses, 8, Down to 15, Of Psalm 103, The Lord, Our God is merciful, And he is gracious, The Lord, Our God is merciful, And he is gracious, Longs the burden, And so do not,

[32 : 40] In mercy plenty us, He will not strike daunted, Nor lay, Nor keep his anger sick, With us he did not us resist, Nor decree quite a hill, For us, In heaven, In it, The earth, The earth, Those MINIESS folk, That there, So great to earth that it,

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POSITION SONG CONTINUES SONG CONTINUES But it isn't something that is solitary
in the sense that the execution itself and the nature of it.

[37 : 34] But the wickedness that is in that is surrounded by wickedness of different, I suppose, of a
different kind, but wickedness nevertheless.

And we see how immoral the life of those involved in it was.

And it shouldn't be a surprise to us, I suppose, without referring to the Bible, if we were
just interested in the history of mankind, there is ample evidence to suggest that there
have been, over the space of many centuries, monarchies that were corrupt and that
displayed equally questionable moral conduct.

But in the Bible we have evidence of that. But not with the Bible. We have it even to the
present day. Somebody has said that the reason for this would be probably because they
have authority or power that those who occupy the thrones of kingdoms think that
because of that possession of power they can do pretty much what they want.

It doesn't matter. And somebody said of that, that power tends to corrupt and absolute
power corrupts absolutely.

[39 : 26] And he follows that with the comment, great men are almost always bad men. You might
disagree with that.

But it depends how you measure greatness. Very often people achieve the power that is
necessary to rule.

They achieve or accomplish that through very wicked actions. They're not really
concerned about what they're doing, if it's right or wrong, but whether it will secure the end
that they have for it.

Well, in the experience of Herod here, we see somebody who has very questionable
moral conduct.

We know from the history books who this Herod was. And it's difficult at times when we
read the Bible, when we talk about Pharaoh, for example. Pharaoh was a king of Egypt.

[40 : 42] And the name Pharaoh would make you think that it was the one Pharaoh, but no, it's not.
Several possess that name. It's the title of a dynasty, perhaps.

And Herod was somebody who possessed the name Herod and the kingdom over which
he was king may, in comparison to other kingdoms, might have been insignificant.

But this particular Herod was the son of another Herod called Herod the Great. Most of
you will know something about Herod the Great because Herod the Great, I don't know
who called him the Great, probably himself, but Herod the Great was the king who was
responsible for the butchering of countless infants when Jesus Christ was born.

He was terrified that his power would be taken from him. And this other king that he heard
of was born. So in order to prevent this king coming to the throne, he decided to kill every
male child under the age of whatever it was at the time.

And it was a brutal, a selfish, and an act that cements his name in the history of mankind.

[42 : 25] Well, that's the father of this Herod. And there were three who would probably lay claim to have the name Herod.

There was Herod Antipas, which is this one. Herod who was called Philip, and another called Archeleus.

And they were all sons of Herod the Great. Although, I think Philip and Antipas, this one, were half-brothers.

And that's from the history given by Josephus. They were not, they had different mothers, but the same father. And that's what makes this whole thing morally questionable, because we're told that the reason for John's imprisonment was that Herod put him to prison.

And the reason Herod put him to prison was Herodias was antagonized by what John said. and what John the Baptist said was that in verse 18, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.

[43 : 58] And the simple background to that was that Herodias was married to Philip. And Herod himself was married to a different wife.

and in order to secure marriage with this woman, he divorced his wife, she divorced Philip, and they married.

Now, according to the law of the Jews, that was not permissible. I don't know if it's permissible today even, but that's what happened.

They both divorced their spouses in order to enter into a marriage that was considered illegal. how they behaved prior to that, the secular history books described to us.

But it is a picture, if you like, of the moral conduct of the court of the king. You get a further picture of it when you see the festivities described to us on the occasion of his birthday, a great party.

[45 : 07] but again, the conduct is itself highly, highly questionable. But I want us to keep all these things in our mind, because it tells us the kind of people that John was dealing with.

It tells us something of the kind of the moral quagmire into which he was preaching the gospel. And it explains to us why there was such a reaction to it.

As far as the telling of the story is concerned, some people think that it's highly irregular, because when the story is told, John has already died, he's already been killed.

And the story of John intrudes upon the account that we have of Herod being told about the activities of Jesus. But it's the activities of Jesus that remind Herod of the preaching of John.

And it's as if he's got this flashback. He remembers what John had to say. He remembers the way John preached the gospel, what he preached, and so on.

[46 : 31] And when he remembered that, he remembered that John really should be dead. But it created in him this fear.

What if he's not dead? And it's as simple as that. It reminded what Jesus was doing, what Jesus was reported as saying, what Jesus was represented as presenting by way of the gospel, was so like what John had done, that he couldn't but think of this person that he thought he had dispatched from the world.

And the story is John's, but at the same time, it's not John's story, it's the story of Herod. The story of somebody who reminds us of what a person can do in the face of the gospel when it is presented to them.

So there's three things that we can think about. They're not really deep thoughts, but they're thoughts I hope would promote within your own hearts and questions. First of all is the preaching of John.

And that's important. It's important for us to remember that the beheading of John took place because of what he preached. preached. It didn't happen for any other reason than that John preached the gospel.

[48 : 09] John preached repentance and what he had to say offended some and created disturbing thoughts in the heart of others.

The effect of the preaching is something that's obvious as well. We need to understand that. how preaching, whoever the preacher is, affects people.

Because I don't care who the preacher is. If the preacher is the voice of God speaking into a person's life, as this preacher speaks into your life, whoever you are, whatever your situation may be, you're not going to hear, you're going to hear what I have to say, but I hope that you won't hear anything other than what God has to say through me.

If it's just what my own opinions, you can't discount them, disregard them, just leave them behind. But if I'm telling you what God has to say, you've got to understand that that is something you need to carry with you and to reflect upon and to act upon, which is what happened here.

There is a response to what Herod, what Herod, what John said on the part of Herodias, his family and others besides, and the outcome of that.

[49 : 38] Well, what do you think, the outcome? Well, you know what the outcome was, he died, John was put to death. And we need to understand what that meant.

we know, there's not much said about the preaching of John here, but we know by reputation who he was.

The Old Testament told us long before John was born that such a person as John was going to be born, because the prophets of the Old Testament described to us that there would be a person who would come into this world, who would be born into this world, and that he was born for this very task of preaching repentance as the forerunner to the great preacher of salvation by way of the cross.

And John was that person. in his own preaching, he compared himself to a forester.

And the role of the forester was to chop down trees, especially corrupt trees, dead trees, and remove them from the floor of the forest and replace them with trees that would bear fruit.

[51 : 10] root. And this is how he saw his ministry. He says of himself that the axe is laid at the root of the tree.

So his description is the description of someone whose task is to prepare the way for new trees, for fruit bearing trees to be planted, where up until that point there had been nothing but drought and corruption.

Now, we can easily, just from the description that we have of John's ferocious preaching, you know, he stood out, he stood out on the scene of time as somebody who dressed weirdly and who said strange things.

And yet, the important thing to remember is this, that it was not enough for John to go out dressed in the skins of animals and to live in the wilderness and to behave strange.

There were plenty of people who did the very same thing in his days and ever since then. You've always got eccentrics who behave in strange ways. That eccentricity is not itself a means by which people would be persuaded to listen to them.

[52 : 34] John's message was accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. And there's no question in my mind that that is what made the difference.

John had something to say and it was God who gave it to him to say and people realised that this was something they wanted to hear.

So people came from round about to listen to the preaching of John. He proclaimed the message of repentance. The need for people to deal with their sin, to turn from their sin, to embrace God as they understood God to be.

In his preaching John did not spare anyone. Everybody was the same to him. Whether they were ordinary people that he met on the street, in the way, on the wilderness, wherever he met them.

Whenever, we're not told when he met Herod or whenever he met Herodias. But we know that he did and that he preached to them and that his message to them was forthright and direct.

[53 : 54] And he told them, we're told in verse 18 as we said, it is not lawful for you to have thy brother's wife. Don't suppose he preached a sermon that had that heading.

But in whatever way he came face to face with Herod, even though he was king, even though he had the power to do all kinds of evil things to John, he still told them face to face that what he was doing, what he had done was wrong.

Now, the strange thing is the difference that we see in the response, the response that was, we'll see, that resulted from his message.

It's a wonder, I don't know, I can't enter into the psyche of any person. I don't know the psychology of it.

I don't know why Herod, who understood himself to be the focus of this condemnation, would want to hear more of what John had to say, but it seems that this is something that was true of him.

[55 : 11] I don't know why so many people came to hear John preach, but they did. They came from near and far to hear what John had to say, and what he had to say was, repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.

That they were sinners in need of salvation, and they needed to change their lives and turn to God. And if you're a sinner, and we all are, and if your life is corrupt, and if your life is not the way it should be in the eyes of God, the last thing we want to do is hear somebody tell us that.

And yet they did. They came to him, and whether it was a magnetic thing, I can't explain it.

But is that not the way the gospel works. When the God of heaven is working through his word, even though that word is condemning you, even though that word is exposing your faults, exposing the things that are going on in your life that be known to anyone else, and you know that this could not have come from any other source, but the God of heaven is stirring up your memory, stirring up your thoughts, stirring up your heart, whether you acknowledge it or not.

There's something in that message that makes you want to hear more of it. things in that way. But he certainly created, as we say, astucey.

[57 : 05] His preaching drew all kind of people to him. And we are told, although John was sent to prison by reason of the command of the king, it was not the king who was really wanting to put him there, because we're told it was Herodias who was responsible.

What we do read in verse 20 is John was known by Herod to be a just man, a holy man, and he observed him.

There's different translations of that word. He protected him, he was perplexed by what John had to say, but he had an interest in what John was preaching.

Now I wonder if anyone here has found themselves to be in a situation where whoever the preacher is, that an interest has been kindled in your thoughts by what you have heard.

you know, not everybody who came to listen to John were converted. They weren't converts to the faith, but they still came.

[58 : 29] They had an interest in what John had to say, although it wasn't a saving interest. I've had people say to me, that was a very interesting sermon.

I've often wondered what they meant by that. That was a very interesting sermon. And as far as I can see, some of these people who have had their interest piqued by what they heard, I'm not sure what of it.

Certainly they haven't been prompted or stimulated to change their life and embrace Jesus Christ as their saviour. and that's the worrying thing about Herod.

He knew John to be a just and a holy man. He knew a lot of things about John and what John had said. He knew them to be true and yet he was not changed by it.

I'm not going to say he wasn't affected by it because he was, but he was not changed by it. Put alongside the same preaching that John heard, that Herod heard from John, the influence that it had on Herodias, she was furious.

[60 : 01] She was infuriated by what she heard from John. She wanted John dead. She didn't want him to live. John's message was the voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord and repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand and more directly, more personally your life is not the way it should be.

You've done wrong, you must forsake that life and turn to God. And she did not want to hear that message in any way. It's amazing how two people can be sitting side by side in a church, in a congregation, hear the same message and the same message will have a different effect.

It's often the case. Some people will be moved by it, some people will remain untouched by it, some people will be tearful, other people will say what a lot of nonsense.

There was a preacher, I'm not sure if he's still living, I think he's passed away, George Philip. I'm not sure if it was his own sermon but he tells anyway in one of his books of an occasion where he was preaching and I think it was his own preaching and he says when he preached he knew that somebody or some people there, he was given unction, he was given assistance by God's spirit to preach very directly and very personally to the congregation and he said after the service one of the adherents, one of those who were regular attenders in the congregation came to see him and this is what he said, after the service a regular attender spoke to him about how moved he was by what he heard.

He confessed what he had heard moved him but then he said this, I had to remind myself it was just a sermon.

[62 : 28] I had to remind myself it was just a sermon. Now, think of that for a minute. He just heard a sermon and it moved him and his way of getting out of his response to the sermon was by reminding himself it was just a sermon.

But George Philip, the preacher, said he did not recognize that God was speaking to him. Now, this is the thing.

How are we with regard to sermons? Whether the preacher is John the Baptist or whether it's this minister here. Are you saying, that word, that message, that accusation, that poking away at this sin boil that is in my side, disturbed me.

But it's only a sermon. It's only his thoughts, his feelings, his interpretation of the Bible.

I have a different one, I have a better one. I've thought about this, but my conclusions are different, just as good as his. Some people listen to sermons and they're apathetic, they're not interested.

[64 : 02] but not many, I would say. Not many. I would think far fewer than we think sit unto the word of God without the word of God in some way or at some point speaking into their lives, speaking into their context of living out their life in this world.

they may pass by that thought, they may move on from it very quickly, they may submerge it under many other thoughts and say it's not relevant, it's not important, it's just something we've heard before, it's something that others have said before, but it doesn't mean anything.

but if you do not think of it like this, that this message today, this moment in time is God's word to you.

I'm not here just to pass the time, I get a salary as a minister of the gospel and I'm called to preach and I have to fulfill my 40 hour week like everybody else, maybe that's the way you see things, I have to preach two sermons on the Sunday, take a prayer meeting, take a funeral, the occasional baptism, that's your role, that's your ministry, that's all you have to do.

As far as I'm concerned these are all the means by which God has ordained that his word would come into the hearts and minds of the men and women that he has entrusted to the care of my ministry.

[65 : 57] Whatever you want from me, what I would want for you is that through me God's word would come to you, and that through me God's word would touch your heart and your mind, and that by way of that word your life would be transformed.

As an unbeliever that you would become a believer, as a believer that your life would be translated from the mundane living out of it to the celebratory living that the Christian can possess in this world, living in Christ, for Christ, to the glory of his name, living to the best of your ability with his help.

God's love, I don't believe for one minute that all I'm to do is convert, the unconverted, that's just a beginning.

The convert must go on to greater things, to better things, to be a witness to the world in which they live, to be a testimony to a living saviour who sits at the right hand of glory, and who impacts upon their life, who touches their every activity, their thinking, their whole life.

John's preaching touched two different people, probably engaged in the same awful sins, taking delight in them, and yet he touched them pointedly, and the result was different to a level that is difficult to understand.

[67 : 41] Herod was moved to want to hear more of John, to want to protect John, to think more deeply of what John had to say, whereas Herodias despised him with the venom that was clearly evidenced in what she wanted done to him.

So John was imprisoned because of what he said. worse would have happened, and of course it did happen. And we cannot imagine, you know, we talked about the sin that was prevalent in that kind of situation.

What mother would have allowed her daughter to dance at the party that was described there? It's not just a dance. It's not just a dance.

the kind of scenario that is clearly understood by it. It was provocative. It was designed to be sensual.

It was designed to entertain the senses of this man in a way that was totally inappropriate. And yet the mother, such was her hatred of John, not just encouraged that, but delighted in it because she got her way.

[69 : 10] She wanted the head of John on a platter and she got it. And Herod, for all the impression that John made upon him, he succumbed to his own lusts and the power that his wife possessed over him and she did possess power over him.

A preacher by the name of Ivan Powell said that Herod found himself trapped between the people and his pride because he had made a declaration.

You know, he was going to give this woman up to half of his kingdom. Whatever she desired, he was seduced and the seduction resulted in the death of John.

We're not given much detail about it. The executioner was sent to the cell of John and the next thing we read his head was displayed on a charger for all to see at the party.

It's interesting when you read what some people have to say. They're very emotional about the kind of scene that's pictured there. When the head of John is revealed some say if his eyes were opened did Herod look into them and see the awful consequences of his activity.

[70 : 50] It doesn't matter how he was portrayed or displayed in front of them. One thing I would say to use this is that when John entered into death gory as it was awful as it was were not given.

The executioner went did he go alone? Was John tied? Was he chained? Whether soldiers with him were not told. But when he left this world we can say with certainty that he was entered into eternal glory instantly.

At the moment of death the souls of believers go immediately into the presence of God in glory. John and that was true of John.

Whatever he endured in this world as a preacher of the gospel was forgotten and he went into the presence of his eternal father.

But it was a different thing for Herod because strangely enough he didn't get over the death of John.

[72 : 11] Some time ago we spoke here I think it was in the prayer meeting about the power of the conscience and I think the conscience of Herod disturbed him.

Why else would he think of John the Baptist when he heard the account of the preaching of Jesus? Why would he think of somebody that he knew was dead?

He certainly was dead. He had seen his head severed from his body. What else was he but dead? And yet when they spoke about Jesus Herod remembered John.

And some people think that all it takes for them to be rid of their sin is just by getting rid of the person who is bringing their sin to their attention.

Well maybe that's one way of doing it that didn't work for him. Some people think that through time the conscience will harden and it will not trouble a person anymore.

[73 : 27] maybe Herod discovered otherwise. John was dead but the word that John preached would be remembered.

It would be remembered by others who heard him preach. It would be remembered by Herodias no matter how much she chose not to remember it.

Maybe not but one thing I can say is that the very deed that they carried out in opposition to the God of grace who had sent John into their lives and don't forget that's what happened God sent John into the lives of Herod and Herodias and he preached the gospel to them.

And what they did with the gospel well we've seen and because of what they did to the gospel they will not ever get over that.

They are dead a long time but the consequences of their deed lives on in their never dying soul and the burden that Christ insists will be there.

[74 : 57] Because when the Bible speaks about hell it speaks about hell as being a place where the world dieth not. It's a very strange picture.

Hell is a place where the world dieth not. And the reason it speaks of that is because in the days of Christ the place that was identified as being like hell was a place outside the city of Jerusalem.

A place where all the rubbish of the city was taken out and it was set on fire. And the fire was burning all the time because the rubbish that was coming out of the city was coming out all the time so the fire was burning and it never went out and the worms that were fixed in such a setting would be constantly consuming the rubbish and this is the picture that was taken from that where the worm dieth not.

A place called Gehenna and people say it is like a conscience and the conscience which many people submerge or try and stifle in this world takes on a different role in eternity where the rejecter of the gospel will be reminded of every opportunity of every word of encouragement to come to Christ of every word of counsel every word of rebuke that was rejected all of these things will be refreshed in their minds constantly Herod may have secured the ability to submerge his conscience through time probably not but some believe that he did Herodias probably some would say didn't have a conscience but don't think that this was the end of the matter

John was somebody who came with a message he delivered the message he did not draw back from the message and instead of being celebrated he was beheaded instead of being lauded and applauded he was imprisoned and dismissed from society not fair not right but it was the way of God and his way is right and the end that he means for it will come to light one day remember the preaching of the word is always a word in season to you to you don't walk away from it don't pretend it's for somebody else and not for you don't think that God has nothing to say to you because it is to you he is preaching he is teaching the word that is a living word into the situation in which you're living your life here in this world hear what he has to say learn from the awful awful truths that are brought to attention in the world let us pray

[78 : 38] Lord be merciful to us help us to not only to hear but to believe and to act upon what your word has to say to us cleanse us from sin we pray through the demon name amen going to conclude singing verses from psalm 119 at verse 33 we'll sing four stanzas verse 33 to 37 psalm 119 teach me o lord the perfect way of thy precepts divine and to observe it to the end I shall my heart incline give understanding unto me so keep thy law shall lie even with my whole heart I shall observe it carefully to verse 37 teach me o lord the perfect way of thy precepts divine teach me o lord the perfect way understanding reach but

ZANG EN MUZIEK I said in my heart to thy testimony I'm not to face inclined Turn thou away my sight and I from you in my naked and in thy good and holy way it leads to quicken me

Now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, the Son of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you whatever and always, Amen